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Mozambique's Voluntary Local Review: SDG Localization, Decentralization, and the Role of Local Governments and Associations

Pedro Laíce and Sylvia Croese

Abstract

The National Association of Mozambican Municipalities (ANAMM) has been undertaking a series of activities since 2016 that aim to raise awareness of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among its members. These activities have contributed to increased ownership of the SDGs at the municipal level, the start of the incorporation of the SDGs in local planning processes, and the completion of the country's first Voluntary Local Review (VLR) in 2020, with contributions from 16 out of the country's 53 municipalities. This chapter draws on the experience of ANAMM to highlight the opportunities and challenges for SDG localization in urban Africa. The case of Mozambique shows that while the SDGs are high on the central government's agenda, municipalities lack the resources and capacity to fully contribute to meeting the SDGs as a result of uneven levels of decentralization. Nevertheless, the VLR revealed high levels of local awareness and diverse examples of initiatives and good practices that can be built on in order to strengthen and support SDG implementation at the local level.

Keywords

National Association of Mozambican Municipalities (ANAMM) · SDG localization · Voluntary local review (VLR) · Decentralization · Mozambique

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11.1 Introduction

The National Association of Mozambican Municipalities (ANAMM) represents the united voice of municipalities of Mozambique. Its core mandate is to represent Mozambican municipalities, advocate for their rights and interests among the government and development partners, and inform and train its members on matters related to municipal development. Since 2016, the association has developed a series of activities with the aim of promoting Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among its members. These activities have included awareness raising, dissemination, and capacity building initiatives on the SDGs among elected

officials and technical staff in different municipal development fora. Taken together, these actions have contributed to increased ownership of the SDGs at the municipal level, the start of the incorporation of the SDGs in local planning processes, and the completion of the country's first Voluntary Local Review (VLR) in 2020 with contributions from 16 out of the country's 53 municipalities.

This chapter draws on the experience of ANAMM to highlight the opportunities and challenges of SDG localization at local government level in a context of uneven levels of decentralization. It starts by reviewing the emergence of VLRs and their purpose, contribution, and importance in the urban African context. It then builds on the Mozambican case to highlight the importance of local governments for the implementation of the SDGs. While the SDGs are high on the central government's agenda, municipalities lack the resources and capacity to fully contribute to meeting the SDGs. Nevertheless, the VLR revealed high levels of local awareness and diverse examples of initiatives and good practices that can be built on in order to strengthen and support SDG implementation at the local level.

11.2 Voluntary Local Reviews and the African Context

As part of the review process of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, member states are encouraged to undertake regular and inclusive reviews of their progress towards the SDGs and present these to the annual United Nations High Level Political Forum (UN HLPF). Reporting is processed under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In the first 5 years following 2015, a total of 168 countries reported on their efforts (Kindornay 2018). Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts, global interest in preparing a Voluntary National Review (VNR) remained high in 2020, with 47 countries preparing and virtually presenting their VNRs, including 16 from Africa (UNDESA 2020a).

While the involvement of local and regional governments in VNR processes was limited in the first VNR cycles, this has gradually increased. According to the global local government association United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), one of the main voices and advocates for SDG localization, local and regional governments' involvement in VNR processes increased to 55% in 2020, up from 42% in the 2016–2019 period. Additionally, UCLG has noted an increase in the elaboration of Voluntary Local and Regional Reviews, understood as publications of local and regional governments that "assess and present advances on the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda from a local standpoint and through a locally-developed narrative" (UCLG and UN-Habitat 2021, p. 11). Some countries have started to include the results of these subnational reports in national reviews (UCLG 2020a), while the UN has started to record available VLRs on the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs website (UNDESA 2021).

The city of New York was the first to submit a VLR on the SDGs to the UN HLPF in 2018, and the year after, 22 cities signed a Voluntary Local Review Declaration, committing themselves to submit a VLR of local progress in achieving the SDGs to the UN HLPF (NYC Mayor's Office for International Affairs 2019). Since then, the number of local governments that has completed a VLR has exponentially increased, from over 50 as of July 2020 to at least 110 VLRs either already published and publicly available or to be published in 2021 and 2022. This also includes a growing number of what have come to be referred as Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs), which represent country-wide bottom-up reports that assess the state of localization processes at subnational levels (UCLG and UN-Habitat 2020, 2021) (see Fig. 11.1).

Due to the novelty, and in many cases spontaneous emergence of VLRs and VSRs, many of them vary in terms of their content, scope, purpose, methodology, template, and format. For instance, VLRs vary in terms of the number of SDGs that are covered, the kind of data used and reported on, the number and extent of stakeholder input, and the actors involved in putting the VLR
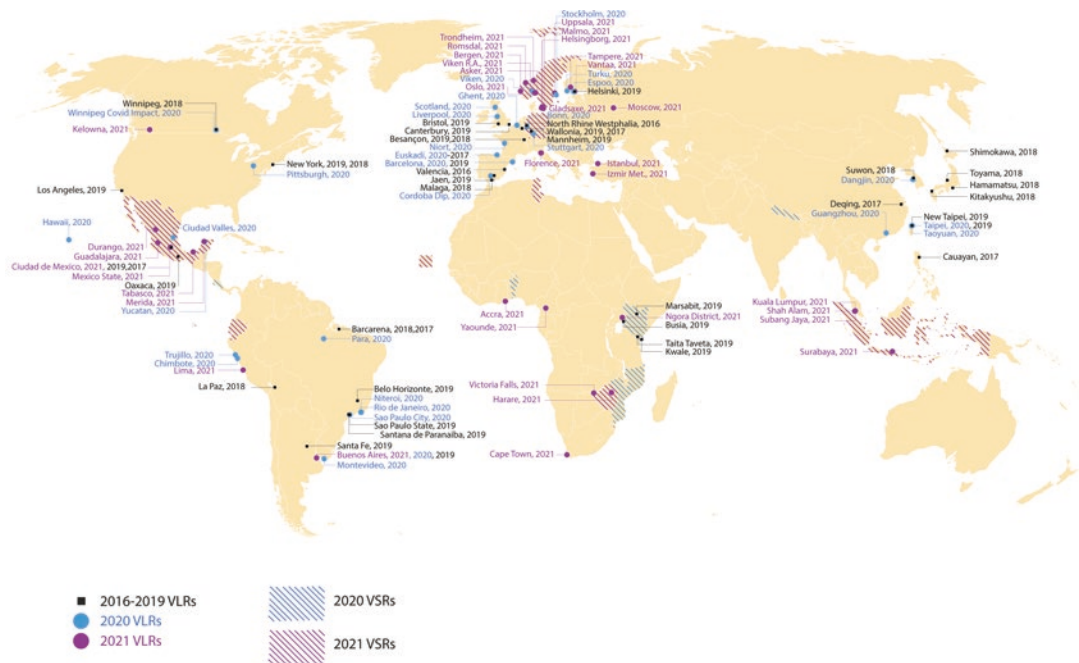
Fig. 11.1 Map of currently completed Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs). (Source: elaborated by UCLG based on the VLR and VSR repository, See https://gold.uclg.org/report/localizing-sdgs-boost-monitoring-reporting#field-sub-report-tab-2)

together, with approaches ranging from more internal to external collaborations and partnerships (Pipa and Bouchet 2020; Ortiz-Moya et al. 2020). Many of the first-generation VLRs have been completed in developed countries and relatively very few in Africa. Support for the development of VLRs in African cities is therefore particularly important, considering that VLRs represent a useful instrument and opportunity to connect local strategies to the SDGs, strengthen evidence-based policymaking, identify gaps and priorities, as well as mobilize new policies, partnerships, and resources (Pipa and Bouchet 2020). As such, VLRs offer a practical way to participate in a growing global movement and accelerate local awareness and action for sustainable urban development.

The development of VLRs is especially relevant in the African context as efforts to include local and regional governments in national SDG reviews remain limited across the continent, in spite of the rapid growth of cities and their central contribution to national development. Although most African countries have integrated the SDGs in their national development plans and reported on their SDG progress to the UN HLPF, very few have actively included local governments or their associations in coordination or reporting processes. More specifically, only about half of the countries that reported to the UN between 2016 and 2019 involved local or regional government associations in their VNR processes, while only about a third of these countries reported having involved local or regional governments in national coordination mechanisms on the SDGs (UCLG 2019).

The limited involvement of local governments reflects the uneven levels of decentralization across the continent and the limited extent to which institutional political, administrative, and fiscal environments are favorable for the action of cities and regions (UCLGA and Cities Alliance 2018). Because of such unfavorable environments, there are large gaps in terms of the data required to monitor and implement development policies at the local level, resulting in inadequate urban policies and interventions, reduced accountability, and reduced social inclusiveness.

To guide and assist other cities, policy makers, researchers, and practitioners interested in conducting a VLR, numerous guidelines, tools, and platforms for sharing good practices are now becoming available. UNDESA has developed a series of Global Guiding Elements for VLRs of SDG implementation which are meant to "provide a starting point for local and regional governments considering producing their own Voluntary Local Review and aim to give an overview of useful focus areas for the review process and the eventual report" (UNDESA 2020b). The European Commission in turn has developed specific guidelines for European cities (EU 2020), and there are various online sharing platforms on VLRs, including some developed by a number of cities themselves, as well as networks, such as the VLR Lab developed by the Japanese Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES 2021).

To contribute to such sharing and learning, UCLG has developed a range of training tools, guidelines, and modules and started a VLR Community of Practice in collaboration with UN-Habitat in order to facilitate and support the development of VLRs as well as key practical knowledge, lessons, and learnings (UCLG and UN-Habitat 2020). Important in this regard is UCLG's support to a number of bottom-up, country-wide pilot experiences on subnational reporting in collaboration with local government associations. In Africa, these include experiences in Kenya, Benin, and Mozambique, the latter which we report on in this chapter (UCLG 2020b).[1] Importantly, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has also started discussions around the preparation of a template for peer-reviewed VLRs in Africa that is aligned with both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 reporting, following requests made from African member states to UNECA at the Africa

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (UNECA 2021).

11.3 The SDGs in Mozambique

In 2015, the Mozambican government initiated a new government cycle, which was accompanied by a new development plan for the period 2015–2019. This plan represents the main instrument for economic and social governance and has been aligned to Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. This alignment was maintained with the adoption of a new development plan for the period 2020–2024.

A number of other key documents are representative of Mozambique's efforts to align its planning and statistical frameworks with the SDGs, which were developed in collaboration with national and international partners. These include a number of interrelated studies, namely:

- A study mapping government capacity for SDG implementation, which assesses institutional, planning, and statistical capacity (MEF 2016a; FAO 2018)
- A study on the viability of SDG indicators, which presents existing indicators relevant for SDG monitoring (MEF 2016b)
- A study on the "mozambicanization" of the SDGs through the 5-year development plan (MEF 2017)

These studies were followed by the development of an Initial Report on the implementation of the SDGs in Mozambique in 2018, which outlines the status of Agenda 2030 implementation, with a particular focus on SDG 2, 3, 4, 6, 13, and 14 (MEF 2018). The report also includes a proposal for a National Indicator Framework on the SDGs in Mozambique, which was updated in 2020 (INE 2020).

To coordinate the country's efforts around the SDGs, in 2017 the government also created a National Reference Group for the implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and financing of the SDGs, as well as Agenda 2063. The Reference Group is presided over by the Ministry of

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[1] Note that in line with more recent definitions by UCLG, the Mozambique exercise should perhaps more appropriately be referred to as a VSR, however in this chapter we follow the term VLR as this is how it was initially conceived and is referred to locally.

Economy and Finances and further includes representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the National Institute of Statistics, the National Assembly, civil society, ANAMM, the private sector, and bilateral and multilateral development partners and UN agencies.

Members of the National Reference Group worked together towards the development of the country's first VNR, which was presented to the (virtual) UN HLPF in 2020 (Republic of Mozambique 2020). In this report, the government outlines its progress and the challenges involved in SDG implementation and the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration, including local governments, which have been instructed to integrate the SDGs into their local strategies and operations.

However, while the National Reference Group on SDGs is meant to be replicated at the provincial and district government level, notably there are no provisions in place for its replication at the municipal government level. This illustrates the limited space afforded to municipal governments when it comes to driving local development or engaging autonomously with multilateral processes, in spite of important progress made in decentralization over the past decades.

11.4 Local Governments and SDGs

Decentralization reforms in Mozambique followed the end of the civil war in the early 1990s and culminated in the creation of municipal authorities in 1997. Under Law 8/97 of 31 May, municipal authorities were administratively classified into five different categories, ranging from categories "A" to "D", in addition to the category of small "towns" (*vilas*). This categorization takes different criteria into account, including political, economic, social, cultural factors, as well as population density, number and type of industries, degree of development of trade activities, education, and sanitation. Based on these criteria, the capital city of Maputo is accorded a special status and is singularly clas-

sified as type "A". The adjoining municipality of Matola and provincial capitals of Nampula and Beira are classified as type "B", while type "C" includes all other provincial capitals, as well as other cities. Type "D" are small districts that play an important role in the process of local development (ANAMM and World Bank 2009).

This classification has guided the country's gradual approach to decentralization, limiting the local governments that could participate in the country's first local elections in 1997 to 33 urban cities and towns, with another 10 added in the elections of 2008, followed by 10 more in 2018. In addition, Mozambique has 128 districts and 11 provincial governments, which represent two additional tiers of subnational government. As part of the most recently adopted package of decentralization laws in 2018 and 2019, the government has introduced a new model of "decentralized provincial governance" (Forquilha 2020). This includes the creation of a new figure of the Provincial Secretary of State, who is appointed by the president of the republic and functions alongside the elected provincial governor. Under a new legislation approved in 2020 by Resolutions 21/2020 and 22/2020 of 26 March, the Mozambican government has updated the classification of cities, districts, and towns as well as introduced the classification of category "A" towns, some of which coincide with existing municipal authorities.

In this complex legal and administrative context, powers to municipal governments have only gradually been devolved, first under the local government laws adopted in 1997 which were revised and expanded between 2006 and 2008 and more recently in 2018. Currently, the following competencies fall under the exclusive responsibility of local governments: land management, urban roads, solid waste collection and treatment, markets and fairs, cemeteries, public parks, gardens and culture, sport and local law enforcement (see Fig. 11.2). Other functions are shared with central or provincial governments, including education, health, public illumination and distribution of electricity, water and sanitation, public transport and roads, social housing, and environ-

1. **Urban and Rural Infrastructures**	5. **Education**
• Green spaces, including gardens and nurseries	• Pre-school education centers
• Roads, including sidewalks	• Public primary schools
• Housing and economy	• School transport
• Public cemeteries	• Equipment for elementary adult education
• Public municipal offices	• Other activities complementary to educational action
• Markets and fairs	
• Firefighters	6. **Culture, Leisure and Sports**
	• Cultural centers, libraries and museums
2. **Basic Sanitation**	• Cultural, landscape and urban heritage
• Municipal water supply systems	• Camping parks
• Sewerage systems	• Sport installations and equipment
• Waste and cleaning collection and treatment systems	
	7. **Health**
	• Primary health care units
3. **Energy**	
• Electricity distribution	8. **Social Assistance**
• Public, urban and rural illumination	• Assistance to vulnerable parts of the population
	• Social housing
4. **Transport and Communication**	
• Urban road network	9. **Environmental Management**
• Municipal public transport systems	• Environmental protection or rehabilitation
	• Afforestation, tree planting and conservation
	• Establishment of municipal nature reserves

Source: elaborated by authors based on Law No 2/97 of 18 February and Law No 1/2008 of 16 January as amended by Law No 6/2018 of 3 August.

Fig. 11.2 Mozambican municipal government competencies

mental conservation and protection, although some of these are set to be transferred to the municipal level.

Most of these responsibilities and competencies are directly linked to the actions that are needed to meet the SDGs, particularly SDG 11, highlighting the importance and relevance of municipal governments as key actors when it comes to making progress on Agenda 2030. However, a number of factors constrain the extent to which municipal governments are able to fulfill their mandate.

This is especially important considering the rapidly growing levels of urbanization in the country, which are mainly driven by high birth rates. In 2019, 36% of the country was urbanized compared to little over 10% in 1980 (Hansine and Arnaldo 2019). The UN has estimated growth to increase to 60% by 2030, but this growth is highly uneven with growth levels ranging from less than 1% to over 10% in a selected number of municipalities (ANAMM and World Bank 2009, p. 297). As a result of this growth, the majority of urban dwellers live in unplanned "informal" areas marked by limited access to basic services and high levels of urban poverty. Moreover, many urban areas are situated in ecologically vulnerable locations, making them prone to natural disasters and other impacts of climate change. These include repeated floods, most catastrophically in 2000, as well as cyclones such as Kenneth and Idai in 2019, which led to the destruction of thousands of human lives, infrastructure, and local economies with long-lasting effects (Oxfam 2020). Local governments have also had to deal with the effects of on-going political tensions, resulting in repeated skirmishes between
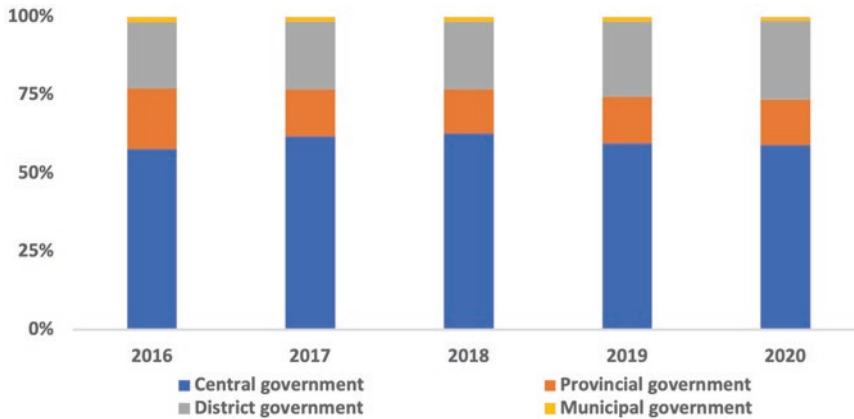
Fig. 11.3 Mozambican state budget allocation (operational) per government tiers (ANAMM 2020)

national government and opposition forces, particularly after the general government elections of 2014, as well as rising acts of violent terrorism in the north of the country since 2019.

Overall, the capacity for service delivery, combined with the need to prepare for and respond to the impact of natural calamities and political conflict, is limited. This results from historically weak organizational structures and poorly maintained infrastructural systems. Moreover, municipal tax bases are limited,[2] which also derives from historically weak but centralized tax systems (Canhanga 2009; ANAMM and World Bank 2009). Importantly, there is a large gap between the increase in spending responsibilities that has come with the devolution of competencies to the municipal level and the revenues available for spending, also referred to as "unfunded mandates" (Raich n.d.). To a large extent, this is the result of the minimal levels of central government transfers to municipal government. These mainly consist of funds transferred under the

Municipal Compensation Fund (*Fundo de Compensação Autárquica* or FCA), the Local Initiative Investment Fund (*Fundo de Investimento de Iniciativas Locais* or FIIL), or transfers destined for a specific objective, such as the Road Fund or the Fund for the Reduction of Urban Poverty. In spite of the increase in the number of elected municipalities over the years, the level of intergovernmental transfers to municipalities has not increased correspondingly and is also much lower compared to transfers to provincial or district governments. For instance, between 2007 and 2010 on average only about 1% of the general state budget was allocated to municipal governments, compared to 4% to district governments and 26% to provincial governments (Raich n.d.). While budget allocations to provincial governments have reduced to the benefit of district governments in recent years, funding for municipal governments remains largely the same, as can be seen in Fig. 11.3. A similar trend applies when looking at the central state budget for public investments (Fig. 11.4).

Although the transfers allocated to the municipal level are low, a study conducted among six Mozambican municipalities shows that they represent a very important part of municipal budgets, with on average almost half of total local revenues consisting of intergovernmental transfers (48%), against 36% of own revenues (divided between 26% of tax

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[2] In 2006, the total budget for all municipalities (excluding aid) was of MT 1.1 billion, equivalent to about US$46 million. In total per capita terms, this means that on average, municipal spending for each resident was little less than MT 300, equivalent to about US$4.7 at 2021 exchange rates, with significant variation from MT 90 to MT 900, or US$1.4 to US$14 at 2021 exchange rates (ANAMM and World Bank 2009, p. 99).
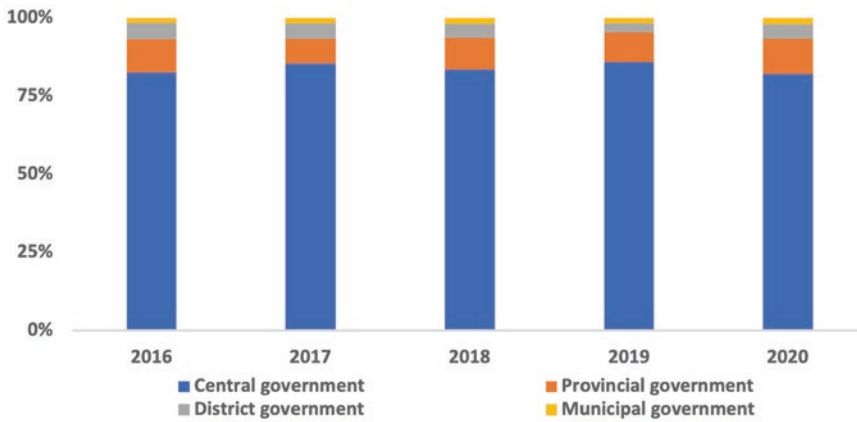
Fig. 11.4 Mozambican state budget allocation (investment) per government tiers (ANAMM 2020)
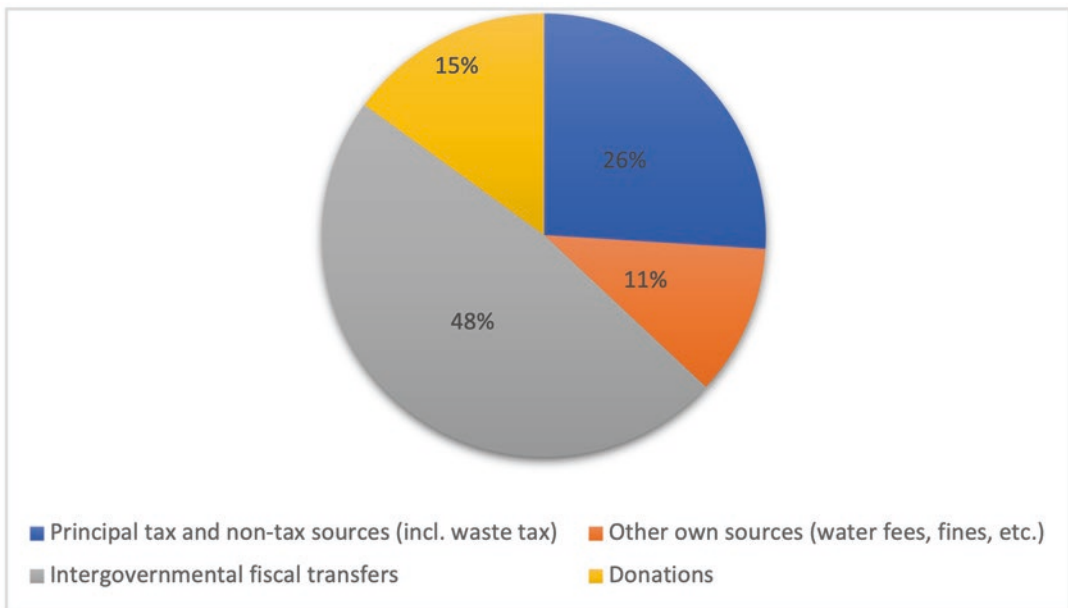

Fig. 11.5 Municipal aggregated revenue in six selected Mozambican municipalities in 2009. (Adapted from Weimer 2012)

and non-tax and 11% other own revenue sources such as fines) and 15% of aid (see Fig. 11.5) (Weimer 2012, pp. 364–365; see also Ilal and Weimer 2018). As in many other African cities (see Chap. 9), most of these revenues are spent on wage bills and other operational costs, even in larger cities with more expansive tax bases such as the capital city of Maputo or cities such as Nampula or Quelimane (ANAMM 2017), with little left to

spend on capital investments required for improved service delivery.

In spite of these common trends, there is a lot of diversity in the performance of municipal governments across the country, with the VLR recording many innovative actions undertaken by municipal authorities in spite of local barriers and constraints. These illustrate the importance of recognizing local government diversity and the ways in which this diversity originates from

local histories, geographies, leadership, and administrative competency and capacity (also Weimer 2012, p. 366).

11.5 Voluntary Local Review Experience in Mozambique

In November 2019, ANAMM conducted its first capacity and awareness training about the SDGs with municipal officials from across the country. The training was supported by UCLG, UNDP, the Municipal Council of Maputo, and the German cooperation (GIZ/BGF). The objectives of the training were to raise awareness and to train local authorities on the implementation and localization of the SDGs, territorial planning, monitoring and evaluation of the global agendas, and providing a space for the sharing and exchange of knowledge and experiences on SDG implementation at the city level (UCLGA 2019).

The development of VLRs was also discussed in the training, sparking the interest of ANAMM to contribute to this growing global movement. The Mozambican VLR received financial support from UCLG, as well as technical support from GIZ/BGF under a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (ANAMM 2020).

One of the aims of the VLR was to assess the extent to which municipalities were already contributing to the SDGs in Mozambique. This required an analysis of levels of poverty and access to basic services in each municipality. Census data is essential for such an analysis as the census is based on household surveys, with the most recent census in Mozambique having been conducted in 2017. However, these data are not disaggregated to the municipal level. As such, the analysis of the VLR was focused on the identification of programs, projects, actions, and their outcomes at the municipal level. Through the assessment of local perceptions, the review also sought to identify the most critical challenges for service delivery at the municipal level (ANAMM 2020).

Key instruments to collect this information included interviews and four types of questionnaires with open-ended and multiple-choice questions. These included the following:

- **General questionnaire:** The objective of this questionnaire was to assess the level of awareness of the SDGs among local authorities and officials, as well as representatives of civil society, and the private sector. It also sought to measure the extent to which the SDGs are already incorporated in municipal actions and policies and which SDGs are considered to be most relevant. This questionnaire was also meant to contribute to the development of a dissemination and training strategy on the SDGs by ANAMM.
- **Municipal questionnaire:** The principal purpose of this questionnaire was to collect quantitative data on municipal management and SDG implementation. It included questions on (1) general municipal data; (2) municipal officials according to gender; (3) information on municipal plans, budgets, and financial resources; (4) implemented programs and projects with data on beneficiaries; (5) spaces for participation and accountability; and (6) the municipality's institutional partners.
- **Questionnaire for members of Municipal Assembly:** This questionnaire was aimed at assessing SDG-related regulations and accountability mechanisms as issued or exercised by the Municipal Assembly.
- **Questionnaire on social perceptions and participation:** This questionnaire aimed to assess the perception and experience of citizens, the extent to which municipalities promote participatory decision-making and accountability, and the extent of the involvement of civil society in municipal management by assessing the extent to which citizens are familiar with municipal programs and projects that are being implemented and the extent to which these contribute to a better quality of life among citizens.

Initially, the VLR sought to collect local data in and with 17 out of the country's 53 municipalities in the period February to June 2020.

However, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that it was only possible for ANAMM staff members to physically visit little over 40% of the targeted municipalities. In other municipalities, information questionnaires and interviews had to be conducted remotely through the use of digital communication platforms, while secondary sources were used to validate the collected information. One municipality (Maputo) ended up not being included in the report as the data provided could not be included in time (ANAMM 2020).

The municipalities that participated in the VLR represented both large and small cities, covering administrative categories "A" to "D", as well as municipal authorities from the south to center and northern part of the country (see Fig. 11.6 and Table 11.1). They also included the municipalities that had taken part in the SDG training in Maputo in November 2019.

11.5.1 SDG Awareness and Relevance

The general questionnaire on SDG awareness and relevance showed that 66% of participants in the study had heard of the SDGs, but had only limited knowledge of the goals, while 26% knew of the SDGs and were able to explain what they were. Only 8% had no knowledge at all of the SDGs (see Fig. 11.7). The main source of information on the SDGs was television and to a lesser extent social media, showing the potential of these and complementary communication channels and activities, such as public events, workshops and trainings, to disseminate information about the SDGs among city officials (see Fig. 11.8).

Some 76% of participants in the study consider the SDGs to be very relevant for municipal management, which implies that even in the absence of widespread detailed knowledge about the SDGs, global development agreements are considered to have local relevance (see Fig. 11.9). Moreover, according to 46%, the SDGs are aligned to the priorities of the municipality (Fig. 11.10). Notably, SDG 6 on water and sani-

tation was considered to be the most important and relevant goal at the municipal level, which was corroborated in various interviews, followed by SDG 3 on health, SDG 4 on education, SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 8 on employment, and SDG 5 on gender (ANAMM 2020).

11.5.2 SDG Implementation

The data collected on municipal management indicate that when it comes to the implementation of municipal programs and projects, four key SDGs are addressed. These include SDG 6 on water and sanitation, SDG 3 on health, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 1 on poverty. Drilling down into this information illuminates the local challenges and governance complexities of implementing sustainable development in a low-income African context.

Interventions related to SDG 11 are part of the regular services that fall under the responsibility of municipalities and include the issuing of property and land-use rights, waste collection, road maintenance, public transport, and environmental protection. However, many other municipal projects are implemented in response to local needs and demands and do not always fall within municipal mandates. Such emergency interventions also often require resources that were not planned for, such as food assistance for vulnerable communities affected by natural disasters. Many municipalities also report using their own resources for the construction of health centers to meet the demand for local health care, even if the transfer of this function has not been completely devolved to the municipal level. Municipalities also organize public events to promote preventive health measures, for instance, related to family planning and the prevention of unwanted pregnancies. Similarly, while the responsibility for education has also not been completely devolved to the municipal level, many municipalities report to be building classrooms to meet local needs as some schools have in excess of 100 learners per class. Municipalities also report to provide students with desks and other school supplies.

Fig. 11.6 Map of Mozambique with participation VLR cities. (Source: Authors)

Table 11.1 Profiles of Mozambican Voluntary Local Review (VLR) municipalities (ANAMM 2020)

	Nampula	**Chimoio**	**Dondo**	**Nhamatanda**
Population	653,961	363,336	103,493	62,362
Number of neighborhoods	18	33	10	12
Year of creation	1997	1997	1997	2013
Category	City "B"	City "C"	City "D"	Town "B"
	Mandlakazi	**Quelimane**	**Manhiça**	**Pemba**
Population	59,714	246,915	77,592	200,529
Number of neighborhoods	15	52	21	13
Year of creation	1997	1997	1997	1997
Category	Town "B"	City "C"	Town "A"	City "B"
	Moatize	**Massinga**	**Quissico**	**Maxixe**
Population	64,398	49,635	25,000	129,993
Number of neighborhoods	8	14	11	17
Year of creation	1997	2008	2013	1997
Category	City "C"	Town "A"	Town "C"	City "C"
	Chokwe	**Xai**	**Boane**	**Matola**
Population	70,100	140,000	106,000	1,032,197
Number of neighborhoods	8	15	33	42
Year of creation	1997	1997	2013	1997
Category	City "C"	City "C"	Town "A"	City "B"
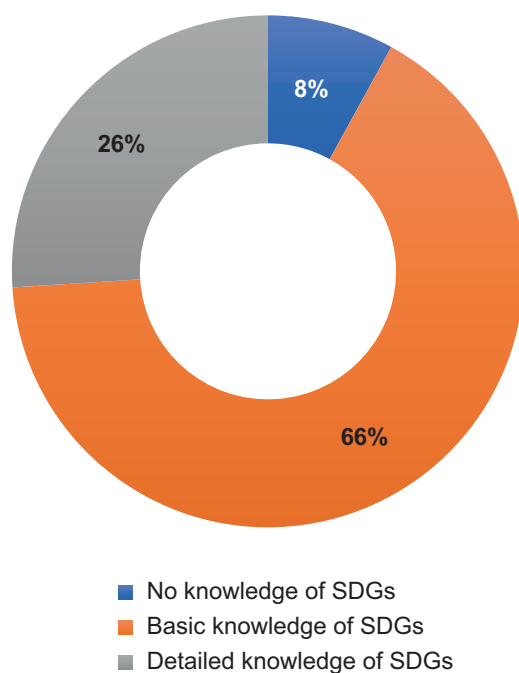
Fig. 11.7 Levels of SDG awareness (ANAMM 2020)

Poverty reduction is a major concern for municipalities and is addressed by initiatives promoting economic development and activities supporting agriculture, fishing, and livestock aimed at creating both employment opportunities as well as improving food security.

Nevertheless, for the majority of municipalities water provision represents the main priority, as public water networks managed by central state-owned utilities often only partially reach the most centrally located neighborhoods and communities, with peripheral neighborhoods requiring additional systems and sources such as fountains, wells, or informal water service providers (Matsinhe et al. 2008). This has important implications for the state's ability to recover costs and further invest in water provision (Farolfi and Gallego-Ayala 2014). There are also three municipalities that are not covered at all by public water systems and where water provision is of the exclusive responsibility of the local municipality. In the municipality of Nhamatanda, this was addressed by drilling 61 wells and constructing three small water systems, two in the period after Cyclone Idai. However, 9 out of the town's 12 neighborhoods still do not have regular access to water, and there are only 200 residential water connections for a population of more than 62,000 inhabitants (ANAMM 2020).
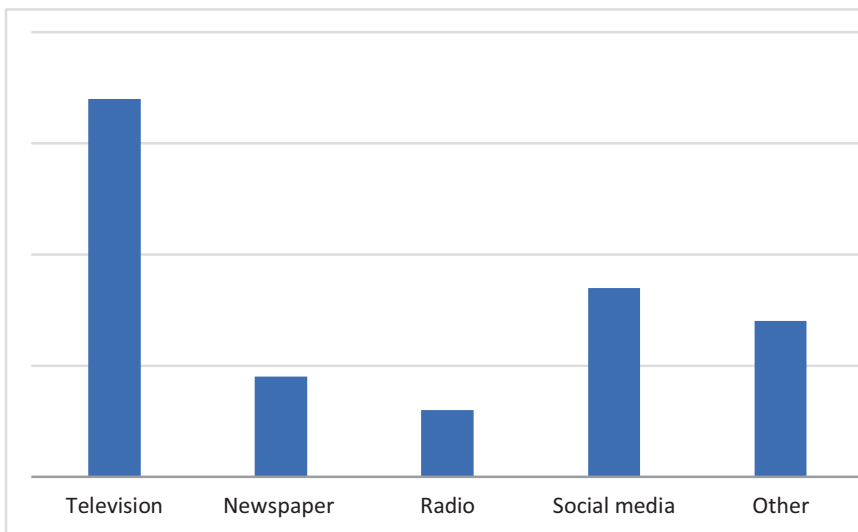
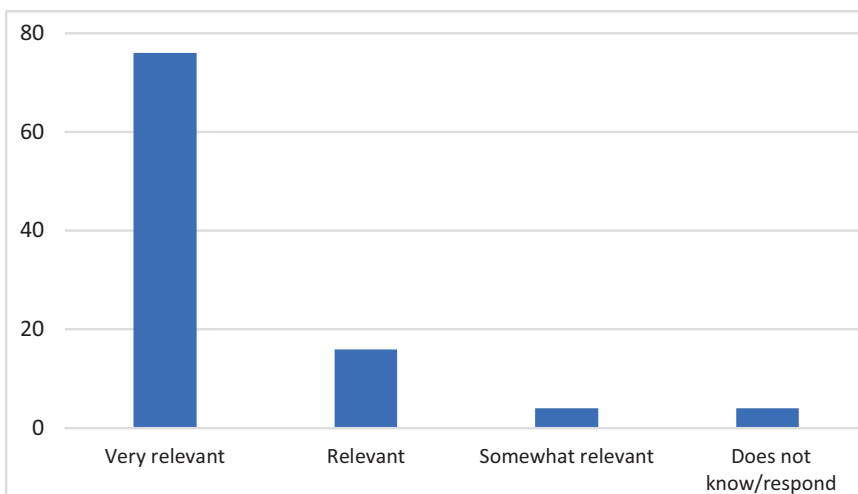**Fig. 11.8** Main source of information on SDGs (ANAMM 2020)

Fig. 11.9 SDG relevance for municipal management (ANAMM 2020)

11.5.3 Good Practices

The municipal programs, projects, and initiatives outlined above indicate that many municipalities in Mozambique are actively involved in improving the lives of local residents, in spite of the many financial and governance limitations. The complexity of the local context is the recurrence of natural disasters, representing a major barrier to long-term planning and development (Koivisto and Nohrstedt 2017). But even amidst adversity, there is innovation. Among the 16 municipalities covered in the VLR, a number of them stand out for being particularly innovative. This section outlines a number of good practices developed by these municipalities with the aim of offering opportunities for learning and action by other municipalities. This is followed by cross-cutting examples around gender and partnerships.
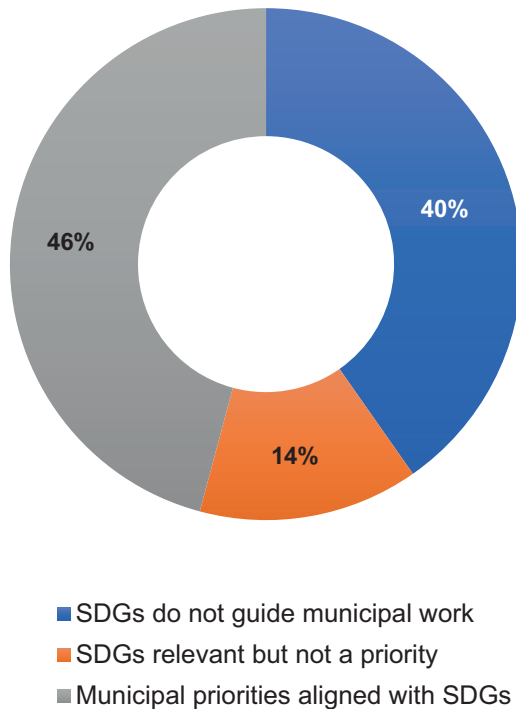
40%

46%

14%

■ SDGs do not guide municipal work
■ SDGs relevant but not a priority
■ Municipal priorities aligned with SDGs

Fig. 11.10 Alignment between SDGs and municipal priorities (ANAMM 2020)

11.5.4 Pioneering Municipalities

The municipality of Chimoio has introduced a new IT system for the collection of municipal fees and taxes, allowing for the registration of 60,000 local residents in the first phase. The system allows residents to track not only their payments and accounts online but also the public works undertaken by the municipality in their neighborhoods and therefore how their taxes contribute to local development. Information is further available on the timeframes of each project, as well as contact details of the contractors, allowing citizens to monitor municipal works.

The city of Dondo was one of the main cities affected by Cyclone Idai in 2019. In order to improve disaster preparedness in the aftermath of the cyclone, the city created a City Resilience Framework for Action with support of UN-Habitat. This involved working together with local communities to create a map of risk and vulnerability of the city of Dondo. Importantly, after its finalization in March 2020, the Action

Framework was adopted by the Municipal Assembly in order to guide the city going forward (UN-Habitat and DiMSUR 2020).

The cities of Nampula and Maxixe have been implementing programs to promote agricultural production through a holistic approach. This involves the regularization of tenure for low-income families and the provision of seeds and other inputs to communities as well as farmer cooperatives. Fishing communities in Maxixe have also benefitted from training in sustainable fishing and the planting of mangroves to protect fishing populations.

The town of Quelimane has created a House of Rights and the Citizen (*Casa do Direito e do Cidadão*) in order to support access to free legal assistance to citizens of Quelimane, especially those in vulnerable situations. It also has developed preventive strategies to address (domestic) violence. These include activities of conflict mediation, legal counseling, advocacy, and leadership training on human rights.

11.5.5 Gender

Many municipalities also report implementing actions in the area of gender equality. While the participation of women in political life has increased in recent years, with an increasing number of female deputies (37.6%), civil servants (39%), provincial assembly members (35%), and Council of Ministers members (41%), these levels are much lower at the municipal level (Republic of Mozambique 2020).

After the local elections of October 2018, only six women (11%) out of a total of 53 were elected President of a Municipal Council, an important position in the Municipal Executive, responsible for the management and implementation of municipal programs and projects. The percentage of female Executive Council members is higher and reached 24%. However, female council members tend to occupy positions in the area of social affairs such as health or culture and less in areas such as administration or finances.

A similar trend emerges when assessing the number of female Presidents of the Municipal

Assembly of which there are only 8 (15%) out of a total of 53, while 21 (40%) occupy the post of Vice President of the Municipal Assembly. Members of the Municipal Assembly also only include 34% women against 66% men.

The reduced participation of women in local decision-making spaces can be explained by a mix of socio-cultural factors, as well as a lack of incentives and political support. While there are no laws or quota to guarantee the participation of women in political life, a number of municipalities such as Chimoio, Nampula, and Mandlakazi have taken it upon themselves to develop initiatives aimed at women empowerment, as well to adopt measures to increase the number of female public servants, both in technical and decision-making positions.

11.5.6 Partnerships

Because municipal financial resources are often limited, many municipalities have promoted the consolidation of partnerships with external actors, such as development agencies but also private entrepreneurs, churches, and other actors that provide technical and financial support.

Such partnerships represent an important contribution to the implementation of mid- to long-term development plans and objectives. Important partners include international organizations and foundations such as the NGO Engineering for Human Development (ONGAWA), the Lay Volunteers International Association (LVIA) and related Association of Volunteers in International Service (AVSI), national non-governmental organization (NGOs) such as the Mozambican Association for the Development of Female Heads of Household (MUCHEFA), and the Mechanism for Civil Society Support (MASC) Foundation, as well as international development agencies such as USAID, GIZ-German Cooperation, the European Union, and UN agencies such as UN-Habitat. The initiatives that count with most external support are those in the area of water, urban planning, infrastructural development, and actions aimed at the protection of children and vulnerable communities. A number of municipalities have also benefitted from financial support from multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the German KfW Development Bank.

The private sector also represents a (potentially) important partner in the implementation of municipal development initiatives. However, it is still relatively weak, especially when it comes to the support of the implementation of SDG-related initiatives. However, municipalities such as Chimoio are rapidly advancing in the consolidation of public-private partnerships as an important part of local development initiatives is co-financed by local businesses. This has been the result of persistent efforts by the municipal leadership, including efforts to restructure and improve its services. Such efforts in turn have contributed to building confidence and increased perceptions of municipal management as efficient and transparent, important in attracting private sector investment. Notably, few municipalities reported on the details of possible partnerships with researchers and academic institutions.

11.6 Lessons

As the world enters into the decade of action, counting down to the year 2030, many challenges remain when it comes to the space that local governments have for SDG localization and implementation. A lack of local awareness, resources, and capacity represent major barriers, as illustrated by the case of Mozambique. Nevertheless, the VLR process also reveals important lessons and opportunities.

Firstly, local leadership is crucial for successful SDG implementation. This involves political will to commit to the SDGs and incorporate these goals as an integral part of local development agendas. The VLR process showed that in municipalities where presidents were more aware of the importance of the SDGs, there was a better integration and visibility of the SDGs in either on-going or projected local plans and efforts.

On the other hand, while the SDGs remain a new concept, most municipalities are already implementing the SDGs in their day-to-day actions and initiatives. This means that there is important scope for awareness raising among local elected officials, technical staff, and citizens around the SDGs in order to build ownership and strengthen the integration of the SDGs in local development plans.

Decentralized cooperation represents an important mechanism for strengthening the human, technical, and material capacity of municipalities, but also for further alignment and integration of the SDGs with local development plans. This in turn requires a greater recognition by national government of the important role of local governments for SDG implementation, more attention to the capacity and resources this requires at the subnational level, as well as the importance of social responsibility. Addressing these issues would require stepping up awareness and communication campaigns around the SDGs and local government and capacity building among a wide range of city officials.

Municipalities need to be supported when it comes to the elaboration of SDG localization strategies, for instance, by building on the current collective VLR to develop individual reviews that use the same methodological instruments. In this regard, monitoring and evaluation efforts will need to be strengthened, for instance, through the creation of locally generated indicator frameworks, in order to support follow-up and implementation (Croese et al. 2021).

In order to strengthen implementation, there is a need to recognize the importance of supporting specific projects that can work as accelerators, but also projects that address the impact of extreme natural calamities. This requires technical and financial support of both the national government, cooperation partners, the private sector, and academia.

Existing as well as additional or alternative financial mechanisms and means of implementation also need to be reviewed, both at the level of local municipalities, national government as well as external development partners. This includes exploring ways to improve local tax collection,

reconsidering existing intergovernmental transfers to the municipal level as well as expanding private sector support.

In sum, while there are still many challenges and barriers to SDG localization and implementation at the local level, proactive and effective leadership and coordinated and committed partnerships represent an important contribution to local progress.

11.7   Conclusion

Voluntary Local Reviews on the SDGs are emerging as an important instrument for local governments to affirm the importance of their actions for SDG progress. In spite of their usefulness as an instrument and opportunity to connect local strategies to the SDGs, strengthen evidence-based policymaking, identify gaps and priorities, as well as mobilize new policies, partnerships, and resources at the local government level, few African cities so far have engaged in VLR processes.

In part this reflects slow, complex, and uneven processes of decentralization across the continent, as illustrated by the case of Mozambique. Decentralization in Mozambique has been guided by the principle of gradualism, meaning that power has only been gradually geographically and functionally been devolved to the local level. Responsibilities have increased but so have structural as well as extraordinary challenges and limitations, arising from limited financial resources combined with the effects of climate change that force municipalities to adapt outside of established or projected plans and policies.

However, the VLR shows that municipalities in Mozambique implement the SDGs in various and often locally innovative and creative ways. Moreover, a number of municipalities have developed cross-cutting initiatives to improve gender equity and build partnerships with a range of partners and stakeholders.

There is much scope to strengthen and support these on-going efforts and share lessons and learnings. Local leadership and commitment are crucial in this regard, but so is the importance of

tracking and evaluating ongoing work through the improvement of local statistical, monitoring, and data management capacity. Local government associations can play an important role in supporting and harmonizing these processes and making sure these are fed back to national government.

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