

Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development 2023

Presentation Notes

Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Role of Voluntary Local Reviews in the Latin America and Caribbean Region

Thursday April 27, 2023

Using the guiding questions I will organize the presentation into subtopics explaining the localization process in planning, monitoring and evaluation and reporting and effective stakeholder engagement as an enabler of SDG localization.

Preamble

- I. Jamaica defines localization as the process of translating national development at the local level through a mechanism of participatory engagement and action that is indicative of the whole of society approach adopted for the implementation of Vision 2030 Jamaica - National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This approach ensures coherence in policy and programming to achieve our national development objectives and ensures that development gains are sustained through ownership. It also ensures that the results of development are reflected in, and positively impact the lives of our citizens.
- II. SDG localization is a priority for Jamaica and has been since we adopted the SDGs in 2015. Jamaica, in partnership with the UNDP, in 2017, implemented a programme of localization to support capacity building, broad-based participation and institutional strengthening to enable alignment of the SDGs with Vision 2030 Jamaica as a means of advancing the overall implementation, monitoring and reporting on the 2030 Agenda. The project therefore strengthened the institutional mechanisms for monitoring and oversight of SDG implementation, facilitated the execution of a broad stakeholder engagement and awareness campaign and provided training on data quality and standards for MDAs that were engaged in producing data for the SDG indicator framework.
- III. Subsequently, we implemented the “Advancing the SDGs through Vision 2030 Jamaica Project” with a “Parish Talk” component that engaged local authorities on aligning local sustainable development plans to Vision 2030 Jamaica and the SDGs, and continued the communication campaign through engagement of schools, communities and local level institutions as a means of demystifying the SDGs, by explaining its importance, the role of local level actors and its benefits for local development.
- IV. We also utilize targeted engagements on an ongoing basis for specific stakeholder groups such as private sector, youth, and civil society bodies to explain the importance of the SDGs and on subjects such as corporate social responsibility and how they can contribute to achieving the goals.
- V. There is also consistent dialogue and engagement that facilitates local actors in the process of planning and defining national level priorities. Through coordination, relationships are built with stakeholders at each level to facilitate continuous dialogue

around achieving the SDGs as well consultations that enable participation in planning, policy development and programme delivery.

- VI. The evaluation exercise for the “Parish Talk” initiative, which includes capacity building for local authorities; demonstrated that there is a need to deepen engagement at this level and to design interventions that target both local authorities and their partners, provide more information and training on alignment of local and national level planning with greater focus on specific areas of planning, implementation, and development performance at national and local levels, and expand the modalities for delivery including the utilization of workshops, increase the duration of the sessions; and present simpler or more parish specific information.
- VII. The Voluntary National Review Process 2022 was utilized to further assess the extent to which our localization efforts have facilitated mainstreaming and translating national level priorities at the local level and identify recommendations to strengthen local action and alignment with the SDGs and Vision 2030 Jamaica. This was done through the production of a thematic report on SDG localization, which provided insights on the gaps to be addressed in local level strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation which are critical to the production of VLRs. It also provided an indication of the level of awareness and participation of local level actors and their capacity to implement and monitor the SDGs. The recommendations emanating from the VNR process serve to improve coordination and mobilization at the local level, which are necessary to lay the foundation of a solid VLR.

Planning:

- VIII. The Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan (NDP) and its Medium-Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF) provide the overarching framework that enables coherence in policy and programming at the national and local levels toward achieving the SDGs. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has overall policy, administrative, coordination and oversight responsibility for local sustainable development planning through the local government authorities. There is complementarity between the local sustainable development plans and the MTF as well as the sector plans of Vision 2030 Jamaica all of which are aligned to the SDGs and act as the vehicle for its implementation at the national and subnational levels and across sectors.
- IX. From the process we have learnt that there is need to establish mechanisms to promote greater coherence between national and local development through both dialogue and practise ensuring that there is agility in the process to respond to the dynamics and complexities of local and national level development processes. Emphasis has therefore been placed on capacity building toward further mainstreaming of national development into Local Sustainable Development Plans (LSDPs) and sensitizing local level stakeholders to Vision 2030 Jamaica and the SDGs through direct engagements.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- X. Our experience of monitoring and reviewing the SDGs has taught us that successful VNRs and VLRs are products of a well-developed monitoring and evaluation system

that enables assessment of both national and local level actions toward achieving the SDGs. The development of the M&E framework and system for national development planning in congruence with the local development planning framework enables monitoring and reporting at all levels of the results chain.

- XI. The development of a Local Development Dashboard which presents local (parish) disaggregation of national outcome indicators enables monitoring and reporting of results which is critical to the development of evidence based local reviews, and informs planning at the local, national and sectoral levels as appropriate.

Reporting

- XII. Whilst Jamaica is yet to produce a VLR, we have recognized that there are opportunities for local level reporting:
 - a. The Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions is a main source of data for reporting on the SDG indicators. Periodically, a large sample is utilized for the survey from which parish level disaggregation is done and parish reports are produced. In the context of producing a VLR, this could be complimented by qualitative methods to gather data on indicators for which data is not available through the survey as well as important themes for example, capturing the work of civil society in achieving the SDGs. The engagement of civil society through coordination to align their community level plans to the SDGs would be a precursor to this.
 - b. The survey also reports data that is disaggregated by regions that is, Kingston Metropolitan Area, Other Urban Centres and Rural areas. Rural areas have consistently lagged on key development indicators. A VLR provides opportunities to for deeper exploration of the issues in rural development and can inform more targeted responses. VLRs can therefore bolster action on the SDGs at the local level by supporting evidenced based local planning and provide policy makers with deeper insights into the nuances of development at the local level. It can also serve as a tool to further engage local level actors using the results of the report to inform discussions on how to improve communities and regions

Stakeholder Engagement

- I. Stakeholder engagement must be purpose driven with clear objectives and clear metrics to measure progress on these objectives. In order to facilitate this, we developed a Communications and Advocacy Roadmap for the SDGs, that was informed by stakeholder mapping, which identified stakeholders, their role, needs and objectives of engagement. The Roadmap also outlined appropriate strategies for engagement of each stakeholder group.
- II. The Local Governance Act 2016 is an important legislative tool that makes provision for community participation; facilitating local action and access to services that promote growth and development at the local level. It supports a strengthened framework for the establishment of local level governance systems that enable citizens to become active agents in the development process.

- III. The establishment of institutional systems for consistent engagement of a broad range of stakeholders from all sectors of society is critical to localizing the 2030 Agenda. The consultative and reporting components of the monitoring and evaluation framework and system, which includes the use of electronic dashboards and other media have been useful tools both for raising awareness and promoting accountability in order to fuel stakeholder participation at all levels. The use of new and traditional media has also proven to be effective tools in communicating the message on the SDGs and national development ensuring inclusion by meeting the communication needs of stakeholders particularly accounting for differences in abilities, age and geographic region.

- IV. Cross border cooperation is necessary to achieve the sustainable development goals in the region. The production of VNRs and VLRs provides data and information to support dialogue on common issues in development as a basis for advocacy as well as cooperation on common solutions. Coordination and collaboration in the production of VNRs and VLRs provides valuable opportunities for capacity building and meaningful exchanges in the areas of monitoring, evaluation and learning as well as sharing innovations in development planning, data production and sector specific issues in development, including but not limited to food security and disaster risk management and reduction.