||| Policy paper

Co-creation in the localisation of the SDGs:

Citizens and local governments accelerating action towards the 2030 Agenda

22nd IOPD Conference

Credits

About the IOPD

The International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD) is an international network open to all cities, organisations and research centres interested in learning about, exchanging and applying experiences of participatory democracy at the local level. It was founded in 2001 within the framework of the European Commission's URB-AL program for decentralised cooperation and its official constitution was in November 2001 in Barcelona, during the 1st IOPD Conference. Also, since 2006 it has been part of the world organisation of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

About UCLG

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is an umbrella international organisation for cities, LRGs, and municipal associations throughout the world that is concerned with representing and defending the interests of local governments on the world stage.

Contents

Foreword

The world is still far off track from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with some targets experiencing regressions. Even for those making progress, a mere 12%, the current context of polycrises threatens significantly the full realisation of the "leaving no one behind" principle. **This results in inexcusably unjust impacts on historically marginalised populations, who feel excluded from decision-making at all levels.**

The 2023 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF): "Driving Transformation for Accelerated Implementation of the SDGs", held in New York from 10 to 19 July, **offered encouraging ways forward.** Advocacy efforts by the local constituency, gathered around the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (LRGs), built the case around **the commitment of LRGs to achieving the 2030 Agenda as indispensable political actors, with localisation at the core of transformative action**. LRGs are leading the global localisation movement **through a wide range of bottom-up, participatory and high-impact policies** that effectively accelerate the 2030 Agenda. They have claimed **SDG 11 as an indispensable accelerator of all SDGs** and as an opportunity to place urban and territorial equality at the heart of all actions aiming **to achieve the SDGs from a human rights perspective**, strengthening local public services to address inequalities, promoting innovation and fostering sustainability.

This bold stance resonated with the high-impact partners that were present at the top-level event. **A powerful political message on the urgency of promoting SDG localisation and multilevel governance was delivered by the UN Deputy Secretary General Aminah Mohammed**. Various stakeholders, including UN agencies, national governments, civil society organisations, and media, expressed a clear commitment to collaborate with LRGs in this endeavour. There was an increasingly **broader recognition of Voluntary Local Reviews and Voluntary Subnational Reviews as resolute, forward-looking processes that elevate the perspectives, needs and aspirations of local communities to the highest decision-making arenas.**

Now, in our efforts towards the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future, **we, as LRGs, will relentlessly defend our contribution to close the gap, as political actors and not mere implementers of top-down policies**. We will keep fostering transformative and urgent change at all levels to address the multidimensional roots of inequalities. **We will do so by developing a rights-centred, equality-driven new social contract based on justice, care, local democracy and genuine co-creation that leaves no one behind.**

For this, **we call on listening to the voices of local communities and enhance the participation and representation of all**, addressing accessibility barriers and intersecting structural discriminations, and striving to rebuild trust. This also requires upholding the role of culture, including intercultural dialogue, diversity and creativity, as a global public good that is essential in the push for SDG progress. Together, we need to fight for a renewed multilateral system centred on localisation, local democracy, participation, and strengthened local self-government,

to promote peace, unity and trust in our institutions. **Like the HLPF, the IOPD webinar on co-creation in the localisation of the SDGs, was a more than necessary space for LRGs to demonstrate their critical commitment and exchange on their best practices around local democracy, participation, and SDG achievement in the pursuit of a better future.**

I am positive that **this Policy Brief will be a critical contribution to achieving the SDGs and building a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world for all**. I am confident it will create new, strengthened spaces to place local democracy and participation at the heart of sustainable development efforts. I wish you a fulfilling and enlightening reading.

Anna Calvete Moreno
Research Officer
United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

Overview

On 5 July, 2023, the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD), with the support of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the City of Rio de Janeiro, facilitated "**Co-creation in the localisation of the SDGs: citizens and local governments co-creating solutions to localise the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs**", a virtual session with LRGs to exchange knowledge, experiences and best practices on citizen co-creation in localising the SDGs. **Rio de Janeiro, Yoff, Euskadi, Cuenca, São Paulo and Mezitli** were the six LRGs (LRGs) that shared their experiences in our webinar, which over 120 participants attended.

This virtual space for exchange is the second in a series of three webinars in preparation for the **IOPD Conference "Participatory Democracy for Diverse, Inclusive and Transparent Cities" which will take place in Rio de Janeiro from 6 to 8 November 2023.** In addition, **this session represented an important milestone in the framework of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)**, where UCLG's and the whole Global Taskforce of LRGs' mission was to represent in this global forum the needs and aspirations of local and regional communities and governments to advance towards the 2030 Agenda and other global agendas.

Methodology

The objective of the webinar was **to share examples of SDGs localisation through citizen engagement in co-creation practices and discuss what steps to take for making the goals as achievable as possible.** The IOPD promotes participatory democracy as an essential tool of LRGs governance in the design and implementation of public policies. In this sense, co-creation in SDGs localisation has been placed at the core of the IOPD's work as an unbeatable opportunity to achieve better solutions, strengthen communities, and build resilience in local cities and territories.

Through this virtual exchange session and this policy paper, the IOPD aims to **inspire and empower LRGs to actively involve their citizens in the localisation of the SDGs**, while giving the opportunity to co-creating an innovative governance framework that is meaningful and practical in the lives of citizens. The speakers of the session were:

- **Daniel Mancebo**, General Coordinator, Sub-Secretariat for Planning and Monitoring Results, Municipal Secretariat of Finance and Planning of Rio de Janeiro.
- **Seydina Issa Laye Samb**, Mayor of Yoff.

- **Asier Aranbarri**, Director of Social Innovation - General Secretary of Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda of Euskadi.
- **Felipe Ochoa**, Head of Cooperation and International Relations of Cuenca.
- **Gabriela Chabbouh**, Director of Training in Environmental Education and Culture of Peace - UMAPAZ, São Paulo.
- **Hurrem Betul Levent Erdal**, City and Regional Planner Strategy Development Manager of Mezitli.

This policy paper comprehensively analyses and compiles the experiences and knowledge shared by these local and regional leaders. The audiovisual recording of the session can be found on the IOPD YouTube channel (video available with contributions in original language without interpretation): <u>Webinar: Co-creation in the localisation of the SDGs</u>.

SDGs localisation to accelerate the 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda is a guide for global development programs until 2030. It was adopted in 2015 by the United Nations member states, who recognise that eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development[1]. **It delineates 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets to address a range of social needs**, such as food sovereignty, access to water and sanitation, climate, gender equality, and building sustainable cities and communities.

The 2030 Agenda implies a common and universal commitment. However, understanding that each member state and stakeholder faces specific challenges to achieve sustainable development, this global framework encourages the localisation of the goals based on their specific contexts, needs and aspirations of the communities. Moreover, **the Political Declaration of the 2019 SDG Summit recognises the critical role of LRGs in implementing and realising the SDGs**. Therefore, it calls for their support and empowerment.

SDG 11 "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable," highlights the fundamental role that LRGs play in accomplishing the 2030 Agenda[2]. This goal is a catalyst for **adopting a place-based approach towards sustainable development, putting at the forefront the need to build on the voices and experiences of local communities**, enhancing their participation and, thus, promoting a new social contract based on justice and local democracy.

SDGs localisation is the contribution of LRGs to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, it encompasses **the definition, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategies at the local and regional level, taking into account the specific contexts from an inclusive and diverse perspective**. This process also entails tracking progress towards the realisation of the goals and their impact in communities with indicators through Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs)[3,4].

VSRs and VLRs are **regarded as "policy tools for localising transformation,"[5] as they contribute to increasing transparency, accountability and ownership of the SDGs**. They are also a sign of the rising commitment of LRGs to this endeavour: as of 2023, there are a total of 240 VLRs available worldwide, representing 579 million inhabitants. Since 2020, 37 VSRs have been produced, representing 170,000 local governments and 1.4 billion inhabitants[6].

However, in 2023 more than halfway to the implementation goal, despite the steady increase in LRGs commitment to localising the SDGs, the world is at a crucial juncture in its pursuit of the SDGs. "Unfortunately, we are not on track," as Anna Calvete underscored in the webinar.

1. United Nations. (2015) Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda
2. UCLG. (2023). From local action to global impact: How localising SDG 11 empowers communities for sustainable transformation. https://powerofwe.uclg.org/new/from-local-action-to-global-impact-how-localising-sdg-11-empowers-communities-for-sustainable-transformation/
3. Global Taskforce of LRGs & UCLG. (2021). "Towards the localisation of the SDGs. Sustainable and Resilient Recovery Driven by Cities and Territories." https://bit.ly/3IWaTfE
4. UCLG GOLD. Lcalising the SDGs: a boost to monitoring & reporting: https://gold.uclg.org/report/localising-sdgs-boost-monitoring-reporting
5. Global Taskforce of LRGs & UCLG. (2023). LRGs' report to the 2023 HLPF: Towards the localisation of the SDGs. https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uploaded/hlpf_2023.pdf
6. Ibid.

As indicated in the UN Secretary-General's 2023[7] progress report on the SDGs, **only about 12% of the approximately 140 targets with available data are making satisfactory progress,** while **around 30% have either stalled or regressed below the baseline established in 2015**.

This presents a critical situation for sustainable development on a global scale, as inequalities are deepening directly impacting local communities. By 2022, 2.2 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water and 1.9 billion lack basic hygiene services. Estimates suggest that by 2030, approximately 575 million persons will continue to endure extreme poverty[8]. Since the beginning of the pandemic, 45% of women have experienced direct or indirect exposure to at least one form of violence[9].

Furthermore, **the engagement of LRGs in VNRs processes and coordination mechanisms has been progressing too slowly or has decreased in some regions**. From 2018 to 2022, their involvement increased from 43% to 48% and from 26% to 34%, respectively. The 7th report of the Global Taskforce (GTF) of LRGs to the HLPF shows how this trend has changed this year: **LRGs involvement in VNRs preparation has decreased to 39%** in countries whose reports had been published at the time of the launching of GTF's document.

LGAs and their members have identified several challenges in their efforts to localise the SDGs. Difficulties in accessing funding, limited coordination across different levels of governments, a shortage of human resources and capacities, insufficient support from national governments, and not enough engagement in national coordination and report mechanisms[10]. Additionally, they reported facing additional obstacles as geopolitical conflicts, ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and financial pressures.

As said by Anna Calvete: **"If national strategies and monitoring instruments do not include LRGs and the participatory, bottom-up perspective that they can offer as the level of government closer to the people, their material and spiritual needs, their dreams, their goals, then we will keep perpetuating a false sense of equality of opportunities and failing in the provision of the most basic services to all."** To reverse the persistent inequalities and set us back on track towards sustainable development, LRGs and their communities need an enabling environment to implement their transformative actions to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

7. United Nations General Assembly, 'Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet' (New York, 2023), https://bit.ly/3MNSpTP.
8. UN-Habitat, 'Priorities 2022–2023: Adequate Housing, Cities and Climate Change, and localising the Sustainable Development Goals' (Nairobi, 2022), https://bit.ly/42galef.
9. UN-Women, 'Measuring the Shadow Pandemic: Violence against Women during COVID-19', 2021, https://bit.ly/3O7HHFA.
10. UCLG. Learning Modules on localisation: https://learning.uclg.org/localising-the-sdgs/
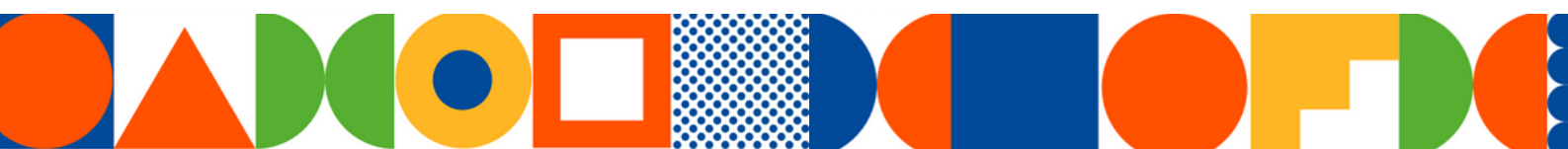
Co-creation in the SDGs localisation: Citizens and LRGs accelerating action towards the 2030 Agenda

Given the setbacks in the SDGs and the limitations LRGs face in getting involved in national mechanisms, it is essential to incorporate more inclusive and rights-based perspectives that only the local level can bring to the 2030 Agenda achievement. **Participatory and deliberative democracy practices championed by LRGs are an unbeatable opportunity to set us back on track and accelerate the pathway towards sustainable development, as they allow for an SDG localisation engaging the communities who have the potential to co-create bold and transformative action.**

Participatory and Deliberative Democracy (PDD) is the exercise of democracy beyond electing political representatives, it allows the co-creation, implementation and evaluation of policies by inhabitants. Therefore, it is not only the exercise of a political right, but also **the opportunity for policies to be more equitable, legitimate, and transformative**. At the same time, it enables a more inclusive and diverse environment for **reaching agreement and making decisions about vital and relevant issues for the communities.** Overall, PDD enables the **co-creation of an innovative** governance framework that is meaningful and practical in the lives of citizens.

For localising the SDGs, LRGs act through different institutional pathways to galvanise policies, programmes, planning, financing, organisational tools, processes, and arrangements. **These pathways reflect trajectories for transformative change, as they imply evolving material and discursive practices shaping decision-making towards collective action,** carrying out local multistakeholder partnerships[11] Furthermore, in the political declaration of the 2023 SDG Summit, UN member states committed to enhance global, regional, national and local partnerships for sustainable development, **engaging all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, private sector, academia and youth**.

Precisely, **one of the pathways towards the 2030 Agenda outlined in UCLG's GOLD VI Report is democratising**. From the voices of the LRGs representatives and experts who participated in IOPD's webinar, enhancing citizen co-creation for SDGs localisation through various PDD mechanisms brings about an array of benefits to address the challenges that perpetuate urban and territorial inequalities.

Reinforcing local awareness and interest in sustainable development brings the 2030 Agenda closer to the people, **fostering social responsibility for cultivating a sense of ownership, commitment and acceptance to the SDGs**. In parallel, **training municipal staff** in the SDGs can help LRGs to effectively localise the SDGs within their policies and programmes, complemented with **citizen participation mechanisms** to align them with people's needs, dreams and aspirations for a sustainable future.

The deep understanding of LRGs about the local contexts, together with community knowledge,

---

11. Adapted from UCLG. (2022) "GOLD VI: Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality. Addressing Inequalities through Local Transformation Strategies." https://bit.ly/436ETAg

enables the design and implementation of effective strategies, making significant progress in achieving these global goals at the local level. For example, in Rio de Janeiro, localising SDG 13 is a priority, since global warming is already affecting this city.

LRGs serve as key nodes and drivers for promoting a rights-based approach to development. When they advance **a series of innovations in participatory democracy, they have the potential to cater for broad communities whilst taking care of including historically marginalised sectors**. For example, the use of **online tools** can cover thousands of inhabitants, from intermediate cities as Cuenca to megalopolis as Sao Paulo. Complementing with face to face participatory democracy mechanisms by **going to the places where people are**, like considering schools as instrumental in planning to reach out children and their teachers and engaging them through games.

Co-creation in VLRs and VSRs realisation also has the potential to promote bottom-up, inclusive and participatory policymaking that is fully aligned with the Agenda 2030. For monitoring the successes and challenges of SDGs localisation, LRGs are leading transparency and accountability exercises through different mechanisms, like public audiences or live broadcasts through social and local media. For example, in Yoff, they hold these exercises every three months to share the project's development with the population and receive their feedback to know their main needs and worries. In this way, **inhabitants can take stock of their municipalities actions, building trust and legitimacy.**

Overall, **the collaboration and articulation fostered by LRGs that champion co-creation in the SDGs localisation supports the alignment of strategies and budgets across all levels of governments**. Collaborating with various actors, including government entities, civil society organisations, local communities, the private sector, and international organisations **forming and strengthening multistakeholder and multilevel partnerships**. Participants of the webinar shared their drive to foster international collaboration to better localise the SDGs via activities like learning sessions, international observatories, conferences, networking events, awards, and online knowledge repositories.

For addressing the urban and territorial inequalities that are hampering the achievement of the Agenda 2030, LRGs are leading co-creation in the localisation of the SDGs to make sure the needs and the dreams of present and future generations are advanced from the local level in this global commitment. **A revitalised global municipalist movement that embraces ambitious commitments, alternative visions, and bold strategies with the hand of communities can lead the way for more just and equal cities and territories.**

Best practices of co-creation in the SDGs localisation by LRGs

The following section will explore the participatory democracy innovations that LRGs participating in the session are implementing to include communities in the SDGs localisation, while fostering urban and territorial equality towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The Sustainable Development Plan is Rio de Janeiro's main instrument for SDGs localisation. It outlines 130 targets around five thematic areas addressing the most pressing issues for the city: peace and cooperation, equality and equity, longevity and wellbeing, climate change and resilience, and governance. Currently, Rio is very much affected by global warming and is also focusing on effective governance to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

The municipality has developed the **online platform *Participa.rio* to promote and facilitate citizen participation**. It has allowed the **involvement of 100,000 people in the localisation process**, as explained by Daniel Mancebo, General Coordinator of the Undersecretariat for Planning and Results Monitoring in the Municipal Secretariat for Finance and Planning.

This digital participation strategy is complemented with the use of **face-to-face tools and going to the places where people are**. In Rio de Janeiro, **schools have become instrumental spaces in planning and professors have become key actors to engage children and teenagers**. To leverage the participation of these commonly marginalised groups, the municipality is drawing from **democratic innovations like games, such as the Effective Mapping**, which was developed in collaboration with specialists.

Through Effective Mapping, **students can learn about the SDGs and share the future they want for their city**. Around **35 thousand people participated** in this process, which allowed the municipality to align the Sustainable Development Plan with their interests and needs.

The city is also implementing **awareness-raising campaigns** through brochures to spread the knowledge about the SDGs and bring the 2030 Agenda closer to the citizens and that it makes sense in their daily lives. This has been **an opportunity for the municipality to learn lessons of social participation and diversify the ways of engagement**, using simple language and collaboration approaches to city's planning.

Monitoring of the 2030 Agenda is a fundamental part of the local work. Rio de Janeiro has been following the guidelines published in 2021. **The second VLR has helped strengthen public policy participation.**

Rio de Janeiro's local efforts have unfolded with an **international collaboration perspective**: they are drawing from **multilevel partnerships and city-to-city collaborations**. They have partnered with international organisations like C40 and UN Habitat and organised events around sustainable development with Paris.

Yoff, Dakar, Senegal

The Mayor of **Yoff**, **Seydina Issa Laye Samb**, shared his experience of citizen co-creation in the localisation of the SDGs: the 7 Keys Agenda. This instrument defines seven cultural policies to address the priorities of the locality to preserve and promote their Lebou heritage in line with the SDGs. The co-creation process was carried out in collaboration with UCLG's Culture Committee and ENDA ECOPOP (Spaces of Co-production of Popular Offers for the Environment and Development in Africa). **UCLG's Culture Committee advances culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development in cooperation with LRGs and their networks.**

The co-creation process involved an **awareness campaign**, presenting the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs to the participants. **Different sectors participated**, such as the municipal team, cultural players, civil society, traditional and religious authorities and the local press, who had an important role in sharing the awareness campaign. This community developed a cultural **mapping through discussions and exchanges on Lebou cultural and religious heritage**, which also allowed a collective identification of gaps towards sustainable development.

The outcome of the participatory exercise is the definition of **the 7 Keys Agenda, which reflects the preoccupations of the community and its vision to ensure a cultural legacy for future generations**. This experience focused on localising SDG16: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."

Monitoring and reporting processes were also fundamental to take care of transparency and accountability. Every three months, **live broadcasts from social media and local television stations** were developed to share the development of the local projects with the population and collect their grievances. This process helped **build trust** within the communities.

From this experience, **the municipality learnt the importance of promoting the values of citizen participation** with mechanisms they have developed: public hearings in the neighbourhoods, a permanent weekly listening system called Open Tuesdays; setting up SUNU GOXX, a digital municipal communication network, and a dynamic partnership with community radio stations.
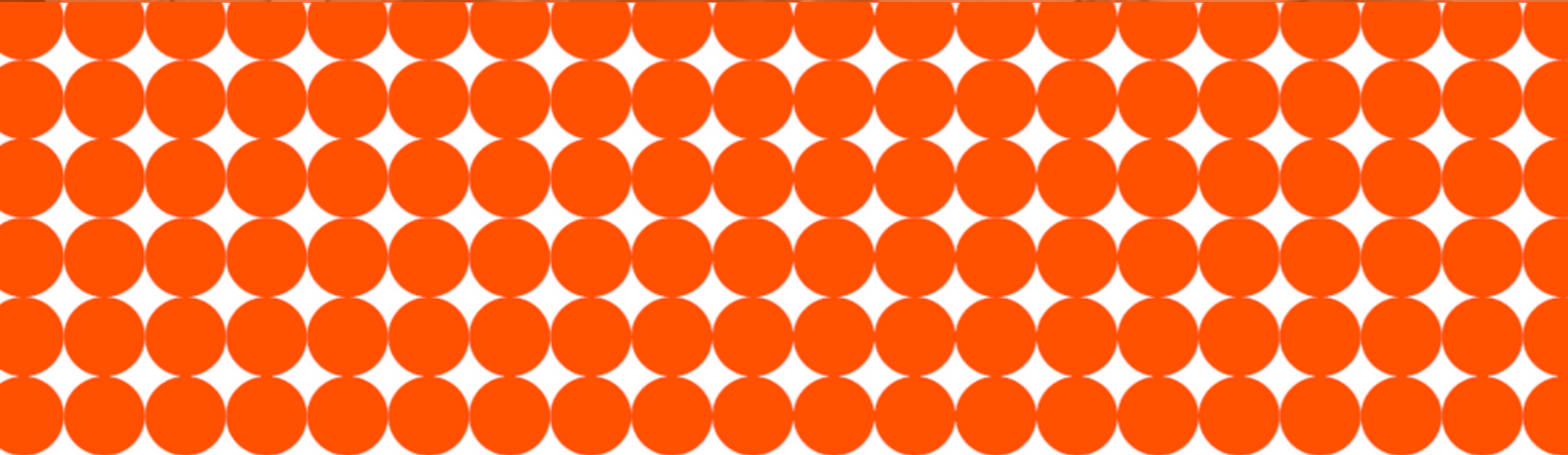
Basque Country, Spain

Asier Aranbarri, Director of Social Innovation of the General Secretariat of Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda in the **Basque Country**, underscored that their main goal is **making sure the 2030 Agenda is a transformative tool by following a new way of doing things**. Furthermore, the objective is to assure a strategic implementation of the SDGs.

The Basque Country outlined an "infrastructure," which is **a forum of multilevel governance to align the the Agenda 2030 and finances across three levels of government**: Regional (Basque Country's government), Supra-local (three historical territories and twenty counties) and Local (252 municipalities). This model draws on **alliances with more than 80 ecological, social and cultural stakeholders and civil society organisations**. This alliance is fundamental, including an urban agenda group, social healthcare, trans, gender, and digital transformation groups to make sure everyones is included in decision making.

As an innovation, the government created **SDG 18: "Basque culture development and sustainability."** The objective is to **make citizens feel identified with the agenda**, contributing to the goals. For this, a platform was created, defining a common work space to **raise awareness and allow for larger contributions**. This initiative brings on board **reference institutions and new actors**, such as universities. The Basque Culinary University, a regional centre for gastronomy, is working on the development of projects to contribute to the SDGs. Similarly, higher studies programmes on the SDGs have been introduced in three Basque universities.

The experience of the Basque Country is an example of the **VSRs as drivers of citizen participation and effective multilevel governance**. Young people have been engaged and this report will be developed with other levels of government and civil society. Additionally, the government has embraced an **"important international vocation:"** currently they are sharing the Bilbao UN Agenda worldwide. **"We need to multiply our efforts to achieve the goals",** Asier Aranbarri made clear that accelerated action towards the 2030 Agenda is a collaborative effort that starts from LRGs.
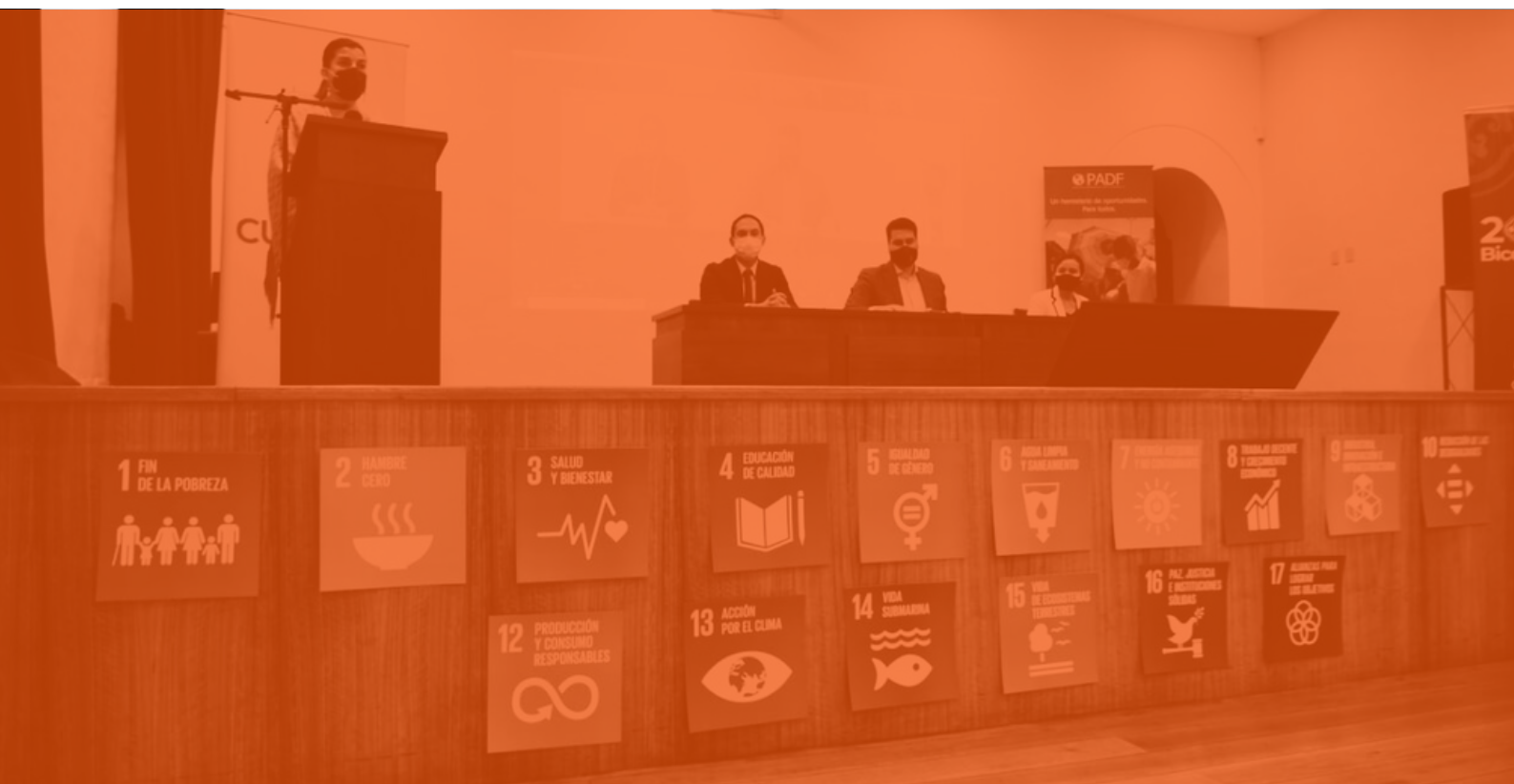
Cuenca, Ecuador

Cuenca has a **track record of more than 20 years in promoting sustainable development** through high-impact local policies, as recounted by **Felipe Ochoa**, Head of Cooperation and International Relations. This achievement has earned this intermediate city of 60,000 inhabitants, to be **selected in 2021 as part of UCLG's Local4Action HUBs programme with the initiative "Localisation of SDGs in the framework of a new normality post COVID."**

The municipality has generated innovative, multisectoral, and multiactor initiatives to address inequalities challenges in line with the global agendas. It has been **"a custodian of international commitments to tackle global challenges from a local perspective"**[12]. In 2015 it was the host of the thematic Conference prior to Habitat III: Intermediary Cities. In 2016, the city was recognised with the Global Green City award for the Green Belt project at the Habitat III International meeting. By 2019, the Municipal Open Government of Cuenca had 223 projects aligned to the SDGs.

To continue and reinforce its commitment to the SDGs, the municipality of Cuenca promoted a training and knowledge sharing experience. The objective of the **virtual course "Introduction to localising the SDGs" is to "territorialise the SDGs"** making this global agenda to go in line with the citizens so they could know why LRGs are key actors in this process.

The course covers five areas: introduction to SDGs, awareness, advocacy and dialogue for the SDG localization, localisation and alignment of plans and projects, elaboration of VSRs and VLRs. **The participatory process includes different actors fundamental to territorial development**:

---

12. See UCLG Local 4 Action HUBs: https://local4actionhubs.uclg.org/

municipal officials, NGOs, companies and businesses, and university students. A total of 400 people participated. Among them, 23 people took part in the "trainer of trainers" process. More than 280 municipal civil servants, 50 university students, and more than 30 companies trained in the private sector. The project also involved **city-to-city cooperation**: two national replication trainings were also developed with the Municipality of Ambato and the Municipal Government of the canton of Mira.

The main lessons learnt are: the importance of training different actors of the city for sustainable development, **the fundamental role of local governments as articulators**, the need to strengthen technical capacities of civil servants and local partners to promote the commitment to the 2030 and how orderly territorial planning linked to SDGs ensures balanced territorial development and improves the quality of life of citizens.

Mezitli, Turkey

Since 2015, this city is promoting the **Women's Producer Market, an integral experience of co-creation in localising the Agenda 2030 as it directly addresses several SDGs:** 3 "Good Health and Well-being", 5 "Gender Equality", 10 "Reduced inequalities", 11 "Sustainable cities and communities" and 12 "Responsible consumption and production".

As explained by Hurrem Betul Levent Erdal, City and Regional Planner Strategy Development Manager from the Mezitli Municipality, **this project promotes women's empowerment** as it is run entirely by women producers, who have **access to employment opportunities** and develop their real autonomy. In this space, 650 local producers from Mezitli have the opportunity to sell their local products.

The Women's Producer Market is complemented with the **Biodegradable Waste Management project**. Its aim is **to develop a sustainable and healthy food cycle in the city**. A group of 200 citizen volunteers are in charge of collecting the fruit and vegetable wastes from 19 bazaars and fields of the municipality. Then, this waste is blended and transformed into compost.

This initiative **encourages the inclusion of a diverse group of citizens**. Retirees and women make up the majority of the group of volunteers who participate in waste collection in the same market place every week. They also count on volunteers from different social and demographic parts of the city: professors, migrant population, entrepreneurs, housewives, mums, youths, kids with parents or grandparents.

Mezitli's experience is an **outstanding municipal example of an equality and whole-of-society approach to sustainable development**. At the same time, it **consolidates a participatory democracy ecosystem** through the implementation and use of various mechanisms and projects to promote an active engagement of the citizenry with the 2030 Agenda.

São Paulo, Brazil

In this city, **the SDGs Municipal Committee was created in 2020 as the governance mechanism for driving citizen participation and co-creation for the 2030 Agenda**. As explained by Gabriela Chabbouh, Director of Training in Environmental Education and Culture of Peace, **to advance SDG 17 "Partnerships for the goals", the SDG Committee is formed by eight public authorities and 16 representatives** from different sectors: the organised civil society, the private initiative and the academia. It has two periods of actuation from 2020 to 2022, and from 2022 to 2024.

This **SDGs Municipal Committee is organised in seven thematic chambers around the SDGs with more than 120 members**: Environmental Chamber, Economic Chamber, Educational Chamber, Institutional Strengthening Chamber, Health and Welfare Chamber, Social Chamber and Urban Chamber. These have **contributed with 8,606 proposals in the Public Consultation organised through the online participation platform *Participe+*.**

Furthermore, another strategy of the city is the **co-creation of a communication plan to disseminate the Municipal 2030 Agenda.** They have facilitated **workshops involving varied audiences**: from experts to lay public to communicate in a clear language. **The event "Virada ODS" (ODS Turnaround) complements this communication plan by raising awareness and civic engagement** towards the major transformations to build a more sustainable future. This event is focused on addressing different local hardships: combating racism and xenophobia, climate change, accessibility and inclusion, people living in street situations and training on SDGs.

These participatory mechanisms are supporting the integration of the global agenda in the local plans, while they are also allowing the training and involvement of commonly marginalised communities. "Virada ODS" was an opportunity for the city to facilitate a workshop on **environmental education for students**, whose outcomes are integrated into the municipal plan designed by the Secretariat of environment. This plan is reinforced with a long-term approach and it stands out as the first local action plan to develop a process of localisation of the 2030 Agenda.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Through the contributions of the speakers and the debate that took place in the webinar session, a series of policy recommendations are proposed and summarised for LRGs, as well as for advocating to national governments and international organisations:

- **Awareness raising and dissemination of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda:** Promoting understanding of the SDGs empowers citizens, strengthens communities and creates a shared sense of responsibility and commitment to the 2030 Agenda. Informed citizens and stakeholders are more likely to take action, participate in decision-making processes, and hold institutions accountable.

- **Inclusive policy development:** Special attention must be paid to traditional marginalised communities: LRGs must ensure that all voices are included through democratic innovations and leveraging face-to-face tools. This approach addresses territorial and urban inequalities, contributing to accelerate the Agenda 2030.

- **Incorporating local experiences:** Adopting overarching instruments which define local targets to advance the SDGs, emphasising thematic areas aligned with local priorities. Strategic local

planning and implementation of the Agenda 2030 helps strengthen communities and build resilience against various challenges, including the ecological crisis, economic crises, and social disparities.

- **Funding and resource allocation:** With adequate and sufficient funds, LRGs can develop local plans that align with the specific needs of their communities and the most pressing local challenges that require immediate and accelerated action. At the same time, it facilitates collaboration with stakeholders, including NGOs, businesses, and academia.

- **Fostering effective multilevel governance and alliances:** Enhancing coordination across levels of governments strengthens the engagement of LRGs in the Agenda 2030 process. Encouraging strategic partnerships with international organisations for local impact promotes knowledge exchange, resource sharing and global outreach of best practices.

- **Promoting monitoring and reporting processes:** As learnt, VSRs and VLRs are powerful drivers of participatory democracy. They hold LRGs accountable, building trust within communities, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring transparency and openness. Keeping track of the SDGs at the local level, enables continuous citizen engagement in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of sustainable development efforts at the local and subnational levels.

- **Advancing SDG17 to contribute to effective co-creation in the localisation of the 2030 Agenda:** SDG 17 encourages global partnerships. Local governments can benefit from city-to-city collaboration and international networks to gain insights, and share experiences. Global collaboration can amplify the voices of local communities, ensuring that their needs and priorities are heard on the global stage, thus influencing the broader SDG agenda.

✚ Know more

- **International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD).** https://oidp.net/en/
- **Local4Action HUBs by UCLG.** https://local4actionhubs.uclg.org/
- **UCLG Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralisation.** https://www.gold.uclg.org/

⬡ Resources

- Global Taskforce of LRGs & UCLG. (2021). "Towards the localisation of the SDGs. Sustainable and Resilient Recovery Driven by Cities and Territories." https://bit.ly/3IWaTfE

- Global Taskforce of LRGs & UCLG. (2023). LRGs' report to the 2023 HLPF: Towards the localisation of the SDGs. https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uploaded/hlpf_2023.pdf

- ICLEI. (2021). Tackling SDG localisation sideways in Africa's cities. https://riseafrica.iclei.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Tackling-SDG-localisation-sideways-in-Africa%E2%80%99s-cities_final.pdf

- UCLG. Learning Modules on localisation. https://learning.uclg.org/localising-the-sdgs/

- UCLG. Local 4 Action HUBs. https://local4actionhubs.uclg.org/

- UCLG GOLD. Lcalising the SDGs: a boost to monitoring & reporting: https://gold.uclg.org/report/localising-sdgs-boost-monitoring-reporting

- UCLG. (2023). From local action to global impact: How localising SDG 11 empowers communities for sustainable transformation. https://powerofwe.uclg.org/new/from-local-action-to-global-impact-how-localising-sdg-11-empowers-communities-for-sustainable-transformation/

- United Nations. 17 Goals to Transform Our World. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/

- United Nations. (2015) Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda