

**GENEVA  
ACADEMY**

Académie de droit international  
humanitaire et de droits humains  
Academy of International  
Humanitarian Law and Human Rights



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA | DEPARTMENT  
OF LEGAL STUDIES



THE HUMAN  
GENEVA  
RIGHTS  
PLATFORM

ACADEMY BRIEFING N°25

# LOCALIZING MULTILATERALISM

THE ROLE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS  
IN ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE SDGs

LUDOVICA CHIUSI CURZI, KAMELIA KEMILEVA, DOMENICO ZIPOLI  
MARCH 2025

THE ACADEMY A JOINT CENTER OF

GENEVA  
GRADUATE  
INSTITUTE

INSTITUT DE HAUTES  
ÉTUDES INTERNATIONALES  
ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT  
GRADUATE INSTITUTE  
OF INTERNATIONAL AND  
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES



UNIVERSITÉ  
DE GENÈVE  
FACULTY OF LAW

# LOCALIZING MULTILATERALISM

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE SDGs

### LUDOVICA CHIUSSI CURZI, KAMELIA KEMILEVA, DOMENICO ZIPOLI<sup>1</sup>

This Academy Briefing originates from an expert roundtable on Data Planning and Collection by National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting, and Follow-up (NMIRFs): The Role of Local and Regional Governments and National Statistical Systems that took place at the University of Bologna on 18 April 2024, co-organized by the Department of Legal Studies at the University of Bologna, the Geneva Human Rights Platform and the Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights (CIDU) of Italy, with the support of the Analysis and Planning Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, in accordance with Article 23bis of the Decree of the President of the Republic no. 18/1967. The opinions expressed in this brief are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all participants of the expert roundtable for their valuable contributions to the discussions that shaped this briefing. We thank Alessia Preti, PhD Candidate in International Law at the University of Bologna, for her invaluable research assistance and Global Cities Hub Co-Director Anh Thu Duong and Senior Policy Advisor Andras Szorenyi, Felix Kirchmeier, Executive Director of the Geneva Human Rights Platform as well as Ms. Maja Bova, Human Rights Expert of the Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights (CIDU) of Italy for their insights and help throughout the project. We also express our deep appreciation to SO<sub>2</sub> Design for their exceptional work in designing and laying out this publication—continuing a tradition of excellence in Geneva Academy publications for over a decade. Finally, we are grateful to Riccardo Zipoli for generously providing the cover photograph for this briefing.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ludovica Chiussi Curzi is an Associate Professor of International Law at the University of Bologna; Kamelia Kemileva is Co-director in the Global Cities Hub, an organization founded by the City and the Canton of Geneva, with the support of the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs to connect and support Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) also called “cities”, municipalities” or “authorities” in their work on global level, namely with the United Nations but also with other organizations. One of the priority areas of work of the Global Cities Hub are the UN Human Rights Mechanisms; Domenico Zipoli is Project Coordinator at the Geneva Human Rights Platform and Senior Research Fellow at the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.

# CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ACADEMY BRIEFING</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3. ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY: THE GROWING ROLE OF LRGs IN THE GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>A. ENGAGEMENT THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTIONS     IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>B. ENGAGEMENT WITH THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>C. ENGAGEMENT WITH UN SPECIAL PROCEDURES</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>D. ENGAGEMENT WITH UN TREATY BODIES</b>	<b>15</b>
1. COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (CESCR)	15
2. COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (CRPD)	15
3. COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)	15
4. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE (HRCTEE)	16
<b>E. ENGAGEMENT IN THE WORK OF THE OFFICE OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER     FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>F. EMPOWERING LRGs AS ACTORS IN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION CAPACITIES: LRGs AS A VECTOR FOR DATA COLLECTION IN THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>A. THE CONSULTATION CAPACITY OF LRGs</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>B. THE COORDINATION CAPACITY OF LRGs</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>5. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT CAPACITY: THE ROLE OF LRGs IN INTEGRATED HUMAN RIGHTS AND SDG MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>A. THE ROLE OF LRGs IN GLOBAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS     AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>26</b>
1. ENHANCING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT THROUGH WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT AND WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACHES	27
2. DECENTRALIZATION AND SUBSIDIARITY: BUILDING LOCAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT CAPACITY	28
3. POLICY COHERENCE AND MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE FOR EFFECTIVE DATA PLANNING AND COLLECTION	29
<b>B. NATIONAL ACTORS AND THEIR ROLES IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND SDG DATA COLLECTION</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>C. CHALLENGES FACED BY LRGs IN DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>D. LINKING SDGs AND HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING</b>	<b>34</b>
1. STREAMLINING DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING FOR SDGs AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANCE	35
2. ENHANCING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY THROUGH INTEGRATED MONITORING	36
3. ADDRESSING POLICY GAPS AND BUILDING CAPACITY FOR LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING	37
<b>E. DIGITAL TOOLS AND PLATFORMS FOR ENHANCING HUMAN RIGHTS AND SDG TRACKING</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>6. CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF LRGs IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND SDG MONITORING     MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>43 44</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Local and regional governments (LRGs) have been increasingly acknowledged as key players in the promotion and protection of human rights and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) due to their proximity to residents within their jurisdiction and their essential role in implementing policies on the ground. LRGs operationalize international human rights commitments and SDGs by translating them into concrete and contextually relevant actions.

These actions often involve aligning local policies with international human rights standards while promoting human rights through community engagement, education, and advocacy. LRGs' role in consultation, coordination and information management is critical to addressing issues such as inequality, health, food security, and housing. These are not only priorities of international human rights frameworks but are also core objectives of the 2030 Agenda. Hence, the interconnectedness between human rights and SDGs make LRGs indispensable in ensuring that global human rights obligations are implemented through tailor-made policies that meet the specific needs of communities.

LRGs as integral organs of the State are unequivocally bound by human rights obligations under international law. Consequently, their role in addressing the specific needs of communities is not merely complementary but a logical extension of State responsibility to implement these obligations. In this context, it is fitting that the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and other UN bodies recognize the essential function of local governments in operationalizing international human rights law at the grassroots level.<sup>2</sup>

Despite this key role, LRGs are often insufficiently integrated into the UN human rights framework. Their participation in global human rights mechanisms and processes is limited, with existing frameworks primarily focusing on national governments. This gap not only overlooks the importance of LRGs in bridging the implementation divide between international standards and local realities but also fails to fully harness their potential to contribute to advancing human rights through localized and context-specific solutions.<sup>3</sup>

Given their critical role in translating human rights commitments into concrete local actions, it is essential to examine how LRGs can more effectively engage with and contribute to the broader UN human rights framework, including both treaty-based and charter-based mechanisms.

---

2 UN Human Rights Council, Local Government and Human Rights, Res 57/12, A/HRC/RES/57/12, 10 October 2024, available at <https://docs.un.org/A/HRC/RES/57/12>.

3 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Human Rights Cities in the EU: A Handbook for Reinforcing Human Rights Locally*, 2021, available at [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2021-human-rights-cities-in-the-eu\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2021-human-rights-cities-in-the-eu_en.pdf).

Human rights are universal and foundational to human dignity, freedom, and well-being. To safeguard and promote these rights, the international community has established a comprehensive array of mechanisms, including treaties, conventions, and monitoring bodies. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, is the cornerstone of this framework, further reinforced by legally binding instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).<sup>4</sup> Alongside these binding treaties are numerous evolving instruments, such as resolutions, decisions, and presidential statements, which reflect ongoing diplomatic efforts to define, reaffirm, and expand human rights protection, including in areas like sustainable development and environmental justice.<sup>5</sup>

The United Nations human rights system comprises two main types of mechanisms for monitoring and promoting human rights: treaty-based and charter-based mechanisms.

Treaty-based mechanisms are established under legally binding international treaties. These mechanisms, also called treaty bodies, are composed of independent experts elected by states that have ratified the relevant treaties. Their primary role is to monitor state compliance with binding human rights agreements, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) or the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).<sup>6</sup>

Charter-based mechanisms, on the other hand, derive their authority from the UN Charter and operate under a different framework.<sup>7</sup> These mechanisms include the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and Special Procedures mandate holders, such as Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts. Unlike treaty bodies, charter-based mechanisms often involve direct engagement with UN member states themselves, including through a peer-review model. The UPR, for example, provides a forum for states to evaluate each other's human rights records, while Special Procedures mandate holders conduct in-country visits and report on human rights conditions based on their assessments.

---

4 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *International Human Rights Instruments and Mechanisms*, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-and-mechanisms>. See Claire Callejon, Kamelia Kemileva, Felix Kirchmeier, and Domenico Zipoli, *Optimizing the UN Treaty Body System*, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, 2018, available at <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Optimizing%20UN%20Treaty%20Bodies.pdf>.

5 See, e.g., UN Human Rights Council, *Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment*, Res 55/2, A/HRC/RES/55/2, 2024; UN Human Rights Council, *Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and the Right to Non-Discrimination in this Context*, Res 55/11, A/HRC/RES/55/11, 2024.

6 See International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), *Updated Simple Guide to the UN Treaty Bodies*, June 2022, available at <https://ishr.ch/defenders-toolbox/resources/updated-simple-guide-to-the-un-treaty-bodies-guide-simple-sur-les-organes-de-traites-des-nations-unies/>. For more definitions, see the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) website at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-and-mechanisms>.

7 Eric Tistounet, *The UN Human Rights Council: A Practical Anatomy*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020, pp. 6–28.

Both treaty-based and charter-based mechanisms are crucial to the international human rights framework and will be examined in this study for their potential cooperation and engagement with LRGs. Additionally, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) plays a key role in supporting these mechanisms through its Secretariat role, overseeing a range of activities to facilitate their implementation and promote human rights globally. These international human rights mechanisms are vital for setting standards, monitoring compliance, and providing avenues for redress. However, their effectiveness relies heavily on the active participation of states and, increasingly, on LRGs, given that the latter are directly responsible for implementing policies that impact daily life in areas such as housing, education, healthcare, and public safety.<sup>8</sup>

Before exploring LRGs engagement with the international human rights system, it is essential to address four foundational elements:

1. **Definition and Conceptualization of LRGs:** The definition of LRGs within international governance remains debated, particularly in relation to what constitutes a ‘city’ or a local authority.<sup>9</sup> While UN platforms like UN-Habitat’s New Urban Agenda (2016) recognize their role in SDG implementation, there is no universally binding legal definition. Some view LRGs as decentralized extensions of central governments rather than independent entities. Nonetheless, international organizations (IOs) have established common principles outlining their responsibilities and governance, emphasizing their role in sustainable development and human rights implementation.<sup>10</sup>
2. **Position in the United Nations Governance System:** LRGs occupy a complex position within global governance, functioning as integral organs of the state while also advocating for greater recognition as distinct actors. Unlike national governments, which hold full membership, or NGOs, which engage through consultative status, LRGs lack formal standing within the UN system.<sup>11</sup> This absence of institutionalized participation reflects their status as decentralized

---

8 See, e.g., Sally Engle Merry, *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice*, University of Chicago Press, 2005, Ch. 1 ‘Introduction: Culture and Transnationalism’ and Ch. 3 ‘Gender Violence and the CEDAW Process’, pp. 1–35, 73–102.

9 For the definition of “city” in Switzerland, see Dominique Joye, Thérèse Huissoud, and Martin Schuler, *Habitants des quartiers, citoyens de la ville?*, Zurich, Seismo, 1995: a municipality with 10,000 or more inhabitants. As of 2020, there are 162 municipalities that meet this criterion. Like Swiss national law, all States define their territorial divisions (e.g., city, region, canton) based on population size and governance structure. See also Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi, *City Diplomacy*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, ‘Defining the City’, pp. 3–6.

10 For more on the issue of definition, see Yishai Blank, ‘International Legal Personality/Subjectivity of Cities’, in Helmut Aust and Janne E. Nijman (eds.), *Research Handbook on International Law and Cities*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Pb ed., 2022, pp. 103–120.

11 The UN considers as “observers” all entities that are not States (i.e., according to the organization’s own definition, requiring a commitment to the UN Charter) or State-led international organizations (such as the World Health Organization or the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). “Observers” include non-profit organizations, as well as churches, universities, and private business structures. Article 71 of the UN Charter opened the door for suitable arrangements for consultation with NGOs. This relationship with ECOSOC is governed today by ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31, available at <https://docs.un.org/E/1996/96>. LRGs do not fit into any of these categories.

authorities rather than sovereign entities. However, some LRGs seek greater recognition within global governance, leveraging networks and partnerships to engage with UN processes, particularly in human rights and sustainable development initiatives.<sup>12</sup>

3. **Human Rights in Local Terms:** LRGs play a crucial role in implementing human rights on the ground, often addressing issues such as housing, education, and social protection. However, their engagement with human rights is typically pragmatic rather than explicitly framed by international legal instruments like the UDHR. Rather than directly referencing global frameworks, LRGs tend to integrate human rights principles into local policies and services in response to community needs. Their approach is often shaped by practical governance considerations, focusing on delivering rights-based services rather than engaging in the legalistic discourse common at the international level.
4. **Local Human Rights Charters and Ordinances:** Many cities and municipalities have adopted local human rights charters or ordinances to set explicit human rights standards, often aligned with international principles. These documents address issues such as non-discrimination, freedom of expression, housing, health, and education. Developed through city movements and voluntarily endorsed by municipalities, they demonstrate a proactive local commitment to human rights.<sup>13</sup> A notable example is the *Cities for CEDAW* movement in the U.S., which applies the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to local policies.<sup>14</sup> In urban development, HRBAs further integrates human rights principles into development planning<sup>15</sup>, aiming to address inequalities and systemic discrimination that hinder inclusive progress.<sup>16</sup> In recent years, international organizations (IOs) like UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Health Organization have increasingly supported city-level human rights activities. UNICEF creates or supports cities activities in the area of human rights.<sup>17</sup> Another example is UNESCO's *Crea-*

---

12 United Nations, *High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism: A Breakthrough for People and Planet*, 2023, p. 17.

13 For examples, see: Mexico City, which in 2010 became the first municipality to adopt a full *Charter for the Right to the City*, available at <https://www.right2city.org/the-right-to-the-city/>; the *Lampedusa Charter* or *Charter of Refugee Cities*, a concept proposed by former Lampedusa mayor Giusi Nicolini as a framework for addressing the challenges faced by migrant entry-point cities, though no formal or widely recognized document exists under international law, available at [https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/lampedusa\\_-\\_carta-eng.pdf](https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/lampedusa_-_carta-eng.pdf); and Zurich's *Züri City Card*, a local system allowing "sans papiers" persons to access specific services within the city of Zurich, despite challenges from the federal government in Bern, available at <https://www.zuericitycard.ch/>.

14 See *Cities for CEDAW* resources at <http://citiesforcedaw.org/resources/>; see also Tamar Ezer, 'Localizing Human Rights in Cities', *EZER*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 68s.

15 Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to ECOSOC, E/2018/57, 15 May 2018.

16 United Nations Sustainable Development Group, *Human Rights-Based Approach*, available at <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach>.

17 UNICEF recognizes child-friendly cities as part of the *Child Friendly Cities Initiative*, a public-private non-profit movement similar to an NGO, available at <https://www.unicefusa.org/what-unicef-does/respect-children/child-friendly-cities>.

*tive City Network* promoting cultural rights<sup>18</sup>, while other International Organisations networks focus on health<sup>19</sup>. However, traditional UN human rights mechanisms have been slower to engage with urbanization and the role of LRGs. Although mechanisms like CEDAW have begun to recognize the importance of LRGs, more needs to be done to integrate urbanization and LRGs into multilateral human rights discussions.

---

18 UNESCO, *Creative Cities Network*, available at <https://www.unesco.org/en/creative-cities?hub=80094>.

19 WHO, *WHO European Healthy Cities Network*, available at <https://www.who.int/europe/groups/who-european-healthy-cities-network>; WHO, *WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities*, available at <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-FWC-ALC-18.4>.



## 2. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ACADEMY BRIEFING

This Academy Briefing examines the engagement between LRGs and international human rights mechanisms. It provides an overview of these mechanisms, assesses LRGs' readiness to engage with them, and explores the capacity of these systems to integrate LRGs. Additionally, it considers the varying willingness of UN member states to accept LRG participation—while some recognize their value, others remain hesitant.<sup>20</sup>

The study also highlights LRGs' role in facilitating consultations with National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and other stakeholders. As intermediaries between local communities and national authorities, LRGs help ensure that diverse perspectives inform policymaking. Effective coordination strengthens collaboration, improves information flow, and aligns governance efforts to advance human rights and SDG commitments.

Furthermore, the briefing explores how LRGs contribute to human rights and SDG monitoring through data management. By identifying localized inequalities and integrating insights into national and global reporting, LRGs help translate international commitments into practical, rights-based solutions at the community level.

Overall, this Academy Briefing provides a comprehensive analysis of the following dimensions:

- **Engagement Capacity (Section 3):** Examines the role of LRGs in engaging with international human rights bodies, including mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review, Special Procedures, and the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies.
- **Coordination and Consultation Capacities (Section 4):** Discusses the role of LRGs in disseminating information and organizing data from various government entities and stakeholders as well as in leading consultations with NHRIs and CSOs.
- **Information Management Capacity (Section 5):** Explores how LRGs can contribute to integrated human rights and SDG monitoring and implementation, focusing on their potential to collect, manage, and utilize data effectively.

---

<sup>20</sup> Many cities around the world still cannot act outside national government policies; see Anna Kosovac, Kris Hartley, Michele Acuto, and Darcy Cuning, *Conducting City Diplomacy: Executive Summary*, Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2020, p. 18. See also Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, *Study and Debate at the Human Rights Council*, available at <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g15/174/88/pdf/g1517488.pdf>.

Ultimately, this study aims to clarify the vital role of LRGs in international human rights engagement—through participation, reporting, and implementation. By analyzing the intersection of human rights mechanisms, the sustainable development agenda, and local governance, the briefing sheds light on how human rights are realized at the local level, as well as the challenges and opportunities LRGs face in this process.<sup>21</sup>

---

21 See also Martha F. Davis, 'Finding International Law "Close to Home": The Case of Human Rights Cities', in Helmut Aust and Janne E. Nijman (eds.), *Research Handbook on International Law and Cities*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Pb ed., 2022, pp. 227–239.

# 3. ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY: THE GROWING ROLE OF LRGs IN THE GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

LRGs play a vital role in translating human rights commitments into concrete local policies and practices. Their growing interaction with international human rights bodies strengthens the link between global standards and local implementation, helping to ensure that human rights obligations are not just national commitments but are actively upheld within communities.

## A. ENGAGEMENT THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTIONS IN THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

The negotiation and adoption of human rights resolutions within the United Nations system, particularly in the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), reflect a complex interplay of diplomacy, advocacy, and consensus-building. While states remain the primary participants, these processes also involve IGOs, NHRIs, CSOs, independent experts, and academics. The UN Secretariat, particularly OHCHR, plays a key role in supporting the UNHRC through substantive and logistical assistance. Experts such as Special Rapporteurs, members of Fact-Finding Missions, and CSOs contribute by providing technical input, voicing concerns, and advocating for specific provisions in draft resolutions.

Notably, the UNHRC is the only UN body that allows continuous participation of IGOs, NHRIs, and CSOs in resolution negotiations. This inclusive approach brings diverse perspectives into human rights discussions. Some entities, functioning as CSOs—such as the American Bar Association and the Global Fund<sup>22</sup>—also influence the outcomes, further illustrating the multi-stakeholder nature of these processes. However, despite the relevance of their competencies, LRGs are not included as direct participants in these negotiations.

The complexity of these processes is further heightened by extensive informal discussions, often held behind closed doors before formal proceedings begin. In contrast to the UN Security Council, where permanent members hold veto power, the UNHRC operates under the principle of “one country, one vote”, ensuring a more

---

22 See the American Bar Association, available at <https://www.americanbar.org/en/>; and The Global Fund, available at <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/>.

democratic approach to decision-making. Only states can formally initiate negotiations in the UNHRC. They are referred to as “initial co-sponsors” or “initial co-authors” of draft resolutions, with some forming a “core group” of key stakeholders. These negotiations begin with a limited circle of supporters and gradually expand through “open-ended negotiations”, remaining informal until the text is presented to the plenary session for official debate and adoption.<sup>23</sup>

Currently, there is no direct evidence that LRGs have participated in the negotiation of human rights instruments, resolutions, or treaties. However, this does not mean they are entirely excluded from these processes. LRGs are frequently referenced in resolutions and consulted indirectly through states and other stakeholders. Given the significant role they play in implementing human rights at the local level, it would be logical for them to be systematically consulted on resolutions addressing areas within their jurisdiction.

In recent years, several UNHRC resolutions have acknowledged the role of LRGs, particularly in the context of SDGs implementation and public service delivery. However, these references remain limited and do not yet establish a formalized role for LRGs in the resolution-drafting process.<sup>24</sup>

Key resolutions mentioning LRGs include:

- **Resolution A/HRC/RES/52/8** (2023) directs OHCHR to incorporate inputs from local governments in its report on public service delivery and human rights.
- **Resolution A/HRC/RES/52/11** (2023) calls for a panel discussion featuring local authorities on the realization of economic, social, and cultural rights.
- **Resolution A/HRC/REC/52/14** (2023) mandates intersessional meetings on human rights and Agenda 2030, again highlighting the involvement of local authorities.
- **Resolution A/HRC/REC/55/11** (2024) on adequate housing explicitly requires the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing to consult LRGs—marking a further step in formalizing LRGs’ role within UN human rights mechanisms.<sup>25</sup>

The most significant of these resolutions is the biennial “**Local Government and Human Rights**” resolution, with the latest version adopted on 10 October 2024.<sup>26</sup> This resolution establishes a framework for collaboration between states and LRGs within the Human Rights Council, demonstrating an increasing willingness by states to engage with local governments on human rights issues. Led by

---

23 See Tistoune, *The UN Human Rights Council: A Practical Anatomy*, supra fn 7, pp. 210–271.

24 Jacob Katz Cogan, ‘International Organizations and Cities’, in Helmut Aust and Janne E. Nijman (eds.), *Research Handbook on International Law and Cities*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Pb ed., 2022, pp. 158–161.

25 All documents can be consulted at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/sessions>.

26 UNHRC, *Local Government and Human Rights*, supra fn 2, UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/57/12, 10 October 2024.

the Republic of Korea, Chile, Egypt, and Romania as “core group” of co-sponsors, the resolution builds on previous versions that recognize the critical role of local governments in providing public services aligned with human rights principles. It underscores the importance of adopting a whole-of-government approach to ensure the respect, protection, and fulfilment of human rights at all levels.

Additionally, this resolution highlights the role of LRGs in areas such as digitalization (e.g., smart cities) and other human rights domains where local governments are uniquely positioned to serve their residents effectively.<sup>27</sup>

While these references represent progress, they remain insufficient given the extent to which LRGs oversee and implement policies directly linked to human rights. Many resolutions address issues—such as housing, non-discrimination, public services, and digital governance—that fall squarely within the competencies of LRGs. However, despite their direct relevance, LRGs are rarely consulted in the negotiation and drafting of these resolutions. For UNHRC resolutions to be more relevant, actionable, and effective, states should systematically engage with LRGs in the drafting process. Ensuring their input would strengthen the implementation of human rights at the local level, enhance policy coherence, and make international human rights commitments more applicable in practice.

## **B. ENGAGEMENT WITH THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)**

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a distinctive mechanism that assesses the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States every 4.5 years. This state-led, peer-review process enables each State to report on its progress in fulfilling human rights obligations, share best practices, and receive feedback from other Member States. The UPR process is not limited to state actors—it also incorporates input from a range of external experts, including UN bodies, NHRIs, CSOs, and academic institutions, allowing for a comprehensive review. Through this process, states receive recommendations from peers, which they are encouraged to implement to improve their human rights performance.

To date, LRGs have largely been regarded as part of their respective states in the UPR process, which is true in an administrative and legal sense. However, there is growing interest in recognizing LRGs as unique, *sui generis*, contributors to state reviews. As the closest level of government to the people, LRGs are uniquely positioned to provide valuable insights and support the implementation of human rights at the local level, a perspective that is gaining traction within the UPR framework.

The UPR offers a significant opportunity for LRGs to engage in the human rights sphere. It provides a platform for cooperation between central governments and LRGs, where subnational authorities can work alongside their national counterparts to promote human rights implementation. This collaboration can help central governments find effective local partners for human rights initiatives,

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., see mainly paragraphs 8 and 9.

while LRGs can use the UPR process to engage in meaningful dialogue with their national governments and ensure that human rights are implemented on the ground. Given the role played by LRGs to promote, protect and fulfil human rights, their participation in the UPR mechanism would add much value for the following reasons:

- Obtaining information on how human rights are being effectively implemented at local level would enable States and the UN human rights machinery, to get a better sense of the situation of human rights in a given State.
- Participating in the UPR would enable LRGs to obtain a clearer idea of where they stand in relation to the promotion and protection of human rights in their respective territories.
- Engaging in the UPR would enable LRGs and their administrations to enhance dialogue with the central government, as well as with local governments in other States.
- Because LRGs already share with central government the responsibility to fulfil accepted recommendations stemming from the UPR, it is only right to include them in the process, and thereby guarantee better adherence and implementation of those recommendations.<sup>28</sup>

Some states have already begun incorporating LRGs into their UPR processes.<sup>29</sup> Italy, for instance, has utilized the UPR to highlight the achievements of LRGs in human rights policy, offering a focused report on their contributions. This approach demonstrates the potential for LRGs to play a more prominent role in the UPR process.<sup>30</sup>

Despite those obvious advantages to fully include LRGs in all stages of the UPR process, many states have yet to fully explore the potential of engaging LRGs in the UPR, despite the clear benefits. Recent resolutions on Local Government and Human Rights indicate that there is a growing recognition of the need to expand LRG involvement in the UPR, suggesting that the future holds significant opportunities for deeper collaboration.<sup>31</sup>

---

28 OHCHR, *Tips for LRGs Participation in the UPR*, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/leaflet-tips-role-lrgs-upr.pdf>.

29 For example, Japan's report for the 2017 UPR (third cycle) provides instances of good practices, such as training for local public officers by the Ministry of Justice (para. 16, A/HRC/WG.6/28/JPN/1) and cooperation on the campaign to combat violence against women (paras. 25, 33, and others of the same report). See UN Human Rights Council, *National Report Submitted in Accordance with Paragraph 5 of the Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 16/21: Japan*, UN Doc. A/HRC/WG.6/28/JPN/1, 2017.

30 Italy, *Mid-Term UPR Report on Regions (Annex I, 3rd Cycle)*, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/ItalyMidTermReview3-annex.pdf>.

31 See UN Human Rights Council, *Local Government and Human Rights*, supra fn 2, UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/57/12, 10 October 2024.

## C. ENGAGEMENT WITH UN SPECIAL PROCEDURES

Special Procedures refer to individuals (Special Rapporteurs) or small groups of experts (Working Groups) appointed by the Human Rights Council to examine specific human rights issues or country situations.<sup>32</sup> Their work includes field visits, interviews with government officials, NGOs, NHRIs and affected individuals, and reporting their findings to the UNHRC. The extent to which Special Procedures engage with LRGs varies significantly depending on their mandate and the cooperation of national governments, which often determines whether such interactions occur. Without state facilitation, engagement with LRGs remains uncertain, limiting the scope of their assessments.

Certain mandates naturally lend themselves to greater interaction with LRGs. For example, Special Rapporteurs on housing issues have actively sought input from local governments and their networks, recognizing their direct role in housing policy and service delivery.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, some Special Rapporteurs on freedom of assembly have acknowledged the influence of LRGs in shaping public space regulations, although engagement remains informal and largely dependent on national authorities' willingness to facilitate it.<sup>34</sup>

In general, Special Procedures do not have an institutionalized framework for engaging directly with LRGs unless these entities actively seek engagement or are included in state-facilitated visits.<sup>35</sup> However, this does not diminish their significance for LRGs. Their recommendations—especially those addressing governance at the local level—can have indirect but lasting impacts by shaping national human rights policies, feeding into broader international mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and influencing national human rights coordination bodies like National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting, and Follow-up (NMIRFs). While their ability to engage LRGs directly may be inconsistent,

---

32 See Tistoune, *The UN Human Rights Council: A Practical Anatomy*, supra fn 7, pp. 13–18.

33 See UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing on her Mission to Portugal*, UN Doc. A/HRC/34/51/Add.2, 2017. The Rapporteur engaged with local and regional governments, assessing their policies related to housing for vulnerable groups, such as migrants and the homeless. The visit resulted in a report with specific recommendations for local and regional authorities to improve access to adequate housing. Available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/863269?ln=en&v=pdf>.

34 See UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights on her Visit to Malaysia*, UN Doc. A/HRC/40/53/Add.1, 2019. The Rapporteur engaged with local authorities to discuss challenges faced by indigenous communities and ethnic minorities, particularly concerning land rights and access to basic services. Recommendations were provided to local governments to improve consultation processes with minority groups and ensure their rights are respected in local decision-making. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc4053add1-visit-malaysia-report-special-rapporteur-field-cultural>. See also UN General Assembly, *Final Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association*, UN Doc. A/78/246, 2023–2024, discussing the role of local authorities. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a78246-importance-rights-freedom-peaceful-assembly-and-association>.

35 See UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation on his Mission to India*, UN Doc. A/HRC/39/55/Add.1, 2018, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc3955add1-report-special-rapporteur-human-rights-safe-drinking-water>. These remain rather isolated examples, due to the limitations of the Special Rapporteurs' capacities to cover policies beyond central State authorities.

their findings and recommendations often filter down to the local level through national policies, legislation, and institutional reforms.

## D. ENGAGEMENT WITH UN TREATY BODIES

UN treaty bodies primarily interact with national governments, as states bear the formal responsibility for implementing international human rights treaties. However, many human rights obligations—particularly in areas such as housing, education, disability rights, and public safety—are carried out at the local level, making the involvement of LRGs essential for effective implementation. While direct engagement between LRGs and treaty bodies remains limited, there are notable instances where local governments have actively contributed to the work of these mechanisms, either by aligning policies with treaty recommendations or by participating in consultations and reporting processes.

The following examples illustrate how UN treaty bodies have engaged with LRGs in different human rights areas:

### 1. COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (CESCR)

The CESCR monitors the implementation of the ICESCR—a treaty closely aligned with LRG functions. Many of the rights it protects, such as housing, land management, and social inclusion, fall within the direct responsibilities of local governments. The CESCR has emphasized that while states remain the primary duty-bearers under the Covenant, local governments play a critical role in translating these commitments into concrete action through urban planning, housing policies, and public service provision<sup>36</sup>

### 2. COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (CRPD)

The CRPD oversees the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has direct implications for urban planning and accessibility policies. One key example of LRG engagement is Barcelona, which has worked closely with the CRPD Committee to develop inclusive urban policies. The city has implemented accessibility audits, adapted public transportation, and ensured that public spaces comply with disability rights standards, aligning its policies with the Committee's recommendations.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) monitors compliance with the

---

36 See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General comment No. 26 (2022) on land and economic, social and cultural rights, E/C.12/GC/26, para. 28.

37 Eurocities, *Barrier-free City for All – 10th Anniversary Report*, Barcelona, 2020, pp. 17–20, available at [https://media-edg.barcelona.cat/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/01105040/Barrier-free-city-for-all\\_10th\\_anniversary\\_report.pdf](https://media-edg.barcelona.cat/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/01105040/Barrier-free-city-for-all_10th_anniversary_report.pdf).



Convention on the Rights of the Child, with local governments playing a central role in child protection, education, and participation. Geneva has actively collaborated with the CRC, implementing child-friendly policies focused on education, protection from violence, and participatory governance. The city introduced programmes on children's rights education and participatory budgeting for youth projects, ensuring that young people have a voice in decision-making processes.<sup>38</sup>

#### 4. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE (HRCTEE)

The HRCtee which oversees the ICCPR, has also seen LRG engagement in its work. In São Paulo, the city engaged with the Committee to address police violence and the protection of civil rights, following recommendations aimed at reducing extrajudicial killings and increasing police accountability. Additionally, police officials from São Paulo and Lisbon contributed to the drafting of the General Comment on the Right to Life under the ICCPR, demonstrating the direct participation of local authorities in shaping international human rights interpretations.<sup>39</sup>

These examples illustrate how UN treaty bodies can play a crucial role in guiding local governments in the implementation of international human rights standards. Collaboration between these bodies and LRGs often results in the adoption of more inclusive, rights-based policies at the municipal level, enhancing the protection and promotion of human rights within communities. Beyond these specific case studies, UN treaty bodies have addressed broader issues related to LRGs, including the participation of ethnic minorities, persons of African descent, indigenous peoples, and women in governance. They have also emphasized the importance of improving coordination between local and national governments to ensure that local authorities understand and fulfill their human rights obligations.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, treaty bodies have contributed to capacity-building initiatives for local governments, focusing on gender responsiveness, children's rights, racial discrimination prevention, and the protection of marginalized populations.

Despite these positive developments, direct engagement between treaty bodies and LRGs remains limited. Given the backlog treaty bodies face in reviewing state reports and handling complaints<sup>41</sup>, it is often impractical for them to work with

---

38 2024 Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child, available at <https://declaration2024.org/>

39 UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36 on Article 6: Right to Life, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36, 2019, p. 7, para. 30, available at [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CCPR/CCPR\\_C\\_GC\\_36.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CCPR/CCPR_C_GC_36.pdf);

Frans Viljoen and Rachel Murray, *The Impact of the United Nations Human Rights Treaties on the Domestic Level: Twenty Years On*, Leiden/Boston, Brill Nijhoff, 2024, pp. 1320-1333, available at <https://aedidh.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Impact.pdf>.

40 See *Cities for CEDAW* website, available at <https://citiesforcedaw.org/>. The main purpose of the initiative is to mainstream CEDAW in municipal policies.

41 To explore the challenges and opportunities further, see Jonathan Miaz, Evelyne Schmid, Matthieu Niederhauser, Constance Kaempfer, and Martino Maggetti, *Engaging with Human Rights: How Subnational Actors Use Human Rights Treaties in Policy Processes*, 'The Different Ways in Which Subnational Political Authorities Engage with International Human Rights Treaties', p. 89 and following.

individual LRGs on a regular basis. A more feasible approach could involve LRGs strengthening their role in data collection and reporting mechanisms, as discussed further in Section 4. By contributing localized data, LRGs can help ensure that treaty bodies receive more comprehensive and accurate information about human rights implementation at the local level.

## E. ENGAGEMENT IN THE WORK OF THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)

As the Secretariat for UN human rights mechanisms, the OHCHR has the flexibility to engage with LRGs within its broader mandate. Much of this engagement has taken place through city networks such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), facilitating exchanges between local governments and UN human rights bodies. However, the extent and impact of these interactions at the local level vary.<sup>42</sup>

OHCHR plays a key role in supporting the implementation of UNHRC resolutions, including those that recognize or involve LRGs. This support includes consulting with relevant stakeholders, including local governments, where mandated. OHCHR engages with LRGs through various means, such as publishing calls for submissions on its website, conducting consultations, and leveraging existing networks to gather inputs. These interactions help ensure that local perspectives contribute to UN human rights processes, particularly in areas where LRGs have direct responsibilities, such as housing, public service delivery, and local governance policies.<sup>43</sup>

Below are examples of how the OHCHR is expected to interact with LRGs, based on specific resolutions with clear mandates and deadlines:

- **Summary of the Expert Meeting on Enhancing Capacity-Building for Local Governments (28 August 2023).** Under the terms of resolution 56/32, the OHCHR has been tasked to prepare a Summary of the Expert Meeting on Enhancing Capacity-Building for Local Governments to incorporate human rights into all their work. When preparing this report, the OHCHR is explicitly directed to seek input from local governments, among other stakeholders, to ensure their experiences and contributions are incorporated.<sup>44</sup>

---

42 One example of OHCHR collaborating directly with LRGs is its support for rights-based and gender-sensitive programming, which led to the Moroto District local government (Karamoja, Uganda) adopting a human rights-based approach to programming. For more information, see <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/what-we-do/partnership/local-governments>.

43 Major city and regional networks include United Cities and Local Governments (<https://uclg.org>), Human Rights Cities Network (<https://humanrightscities.net/human-rights-cities/>), and many others, which are considered NGOs in the UN system. See *Engaging LRGs in Multilateralism*, Global Cities Hub, 2023, p. 6 available at [https://www.genevacitieshub.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/GCH\\_3rd-Anniversary-report.pdf](https://www.genevacitieshub.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/GCH_3rd-Anniversary-report.pdf)

44 See UN Human Rights Council, *Summary of the Expert Meeting on Enhancing Capacity-Building for Local Governments to Incorporate Human Rights into All Their Work*, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/32, 28 August 2023

- Panel Discussion on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (March 2024)**  
Under the terms of resolution 52/11, the OHCHR was mandated to convene a panel discussion during the fifty-fifth session of the UNHRC in March 2024. The discussion focused on the realization of economic, social, and cultural rights, and was opened to local authorities, states, relevant treaty bodies, academia, civil society, and other stakeholders. The panel aimed to share challenges and best practices in the fulfilment of the right to social security, as well as the development and implementation of public policies and services critical to economic, social, and cultural rights.<sup>45</sup>
- Three Full-Day Intersessional Meetings on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda**  
As mandated by resolution 52/14, the OHCHR is requested to organize three full-day intersessional meetings to foster dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The aim of these meetings is to create a platform for states, United Nations agencies, regional human rights mechanisms, national human rights institutions, LRGs, and civil society organizations to voluntarily share good practices, achievements, and lessons learned. The focus will be on gender-responsive approaches in promoting and protecting human rights within the framework of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>46</sup>
- Request for a 2026 Report on Local Governments and Human Rights**  
The OHCHR has also been requested to prepare a report by 2026, addressing the role of local governments in the realization of human rights. This report is expected to build on earlier resolutions that emphasize the importance of LRGs in providing public services and fostering human rights at the local level. It will likely focus on areas such as digitalization (e.g., smart cities) and other human rights issues where LRGs are playing an increasingly significant role.<sup>47</sup>

These examples illustrate how the UNHRC and its member states are progressively mandating OHCHR to engage with LRGs as part of its broader human rights work. By facilitating these interactions, OHCHR ensures that the perspectives and experiences of local governments contribute to the global human rights dialogue. This engagement is crucial for transforming international human rights commitments into concrete, locally implemented policies and action.

## F. EMPOWERING LRGs AS ACTORS IN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY

LRGs are essential to advancing human rights at the local level, given their direct responsibility for public services and community engagement. However, they face challenges such as limited resources, exclusion from government-centric report-

<sup>45</sup> UN Human Rights Council, *Panel Discussion on the Realization of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, UN Doc. A/HRC/52/11, 2024, see operative para. 27.

<sup>46</sup> UN Human Rights Council, *Resolution 52/14*, UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/52/14, 2023, see operative para. 1.

<sup>47</sup> See UN Human Rights Council, *Resolution 57/12*, supra fn 2, UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/57/12, 2024.

ing systems, and a lack of disaggregated data, which hinder their full participation in international human rights processes.

Despite these obstacles, LRGs are gaining recognition within UN human rights mechanisms and SDG review processes, opening new opportunities for engagement. A key area for LRG involvement is human rights reporting, where they can contribute in two critical ways:

- **Facilitating Reporting Processes:** LRGs can provide localized insights for national reports submitted to UN mechanisms, ensuring that grassroots realities inform global assessments.
- **Coordinating Implementation:** LRGs translate international human rights commitments into practical policies that address local needs, aligning governance frameworks with global standards and strengthening community engagement.

A particularly promising development is the integration of SDG data collection into human rights reporting. Tools like Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSNRs) allow LRGs to gather disaggregated data, highlight inequalities, and inform targeted policy interventions. Strengthening LRGs capacities through financial support, technical training, and institutional integration is essential for ensuring that human rights commitments are effectively implemented at the local level.

As the global human rights landscape evolves, fully recognizing LRGs as key stakeholders is crucial. By equipping them with the necessary tools and resources, the international system can bridge the gap between global commitments and local realities, ensuring that no one is left behind.

## 4. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION CAPACITIES: LRGs AS A VECTOR FOR DATA COLLECTION IN THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM

The UN Summit of the Future and the Pact for the Future have underscored the necessity for an inclusive multilateral approach that empowers LRGs, as a tool towards the localization of sustainable development.<sup>48</sup> The UNHRC has also reinforced this shift through a Joint Statement, highlighting states' interest in engaging more systematically with LRGs, particularly in relation to NMIRFs, where they exist.<sup>49</sup>

Despite their potential in connecting national frameworks with local realities, the role of LRGs in consultation and coordination for data collection remains limited due to several structural and systemic challenges. First, LRGs are often excluded from national human rights and development reporting processes, as the international human rights system and many SDG monitoring frameworks are traditionally designed for engagement at the national level. This lack of integration results in a significant underutilization of LRGs' proximity to communities and their ability to provide granular, localized, disaggregated data. Second, limited financial and technical resources constrain LRGs' capacity to implement robust data collection systems, engage in consultations with diverse stakeholders, or coordinate effectively with central governments and other agencies.

Additionally, the absence of clear legal and institutional frameworks defining their role in data collection often relegates LRGs to a peripheral position in national planning processes. Fragmented data systems and the lack of standardized methodologies further exacerbate this problem, making it challenging for LRGs to align

---

48 See *Pact for the Future*, Action 55, p. 35, requesting the Secretary-General to provide recommendations on engaging with local and regional authorities to advance the 2030 Agenda and localize the Sustainable Development Goals by the end of the seventy-ninth session for Member States' consideration. Available at <https://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/109/2024/09/The-Pact-for-the-Future-final.pdf>.

49 See *Joint Statement on Human Rights and Local Government*, recently endorsed by more than 50 States at the UNHRC, available at <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/fr/dfae/dfae/aktuell/reden.html/content/missions/mission-onu-geneve/en/meta/speeches/2024/Joint-Statement-Local-Government-and-Human-Rights>, following the good example of CIDU (Comitato Interministeriale per i Diritti Umani, the Italian National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up, NMRIF).

their efforts with national and international reporting mechanisms. Addressing these limitations requires increased recognition of LRGs' potential, capacity-building initiatives, and the creation of inclusive frameworks that institutionalize their role in consultation and coordination.

## A. THE CONSULTATION CAPACITY OF LRGs

Data collection cannot occur in isolation. Meaningful consultation ensures that data accurately represents the lived experiences of communities, especially those traditionally excluded from decision-making processes. Consultation allows governments to understand the challenges faced by local populations, fostering trust and encouraging community participation.<sup>50</sup>

Engaging LRGs in broader government human rights monitoring and implementation can enhance the quality of data collected, ensuring it reflects local realities and contributes to more accurate reporting on human rights and SDGs. Policy-makers in LRGs are in a unique position to foster opportunities for dialogue and engagement among the various groups and perspectives within societies. Local initiatives have already proven essential in achieving the mutual understanding between duty-bearers and rights-holders necessary for putting human rights and sustainable development into practice.<sup>51</sup>

Consultation processes are essential for enriching decision-making with diverse perspectives and lived experiences. LRGs excel in engaging with stakeholders such as CSOs, grassroots movements, and local communities to capture on-the-ground realities. For instance, consultations with indigenous communities can yield critical insights into how policies impact vulnerable populations, ensuring that interventions are both equitable and effective.

Through consultation with local communities, LRGs can greatly contribute to the gathering of relevant data for reporting mechanisms. In particular, they can:

- **Implementing human rights and enhance responsiveness to local needs:** Implementing human rights and SDGs at the local level allows for a more precise response to the specific needs of residents, leading to more targeted and effective actions. Localizing human rights is crucial, as it paves the way for sustainable development, enabling the achievement of SDGs and human rights standards. Rights-holders, who are directly impacted, should be a key source of information about the human rights situation in a certain portion of territory, offering insights and resources to address any gaps in governmental measures and policies. Involving all relevant stakeholders ensures that identified issues and needs are comprehensive, while also keeping rights-holders

---

50 See UN Human Rights Council, *Local Government and Human Rights*, supra fn 2, UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/57/12, 2024.

51 See, among others, Martha F. Davis, Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen, and Emily Hanna (eds.), *Human Rights Cities and Regions – Swedish and International Perspectives*, Raoul Wallenberg Institute, 2017.

informed and providing them opportunities to participate in policy discussions that affect them.<sup>52</sup>

- **Strengthen Local Voices:** LRGs, through their direct contact with communities, are well-placed to empower individuals and groups, helping to eliminate discrimination and marginalization. Public participation is crucial for developing policies on issues that directly affect people’s lives. This engagement not only gives rights-holders a voice but also fosters confidence, interest, and trust in local governance, while strengthening connections within the community. Moreover, participation is essential for gathering reliable data reflecting the level of achievement of SDGs and human rights standards. In this regard, LRGs can play a central role in facilitating the reporting process that leads to national submissions to international human rights bodies. Encouraging and supporting citizen-generated data can fill gaps in official statistics, especially concerning marginalized communities. For instance, the SDG 16+ Civil Society Toolkit<sup>53</sup> emphasizes the importance of such data in monitoring progress on peace, justice, and inclusion. It advocates for partnerships between governments and civil society to validate and integrate citizen-generated data into official monitoring frameworks.
- **Foster Partnerships:** Consultations also serve as opportunities to educate both officials and citizens on the importance of human rights and the SDGs. Through workshops, town hall meetings, and co-created events, LRGs can foster greater understanding and cooperation in addressing human rights challenges. Collaborative initiatives, such as co-organized events and workshops between LRGs and civil society organizations, have been particularly successful in educating both public officials and the public about the importance of taking active participation in the reporting mechanism, as a key step to subsequent implementation. This collaboration can take the form of co-creation or “collaborative activism”, manifesting in a range of partnerships, from formal committees to informal networks.<sup>54</sup>
- **Improve the Synergies with the NHRIs:** As NHRIs are responsible for monitoring and promoting compliance with international human rights obligations, their partnership with LRGs ensures that local realities and priorities are accurately represented in national reporting. LRGs provide on-the-ground insights and data that NHRIs might otherwise struggle to obtain, particularly regarding marginalized communities and localized human rights challenges. In return, NHRIs can support LRGs by offering technical expertise, training, and tools to improve data collection and reporting practices. Collaborative initiatives, such as joint consultations or workshops, can further enhance the quality and comprehensiveness of data gathered. In this respect, there seems to be a trend

---

52 For example, platforms like the Raoul Wallenberg Institute’s training programmes have been critical in enhancing the knowledge and skills of LRG officials, equipping them to better collect data, plan policies, and understand local human rights challenges. See, for example, *Human Rights-Based Approach for Local Governments*, available at <https://rwionline.eu-west.catalog.canvaslms.com/browse/oc/courses/human-rights-based-approach-for-local-governments>.

53 See *SDG 16+ Toolkit*, available at <https://www.sdg16toolkit.org/>.

54 Esther van den Berg, ‘Co-Creating Human Rights in the City – Civil Society and Human Rights Cities in the Netherlands’, in Martha F. Davis, Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen, and Emily Hanna (eds.), *Human Rights Cities and Regions – Swedish and International Perspectives*, Raoul Wallenberg Institute, 2017.

whereby NHRIs engage with municipal governments to develop human rights indicators that align local policies with international frameworks.<sup>55</sup> By maintaining regular communication and consultation with NHRIs, LRGs not only contribute to national reporting processes but also reinforce their role as key actors in promoting and protecting human rights at the local level.

- **Building Synergies with the Private Sector:** LRGs often have closer relationships with local businesses, enabling them to foster dialogue and collaboration in addressing human rights challenges. By engaging the private sector, LRGs can gather critical data on labor rights, environmental impacts, and community well-being, which informs more comprehensive and accurate human rights reports. Beyond reporting, LRGs can also leverage these partnerships to implement human rights obligations, encouraging businesses to adopt responsible practices, align with international standards, and contribute to sustainable development goals.

Collaborative efforts between LRGs and NHRIs, central governments more generally and IOs have been crucial in advancing the human rights agenda at the local level. Collaborative programmes can provide conceptual tools and methodologies for integrating human rights into policy planning, budgets and local actions<sup>56</sup>.

The benefits of fostering consultation between LRGs and central entities or institutions are particularly evident when it comes to data collection. Collaboration in this area ensures that local governments can access and contribute to more comprehensive and accurate datasets, which are crucial for informed decision-making and policy development. Through consultation, LRGs can share valuable on-the-ground insights, while central entities can provide the tools, methodologies, and frameworks necessary to standardize and enhance data collection efforts. This exchange not only improves the quality of data but also helps align local initiatives with national and international standards, thereby facilitating more effective implementation of human rights and SDG-related policies. Moreover, reliable data offers a shared language, facilitating LRGs' consultation and collaboration with NMIRFs<sup>57</sup>.

---

55 See 2024 World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF), *Advancing Human Rights Cities: Local Governments and National Human Rights Institutions in the Global Human Rights System*, available at <https://www.humanrights.go.kr/eng/board/read?boardManagementNo=7003&boardNo=7610621&menuLevel=2&menuNo=114>. The National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK) has actively engaged with local governments through WHRCF to strengthen human rights indicators and align local policies with international frameworks.

56 The Director of the Human Rights Division of the Government of Canelones, Mr. Garolla, discussed the collaboration between the Division and OHCHR on the Building Bridges II project during the expert meeting on enhancing capacity-building for local governments to incorporate human rights into all their work, held in Geneva on 28 August 2023. See UN Human Rights Council, *Summary of the Expert Meeting on Enhancing Capacity-Building for Local Governments to Incorporate Human Rights into All Their Work*, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/32, 2023.

57 The expert meeting on enhancing capacity-building for local governments to incorporate human rights into all their work, held in Geneva on 28 August 2023, revealed a variety of initiatives currently in place at the local level, involving not only academic institutions and civil society organizations but also government ministries. Examples can be found in India, Italy, Chile, and Sweden. The Geneva Meeting on Capacity Building for Local Governments highlighted the importance of equipping LRGs with tools to integrate human rights frameworks into their consultation processes. These tools enable LRGs to gather qualitative data and ensure that policies reflect the voices of those most affected. Such efforts not only enhance inclusivity but also ensure that local perspectives inform national and international policy agendas.



## B. THE COORDINATION CAPACITY OF LRGs

LRGs are foundational in promoting policy coherence, acting as catalysts for informing and encouraging their peers to adopt a unified approach to human rights. The effectiveness of policies and programmes relies on the coordination and cooperation among local government agencies, ensuring that efforts are harmonized, resources are utilized efficiently, and overlapping initiatives are minimized.

In the complex interplay between society and central governments, LRGs hold considerable potential in coordinating efforts with respect to the collection, organization and dissemination of data. This coordination will also be relevant to the implementation phase, with the view to aligning local actions with broader national and international objectives and amplifying the impact of human rights and SDGs at every level of governance.

LRGs networks serve as conduits for sharing best practices, developing practical tools, and linking local governments directly to national policy frameworks and central governments initiatives. For example, in Italy, the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Human Rights works with the National Association of Italian Municipalities to provide training on international human rights law and UN recommendations. This collaboration exemplifies how national networks of LRGs can strengthen the relationship between LRGs and central governments. The importance of such coordinated efforts was underscored at the expert meeting in Geneva on enhancing capacity-building for local governments to incorporate human rights into all their work, held on 28 August 2023<sup>58</sup>.

On a global scale, LRGs have increasingly turned to international networks to bolster their coordination capacities. Organizations such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), ICLEI, and similar provide essential platforms for LRGs to exchange knowledge, collaborate on collective strategies, and address common challenges<sup>59</sup>.

Through adequate coordination, LRGs can:

- **Systematize human rights data collection:** By adopting nationally standardized data collection practices, LRGs play an important role in ensuring the systematic gathering and flow of information across governance levels. A robust framework for data collection prevents gaps that often arise from inconsistent or sporadic reporting, ensuring continuity and reliability. This consistency is essential for aligning local actions with national and international human rights frameworks and SDGs. Standardization also facilitates the identification of trends, the monitoring of progress, and the development of actionable policies.

---

58 See UN Human Rights Council, Summary of the Expert Meeting on Enhancing Capacity-Building for Local Governments to Incorporate Human Rights into All Their Work, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/32, 2023, para. 16, available at <https://www.ohchr.org>.

59 For a comprehensive list of main city and regional networks, see the *International City Networks Directory*, available at <https://globalcitieshub.org/en/city-networks-directory/>.

- **Contribute to the digitalization of human rights data:** digitalization processes are a game-changer for ensuring efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity. Digital platforms, such as centralized dashboards and data repositories, allow LRGs to collect, analyse, and disseminate information in real time. Digital human rights tracking tools enable multiple stakeholders to input and track human rights data, eliminating redundancy and streamlining efforts.<sup>60</sup> Such tools have the potential to ensure interoperability between local, regional, and national systems, reducing duplication of efforts and improving the quality of data shared across governance levels. Establishing digital platforms for real-time data sharing fosters timely decision-making and enhances collaboration across institutions. In Germany, city-level SDG portals allow municipalities to update and share progress indicators directly with national bodies.<sup>61</sup>
- **Facilitate Knowledge Exchange and Promote Peer Learning:** LRGs are ideally positioned to act as hubs for sharing best practices and lessons learned in data collection. Coordinating with others through national and international networks promotes the adoption of innovative methodologies and tools, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of data systems. Facilitating workshops, forums, and webinars where municipalities can exchange successful strategies improves the overall capacity of LRGs to collect and manage data. Regular training programmes tailored to the specific needs of LRGs can address gaps in technical knowledge and ensure that local officials are well-equipped to implement standardized data practices.

A structured and digitised approach to data collection not only strengthens the reporting mechanisms but also ensures that human rights considerations and SDG targets are effectively integrated into governance at all levels. By leveraging technology, standardization, and collaboration, LRGs can create a more inclusive, efficient, and impactful data ecosystem.

---

60 See Section 5.e, Tools and Strategies for Enhancing Data Collection and Management, pp. 33–37 below.

61 See *About the Project*, SDG-Portal, available at <https://sdg-portal.de/en/ueber-das-projekt>.

## 5. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT CAPACITY: THE ROLE OF LRGs IN INTEGRATED HUMAN RIGHTS AND SDG MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION

LRGs are well-positioned to play a crucial role in data collection, analysis, and management for human rights and SDG monitoring. Their proximity to communities allows them to capture granular, context-specific data that national governments often lack. However, their current role remains largely limited to policy implementation, with insufficient capacity and institutional support to systematically track progress on human rights and sustainable development commitments.

Expanding LRGs' role in information management would enable them to not only implement but also monitor human rights and SDGs at the local level. This shift requires strengthened technical capacity, policy coherence between national and local governments, and the adoption of digital tools to enhance data collection and analysis. Despite these challenges, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, coupled with emerging digitalization trends, provide promising pathways for LRGs to improve their data-driven decision-making and reporting contributions.

This section explores how LRGs can leverage digital platforms, enhance collaboration with national bodies, and adopt innovative monitoring strategies to strengthen their information management capacity. Strengthening accountability mechanisms and policy coherence between governance levels will be essential to ensuring that human rights obligations are met and SDGs are achieved in an inclusive and equitable manner.

### A. THE ROLE OF LRGs IN GLOBAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

To date, the capacity of LRGs to manage data effectively is essential in transforming SDGs into actionable, localized policies. LRGs are tasked not only with collecting the context-specific data necessary for human rights monitoring and SDG tracking but also with ensuring that this data is accurate, timely, and comprehen-

sive. This involves gathering detailed information on issues such as access to education, healthcare, housing, and basic services, which are critical both to human rights obligations and to the achievement of the SDGs<sup>62</sup>.

Information management is particularly vital for addressing disparities at the local level, such as unequal access to resources, economic opportunities, and services, which might not be visible in national-level data. For example, while SDG indicators on poverty reduction might be measured nationally, LRGs can disaggregate these indicators by neighbourhood, demographic group, or region, revealing disparities in resource distribution or service accessibility that are directly tied to the realization of human rights. Moreover, LRGs can directly involve communities in the data collection process, enhancing both the inclusivity and the relevance of the information gathered. Participatory data collection allows LRGs to ensure that marginalized and vulnerable groups are represented in the datasets, making it possible to identify and address specific local challenges related to rights violations or development inequities. This dynamic, localized approach to data collection and management equips LRGs with the ability to adjust policies and programmes more effectively, ensuring that they are tailored to the real-time needs of their populations.

## 1. ENHANCING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT THROUGH WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT AND WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACHES

LRGs can significantly enhance their information management capacities by adopting whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, both of which emphasize integrated and inclusive governance frameworks. These approaches provide LRGs with the structures necessary to manage and utilize data for human rights monitoring and SDG implementation.

The *whole-of-government approach* promotes vertical and horizontal integration across all levels of governance.<sup>63</sup> For LRGs, this means coordinating data management with national governments, aligning local data collection efforts with broader national and international reporting frameworks. It also ensures that data management efforts across various sectors, such as health, education, and environmental protection, are not siloed but rather integrated to provide a holistic view of human rights and development progress. Effective information management in this context requires LRGs to develop strong relationships with national statistics offices and sectoral ministries, enabling them to contribute high-quality, localized data to national systems.

---

62 See United Nations Human Rights Council, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva Human Rights Platform, and University of Bologna, *Expert Roundtable on Data Planning and Collection by National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting, and Follow-up: The Role of LRGs and National Statistical Systems* (Geneva Human Rights Platform, April 2024), available at <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/news/detail/714-expert-roundtable-discusses-role-of-local-andregional-governments-in-data-collection-for-national-mechanisms>. The outcome document can be found at [https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlafiles/docmanfiles/Final\\_Bologna%20Expert%20Roundtable\\_Summary%20and%20Takeaways.pdf](https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlafiles/docmanfiles/Final_Bologna%20Expert%20Roundtable_Summary%20and%20Takeaways.pdf).

63 United Cities and Local Governments, *The Localization of the Global Agendas: How Local Action is Transforming Territories and Communities* (GOLD V Report, 2019), p. 19.

The *whole-of-society approach* expands governance to include non-governmental actors, such as CSOs, the private sector, academia, and community groups, in the data collection and management process.<sup>64</sup> By fostering collaboration with these stakeholders, LRGs can gather more comprehensive and representative data. Civil society, for example, often has access to information from vulnerable populations that may not be captured by official government data. By engaging these groups in the data collection process, LRGs can ensure that their information management efforts reflect the full diversity of the population and address potential human rights issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

In both approaches, the emphasis is on breaking down silos, encouraging collaboration, and integrating information management across sectors and governance levels. This allows LRGs to create more cohesive, reliable, and inclusive data sets, which are critical for both human rights monitoring and sustainable development planning.

## 2. DECENTRALIZATION AND SUBSIDIARITY: BUILDING LOCAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

The principles of *decentralization* and *subsidiarity* are foundational to building the information management capacity of LRGs. Decentralization involves transferring decision-making power and authority from central governments to sub-national levels, allowing LRGs to take ownership of the data collection, analysis, and policy-making processes related to human rights and sustainable development.

With *decentralization*, LRGs are better positioned to gather data that reflects the specific challenges and needs of their communities.<sup>65</sup> For instance, LRGs in urban areas may prioritize data on housing, infrastructure, and public health, while those in rural regions may focus more on access to clean water, land rights, or agricultural sustainability. This ability to localize data collection enables more responsive and effective governance, ensuring that the policies developed based on this data directly address local human rights concerns and development needs.

The principle of *subsidiarity* complements decentralization by ensuring that decisions and actions are taken at the most appropriate level of governance. Subsidiarity empowers LRGs to manage their own data collection and human rights monitoring efforts because they are the closest to the issues on the ground. This results in more accurate and relevant data, which can be rapidly acted upon.

However, *decentralization* and *subsidiarity* alone are not sufficient to ensure effective information management. They must be supported by strong institutional frameworks, which provide LRGs with the financial resources, technical expertise,

---

64 Idem.

65 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report of the expert meeting on enhancing capacity-building for local governments to incorporate human rights into all their work* (OHCHR, 2024), UN Doc A/HRC/56/32.

and legal authority necessary to manage data effectively.<sup>66</sup> Without these supports, LRGs may struggle to collect and manage the data needed to track human rights and sustainable development progress effectively. In addition, there must be mechanisms for coordinating and integrating local data into national frameworks, ensuring that the localized insights provided by LRGs contribute meaningfully to national and international reporting systems.<sup>67</sup>

As such, the information management capacity of LRGs is critical for ensuring that human rights are monitored effectively and that the SDGs are implemented in a way that is responsive to local realities. By embracing decentralization, subsidiarity, and whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, LRGs can build robust information management systems that contribute to more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable governance.

### 3. POLICY COHERENCE AND MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE FOR EFFECTIVE DATA PLANNING AND COLLECTION

Effective governance for human rights monitoring and SDG implementation requires a coherent policy framework that harmonizes efforts across different levels of government. *Policy coherence* is vital because it ensures that national and local governments align their strategies, resources, and actions toward achieving common goals—namely, human rights obligations and SDG targets.<sup>68</sup> This alignment prevents duplication of efforts, promotes efficient use of resources, and ensures that human rights and SDG commitments are not approached in isolation, but rather as interconnected objectives that reinforce each other.

In the context of LRGs, *policy coherence* means that local policies, whether related to education, health, housing, or social inclusion, must be designed in a way that supports national strategies for human rights and the SDGs. For example, a city's housing policy should not only aim to reduce homelessness (SDG 11) but also uphold the right to adequate housing as enshrined in international human rights treaties like the ICESCR. Coherence in this sense ensures that both local development goals and international human rights obligations are met simultaneously, creating a unified framework for sustainable development.

---

66 United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), *Towards the Localization of the SDGs* (UCLG, 2021) available at [https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/towards\\_the\\_localization\\_of\\_the\\_sdgs.pdf](https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/towards_the_localization_of_the_sdgs.pdf).

67 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Policy Brief No. 164: The Integrated Nature of the SDGs as a Lever for Trust, Institutional Resilience and Innovation (UN DESA, 2024), available at <https://desapublications.un.org/policy-briefs/un-desa-policy-brief-no-164-integrated-nature-sustainable-development-goals-lever>.

68 See United Cities and Local Governments, *GOLD V Report: The Localization of the Global Agendas – How Local Action is Transforming Territories and Communities*, supra fn 63, p. 23; Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, *Localising Human Rights in the Context of SDGs: A Handbook for Cities* (Lund, Sweden, 2022), available at <https://rwi.lu.se/publications/localising-human-rights-in-the-context-of-sdgs-a-handbook-for-cities/>.

*Multilevel governance* is a critical model for fostering policy integration between national and local governments.<sup>69</sup> This model emphasizes the importance of coordination across different levels of government, where responsibilities are shared, and actions are aligned. In a multilevel governance structure, national governments set broad human rights and SDG targets while LRGs implement and monitor these goals at the grassroots level. The success of this model hinges on clear communication channels, joint policy development, and shared accountability mechanisms. Moreover, *multilevel governance* allows LRGs to contribute context-specific insights to national policymaking, ensuring that local realities are considered in national strategies. For example, if national governments aim to reduce poverty (SDG 1), LRGs can provide localized data on poverty rates in specific urban or rural areas, allowing for more targeted interventions. This integration of local data into national policy frameworks ensures that no community is left behind, promoting both sustainable development and the protection of human rights.

## B. NATIONAL ACTORS AND THEIR ROLES IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND SDG DATA COLLECTION

Human rights and SDG monitoring primarily rely on various national institutions tasked with collecting, analysing, and reporting on data. While LRGs could potentially play a significant role in supporting these efforts, the current systems largely depend on national entities such as National Statistics Offices (NSOs), NMIRFs and NHRIs. These national bodies are primarily responsible for shaping the broader data collection and reporting frameworks, leaving potential opportunities for LRGs to engage more effectively at the local level.

- **National Statistics Offices (NSOs):**

NSOs remain the primary entities responsible for collecting and disseminating data across sectors like education, health, employment, and environmental sustainability. NSOs are governmental agencies tasked with collecting, analyzing, and disseminating statistical data that is crucial for informing public policy and decision-making.<sup>70</sup> They play a central role in the National Statistical System of a country by producing official statistics on various aspects of the economy, society, and environment. The primary objectives of NSOs are to ensure the availability of high-quality, accurate, and timely data to support government functions, business decisions, and the public's understanding of key issues. They ensure that data is gathered in standardized formats, making it comparable across regions and countries. If LRGs were more closely integrated into this process, they could contribute localized data that better reflects the diverse conditions within their communities, allowing for a more accurate representation of rights and development challenges. LRGs, therefore, might provide essential support to NSOs

---

69 Idem.

70 United Nations, *Handbook on Statistical Organization: The Operation and Organization of a Statistical Agency* (3rd edn, 2023), ch. 5, available at [https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/handbook/chapters/Ch5\\_Handbook\\_20230417.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/handbook/chapters/Ch5_Handbook_20230417.pdf).

by offering data disaggregated by variables such as age, gender, income, and ethnicity, potentially identifying inequalities that are difficult to capture through national-level data alone.

- **National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting, and Follow-up (NMIRFs):**

NMIRFs are government structures mandated to coordinate and prepare reports to, and engage with, international and regional human rights mechanisms, including the UN Treaty Bodies, the UPR and Special Procedures.<sup>71</sup> They also address the implementation gap by initiating, coordinating and tracking national follow-up and implementation of obligations and recommendations emanating from these mechanisms. NMIRFs coordinate the monitoring and reporting of human rights obligations and SDG progress, integrating data from various ministries, NSOs, and potentially regional actors like LRGs. Though their focus is primarily at the national level, NMIRFs could significantly benefit from incorporating localized data into their reports, provided there is greater collaboration with LRGs. The integration of local insights would ensure that national reports reflect a fuller picture of human rights conditions across all regions. To facilitate this, NMIRFs could establish clearer protocols for engaging with LRGs, ensuring that local data collection efforts contribute meaningfully to national and international human rights obligations.

- **National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs):**

NHRIs are official independent institutions established by the State for the promotion and protection of human rights. They are established by the constitution or an act of the legislature that guarantees their independence from political direction and political interference, both governmental and non-governmental. They comply with the international minimum standards for NHRIs, the Paris Principles.<sup>72</sup> Their potential to support LRGs in data collection could be significant, particularly if they provided more technical expertise to ensure that local governments collect data aligned with human rights principles. If LRGs were better equipped, they could help disaggregate human rights data, ensuring that the experiences of marginalized groups are accurately reflected in reports. Moreover, NHRIs could play a pivotal role in guiding LRGs on privacy, inclusion, and the ethical use of data. However, for this to happen, clear frameworks and consistent support structures would need to be established.

---

71 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up: A Practical Guide to Effective State Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms* (United Nations, 2016), available at [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/HR\\_PUB\\_16\\_1\\_NMRF\\_Study.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/HR_PUB_16_1_NMRF_Study.pdf). See also *Expert Roundtable on Data Planning and Collection by National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting, and Follow-up*, supra fn 62. For more information on the latest developments, including relevant Human Rights Council resolutions and initiatives, see <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/national-mechanisms-implementation-reporting-and-follow>.

72 Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, *A Manual on National Human Rights Institutions* (2018), p. 11, available at <https://www.asiapacificforum.net/resources/manual-on-nhris>.



## C. CHALLENGES FACED BY LRGs IN DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING

LRGs could potentially become key players in human rights and SDG monitoring, but they currently face several challenges that limit their capacity to effectively engage in data collection and reporting. Addressing these challenges could create significant entry points for LRGs in future frameworks.

- **Limited Resources:** Financial constraints continue to hinder LRGs' ability to allocate adequate resources for comprehensive data collection. Without sufficient investment in digital tools, human resources, and training, LRGs may struggle to develop the technical infrastructure needed to gather and manage data. To overcome this, national governments and IOs might consider providing targeted financial support and capacity-building initiatives to enable LRGs to fully engage in human rights data collection.
- **Technical Capacity Gaps:** LRGs often lack the technical expertise required for effective data collection and analysis, particularly in the areas of human rights monitoring and SDG reporting. Training programmes designed to equip LRGs with the skills necessary for using digital tools, managing disaggregated data, and applying HRBAs to data collection could help close this gap. If LRGs had access to these resources, they would be better positioned to provide relevant data for national reports, thereby enriching the overall monitoring process.
- **Lack of Standardization and Policy Coherence:** Currently, there is little standardization in how LRGs collect and report data, which often results in inconsistencies when attempting to integrate local data into national frameworks. If LRGs were provided with clear, standardized frameworks aligned with national and international human rights and SDG indicators, their data collection processes could become more reliable and comparable. Achieving policy coherence between local, regional, and national levels would also be critical for ensuring that data from all governance levels is harmonized and useful for comprehensive reporting.
- **Exclusion of Marginalized Populations:** Although LRGs are well-placed to engage with their communities, current practices do not always ensure that marginalized or vulnerable populations are adequately represented in data collection efforts. If LRGs were empowered with the tools and strategies to reach these populations more effectively, they could gather more inclusive data that reflects the rights and needs of all community members. Collaborating with civil society and community groups could also enhance the inclusivity of local data collection processes, ensuring that human rights data reflects the diverse realities on the ground.
- **Potential for Collaboration Between National and Local Actors:** While the current human rights and SDG monitoring frameworks are largely centered at the national level, there are numerous opportunities for LRGs to become more actively involved. Collaboration between national actors such as NSOs, NHRIs,

and NMIRFs with LRGs could enhance the overall quality and relevance of data collected.<sup>73</sup>

- **Data Standardization and Integration:** National actors could work closely with LRGs to provide the technical guidance needed to ensure that local data collection aligns with national and international standards. By adopting interoperable digital tools and frameworks, LRGs could more easily integrate their data into national systems. This would enable a more comprehensive understanding of local conditions and allow for better monitoring of human rights and SDG progress.
- **Capacity Building and Technical Assistance:** National institutions, particularly NSOs and NHRIs, could play a key role in building the capacity of LRGs to manage data collection. By providing training and technical support, these institutions could ensure that LRGs are equipped to handle the complexities of human rights data collection and analysis. This would not only strengthen LRGs' ability to contribute to national reports but also enhance their own governance capacities.
- **Inclusive Data Collection Strategies:** Collaboration between LRGs, NSOs, NHRIs, and NMIRFs could ensure that data collection methods are inclusive and capable of capturing the experiences of marginalized groups. This would require the development of targeted outreach programmes and ethical guidelines that prioritize inclusivity. If LRGs were supported in these efforts, their data could become more representative, offering a clearer picture of human rights conditions at the local level.

For LRGs to play a more active role in human rights and SDG reporting, stronger alignment between local and national data systems is essential. This requires interoperable data frameworks that allow LRGs to integrate their insights into national reporting processes. By adopting real-time data collection tools and standardized methodologies, LRG contributions can enhance the accuracy and depth of human rights and SDG monitoring.

Formal collaboration structures, such as joint committees or working groups between national and local governments, would further streamline data-sharing efforts. These mechanisms would institutionalize LRG participation in national reporting, ensuring that local-level realities shape broader governance strategies. Strengthening these partnerships will lead to more comprehensive and inclusive human rights and SDG assessments.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> See *Expert Roundtable on Data Planning and Collection by National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting, and Follow-up*, supra fn 62.

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, Italy's *2021 Mid-Term Review Report and Its Annex*, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/ItalyMidTermReview3-annex.pdf>.

## D. LINKING SDGs AND HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING

The overlap between the SDGs and the UN human rights framework, presents an important opportunity for LRGs to expand their role. Many SDGs align closely with human rights obligations outlined by UN mechanisms.<sup>75</sup> For example:

- SDG 1 (No Poverty) aligns with the right to an adequate standard of living under Article 11 of the ICESCR.
- SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) supports the right to health, as detailed in Article 12 of the ICESCR.
- SDG 4 (Quality Education) links to the right to education, outlined in Articles 13 and 14 of the ICESCR and Article 28 of the CRC.
- SDG 5 (Gender Equality) aligns with the CEDAW and is closely monitored by special procedures mandate holders like the Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

LRGs could contribute significantly to integrating human rights-based approaches into their SDG monitoring by aligning local data collection and governance practices with recommendations from UN treaty bodies, UPR recommendations, and special procedures. For instance, when tracking progress on SDG 5, LRGs could assess their local gender equality policies alongside CEDAW obligations, ensuring their initiatives align with national and international human rights obligations. Special procedures mandate holders, such as Special Rapporteurs or Working Groups, also provide country-specific recommendations that LRGs could integrate into their local governance. For instance, the Special Rapporteur on the right to housing may offer recommendations to improve housing conditions for vulnerable populations, which LRGs could incorporate into their monitoring under SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). These contributions would provide a more comprehensive governance framework, addressing both development and human rights at the local level. Engaging more systematically with UPR recommendations could also strengthen LRGs' alignment with human rights monitoring. LRGs could align their data collection processes with specific UPR recommendations issued to their country, providing essential localized insights into the state's compliance with its human rights obligations under both the SDGs and human rights mechanisms.

### 1. STREAMLINING DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING FOR SDGs AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

LRGs could significantly enhance their role by focusing on streamlining data collection and reporting for both SDGs and human rights mechanisms. Currently, data collection for these frameworks often occurs in silos. For instance, health data

---

<sup>75</sup> Danish Institute for Human Rights, *Integrated Approach to Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda: A Guide for National Human Rights Institutions* (2018), available at [https://www.humanrights.dk/files/media/migrated/integrated\\_review.pdf](https://www.humanrights.dk/files/media/migrated/integrated_review.pdf).

collected under SDG 3 might not include human rights considerations, such as non-discrimination or equal access to healthcare, which are core principles of the right to health under General Comment No. 14 of the CESCR.

To address this gap, LRGs could adopt integrated monitoring frameworks that align SDG indicators with UN human rights treaty bodies, special procedures, and UPR recommendations. For example, LRGs could collect disaggregated health data on access to medical services for marginalized populations, aligning this data with both SDG 3 targets and the CESCR's guidance on the right to health.

LRGs could also use digital platforms to streamline the collection of both SDG and human rights data, ensuring real-time monitoring of local progress.<sup>76</sup> By doing so, LRGs could align their reporting with national mechanisms such as NMIRFs, which are tasked with compiling human rights reports for submission to the UPR and treaty bodies. Additionally, these platforms could facilitate the integration of special procedures mandate holders' recommendations into local governance efforts, ensuring a more comprehensive and rights-based approach to SDG implementation.

## 2. ENHANCING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY THROUGH INTEGRATED MONITORING

LRGs could also enhance accountability and transparency by aligning their SDG monitoring efforts with the recommendations and reporting obligations of UN human rights mechanisms, such as the UPR, special procedures, and treaty bodies. Many of these mechanisms stress the importance of participatory, transparent governance that reflects the rights and needs of all citizens. LRGs should play a key role in this process because they are closest to the populations they serve and are in the best position to monitor the impact of policies on the ground.

One way to enhance accountability is through the use of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), which are modeled after the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) that countries submit to the United Nations to report on their progress toward the SDGs. VLRs provide a platform for LRGs to assess their own progress on the SDGs, offering transparency and encouraging local governments to take ownership of their human rights and SDG commitments.<sup>77</sup> By integrating human rights data

---

<sup>76</sup> See Section 5.e, *Tools and Strategies for Enhancing Data Collection and Management* below, pp. 33–37.

<sup>77</sup> A Voluntary Local Review (VLR) is a process through which LRGs (such as cities, municipalities, or regions) assess and report on their progress toward achieving the SDGs set by the United Nations. The VLR is modeled after the Voluntary National Review (VNR), which allows national governments to evaluate their SDG progress. VLRs enable local governments to track and report their contributions to global SDG goals, align local policies and actions with the broader global agenda, enhance transparency and accountability by sharing progress with the public and international community, and promote collaboration between different government levels, stakeholders, and communities. VLRs have gained prominence as cities and local authorities play a crucial role in localizing and implementing the SDGs, adapting global targets to specific local contexts and challenges. For more information, see United Nations, *Voluntary Local Reviews* (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs), available at <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/voluntary-local-reviews>.

into VLRs, LRGs can ensure that local policies are not only aligned with SDG targets but also compliant with international human rights standards.

For instance, an LRG conducting a VLR might assess its progress on SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by collecting data on women's participation in the workforce, access to education, and protection from gender-based violence. By linking this data to CEDAW obligations, the LRG ensures that its policies are aligned with both national SDG goals and international human rights frameworks. This type of integrated reporting enhances accountability by providing a holistic view of how well local policies are serving vulnerable populations, thus encouraging continuous improvement.

Additionally, LRGs could strengthen their monitoring systems by incorporating feedback from special procedures mandate holders. For example, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty may issue localized recommendations for improving living conditions, which LRGs could implement and report on through both SDG and human rights channels.

If a Special Rapporteur on the right to food recommends measures to address food insecurity for disadvantaged groups, LRGs could integrate this into their reporting under SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). By doing so, LRGs would not only contribute to national reports to UN human rights mechanisms and SDG reporting but also increase local-level accountability and transparency.

### **3. ADDRESSING POLICY GAPS AND BUILDING CAPACITY FOR LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING**

LRGs could play a more active role in human rights and SDG monitoring by addressing policy gaps and building capacity for human rights-based data collection. While many LRGs currently lack the frameworks or resources to effectively integrate human rights monitoring into their SDG reporting, targeted support from national governments, NHRIs and IOs could help bridge this gap.

Training programmes focusing on human rights and SDG monitoring could equip LRG officials with the skills needed to manage data collection, ensuring compliance with recommendations from the UPR, special procedures and the treaty body system. For example, LRGs could be trained to develop indicators under SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) that also track local compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), or the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Effective governance requires ongoing communication between national and local authorities, particularly when it comes to monitoring human rights and SDG progress.

Establishing feedback loops between these levels of government is crucial for ensuring that the data collected by LRGs is aligned with national priorities and can be effectively reported in national and international forums. One approach is to establish formalized data-sharing agreements between LRGs and national govern-

ments/NMIRFs.<sup>78</sup> These agreements would set clear guidelines for how local data should be collected, standardized, and reported, ensuring that it feeds into national SDG and human rights reports in a consistent and useful manner. Data collected at the local level—whether on education, health, or public services—can then be aggregated and used to inform national policy decisions.

Additionally, establishing or strengthening NMIRFs composed of representatives from national ministries, LRGs, the NHRI and CSOs would facilitate the sharing of best practices and foster a culture of mutual accountability. NMIRFs could regularly review local data, provide feedback on the progress being made, and make recommendations for improvements. By fostering this two-way communication, national governments can ensure that LRGs receive the necessary support and resources to meet their reporting obligations.

Feedback mechanisms are particularly important in areas where local policies may diverge from national priorities. For example, an LRG may prioritize urban development projects that contribute to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), but these projects could have unintended negative consequences for marginalized populations, such as the displacement of informal settlements. Through feedback loops, national governments/NMIRFs can provide guidance to LRGs, ensuring that local development strategies remain aligned with broader human rights and SDG objectives.

Ultimately, establishing these feedback mechanisms helps create a governance structure where local actions are continuously informed by national priorities and where national strategies are shaped by local realities. This alignment is critical for ensuring that human rights and SDG monitoring is both comprehensive and inclusive.

## E. DIGITAL TOOLS AND PLATFORMS FOR ENHANCING HUMAN RIGHTS AND SDG TRACKING

Several existing digital human rights tracking tools and databases<sup>79</sup> provide opportunities for LRGs to enhance their data collection, monitoring, and reporting capabilities for both human rights and SDGs monitoring, implementation and follow-up. To improve the linkage between national and local data collection, platforms such as the National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRTD), IMPACT OSS, SIMORE PLUS, and SIGOB can be adapted to LRG use, enabling more integrated, real-time data collection and reporting.

---

78 See *Expert Roundtable on Data Planning and Collection by National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting, and Follow-up*, supra fn 62.

79 For more information, see Geneva Human Rights Platform, *Digital Human Rights Tracking Tools and Databases Initiative*, available at <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/geneva-humanrights-platform/initiatives/detail/101-digital-human-rights-tracking-tools-and-databases>. You can also explore the main report: Domenico Zipoli, *The Human Rights Data Revolution (2024)*, available at [https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Briefing%2023\\_web.pdf](https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Briefing%2023_web.pdf), and the *Digital Human Rights Tracking Tools and Databases Directory*, available at <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/geneva-humanrights-platform/tracking-tools>.

- **National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRTD):**

Developed by OHCHR, the NRTD is an interactive tool developed to assist states in managing and tracking their human rights obligations and SDGs. By enhancing digital information management, the NRTD aids NMIRFs in monitoring the implementation of recommendations from UN human rights bodies and facilitating reporting. Each national version of NRTD offers functionalities such as organizing recommendations by themes, planning follow-up activities, assigning lead institutions, developing indicators, tracking progress, and exporting data for reporting. The database supports multiple UN languages, with translation into national languages available upon request.<sup>80</sup> Extending NRTD access to LRGs would allow them to directly input data on local implementation of human rights recommendations, ensuring that national reports reflect local realities. This would foster greater coherence between local and national human rights reporting and enable more granular monitoring of compliance.

- **IMPACT OSS:**

IMPACT OSS is an open-source software designed to help states coordinate and monitor the implementation of international human rights recommendations and SDGs. It also allows communication of progress to the public. The software supports maintaining, categorizing, and filtering recommendations and government actions from multiple frameworks, with two versions available: one focusing on international human rights and SDGs, and another incorporating national development strategies. Users can define indicators, track progress, receive automated reminders, and identify gaps in implementation, with tools to map overlaps across different frameworks for efficient data management.<sup>81</sup> Extending IMPACT OSS access to LRGs would enable them to track their contributions to the SDGs and human rights obligations and align their initiatives with national and global targets. By integrating local data on progress in areas like health, education, and infrastructure, IMPACT OSS can facilitate more accurate local reporting and enable LRGs to feed their data into national SDG frameworks and the monitoring cycle of international human rights mechanisms.

- **SIMORE PLUS:**

SIMORE Plus (Sistema de Monitoreo de Recomendaciones en Derechos Humanos) is a digital tool developed to track the implementation of recommendations from UN human rights mechanisms and cases from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Initially launched in Paraguay through a partnership between its Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice and the OHCHR, it is now used by several Latin American countries, including Chile, Guatemala, Honduras, Uruguay, and Argentina, among others. SIMORE Plus provides two key functions: it allows public access to compiled

---

80 For more information, see Geneva Human Rights Platform, *Digital Human Rights Tracking Tools and Databases Directory, National Recommendations Tracking Database*, available at <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/geneva-humanrights-platform/tracking-tools/detail/2-national-recommendations-tracking-database..>

81 For more information, see Geneva Human Rights Platform, *Digital Human Rights Tracking Tools and Databases Directory, IMPACT OSS*, available at <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/geneva-humanrights-platform/tracking-tools/detail/4-impact-oss>.

and systematized human rights recommendations, linking them to the SDGs and identifying responsible ministries, and it facilitates the preparation of national reports by enabling government representatives and civil society to monitor and report on human rights implementation progress. This tool enhances transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in human rights and SDG follow-up.<sup>82</sup> LRGs could use SIMORE PLUS to monitor their progress on human rights commitments, ensuring that local actions align with recommendations issued by UN treaty bodies, the UPR and other human rights mechanisms. This tool enables LRGs to link their human rights efforts to SDG monitoring, promoting an integrated approach to governance.

- **SIGOB:**

The UNDP-SIGOB SDG platform is a strategic information tool designed for the highest executive offices (President or Prime Minister) or the institution tasked with overseeing SDG implementation. Its main functions are to manage the coordination of the SDG agenda across institutions, identify synergies and gaps to accelerate progress, engage non-government actors by mapping their contributions to specific SDG targets, and support monitoring and reporting efforts both nationally and internationally. Drawing on UNDP-SIGOB's experience with government programmes and development strategies, this platform, alongside a political team, fosters long-term stakeholder engagement and public support critical to the success of SDG implementation, beyond political cycles.<sup>83</sup> LRGs can use SIGOB to track local governance performance and service outcomes, particularly in areas related to SDGs and human rights. By generating real-time data, LRGs can share insights with national authorities and contribute to comprehensive, integrated reports on both human rights and SDGs.

## ADAPTING DIGITAL TOOLS AND STRENGTHENING DATA SYSTEMS FOR LRGs

To enhance their role in human rights and SDG monitoring, LRGs must develop robust data systems and leverage digital tools that allow them to collect, analyze, and report data more effectively. While platforms such as NRTD, IMPACT OSS, SIMORE PLUS, and SIGOB already facilitate human rights tracking, they need to be customized to local needs, ensuring accessibility in multiple languages and the inclusion of indicators tailored to local governance priorities. However, the successful adoption of these tools depends on adequate training, local ownership, financial support, and interoperability with national systems.

### a. Building Capacity for Effective Data Collection and Management through a Human Rights-Based Approach

A major challenge for LRGs is the lack of financial and technical capacity to implement comprehensive data collection and management systems. Many local

---

82 For more information, see Geneva Human Rights Platform, *Digital Human Rights Tracking Tools and Databases Directory*, *SIMORE Plus*, available at <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/geneva-humanrights-platform/tracking-tools/detail/3-simore-plus>.

83 For more information, see UNDP, *SIGOB: Democratic Governance Information Systems*, available at <https://www.undp.org/latin-america/sigob>.



governments lack the expertise to gather, disaggregate, and analyze rights-based data, as well as the resources to invest in digital infrastructure. To address these gaps, capacity-building programmes must be designed with a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to data<sup>84</sup>, ensuring that data collection, analysis, and reporting processes uphold fundamental rights principles such as participation, non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability.

Key capacity-building initiatives should include:

- Training on data collection methodologies that align with international human rights and SDG indicators, ensuring that LRGs produce high-quality, relevant, and rights-based data.
- Technical assistance for digital platforms, equipping LRGs to use real-time monitoring tools effectively while ensuring data privacy, protection, and accessibility for all stakeholders.
- Peer-learning initiatives, where LRGs can exchange best practices and adapt governance models that have been successfully implemented elsewhere.
- Financial support mechanisms from national governments and international donors to enable LRGs to invest in data infrastructure, personnel, and digital human rights tracking tools and databases.
- Trainings on the use of AI for human rights monitoring, aimed at upskilling LRG representatives in understanding both the benefits and challenges of AI in human rights and SDG monitoring and implementation.<sup>85</sup>

Without these interventions, LRGs will continue to be underutilized in national and global monitoring frameworks, despite their proximity to communities and ability to collect localized, disaggregated data.

## **b. Interoperability and Integration with National Systems**

For LRGs to contribute meaningfully to national reporting, their data must be effectively integrated into national human rights and SDG monitoring frameworks. However, fragmented data structures currently limit the exchange of information between local and national levels. Strengthening data-sharing agreements and interoperability standards would allow LRG-generated data to be incorporated into national reports, improving the overall accuracy and depth of human rights and SDG assessments.

---

84 OHCHR, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Data – Leaving No One Behind in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2018), available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/GuidanceNoteonApproachtoData.pdf>.

85 Milica Mirković and Jennifer Victoria Scurrell, *AI Decoded: Key Concepts and Applications of Artificial Intelligence for Human Rights and SDG Monitoring* (Working Paper, January 2025), available at <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/GHRP%20-%20AI%20Decoded.pdf>.

A well-integrated system requires:

- Formalized data-sharing agreements outlining how local-level data contributes to national reporting.
- Standardized methodologies to ensure consistency and comparability across governance levels.
- Joint working groups between national (e.g. NMIRFs) and LRGs to support data harmonization, local capacity-building, and policy alignment.
- Input localized data into national reporting frameworks, ensuring that national reports reflect the realities of diverse communities.

By ensuring that LRGs' human rights and SDG data are systematically included in national frameworks, governments can create more informed policies that reflect ground-level realities rather than top-down assumptions.

### **c. Strengthening Collaboration Between Local and National Actors**

Sustained collaboration between LRGs, national governments, and IOs is crucial for ensuring effective human rights and SDG monitoring. NHRIs, NSOs, academia, and UN agencies can play an essential role in providing technical guidance, data standardization support, and policy alignment to strengthen local monitoring efforts.

A structured governance framework for collaboration should include:

- Institutionalized dialogue mechanisms ensuring that LRGs contribute systematically to national reporting.
- Comprehensive digital human rights tracking tools and databases that track progress across multiple sectors, aligning local data with human rights and SDG commitments.
- Joint research initiatives, where academia and technical experts collaborate with LRGs to improve data quality and reporting methodologies.

By enhancing digital capacity, governance coordination, and financial support, LRGs can transition from passive implementers to active data contributors, improving the global human rights monitoring system with accurate, localized insights that reflect on-the-ground realities.

## 6. CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF LRGs IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND SDG MONITORING

LRGs play a crucial role in advancing sustainable development and human rights, even when these efforts are not explicitly framed as such. While LRGs frequently align their activities in sustainability, climate action, and social inclusion with the SDGs, they also make significant, albeit often unacknowledged, contributions to human rights implementation. One key avenue for this engagement is through the collection and use of disaggregated data. By producing localized and detailed data, LRGs can actively participate in international human rights mechanisms, helping to implement recommendations, seek tailored advice, and contribute to global dialogues.

However, despite their proximity to communities, ability to collect granular data, and capacity to implement context-specific policies, LRGs remain underutilized in global and national governance frameworks. Structural barriers—such as limited formal recognition, insufficient resources, and fragmented data systems—continue to hinder their full engagement in multilateral human rights processes. This study has highlighted existing pathways and opportunities for LRGs to contribute more effectively to human rights monitoring, particularly by enhancing their role in data collection and multilevel governance structures. Expanding their engagement capacity, consultation and coordination mechanisms, and information management capabilities is essential to ensure that human rights and SDG commitments are met at all levels of governance.

## MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this analysis, the following key recommendations outline the necessary steps to fully integrate LRGs into national and global human rights and SDG monitoring frameworks:

### 1. INSTITUTIONALIZING LRGs IN NATIONAL AND GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS

To fully unlock the potential of LRGs in human rights and SDG monitoring, they must be systematically included in national human rights and SDG reporting mechanisms, particularly within NMIRFs. Their role in collecting localized, disaggregated data and contributing to national reports should be institutionalized to ensure that global and national policies reflect local realities. This requires formalized collaboration mechanisms, such as joint reporting structures, dedicated data-sharing agreements, and governance committees, which will help integrate LRG perspectives into multilevel decision-making processes.

### 2. STRENGTHENING ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION CAPACITIES

LRGs must be empowered to act as key consultation and coordination actors within national human rights systems. Their role in bridging the gap between national governments and local communities is critical for ensuring that human rights obligations translate into actionable local policies. Strengthening their participation in NMIRFs, treaty body reporting, and UPR consultations would enable them to share localized insights, contribute to policy discussions, and enhance implementation at the grassroots level.

Governments should also establish clear consultation mechanisms where LRGs can provide input into national human rights strategies, SDG implementation plans, and reporting processes. This would ensure that local realities are reflected in national and international human rights assessments, leading to more inclusive and effective policymaking.

### 3. CAPACITY BUILDING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Many LRGs lack the technical and financial resources needed to conduct effective data collection and human rights monitoring. National governments and IOs must invest in digital infrastructure, training programmes, and financial support mechanisms to equip LRGs with the necessary skills and tools. Capacity-building efforts should focus on:

- Training on human rights and SDG data collection methodologies, ensuring LRGs produce high-quality, standardized data.
- Technical assistance for digital tools, enabling real-time monitoring and reporting.
- Financial support for infrastructure and personnel, ensuring that LRGs have the capacity to participate effectively in national and international frameworks.

By investing in targeted capacity-building programmes, LRGs can expand their consultation and coordination capacities, allowing them to act as key intermediaries between national human rights institutions, civil society, and international bodies.

#### 4. LEVERAGING DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING

Effective information management capacity is critical for ensuring LRGs can track human rights progress and SDG implementation. Digital tools such as SIMORE PLUS, IMPACT OSS, and NRTD have the potential to transform human rights monitoring by enabling real-time data collection, improved reporting mechanisms, and integration with national systems.<sup>86</sup> However, many LRGs lack access to national data platforms or the necessary digital infrastructure to use these tools effectively.

Governments and international partners should prioritize investments in digital transformation, including:

- Ensuring LRGs have access to national-level human rights tracking tools, allowing them to input localized data into national reports.
- Providing necessary hardware, software, and broadband infrastructure to support digital data management.
- Training LRG personnel in digital literacy, AI and data governance, ensuring they can effectively use digital these tools to monitor human rights and SDG progress.

#### 5. STRENGTHENING MULTILEVEL COLLABORATION AND POLICY COHERENCE

For LRGs to play a meaningful role in human rights and SDG governance, stronger coordination between local, national, and international actors is required. Dedicated communication channels and governance structures should be established to facilitate regular engagement between LRGs and NMIRFs, ensuring that local actions are reflected in national and international human rights reports.

Key steps include:

- Formalized data-sharing agreements that enable consistent collaboration between LRGs and national governments.
- Joint working groups comprising national and local actors to harmonize data collection and reporting methodologies.
- Regular consultations and feedback loops, ensuring that local realities shape national and global policies.

---

<sup>86</sup> Domenico Zipoli, *The Human Rights Data Revolution* (Briefing No. 23, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, 2024), available at [https://geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Briefing%2023\\_web.pdf](https://geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Briefing%2023_web.pdf).

## 6. PROMOTING INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

Ensuring inclusive governance is crucial for effective human rights monitoring and SDG implementation.<sup>87</sup> LRGs must be equipped with the tools and strategies to engage marginalized communities in data collection, ensuring that all voices are represented in human rights assessments. Collaborating with civil society, academia, and community groups will further enhance participatory policymaking and accountability mechanisms.

Key measures include:

- Developing participatory data collection strategies to reflect the lived experiences of diverse populations.
- Engaging the private sector in responsible human rights practices, particularly in areas like urban development, digitalization, and public service delivery.
- Ensuring that human rights data reflects community-level realities, making policy interventions more relevant and effective.

As the world progresses toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, integrated data collection systems will become essential for tracking human rights and SDG progress simultaneously. Multilevel collaboration, digital innovation, and inclusive development will define the future of human rights governance. With the right tools, resources, and institutional support, LRGs will be able to ensure that no community is left behind in the pursuit of sustainable and equitable development.

Investing in LRGs is not just a matter of decentralization—it is about ensuring that the data we collect, the policies we create, and the progress we track reflect the true diversity of human experience. Advancing their role in human rights and SDG monitoring is a strategic investment in a future that is sustainable, inclusive, and rights-based. By addressing these priorities, LRGs can transition from implementers of localized policies to proactive agents of change in global governance. Their enhanced participation in national and international frameworks will not only improve human rights and SDG monitoring but also advance a more just and equitable society for all.

---

87 OHCHR, *Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Implementation of Resolution 51/33 on Promoting International Cooperation to Support National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up* (UN Doc. A/HRC/57/73, 2024), p. 11, available at <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/125/14/pdf/g2412514.pdf>.

The Geneva Academy provides postgraduate education, conducts academic legal research and policy studies and organizes training courses and expert meetings. We concentrate on branches of international law that relate to situations of armed conflict, protracted violence and protection of human rights.

Established in 2007 by the Faculty of Law of the University of Geneva and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, the Geneva Academy has acquired a global reputation for excellent teaching and research, and it attracts exceptional students to its master's and training programmes. Our graduates are employed around the world, promoting and protecting international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights in governments, NGOs, international organizations and academic institutions. The Geneva Academy thus contributes to the dissemination of legal knowledge in these crucial sectors.

Our scientific research focuses on clarifying IHL, strengthening human rights protection and developing the areas of complementarity between IHL and international human rights law. In these areas, the Geneva Academy makes a specific contribution to policy development and debate, in government and among scholars and practitioners.

The Geneva Academy is a cosmopolitan community located in the heart of Geneva, an international city and humanitarian hub. Through close interaction with international organizations, NGOs, experts, governments and the private sector, we actively participate in global discussions on IHL, human rights, international criminal law and transitional justice.

978-2-9701458-8-2



The Geneva Academy  
of International Humanitarian Law  
and Human Rights

Villa Moynier  
Rue de Lausanne 120B  
CP 1063 - 1211 Geneva 1 - Switzerland  
Phone: +41 (22) 908 44 83  
Email: [info@geneva-academy.ch](mailto:info@geneva-academy.ch)  
[www.geneva-academy.ch](http://www.geneva-academy.ch)

© The Geneva Academy  
of International Humanitarian Law  
and Human Rights

This work is licensed for use under a Creative  
Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share  
Alike 4.0 International License  
(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).