

Snapshot of a Global Forum project in **Colombia, Kosovo, the Philippines and Tanzania**

City Movers: Digital Data Dashboards enabling Municipalities to track progress towards Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)

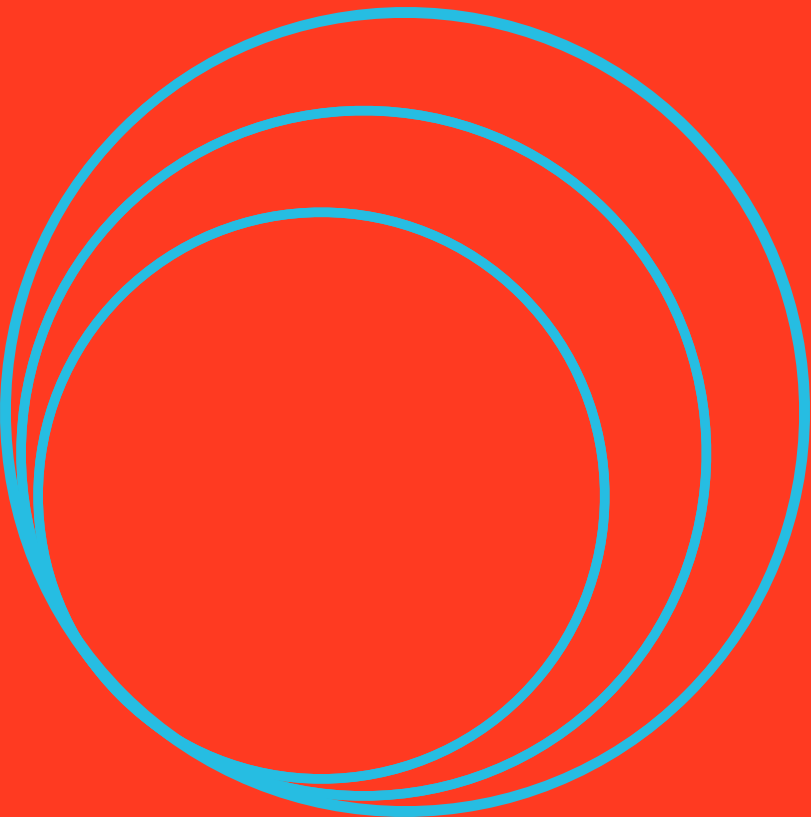


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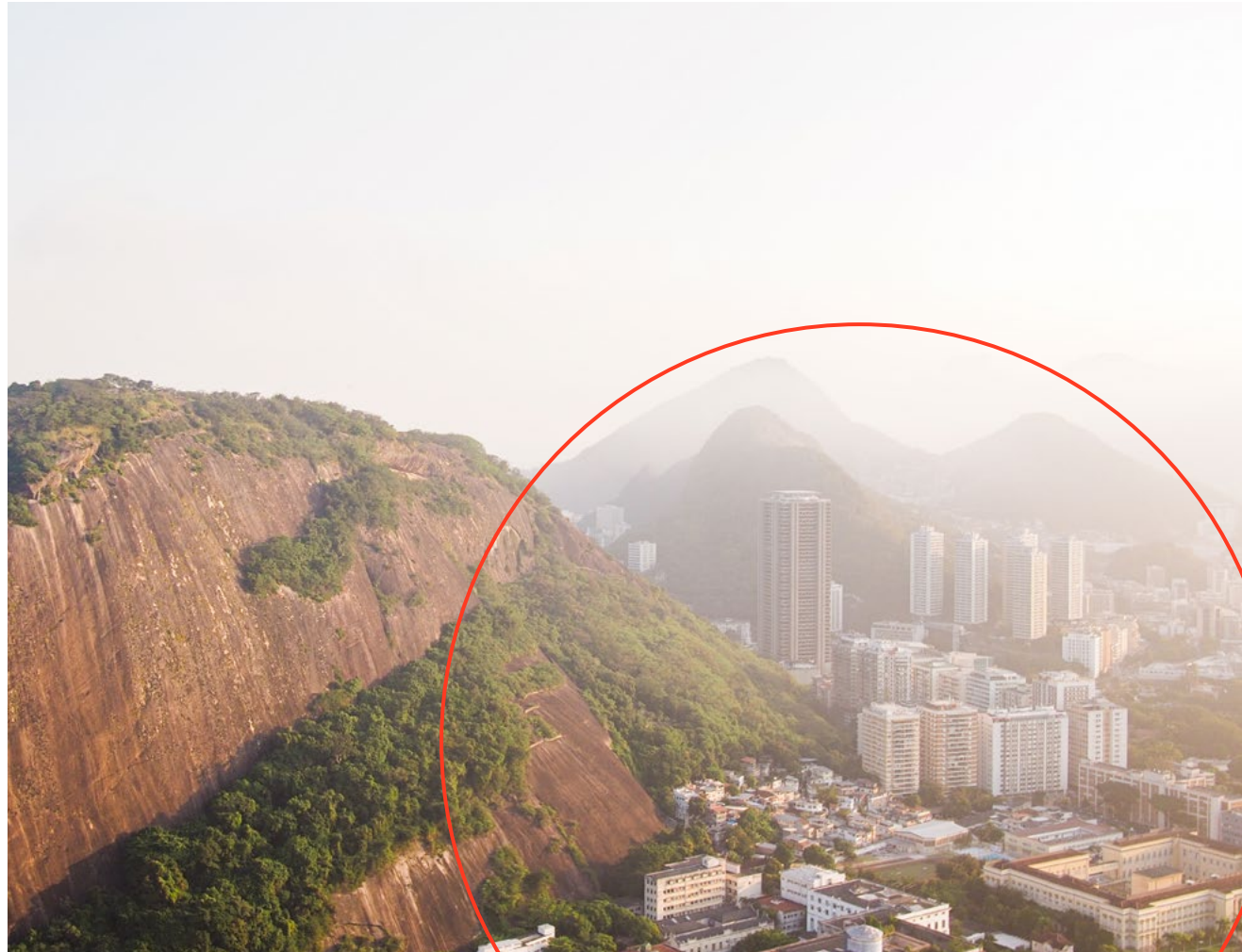
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About the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies

The Global Forum is a network that connects the knowledge and experience of multi-stakeholder advisory commissions, councils and similar bodies for sustainable development. These bodies contribute to the national institutional architectures for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By bridging knowledge and interests of various stakeholder groups, multi-stakeholder advisory bodies foster social acceptance and cohesion within society in times of transformation. Constant exchange across its members creates a rich marketplace of ideas about how to deliver the 2030 Agenda. With its rich pool of collective knowledge, the forum effectively invites stakeholders and governments around the globe to adapt, implement and jointly accelerate the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.



Foreword

Delivery of the 2030 Agenda is concrete and requires decisive action by people at the local level. More than half of the world's population lives in urban areas, a share expected to rise to 70 percent until 2050. Urban planning and administration face huge challenges in securing communal wellbeing, resilience, and sustainable development. Cities are at the forefront of local implementation efforts as municipal decision makers work closest with the citizens whose lives will be affected by sustainable development. The United Nations 2030 Agenda and the SDGs incorporate the principle of bottom-up implementation according to which countries as well as sub-national entities are encouraged to set their own targets for SDG implementation, monitor progress, and report on their achievements. Around the world, city governments and community organizations are championing locally SDG-related actions and initiatives. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs, more than 70 cities worldwide have reported their results directly to the United Nations (UN) through Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs): locally crafted, data-based reports that showcase success stories of SDG progress and outline areas for further action.



The partners involved

The ↘International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is one of the world's leading centers of research and innovation for sustainable development. IISD provides the ↘tracking progress tool, a website template enabling communities to develop local data dashboards tracking sustainable development and wellbeing. IISD coordinated the activities of this working group in Colombia, Kosovo, Philippines, and Tanzania.



In **Colombia**, ↘Pereira Cómo Vamos (PCV) is a citizen initiative combining academia and the private sector to monitor and evaluate the quality of life in the City of Pereira. In partnership with the mayor's office of the City of Pereira and the ↘Stockholm Environmental Institute (SEI) Latin America all partners implemented the ↘tracking-progress website for the City of Pereira and drafted a Voluntary Local Review (VLR) on the City's contribution to the SDGs for the High-Level Political Forum in New York, 2022.



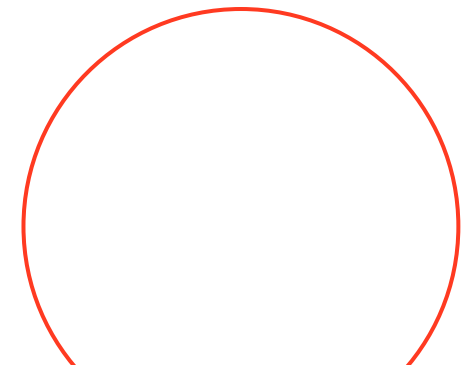
The ↘Institute for Development Policy (INDEP) is a think tank and an advocacy center that provides independent research-based policy solutions in **Kosovo**. The institute is also a member of the Sustainable Development Council in Kosovo and pursues campaigns and activities for SDG implementation at communal level in Kosovo and jointly with the ↘Drenas Municipality delivered a ↘tracking-progress website for the City of Drenas.



In the **Philippines**, the ↘Jaime V. Ongpin Foundation, Inc. (JVOFI) is a leading NGO in Northern Philippines that aims at mobilizing partnerships towards self-reliant and resilient communities and sustainable development. JVOFI's initiatives focus on ecological enhancement, enterprise development, institutional strengthening, and resource generation and management. Together with the ↘City Government of Baguio they developed a ↘tracking-progress website for the City of Baguio and are ready to draft a VLR report for the city.



In **Tanzania**, the ↘Tanzania Data Lab (dLab) targets solutions for local, regional, and global sustainable development challenges through harnessing the potential of data and innovation. dLab together with the mayor's office in Tanga City aimed on developing a ↘tracking-progress website for the City of Tanga. Due to local changes in government, the overall project is not yet completed, as VLRs and tracking-progress websites require the political buy-in of decision makers.



Behind the scenes: the tracking-progress website project

With the project “City Movers: Digital Tracking-Platforms for Municipalities, towards Voluntary National Reviews (VLRs)”, piloted in 2021, Global Forum network members, together with local governments championed defining local targets, taking local action, and using local disaggregated data to monitor progress. To this end, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) has worked in partnership with municipal governments and Global Forum member organizations to advance urban sustainable development through tracking-progress in the context of the SDGs in the above mentioned four project areas, namely Pereira (Colombia), Drenas (Kosovo), Baguio (Philippines) and Tanga (Tanzania).

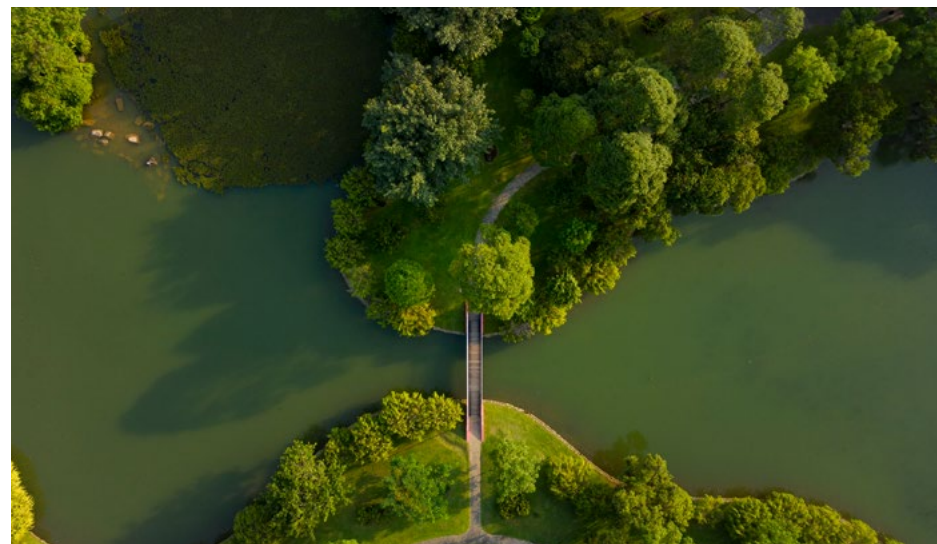


The project aimed to support municipalities in strategizing and tracking progress towards the SDGs in their communities using local data to engage citizens, track SDG progress, and inform decision making towards community wellbeing and sustainable development. As the main outcome, the communities established the digital data dashboards for the cities of ↘Drenas (Kosovo), ↘Baguio (Philippines), ↘Pereira (Colombia), and ↘Tanga (Tanzania). These activities sought to encourage the creation of partnerships to implement a concerted, data-driven approach to continuously track progress on local sustainable development in the context of the 2030 Agenda, its seventeen SDGs and six transformation areas. This work enabled several partners to embark on drafting a Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and to engage in worldwide peer exchange at the High-Level Political Forum in New York.

These pilot measures in four cities illustrated how local communities around the globe can utilize digital reporting on the SDGs to strategize sustainable development in their communities. To accomplish this objective, the implementing organizations:

- Established round tables including stakeholders in the communities.
- Engaged and strategized for sustainable communities;
- Provided series of virtual training workshops in data communication; and
- Developed community indicator platforms in the form of locally developed, data-based websites.

Beyond this and with the support of SEI, the City of Pereira drafted a Voluntary Local Review (VLR), based on their tracking progress website to be presented at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July 2022.



Why community indicator systems?

To implement the globally shared framework of objectives set forth in the 2030 Agenda, it is essential for stakeholders to collaboratively engage in localizing the SDGs, including the definition, implementation, and monitoring of SDG-related strategies at local level. To achieve these goals, community indicator systems (CIS) can be used to track progress on local sustainable development in the context of the SDGs. Cities can take local leadership for sustainable development by advancing SDG localization and the use of local, disaggregated data for the purpose of tracking progress. This in turn empowers local action towards structural change proceeding from the roots of key challenges and development gaps. Beyond the opportunity of reporting and sharing local SDG progress at multiple levels, the process of developing VLRs engenders local momentum for holistic and participatory decision making towards community wellbeing, resilience, and sustainable development.

What did we do?

Creating community data dashboards

The implementing organizations jointly realized online data dashboards for community indicator visualization and tracking in each of the four project areas. The set-up of the community indicator platforms proceeded in close cooperation with IISD using IISD's Tracking Progress tool. In several training modules, IISD's team delivered the know-how on content development and data processing for setting up the online data platform.

➤ IISD's Tracking Progress tool is a template for CIS that community partners can adapt to display data and indicators on issues that matter to their community. The tool offers a customizable data dashboard that to share key indicators on community wellbeing and the SDGs as charts, maps, and graphs. This platform was designed as an open data system for improving data availability, measurement and reporting to inform decision making and local engagement. In the context of the project "City Movers towards VLRs – Digital Tracking-Platforms for Municipalities", the implementing partners customized their themes and indicators to reflect local SDG priorities. Thereby, communities will be enabled to make substantive progress on SDG priorities and to easily translate the data into local reports and present VLRs to the international peer community.

PEREIRA – 7 THEMATIC SETS, 55 INDICATORS, 1 VLR

The City of Pereira pursues a broad and cross-sectoral approach in its sustainability policy. The implementing organizations jointly conducted the steps towards realizing the community data dashboard, including a thorough review of the indicators provided by Pereira Como Vamos (PCV). Proceeding from the PCV database, the partners selected indicators based on relevance, value added through their visualization, and availability of relative data instead of only absolute data. In addition to the data provided in the PCV database, the implementing partners screened PCV's annually citizen surveys and a report on the quality of life, which combine data from numerous municipal and regional governmental institutions. The mapping of the indicators to the SDGs was done by SEI Latin America Staff, who provided the field related expertise and experience. To improve the accessibility of the CIS, the implementing partners created tabs in the platform for further information on how to use the platform, which organizations developed it, and who is the source of the indicators. The website provides guidance on searching indicators on the website using the visualization tools, understanding the four different visualization types (pie charts, line charts, bar charts, and maps.), downloading the data, and identifying the related SDG targets associated to each indicator.



Multi-stakeholder partnerships

The creation of community data dashboards inspired multi-stakeholder partnerships, between civil society organisations and governmental institutions. The partnerships opened new spaces for institutional dialogue towards advancing the 2030 Agenda and for mutual SDG action:

BAGUIO – 13 THEMATIC SETS, 203 INDICATORS

In the **Philippines**, the implementing organization JVOFI together with Baguio City, in particular the Planning and Development Office, set up a Technical Working Group to identify the prioritized SDG indicators and the data to be included in the data dashboard. The identification of a total of 203 indicators led to the participation of over twenty City Offices in the data uploading and validation process. This partnership enabled the public sector to create ownership for the project laying the foundation for the strong political support and approval of the community indicator platform and its public dissemination in spring 2022.

DRENAS – 15 THEMATIC SETS, 57 INDICATORS

In **Kosovo**, the implementing partner INDEP and the Municipality of Drenas signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in May 2022 for the purpose of joining forces to maintain and continue technical support to the community indicator platform after its launch. Not only has this made the platform the only comprehensive, virtual information tool on SDG progress for the citizens of Drenas, but also awarded it with legitimacy and trustworthiness for identifying problems within the city and addressing them within evidence-based and participatory policy making processes.



Reaching out

Once local indicators were identified, measured, and visualized through the accessible online platforms, the implementing partners tackled the strategic communication towards the respective communities and local leaders which included the development of a communication plan in close cooperation with their municipal partners. IISD shared their experiences with the local implementing organizations during online trainings including practical recommendations for strategic communication plans, media relations, social media, in-person events, and the use of multi-media formats. The implementing organizations in the four project areas presented their community data dashboards to the municipal governments with the intention to achieve political endorsement. In Baguio, for instance, the website was publicly launched after receiving approval from the official administration and the launch was led by the Public Information Office in Spring 2022. This enhanced the transparency of the local government's sustainability policy on the one hand and vested the platform with legitimacy and authority on the other hand.

Developing Voluntary Local Reviews

Community indicator dashboards not only make data on SDG progress accessible, they also support the creation of data-driven reports and success stories for communication with citizens and decision makers. The project ultimately afforded the opportunity for municipal partners to develop Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) in cooperation with their local implementing partners. This serves to support citizen engagement by providing access to information about local sustainability and territorial development. In addition, VLRs provide the opportunity to share their SDG progress with peer communities within the scope of their own countries as well as internationally.

In **Pereira**, the project strengthened the municipal government by facilitating strategic partnerships to foster sustainability and data collection. In 2022, the city developed its first VLR focusing on progress towards the four goals and their targets that were prioritized at the 2022 HLPF: quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), life on land (SDG 15), and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17). The project has demonstrated the importance of implementing, monitoring, and reporting on the 2030 Agenda with the help of citizen data and accessible tracking platforms. Based on the latter, municipalities can easily draft their VLRs as data is already available and sorted and can follow up on the SDG progress by adding new indicators or themes to the platform. Thereby, cities can serve as success stories for other cities within and across the borders of their country.

The development of VLRs allow people in the city to access consultative processes and oversight. This enables citizens to, first, know their territory and living environment, and second, to discuss which areas are of highest importance to achieve progress towards realizing the 2030 Agenda.

MARIO CÁRDENAS, SEI LATIN AMERICA, [↘ IN VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEWS \(VLRs\)](#)



At the 2022 HLPF, RNE and SEI Latin America partnered to co-host a Side Event on VLRs' connection to national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The event offered a platform for global municipal peer-exchange and served

to present of the VLRs of the City of Pereira and the ↘City of Bonn. With the aim of fostering global exchange between municipalities with the intention of drafting VLRs, RNE and SEI Latin America produced a ↘short movie on the making-of Voluntary Local Reviews in Pereira and Bonn.

The City of Bonn adopted a sustainability strategy in 2019 with concrete references to the 2030 Agenda that enabled data-based reporting and SDG progress tracking alongside dialogues on local and national solutions for sustainable development. At the 2022 HLPF, the City of Bonn presented its second VLR on the local implementation of the SDGs focusing on nine fields of action for municipal sustainability, all of which were identified and measured during a process that included citizen involvement through public participatory processes.

Reflections and lessons learned

Good practices that contributed to the project's success

Reaching across society: The implementing organizations experienced the preparation process of the community data dashboard itself as the actual project achievement. This process is often the first step towards the activation of making the SDG progress measurable and visible through the local integration of citizen and municipal knowledge and action. The cross-linkage through different actors of society is what is considered as the quintessential value added by the project.

When talking about SDG localization, the main achievement is in reaching citizens directly. Local authorities and municipalities are governmental institution that engage in closer interactions with citizens, who are eventually the beneficiaries of transformation towards sustainable development processes and goals.

VLR MOVIE, RICARDO ROJAS, DIRECTOR PCV,
↘ IN VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEWS (VLRs)

Informing local action and policymaking: Providing political decision-makers, civil society, and the public with information about the city's contribution to the accomplishment of the 2030 Agenda helps all stakeholders to determine needs and gaps, and to identify possible partnerships to address these. This paves the way for further joint action towards implementing the 2030 Agenda, and for promoting governance accountability and transparency.

Challenges encountered

Data accessibility: In several of the project areas, the implementing organizations faced challenges with regards to gathering and arranging data, often located in different sources, and not evidently linked to the SDGs. Therefore, the data needs to be subjected to careful and suitable accuracy checks, which sometimes can be subject to delays and personnel matters on the side of the municipalities.

Lacking long-term political commitment: The implementing organization in Tanzania experienced difficulties in generating political will and a lack of interest in the realization of the community data dashboards. On the side of the municipality, concerns with regards to transparency were raised. This is the main explanation of the stagnancy in the implementation process.

Outlook

The identification of local indicators, their measurement, and visualization through an accessible online platform, can be an effective first step to gather stakeholders for monitoring and strategic planning of sustainable communal policymaking. For instance, implementing partners in Baguio (Philippines) are envisaging to take the implementation of data-based local SDG indicators from the municipal to the regional level as well as to other municipalities.

Owing to their cross-cutting function, SDG advisory bodies can facilitate dialogues across municipalities about what works best and create connections of local SDG implementation with national stakeholders for the delivery of the 2030 Agenda.

The implementation in the project areas has demonstrated outstanding potential for generating local and national political buy-in for VLRs. To realize this potential, several members of the Global Forum have initiated in 2022 a Community of Practice (CoP) addressing VLRs as drivers for localizing SDGs and informing Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

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