KEY FINDINGS

Jordan’s governance framework towards decentralization has been shaped by a series of reforms implemented in recent years, including the Municipalities Act, the Decentralization Act and the Local Administration Law. Such institutional framework provides for the existence of several mechanisms for SDG planning and implementation, working in coordination with each other. Thanks to the existence of these mechanisms, national and local authorities, policy departments and societal actors at all levels across the country are involved in the strategic design, planning, implementation and review of the national SDG localization strategy.

Vertical integration for SDG localization in Jordan is enhanced by the involvement of elected municipalities and governorates councils in the Coordination Committee and in various task forces set up by the Higher National Committee on Sustainable Development. Local authorities, and above all the Greater Amman Municipality, adopt thematic plans inspired by national planning, defined in the Executive Development Programmes (EDPs) and in the Government’s Indicative Executive Programme 2021-2024 (GIEP), that follows the “Jordan 2025” strategy and the 2030 Agenda.

Horizontal integration is ensured by the existence of inter-governmental coordination mechanisms such as the Higher Steering Committee, the National Higher Committee for Sustainable Development and the thematic task forces. Furthermore, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) works closely with all ministries and government institutions to align the SDGs with sectoral policies. Similarly, the Greater Amman Municipality has a strong horizontal collaboration between different sectors, based on several thematic internal committees putting together different directorates.

Stakeholder engagement on the 2030 Agenda is inspired by the strategy developed by the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation and is enhanced by the involvement of private sector, CSOs, academia and local communities in all the formal national mechanisms for SDG implementation and VNR preparation. The Voluntary National Reviews (2017 and 2022) and Voluntary Local Review of Greater Amman Municipality (2022) represent fundamental review processes on SDG planning and implementation across the country.
INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The Kingdom of Jordan is a unitary parliamentary monarchy with a two-tier subnational government system, composed of 12 governorates at the regional level, and 100 municipalities and the Greater Amman Municipality at the municipal level.

The legal framework for decentralization is made up by the following acts: the Municipalities Act, firstly introduced in 2007 and later modified in 2015, together with the Decentralization Act of 2015 and the relevant by-laws. The Municipalities Act (2007, 2015) sets out the responsibilities of municipalities, as well as their governing structure and their classification. The Decentralization Act (2015) gives concrete expression to the decentralization initiative put forward by the King of Jordan as part of the Jordan Vision 2025, the country’s 10-year strategy to promote decentralization and local democracy, providing the creation of elected governorate councils at the provincial level that enjoy financial and administrative independence. The new Local Administration Law (2021) sets the share of appointed members of the governorate councils at 40% and established that municipalities’ elected mayors should also be members of the governorate councils.

Although these reforms have led to significant changes in Jordan’s governance framework towards decentralization, important challenges remain, such as assigning clear mandates to the different subnational levels or enhancing coordination across levels of government, while recentralizing trends have hindered competence devolution over the past few years.

VERTICAL INTEGRATION

Concerning political commitment and institutional arrangements, to ensure efficient alignment and to emphasize a commitment to all SDGs within national priorities, the Government has opted to ensure that no overlapping mechanisms are established anew, and that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda builds upon existing institutional frameworks. These have been further refined to allow for better harmonization, including: 1) Higher Steering Committee – headed by the Prime Minister’s Office and involving relevant Ministers, the private sector and CSOs – to provide overall strategic guidance on policymaking for the implementation of the SDGs; 2) National Higher Committee for Sustainable Development – established in 2002 and headed by the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation with membership from ministries, the private sector, CSOs, and representatives of women, youth, Senate (upper house), House of Representatives (lower house), and local communities – to act as a reference for planning and roadmap for all national endeavours related to sustainable development; 3) Coordination Committee – headed by the Secretary General of MOPIC with membership from ministries, Government, and stakeholders – to provide supervision and management during the Executive Development Programmes (EDPs)’ preparation, to ensure mainstreaming of the SDGs within implementation and M&E processes of national and local plans and to ensure inter-linkages between the sectoral task forces. The involvement of elected municipalities and governorates councils in the Coordination Committee represents the main institutional arrangements to accelerate the mainstreaming of the SDGs at local levels. The governorates and the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) also participated in the task forces set up by the Higher National Committee on Sustainable Development to review each SDG for the 2022 VNR, task forces that have become permanent.

Concerning planning, the EDPs are multi-year government development plans, developed through a participatory approach, to integrate and translate different national development and sectoral plans and strategies under the “Jordan 2025” into actionable and measurable development programmes through three- or four-year cycles. As part of the country’s decentralization drive, the EDPs also include development programmes for each of the 12 governorates, translating national priorities at the sub-national level and taking into consideration their own sustainable development priorities and challenges. The Government’s Indicative Executive Programme 2021-2024 (GIEP) – i.e., the last EDP and the current national development program – includes plans for projects and transformative programmes that will contribute to accelerating progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Local authorities adopt thematic plans inspired by national planning, by aligning institutional goals and actions and by adapting them to the context through strict collaboration. Moreover, representatives of municipalities and governorates councils take part to several national planning committees, as in the case of the national climate change committee.

About implementation, the MOPIC, in coordination with the Ministry of Finance and the General Budget Department, has linked capital expenditures to the EDPs, thereby also ensuring that priority funding is allocated to the SDGs as an integral component of the EDPs. The UNDP has supported the Higher National Steering Committee with a dedicated ‘roadmap for the implementation of the SDGs with a 2030 time-horizon’ to reinforce SDG related initiatives in planning at the national and sub-national levels, including awareness raising, mapping, mainstreaming and financing development initiatives. The 2022 VNR represented the opportunity to release an Updated Jordan SDGs Implementation Roadmap, along with the preparation of the action plan for the roadmap through consulta-
tive meetings, to identify roles and responsibilities at all levels, and to ensure implementation, review and ongoing update. Jordan’s Planning Law sets in place the general framework for planning, financing, implementing, monitoring and evaluation.

SDG localization has made significant progress due to local and regional governments’ inclusion in national coordination mechanisms, the passing of the new decentralization law and placing the National Higher Committee for Sustainable Development. Local authorities report that they face problems in implementing the actions outlined in the adopted plans due to limited technical, human and financial capacities, requiring respectively new technological solutions, constant HR training and budget sources to fully finance SDG-related plans.

The MOPIC is in charge of reporting SDG progress and it is developing, in cooperation with the Performance Progress Unit at the Prime Ministry, a national monitoring system which will be used to monitor national and local programmes and plans. This system includes more than 600 indicators designed to be tracked by MOPIC through three-month progress reports and annual analytical reports. Furthermore, Jordan Department of Statistics following the National Strategy for Development of Statistics 2018-2022 established the Jordan Development Portal (JDP), which represents an open-access centralized platform for economic, social and environmental indicators. Most data are currently available only at the national level, while it is complicated for local authorities to obtain data at the local level, which negatively affects their ability to tailor policies and actions according to needs.

Jordan’s first VNR — submitted in 2017 — stressed the participation of both elected municipalities councils and appointed governorates councils to the reviewing process. In the process of drafting the 2022 VNR, in order to hold local consultations and engage entities at the local level, a national workshop was organized involving — among others — the governorates and municipalities councils. In early 2021, GAM started the process for the development of its VLR – the first in the country – with the support of UN-Habitat, contributing also to strengthen the VLR movement in the Middle-East and West Asian Countries. The preparation of both the 2022 VNR and the VLR by GAM required close coordination, ensuring coherence and complementarity between information, data and evidence notwithstanding some localizing traits based on Amman specific features.

Concerning political commitment, at national level the Higher Steering Committee – headed by the Prime Minister’s Office — and the National Higher Committee for Sustainable Development – headed by the MOPIC – both includes relevant line ministries. Since 2017, MOPIC works closely with all ministries and government institutions to align the SDGs with sectoral policies, and it ensured that the most relevant SDGs’ targets and indicators were selected and were linked to specific projects and budget allocations. Ministries are also members of the task forces set up by the National Higher Committee on Sustainable Development to review each SDG. At local level, GAM has a strong horizontal collaboration between different sectors in the municipality, based on several internal committees for each plan putting together different directorates. Indeed, actions under implementation are listed in each local plan highlighting intersectoral collaborations.

With regard to planning, Jordan attempted to develop strategies that fully reflect the multiple dimensions of development. Jordan has mainstreamed SDGs into sectoral strategies and action plans, such as Jordan’s Green Growth National Action Plan 2021-2025. In addition, several line ministries have formed technical working groups to review their sectoral and local plans and map them against the SDGs. Technical missions have also been conducted to support this process with relevant line ministries and the Department of Statistics, especially with regard to assessing the availability of indicators and identifying their categorization.

In the case of GAM, three main strategies concur to pursue the SDGs at local level:
- the Resilience strategy, approved in 2017;
- the Climate action plan, approved in 2019;
- the Green City action plan, approved in 2021.

They are strictly interrelated and fully aligned with national plans, thus contributing directly or indirectly to pursue the SDGs.

According to the 2022 VNR, implementation focus must be based on major strategic projects that will have a significant impact across sectors. The GIEP includes plans for projects and transformati ve programmes that will contribute to accelerating progress in achieving the 2030 agenda. In addition, efforts must be directed towards strengthening the institutional structure and capacities required for achieving the SDGs and developing the national SDGs database. The GAM Sustainable Development and Resilience Unit follows-up the implementation of SDG-related plans and projects, trying to get funding and in collaboration with different sectors. However,
while inter-sectoral collaboration among institutions works good at higher levels and for planning stages, it is much more challenging at technical level for implementation.

The 2022 VNR opted to report on all 17 SDGs to fully reflect the interlinkages and synergies across sustainable development dimensions and among goals. Moreover, key progress was made across different goals that was worthwhile to showcase. Moreover, in establishing the task forces of the Coordination Committee, the representation of the Department of Statistics in each task force has been ensured and the task forces have been provided with the initial data available on the JDP. The methodology adopted contributed indirectly to activating the eco-system, and enriching the JDP with accurate, sustainable and national data sources. The data needed to steer policies correctly towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda are currently available to different ministries and other actors. However, it is complicated for local governments to access all the sources (still scattered between different entities) and thus to dispose of the data, therefore it is still difficult to measure how their plans and strategies contribute to the SDGs in an integrated manner.

**STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Jordan’s efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda are enabled by strong partnerships with the private sector, CSOs, academia and the international community. The MOPIC prepared a stakeholder engagement strategy to ensure the widest participation from all Major Groups and Organizations in the SDG implementation and VNR preparation. The Higher Steering Committee includes also private sector organizations and CSOs. Similarly, the National Higher National Committee for Sustainable Development involves private sector organizations, CSOs, and representatives of women and youth. Upon the directions of the National Higher Committee for Sustainable Development, 16 task forces have been established, including all parties relevant to achieving the goals, among which the private sector, CSOs, UN organisations and other international institutions. In GAM, community and stakeholder engagement represents a challenge. Despite having a public engagement plan with the municipal communication department, most of citizens do not know the meaning of the SDGs and how they affect their lives.

Concerning planning, Jordan’s Higher National Steering Committee provides overall strategic guidance for the implementation of the SDGs including consultations with stakeholders. The stakeholder engagement strategy proposes a variety of fora including task force meetings, workshops, focus groups and debates as well as a number of outreach tools like printed materials, social media engagement, and others. The strategy also took into account challenges to the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, namely: difficulties reaching the most marginalized, the tendency to involve larger NGOs rather than smaller, community-based organizations and individuals and time constraints. The EDP 2016-2019 was designed in partnership with all Major Groups and Organizations as essential partners in the development process, with the support of a coordination committee and the 16 task forces. Similarly, the GIEP for 2021-2024 took into account the participation of the private sector and CSOs in development and their complementarity of roles. However, there a still limited examples of Public-Private Partnerships at local level with a strong engagement of the private sector in implementing and financing SDG-related actions.

With regard to implementation, the EDP 2016-2019 covered 26 development sectors, and identified the roles of 123 partners (public, private, CSOs, others) in carrying out 2,126 projects. Moreover, NGOs and CSOs have been heavily engaged in strengthening ownership of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs through many awareness-raising workshops and consultations held around different themes. The task forces established during the drafting of the 2022 VNR further enhanced the role of the private sector, CSOs, UN organisations and other international institutions to implement the 2030 Agenda in Jordan. In GAM, during the preparation of the Green City Action Plan, a pilot initiative of community engagement was conducted deploying several tools: online survey to the general public, online sessions with directorates representatives; university students involved as Green Ambassadors, etc. Its success is very promising for tackling the challenge of community and stakeholder engagement that is often hampering implementation phases.

To elaborate the 2022 VNR, MOPIC adopted a mechanism through which all relevant stakeholders were engaged and included in the drafting process. To this end, the 16 task forces were involved actively, and through them several stakeholders were encouraged to review the SDG’s targets and indicators, in addition to their links with national and sectoral strategies, to determine the extent of achievement made and to compare them with the latest available data. Academia and representatives of local communities, unions and youth were also included in the process. The task forces will be permanent in order to strengthening the capacity to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in an ongoing manner. Moreover, in order to hold local consultations and engage entities at the local level across the Kingdom’s governorates, a national workshop was organized, involving – among others - representatives from academia and CSOs. Finally, to ensure discussions at national level, a special platform was announced, allowing civil society to present comments on the report.
This summary reports the main information on multilevel governance for SDG localization in Jordan. It is part of the wider global research “Accelerating progress towards the localization of the SDGs and post-pandemic recovery through enhanced multilevel governance”. The research is the building block of UN-Habitat’s effort to strengthen global knowledge and practices on multilevel governance as a key process to localizing the SDGs. The research has been led in partnership with ARCO (Action Research for CO-development) and with the support of knowledge partners: Brookings Institution, LSE Cities, Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, United Cities Local Governments.

The analysis summarized here is mainly based on information collected through key informant interviews with the national coordination body for SDG implementation in the Jordan (i.e., Minister of Planning and International Cooperation) and one local authority actively committed to SDG localization (i.e., Greater Amman Municipality). Moreover, it provides information extrapolated from the official Voluntary National Reviews (2017 and 2022) and the Voluntary Local Review by Greater Amman Municipality (2022), as well as from relevant global reports, including the yearly UCLG report to the High-level Political Forum “Towards the localization of the SDGs”, OECD/ UCLG (2019), OECD (2020), OECD country profiles on PCSD, Brookings (2020, 2022), and the policy briefs on “Emergency Governance for Cities and Regions” by LSE Cities, UCLG & Metropolis (2021).