Republic of Ghana

Guidelines

Voluntary Local Reviews Preparation in Ghana

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UN-HABITAT

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Voluntary Local Reviews Preparation in Ghana

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Contents

Foreword by NDPC

The United Nations in 2015 adopted ambitious global goals of eradicating poverty and hunger among others by 2030 while sustainably managing the environment to ensure prosperity for all humanity in a safe planet. Following the adoption of the goals, countries were encouraged to put in place development frameworks that reflect the global agenda: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. In response to this call, Ghana has mainstreamed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the continental goals(Agenda2063)into the country's Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (CPESDP), 2017-2024 and its updated version (CPESDP 2021-2025). The goals have been reflected in the medium-term national development policy frameworks of the country.

As part of mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063, the National Development Planning Commission through the Implementation Coordinating Committee (ICC) has prepared several reports that provide indication of the status of implementation of both agendas. Some of these include the 2018 SDGs Indicator Baseline report,2020 SDGs report as well as Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports for the years 2019 and 2022. The ICC has also prepared two Agenda 2063 reports based on the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan (FTYIP) and a stakeholder consultation report on the review of the FTYIP. There are SDGs Budget Reports produced by the Ministry of Finance on year-on-year basis since 2019, showing the annual budgetary allocation for the SDGs.

In recent times, there has been an awakening call for regional and local governments to also review the state of implementation of the SDGs in their respective jurisdictions. In view of this, the New York City launched a Voluntary Local Review (VLR) Declaration in September 2019 to signal the need for local and regional governments world wide to formally commit to reporting on the SDGs. This alongside the localisation of the 2030 Agenda is aimed at bringing the SDGs closer to the people they serve and using the framework as a tool for planning. The Accra Metropolitan Assembly was the first local authority to prepare a Voluntary Local Review in Ghana. This has fueled interest among other Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana to prepare their Voluntary Local Reviews.

The National Development Planning Commission through the ICC has put together this guide as a necessary step to ensure institutionalisation of VLR preparation at the district level. The use of this guide would build the requisite capacity of MMDAs to periodically prepare their VLRs. The guide is not prescriptive but indicative of the essentials that must be present in a VLR. This is to ensure that the reviews meet the required standard to facilitate harmonisation of Information for national level reporting on the SDGs such as VNRs.

In the interest of leaving no one behind, these VLRs could report on well disaggregated information on the vulnerable and those who are furthest behind in development efforts in order to better target critical interventions at the local level. We encourage all MMDAs to take advantage of this opportunity to report on their progress and experience in implementing the SDGs and AU Agenda 2063.

Professor George Gyan-Baffour
Chairman, NDPC

Kodjo Esseim Mensah-Abrampa, PhD
Director-General, NDPC

Acknowledgement

The guidelines for the preparation of Voluntary Local Review of Metropolitan,Municipal and District Assembles (MMDAs) benefited from the immense contributions of key stakeholders across the many development phases of the document. The Commission is grateful to the SDG Implementation Coordinating Committee (ICC) for the continuous support in coordinating Ghana's SDGs, implementation, reporting and development of key documents including this guide. We extend our appreciation to Development Partners under the coordination of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office for their active involvement from inception to completion of the guide. The Commission further appreciates the experiences and comments shared by the sub-national level – Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) and Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs).

Finally, the Commission wishes to appreciate all task team members from the NDPC and SDG ICC (see list of drafters in the annex) for their excellent expertise and commitment in drafting the guide.

Funding support: The Commission acknowledges and appreciates the funding support from the Government of Ghana and UN-Habitat in developing this maiden guide for Ghana.

INTRODUCTION TO THE VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEW GUIDELINES

Introduction to the Voluntary Local Review Guidelines

The United Nation in 2015 adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda with the main being to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The African Union in 2015 also adopted its fifty-year framework dubbed: AU Agenda 2063, with a vision for Africa to be integrated, prosperous and peaceful,a continent driven by its citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena. The UN and the AU in April 2017 signed the joint United Nations-African Union framework of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 for stronger institutional and partner coordination, the leveraging of resources and synergies and enhanced policy coherence in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Ghana like many countries has adopted both agendas and demonstrated their adoption through their integration into its planning system. It has further consolidated and localised processes through a three-tier implementation and coordination structure. The SDG and AU Agenda 2063 structure yielded deliverables such as AU Biennial reports, Voluntary National Reviews, SDG Annual Reports and Special Reports.

The mid-point of the Sustainable Development Agenda has made it crucially important to strategically address issues of leaving-no- one behind (LNOB) and establishing innovative ways of accelerating the SDGs implementation for a wider reach. One of the ways to ensuring this is strengthening the structure for implementation and reporting of the agendas at the sub-national level.

Preparation of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) is an important opportunity for the local level to report ontheir experiences in implementing the agendas.

Voluntary Local Reviews provide a means of assessing the efforts by local governments on the progress towards SDGs and Agenda 2063;identify policy gaps; establish synergies across existing strategies; identify innovative interventions; and establish partnerships with stakeholders among others. The consolidation of quality VLRs could provide a wealth of data for the preparation of national reports on the agendas.

Preparation of VLRs has gained broader recognition since its adoption in 2017. The 2021 UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) consolidated the prime role of VLRs in localising the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Ghana in 2020 published its first VLR by the Accra Metropolitan Assembly. The rising interest in VLRs warrants the need to prepare guidelines to support districts or cities to prepare their VLRs.

Ghana's VLR guidelines leverage on existing guidelines by providing localised content to facilitate contextual reporting. The objective of the guidelines is to provide a step-by-step approach to guide VLR reporting on the implementation of the agendas. The guide has been prepared to help Metropolitan,Municipal District Assemblies (MMDAs).

The VLR guideline was prepared by the National Development Planning Commission through the SDG Implementation Coordinating

Committee. Encapsulated in the guide are preliminary sections and six chapters including Introduction; Methodology and the Process for preparation; Policy and enabling environment; Progress of goals and targets; Financing the SDGs and Opportunities for Investment; Conclusion and next steps.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF VLR

Structure and Content of VLR

Preliminary Sections

Opening statement / Foreword

There should be a foreword to highlight the context of the report, the importance placed on implementing the SDGs / AU Agenda, among others. This should consider:

Statement should be from a high-ranking officer: The opening statement is an opportunity for the Metropolitan Municipal and District Chief Executive (MMDCE), Mayor, or another high-ranking public official to showcase how the reporting entity sees the SDGs as part of
their vision for a sustainable future.

Attention-Grabbing: An effective hook that draws the audience in and piques their interest should be used as the opening statement's first sentence. This can be accomplished by using a pertinent anecdote, a startling statistic, a rhetorical question,or a relevant quote.

General Description of the document: The speaker should introduce the topic and provide context for the audience to understand why it is important. This can be achieved by highlighting
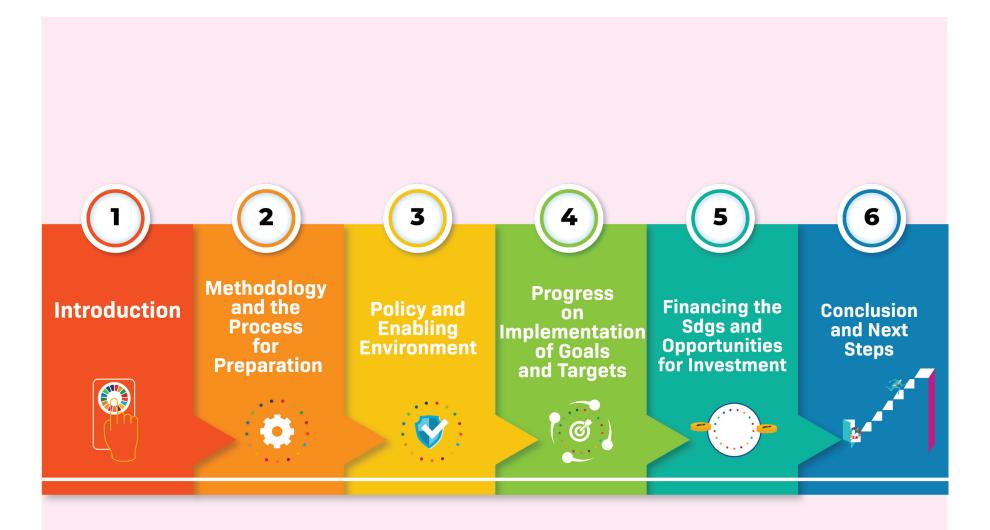what the VLR is, the reason for reporting on VLR, discussing the historical background and capturing a key milestone of the SDGs.

Roadmap: The opening statement should provide a clear mapping of some of the content in the VLR. This can be achieved by previewing the main points that will be covered or outlining the structure of the argument.

Highlight (within 2 pages)

This section should provide a brief overview of the key findings of the VLR, including the progress towards the SDGs / Agenda 2063, achievements, challenges, lessons learnt and recommendations. Further, it should provide key next steps for ensuring the achievement of the SDGs / Agenda 2063. As part of the next steps, the district could highlight major investment opportunities in critical areas to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs

1	2	3	4	5	6
Introduction	Methodology and the Process for Preparation	Policy and Enabling Environment	Progress on Implementation of Goals and Targets	Financing the Sdgs and Opportunities for Investment	Conclusion and Next Steps

01
INTRODUCTION

Chapter One: Introduction

Background

This section should provide a brief background for the VLR. It should provide reasons for the development of the VLR. It can further highlight the main benefits of undertaking a VLR including creating local ownership and accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and tAgenda 2063 at the local level and the added value of VLR to national reports on the SDGs including VNRs and SDG annual report.

Brief Profile of the District

This section should provide a brief introduction of the district, covering major areas such as listed below. As much as possible, a visual/graphical representation could be adopted to present the profile on the areas.

» **Demography –** population, age distribution, sex, socioeconomic status (e.g., low/middle-income families, communities), disability status.

» **Economy and Employment –** disaggregation of businesses (agriculture, services, industry), level of formality/informality, type of employment including self-employment, paid and unpaid work, level of voluntary work.

» **Education –** literacy status, enrolment performance, academic performance, level of educational attainment.

» **Health –** Disease prevalence, Fertility rate, Mortality rate, Reproductive health.

» **Geography and Natural Resource–** size of district, location and landscape of district, type of resources available (cocoa, coffee, timber, gold, diamond, manganese, lithium, etc.), soil type, climate conditions, heritage sites, local tradition (culture).

» **Governance and Administration –** administrative structure, existing policies, plans and legislations, etc.

» **Community Engagement –** forums / platforms available, level of participation of citizens, partnerships in place.

» **Supportive Services –** Available social services available for families related to sustainable development and human rights.

02

METHODOLOGY AND THE PROCESS FOR PREPARATION

Chapter Two: Methodology and the Process for Preparation

Introduction

The chapter should highlight the methodology and process utilized in the preparation of the Voluntary Local Review (VLR). It should reflect on the institutional arrangements for the preparation of VLR, the assignment of responsibilities and the process of selection of indicators to be utilised in preparing the report. The introduction should also cover data collection methods and how the data gaps are addressed by the MMDAs.

Stakeholder engagement

The section should describe the processes used in involving stakeholders in preparing the report, taking into consideration the principle of "leaving no one behind". It should showcase if any, innovative processes used in the engagement processes, including the use of social media platforms, radio talk shows, sign language interpretation, etc. It should further indicate if there were any challenges encountered in ensuring the inclusiveness of all stakeholders in the process.

As much as possible, MMDAs are encouraged to avoid duplication of engagement by relying or improving on existing institutional arrangement for engagement. Reference can be made to the Popular Participation Policy or Consultative processes provided for in Section 3 and Third schedule of the National Development Planning (Systems) Regulation, 2019 (L.I 2232).

Indicator, data gathering and sources

The indicator selection should be informed by availability of data. MMDAs are encouraged to outline the strategies/steps used in agreeing on the indicators for reporting. The number of indicators used in the preparation of the report should be highlighted (reference table 1) as well as the localised indicators (i.e. SDG indicators changed to suit local situation). As much as possible, data should be provided for all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and all 20 Goals of AU Agenda 2063. Indicators, and targets at the global and national levels should not be selected by the MMDAs.

Should data or resource availability be a constraint, priority could be given to goals under consideration at High-Level Political Forum, continental, national and regional forums, or those pertinent to the needs of the district at a time.

MMDAs are encouraged to use appropriate visualisation tools to tell the story behind the detailed text and numerical figures. There should be a clear indication of responsibilities and the structure adopted for the analysis.

Table1:Number of indicators reported/utilized

SDGs[1]	Number of indicators			
	Original Indicators[2]	Corresponding AU Agenda 2063 Indicators	Localised[3]	Proxy[4]

The section should also provide the process of gathering data for the report and the sources of data as well as the challenges, gaps and opportunities encountered during the process. Existing data could be sourced from census, surveys, administrative sources, existing reports, policy documents and non-traditional sources like satellite images, call detail records among others. Reference should be made to all data sources and documents utilised in the preparation of the report. All references should be included a generated bibliography for the VLR.

Addressing data challenges/gaps
to address the data gaps, MMDAs could use case studies and rapid assessments in addition to already existing data. Additionally, the existing data could also be complemented by data collected through stakeholder engagement such as focus group discussions and key informant interviews. In situation where there is no data for an indicator but there is data for a key performance indicator in the District Annual Progress Report to closely discuss the same indicator,it can be used as a Proxy.

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1   Provide the list of goals addressed in the VLR report
2   The indicators reported as provided in the SDGs
3   SDGs indicators that have been localised or changed to reflect local situation
4   Different indicators used to represent the SDGs indicators

03

POLICY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Chapter Three: Policy and Enabling Environment

Introduction

The section on the policy and enabling environment should focus on the implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 within the MMDAs. It discusses the mechanism used for integrating the SDGs and Agenda 2063 into Medium-Term plans and budgets. The discussion should also highlight the approaches used to ensure the principle of leaving no one behind.

Integration of the dimensions of sustainable development and the principle of leaving no one behind

This section should discuss the integration process of the dimensions and the principle of leaving no one behind. "Sustainability" in the context of Ghana's development entails integrating the three pillars of sustainability namely the socio-cultural, economic, and natural resources into policies, plans and programmes. In addition, Ghana has identified institutional development as a fourth pillar for sustainability in recognition of the important role strong and efficient institutions play in delivering sustainable development outcomes

The discussion should focus on the inter-linkages among these dimensions of sustainable development and its linkage to the pillars and programmes of the MTDP. This section should also discuss the process used to integrate vulnerable groups such as women, children, PWDs, etc. in the identification of issues in the Medium-Term Plan and how these issues are linked to SDGs and Agenda 2063.

NB: Reference should be made to sustainability tools such as SEA, compatibility matrix etc.

04

PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS AND TARGETS

Chapter Four: Progress on Implementation of Goals and Targets

Introduction

The chapter should begin by highlighting the need to track the progress of implementation. It should demonstrate how the Assembly is making effort to achieve the goals and targets of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. It should clearly make room for both challenges and success in the implementation of the Goals.

Progress on Implementation

This section focuses on progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 goals. Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) are encouraged to report on progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and all 20 Goals of AU Agenda 2063 as much as data availability permit. A broad heading of each sustainable development goal, the target, and its corresponding Agenda 2063 target should be provided. The analyses on the SDG indicator should then follow (Refer to Box 1).

Box 1: Sample Progress of Implementation
Goal 1:End poverty in all its forms Everywhere

Indicator 1.1:Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)

A succinct writeup must be provided on the indicator bringing out trends with figures where possible and highlight any locally adapted targets. The progress towards target should also be captured for each indicator. All the key interventions at the sub-national level that are facilitating achievement of a goal or target needs to be highlighted. The analyses of progress should also capture the opportunities that exist and the challenges/constraints working against achieving each goal and the emerging issues in that field. MMDAs and RCCs can utilise both qualitative and quantitative data in this section and text boxes where necessary to provide useful information on unique efforts being undertaken to enhance evidence-based monitoring and evaluation of the goal or target.
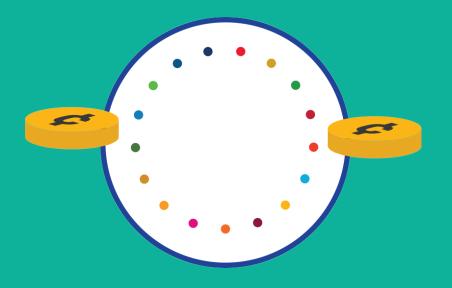
Please note: Repeat this process for all indicators and target under each goal

05

FINANCING THE SDGS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT

Chapter Five: Financing the SDGs and Opportunities for Investment

Means of Implementation

The notion of 'Means of implementation' (MOI) – as defined by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) on Financing for Development, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – describes the interdependent mix of financial resources, technology development and transfer, capacity-building, inclusive and equitable globalisation and trade, regional integration, and the enabling environment required to implement the 2030 Agenda.

SOME GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DRAFTING THE "MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION"

1. What are current resource flows for the selected SDGs/Agenda2063goals? Summarise steps taken to mobilise domestic resources, official development assistance and additional sources of funding, such as foreign direct investment and remittances.
2. What steps have been taken to identify critical gaps and estimate additional resources thatareneededtoimplementthe2030Agenda?Relevantaspectsincludefinancing,capacity development needs, data and statistics knowledge sharing, technology and partnerships.
3. How has the private sector been engaged to support the realisation of both Agendas?
4. How is the MMDA collaborating and engaging Development Partners and NGO sat the district level to support with funding, data, technology and other resources for the implementation of the SDGs?
5. What are the key binding constraints [provide per each goal if possible] to accelerating the implementation of the SDGs.

At the section of the Voluntary Local Review of MMDAs, a reflection should be provided on how implementation of the SDGs are being supported by traditional and non-traditional sources of funds as well as innovation and technology adopted in the process.

» This section could include ideas and experiences for how to align recovery plans and funds with the Sustainable Development Goals (support schemes, investment plans, restructuring of subsidies, as well as an analysis of budgetary reallocations with a view to ensuring addressing vulnerabilities and sharing experiences on what works in this regard).

» MMDAs could elaborate on existing financing strategy/integrated national/

domestic financing frameworks and the appropriate policies and reforms in place to finance their strategy. The review could indicate how financial systems, statistical data, and resource allocations are being aligned to support the realisation of the 2030 Agenda and its pledge to leave no one behind.

» Efforts towards mobilising domestic resource and the successes achieved must be highlighted. Domestic resources should include the contribution of the private sector. Moreover,MMDAs experiences with gender-responsive budgeting, where applicable, should be stated.

» MMDAs must highlight concrete technology, capacity development and data needs for which external support may be needed.

Investment Opportunities

This section should discuss key investment opportunities that exist at the MMDA level that can be leveraged to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The discussion should reflect the economic, social, environmental and other investment opportunities, partnership arrangements as well as mechanisms to be used to utilise such opportunities. Also,this section should highlight plausible key challenges of these investments and as well identify mechanisms and strategies to be adopted to attract investors for developing these opportunities. These investment opportunities should be aligned to measure their contribution towards achieving the SDGs. Refer to Table 2 for guidance.

Table 2: Investment opportunities

Key opportunities[5]	SDGs Alignment[6]	Risk[7]	Mechanism to address the risk[8]

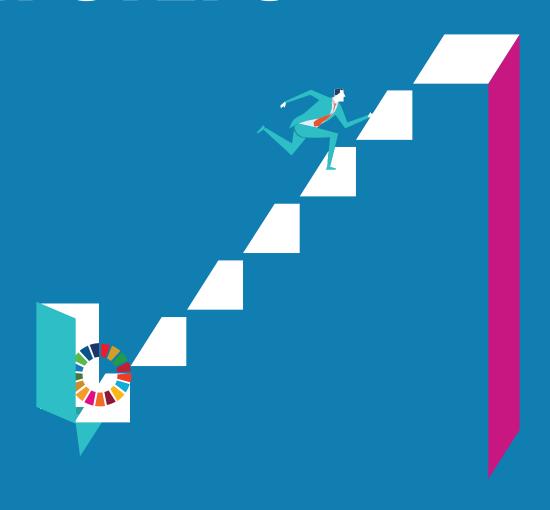**NB: Picture evidence can also be provided**

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5   Provide a list of key opportunities at MMDA level
6   Provide a List of SDGs targets or indicators the opportunity can help to achieve

7   List of anticipated challenges for utilising the opportunities

8   List of actions that can help address these challenges

06

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Next Steps

Conclusion

This section should be informed by the outcomes of the review, highlighting briefly the local actions that culminated into such results. The conclusion should highlight what lessons the MMDA has learned from the entire review process and the next steps it intends to take to enhancing efforts at addressing the local challenges including data gaps and investment challenges identified. The section could also incorporate a call for continued partnership and engagement with specific institutions and other local stakeholders.

NextSteps

This section should outline the steps being instituted to mobilise action at the local level towards accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 within the Decade of Action and Delivery for the Sustainable Development Agenda.

The Next steps could cover:
» Approval process and ownership of the VLR

» Publication and dissemination plan, press engagement, detailed monitoring and evaluation plan

» Sharing of experience – encourage participation in local, regional, national and international forums

» Investor engagement strategy – to engage investors on investment potentials of the district.

» Resource mobilisation: The VLR should be used to mobilise investments and resources from both traditional and innovative sources.

Annex 1: List of Drafters

Report Drafting Team:

Dr. Richard Osei Bofah	National Development Planning Commission (SDGs National Coordinator)
Dr. Felix Addo-Yobo	SDG Advisory Unit
Charles Kofi Konglo	National Development Planning Commission
Patience Ampomah	National Development Planning Commission
Joshua Kwame Addae	National Development Planning Commission
Daniel Amofa	National Development Planning Commission
Eric Agyei	National Development Planning Commission
Vitus Bobrnuo	Ghana Statistical Service
Ashraf Muhsin Barko	National Development Planning Commission
Anthony Nii Oku Nelson	National Development Planning Commission
Winnifred Akoto Sampong	National African Peer Review Mechanism – Governing Council

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8. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2022). Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews: The 2022 Edition. New York,USA. (Accessed from Microsoft Word-Handbook 2022 EN- Clean (un.org) on 21st January 2022).

9. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, United Cities and Local Governments of Africa and UN Human Settlements Programme (2022). Africa Voluntary Local Review Guidelines. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. (Accessed from AFRICA VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEW GUIDELINE.pdf (uneca.org) on 5th January 2023).

Some SDGs Resources

Voluntary Local Reviews | UN-Habitat (unhabitat.org)

Global Guiding Elements for VLRs_FINAL.pdf(un.org)

Shimokawa Method for Voluntary Local Reviews (iges.or.jp)

VLR_Handbook_7.7.19.pdf (brookings.edu)

State of the Voluntary Local Reviews 2022: Overcoming Barriers to Implementation (iges.or.jp) 2021 - Malmo.pdf (iges.or.jp)

Toolbox Voluntary Loca lReviews, VLR (unhabitat.org)

Voluntary Local Reviews of Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (iisd.org)

Voluntary Local Reviews of Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (iisd.org)

Voluntary Local Review | City of L.A. Sustainable Development Goals (lamayor.org)

Accra_City_2020_VLR_Report-Final (May_2020) docx.pdf (ama.gov.gh)