Localizing the SDGs in Complex Metropolitan Structures: Lessons and Insights from eThekwini Municipality, South Africa

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Abstract

Over the past years, eThekwini municipality (also known as Durban) has emerged as an exemplar city for biodiversity and climate change action and also for the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in an African city context. Key to the SDG localization approach has been the use of its medium-term Integrated Development Plan to align the work of the municipality with the SDG goals and targets. This chapter looks at some of the factors that have shaped eThekwini's approach to SDG localization. Chief among them is the city's longstanding track record of engagement and participation in global sustainability networks and agendas through an active leadership that has fostered the emergence of local sustainability champions within the city. While eThekwini shares many challenges with other metropolitan African cities around multilevel governance, active local leadership has made the city carve out its own path toward the practical implementation of global policy in a way that is grounded in local processes and through priority actions that are suited to its specific context.

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12.1 Introduction

eThekwini Municipality is the government authority with oversight over South Africa's third-largest urban hub—Durban—that is also an important development hub on the east coast of Southern Africa. Like many other African cities, it has experienced rapid urban growth over the past years. Covering a vast, mostly rural territory of some 2297 km^2, its estimated 3.3 million population is mostly settled in and around the city's urban core. High levels of formal unemployment put pressure on its ability to sustainably manage, finance, and deliver services (eThekwini Municipality 2021).

The municipality has aimed to tackle the challenges of growth, poverty, and environmental integrity through innovative policy reform and through an integrated approach to strategic city planning. Although predating the SDGs, integrated development planning is a local government process adopted across South Africa that aligns with the shift towards a more holistic understanding of sustainable development of the post-2015 development agenda (Binns and Nel

2002; Madzivhandila and Asha 2012). This chapter directly explores the value of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) as a tool for SDG localization, using the experience of Durban, and indirectly highlights the critical role of the support and activities of individual officials in building a global agenda from the bottom up.

As might be expected of an African city that is habitually used as a case study of urban change in Africa, eThekwini Municipality has been the subject of considerable practice-based and academic reflection. There are both critical and complimentary assessments of the council's performance. Some of the most interesting and reflective work on the localization of global agendas comes from Debra Roberts, who aside from being the co-chair of the United Nations International Panel of Climate Change (IPCC) is also a local government official from Durban and has published extensively on the challenges of working at the local level (Roberts 2008, 2010; Roberts and O'Donoghue 2013; Cockburn et al. 2016; Boon et al. 2016). Building on her invaluable insights as a city insider, this chapter is also written by a Durban city official. It reflects from within local government on the factors, lessons, and challenges that have shaped the city's own unique approach to SDG localization in eThekwini.

The story and the position of its storyteller are important because Durban has embraced localizing global policy since the endorsement of the 2030 Agenda in 2015. This started with the use of its IDP as the basis for capital expenditure in alignment with SDG goals and targets. Early efforts around IDP/SDG harmonization fed into ongoing efforts around monitoring and reporting in preparation for its first Voluntary Local Review (VLR) on the SDGs. Key to this IDP-based approach to pushing for SDG enhancement is that local priorities draw from and reinforce international agendas. This global-local articulation has been a feature of Durban governmentality and is based on a longstanding engagement with global sustainability agendas, going back to the Rio Earth Summit of 1992. Since then, there has been extensive participation by Durban officials in numerous global city networks. International engagement has been led by an active city leadership, which in turn has fostered the emergence of local sustainability champions.

12.2 eThekwini's Planning Approach in Context

eThekwini's key entry point for global policy alignment at the city level is its 5-year Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process, through which the SDGs are now filtered to reinforce sustainability planning and implementation (eThekwini Municipality 2021). For those less familiar with South African context, it is helpful to know that the IDP is a municipal-led strategic planning tool that for almost two decades has been used across South Africa to ensure cross-department alignment and to allow for medium-term prioritization (Harrison 2001; Todes 2004). Its origins lie with the end of apartheid and the ambition for radical change.

In 1994, South Africa became a newly democratic country after decades of white minority rule. Apartheid left behind an entrenched legacy of social and spatial inequality, which the new post-apartheid government sought to address through the introduction of a new legal, policy, and governance framework. Key to this framework was the restructuring of local government, translating into a period between 1994 and 2000, during which cities were governed through a transitional local government. The adoption of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 and the Municipal Structures Act of 2000 established South Africa's current local government structure with three categories of municipalities: metropolitan, district, and local (Cameron 2001).

The basis for this structure was the new Constitution of 1996, which assigned specific service delivery responsibilities to national, provincial, and local government under a nationally sponsored Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP). Under this program, local governments were to have an explicit developmental mandate, with key mandates and responsibilities in the area of basic service delivery (Parnell et al. 2002). A key instrument in this regard is the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The IDP

was designed "as an instrument to assist local authorities in transformation, and in fulfilling the objectives of the nationally sponsored Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)." It combines a strategic plan, which has a vision and a set of strategies and projects, and a meta-plan, which links a series of separate sectoral-based plans and planning processes (Harrison 2001, pp. 176–177).

During the transitional period for local government, most local authorities in South Africa prepared some kind of IDP with guidance of the national government. After the first local elections of 2000, a new round of IDPs was prepared for the new local municipalities. However, many local authorities in South Africa were unable to complete a meaningful integrated and coordinating planning process. To date, many continue to struggle with the most basic functions of management and service delivery, in a context in which economic performance and efficiency and short-term delivery have increasingly come to prevail over social, participatory, and long-term planning prerogatives (Harrison 2001; see also McDonald and Smith 2004; Palmer et al. 2017).

These challenges are shared by the city of eThekwini, which in recent years have been compounded by global drivers of change such as rapid urbanization, globalization, and climate change. Three distinctive characteristics are important in understanding Durban and its complex challenges. Firstly, approximately 68% of the municipal area is peri-urban or rural in nature and partly governed by traditional authorities. Secondly, Durban is unusual in that it is located in a global biodiversity hotspot (1 of only 36 worldwide), making the protection and management of natural ecosystems a priority. Thirdly, due to apartheid, Durban has a legacy of structural and social inequity which is apparent in all aspects of city life and functions. Durban has a Gini coefficient (measuring the level of inequality) of 0.63, which is among the highest in the world, with an estimated 41% of the population experiencing conditions of poverty (eThekwini Municipality 2021) and a housing backlog of approximately 389,000 units (eThekwini Municipality 2017a, p. 35).

In comparison with many African local governments, the fiscal power of eThekwini may seem great. However, this has to be put against the reality that in this context it is local government that is on the front line of delivering the services that underpin progress towards the SDGs. Like all local governments in South Africa, the city of eThekwini is responsible for the delivery of basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity, and solid waste collection. However, as a metropolitan municipality, created as part of the municipal reforms of 2000, it represents a Category "A" municipality, holding constitutionally protected powers such as the ability and the technical capacity to generate revenue. This gives it more powers than smaller category "B" and "C" municipalities, representing intermediate and small towns, although primary responsibility for social services (education, health, and welfare), the built environment (human settlements), and water and electricity (energy) infrastructure still lies with the provincial and/or national government departments. Over the years, the city of eThekwini has skillfully sought to manage these challenges and responsibilities through long-term evidence-based development planning and active participation in global sustainability organizations and networks. The power of localization in Durban rests in part on the fact that it is the local government that is tasked with action to enhance basic conditions of residents. In this regard, what planners do to harmonize competing imperatives and come up with catalytic action that will drive sustainable development really matters. Experiences in eThekwini, which has been doing this for some time now, are illuminating for any city wanting to push the SDGs from the local scale.

12.3 Planning in eThekwini: From the Local to the Global

During the transitional period of the late 1990s, the city of eThekwini was mainly governed in line with the logic of "Reconstruction and Development," delivering a range of services, including water and transport, and even some pri-

mary health. However, the city had little evidence of the impact of this demanding political agenda on its service delivery. The gap between the political aspirations of the post-apartheid transition and local change led to the decision to conduct a Quality of Life survey in Durban in 1998. The survey measured the perception of local residents of municipal service performance and showed that in spite of increased service delivery, the perceived quality of life had decreased. Clearly in breach of the hope of the new democracy, the slip in standards represented a major political concern, sparking a search for more sustainable service delivery mechanisms within the municipality and a focus on process and impact rather than merely on outputs.

In 1999, Durban adopted a methodology of outcome-based planning, which was used to develop the city's Long-Term Development Framework (LTDF) in 2000, which was adopted in 2001, providing an overarching long-term sustainability framework for the midterm national government mandated municipal IDPs (eThekwini Municipality 2001). The kinds of action initiated in South Africa might be thought of as the sort of intervention envisaged by SDG 17 on strengthening the institutional capacity (of local government) to deliver the global agenda (Palmer et al. 2017). In the South African context, Durban was a pioneer of the bold rethink of the role and practices that local government needs to achieve large scale transformation—not just nationally but also internationally.

In 2008, the city partnered with an international organization called the Sustainable Cities Initiative to review the LTDF. This organization promotes the use of community participation and engagement for the development of city strategies and previously had worked in cities like Vancouver and Chicago. Building on knowledge that was coming out of the recently adopted Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the World Sustainable Development Summit, held in Johannesburg in 2002, the jointly constructed plan was grounded in sustainable development theory, while also including extensive active public participation processes. The result of this process—called "Imagine Durban"—was a consolidated vision for the future of the city with associated timeframes, roles, and responsibilities, as well as targets that spanned a 50-year sustainable development path. Moreover, the plan recognized that its implementation needed to involve all spheres of government, in consultative and inclusive processes that involved all stakeholders (Roberts 2008).

In recognition that there are multi-scale issues to localization, the city in 2015 started reviewing its alternative strategy through its City Planning Commission (CPC), which existed alongside the National Planning Commission and the Provincial Planning Commission for KwaZulu-Natal, the province that eThekwini is part of. The members of the CPC are experts in their field and provide oversight for the component parts of the city's strategy (eThekwini Municipality 2015). The CPC highlighted three areas that needed attention: urban governance, spatial development, and economic development. Based on these areas, a set of implementation plans were developed to feed into the city's IDP, but also to align with the requirements or indicators of the newly endorsed global development agendas (from the IPCC, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and also the 2030 Agenda).

The overt focus on global development agendas emerged from eThekwini's active participation in a number of international networks and organizations. Apart from the city's membership of a number of national local government associations such as the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the South African Cities Association (SACN), eThekwini is an active member of global city networks such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), Metropolis, the Global Parliament of Mayors, as well as the African Union's NEPAD Cities Program. Several eThekwini mayors, senior officials, and council members have been active members of the executive leadership of these organizations, hosting numerous high-level meetings and summits in Durban, such as the United Nations Climate Chance Conference (COP17) in 2011, to the UCLG World Congress and Global Parliament of Mayors in 2019.

Working with its commitment to addressing its substantial environmental challenges, the municipality has been particularly active in networks with a focus on climate change, such as the 100 Resilient Cities Initiative, ICLEI Africa, and the C40 Climate Leadership Group. For instance, in the area of climate change, the city contributed to the global climate change negotiations that resulted in the adoption of the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015. A key person in this regard was the city's head of the Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department between 1994 and 2016. Dr. Debra Roberts was a member of United Nations International Panel of Climate Change (IPCC) working groups, as well as the South African UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiating team. Roberts, in 2015 elected as IPCC co-chair, is the most high-profile official to combine a local and global role. However, Durban residents were also visible in the area of urban safety through the city's participation in the African Forum for Urban Safety and its partnership with the UN-Habitat Safer Cities Program (UN-Habitat 2016). Key to the city's role in these municipal, regional, and global networks is not just its active membership at the highest political level but also the use of these connections and senior positions in these organizations to advocate and lobby for the inclusion, importance, and capacitation of subnational governments in global sustainable development conversations and implementation. There is an additional value for others of the Durban presence—that of having a strong African voice with a credible base to push for forms of localization that work on the continent.

Individuals engagements in city-to-city and international urban organizations and networks opened the way for broader global advocacy work. This included the city's contributions to the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Thematic Group on Sustainable Cities, a group involved in mobilizing support for the creation of a stand-alone urban SDG in the run-up to the adoption of Agenda 2030 in 2015 (Acuto et al. 2018). The city also started chairing the UCLG Urban Strategic Planning Committee, while participating in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, a coordination mechanism that brings together the major international networks of local governments to undertake joint advocacy work relating to global policy processes. As part of this advocacy work, the city participated in numerous important global meetings and events, including the New Urban Agenda working groups, which contributed to the adoption of the New Urban Agenda at Habitat III in 2016 (Moodley 2016).

Participation in global engagements allowed the city not only to advance subnational government interests in South Africa but also to learn from other pioneering cities across the world and the different ways in which they have approached SDG localization. As a result, internal levels of knowledge and awareness of global development agendas were high, contributing to a commitment to align local planning agendas with these global conversations. In practice, this resulted in a bold and independent attitude to forging a bottom-up approach to SDG localization, where the city developed its own approach without much guidance from the South African national government, which has been mainly focused on SDG domestication at the national level (Mthembu and Nhamo 2021).

12.4 Localizing the SDGs in eThekwini

SDG localization in eThekwini has been led by the office of the IDP, which has a strong local political base from the Mayor. The Mayor holds local political leadership of the city's mayoral committee, which coordinates the work of the City Council. However, there is also a strong external political impetus that derives from the role and experience of the city's IDP manager as technical chair of the UCLG Urban Strategic Planning Committee.[1] The power of the IDP as a conduit for SDG localization in eThekwini is not just political, but it is also technical. In any

[1]More information on this committee see the UCLG website: https://www.uclg.org/en/organisation/structure/committees-working-groups/urban-strategic-planning.

South African municipality, the IDP represents the city's guiding document. The IDP office therefore represents a key office or hub in the city. As the IDP requires a holistic approach to strategic development within the municipality, making links across various city units and departments to ensure that the city remains on the correct trajectory is its major purpose. This makes the IDP office a strategic entry point for sustainability planning, over time also becoming a hub for information and knowledge sharing on the processes of implementation and SDG localization with actors inside as well as outside of the city.

Work on SDG localization in Durban actively started upon the completion of the city's municipal IDP for the period of 2017–2022, which is defined according to an eight-point plan: (1) Develop and sustain our spatial, natural, and built environment. (2) Develop a prosperous, diverse economy and employment creation. (3) Create a quality living environment. (4) Foster a socially equitable environment. (5) Support organization design, human capital development, and management, (6) Build a vibrant and creative city—the foundation for sustainability and social cohesion. (7) Provide good governance and responsive local government, and (8) Build a financially accountable and sustainable city (eThekwini Municipality 2017b, p. 226).

Broadly, these eight points reflect the three key components of sustainability: environmental, economic, and social, underpinned by good governance practices, and the correlation with the values of the SDGs is clear. Important to note in this regard is the additional contribution of the New Urban Agenda, which brings a more specifically human rights dimension to the social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainable development through its focus on the right to the city (UN 2016). Taken together, eThekwini's premise for SDG localization is that there are different starting points for SDG localization and that a city can use whatever model for sustainable development that it chooses and find alignment between the goals and intention of global agendas and local sustainability agendas. The SDG relevance of the normative platform of the eThekwini IDP is only really evident when its incorporation into the work of the Council is assessed.

12.4.1 Mapping Responsibilities

The first step towards SDG localization in eThekwini consisted of an exercise, conducted in 2017, to find out which SDGs fell under the responsibility of the metropolitan municipal government. The starting point for this exercise was a review of all of the 169 SDG indicators that were mapped in accordance with the role and responsibilities of the different tiers of government, as per the South African Constitution, specifically section four and five which outline the powers and functions of each sphere of government.

Through this mapping exercise, 98 of the indicators were found to respond to South African municipal mandates, while 23 and 48 indicators responded to provincial and national responsibilities respectively (see Fig. 12.1). However, of the projects that were implemented in eThekwini, 60 projects did not align with any of SDG indicators, meaning that although the city played a role in facilitating their implementation, these projects did not align with its direct responsibilities as local government. This number of projects was reduced to 48 in the following year, 2018. Conversely, 30 of the 98 indicators associated with local government aligned with a particular SDG target or indicator in 2017, which in 2018 increased to 50 and in 2019 to a further 56 indicators which had associated projects. Overall then, there was a gradual harmonization of SDG and IDP priorities and project selection, highlighting the important influence of the local on the global and the global on the local.

Based on this review of SDG targets and associated projects that the city was implementing as local government, the IDP office listed the number of projects for each relevant SDG target. This allowed it to calculate the capital expenditure for each target as well as average spend, creating an understanding, and therefore awareness, of what capital expenditure was going towards in terms of SDG achievement.

Fig. 12.1 SDG indicators and South African government responsibilities. (Source: author)
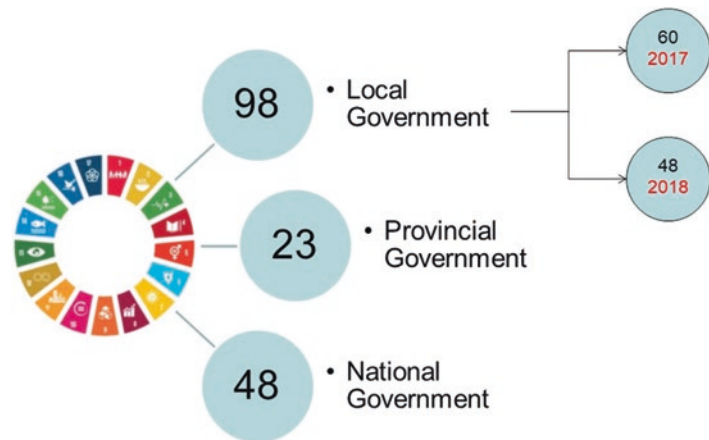
For example, the city's highest capital outlay corresponded to projects related to SDG targets 16.7 (to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels), 6.2 (achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations), and 11.2 (provide access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities, and older persons).

It also showed that in terms of housing or human settlement-related programs, which is actually a provincial and national mandate, the city was implementing in the region of 700 projects with a total capital budget of ZAR 2.8 billion (about US$ 180 million at 2021 exchange rates) and a highest spend of around ZAR 238 million (about US$ 15 million at 2021 exchange rates). Having this overview therefore gave the city an important snapshot of its expenditure in relation to each of the SDG targets and indicators and an important basis for the alignment of its IDP at a capital budget level. It also highlighted the need for more engagement and active partnership with other levels of government to deliver on the SDGs, as well as more efficient financial flows to the local government level.

12.4.2 Budget Alignment

The IDP consists of a number of goals that provide the basis for a Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) and associated budgets, thereby ensuring that spending matches political planning objectives (Duminy and Parnell 2020). Effectively, through the addition of the SDBIP process, the city looked at how the municipal capital budget implementation and capital budget investment aligned to the SDG goals and targets. Practically, the method used was to align each of the capital projects to a relevant SDG and associated targets. In cases where projects can align to multiple goals and targets, the city used the "best match" principle, aligning the project with a target that matched best with the original intent of that capital delivery program. For example, if a project revolved around the development of new infrastructure to deliver better health services, the city aligned that project to the associated health SDG and not the infrastructure SDG.

Source documents used in this exercise were the city's SDBIP capital projects, as included in its 2017/2018 Municipal Service Delivery Implementation Plan (eThekwini Municipality 2017c). In 2017/2018, the city looked at capital and operational projects, but in the following years of 2018/2019 only looked at capital projects. What contributed to this process of strategic budgetary review was the implementation of the Municipal Standard Chart of Accounts (mSCOA)

system. This is an accounting system that has standardized the accounts of all municipalities across the country and aims to change how municipalities transact by standardizing financial management processes through policy formulation, budgeting, and in-year reporting frameworks as part of a wider public sector reform. Importantly, it contributes to ensuring that every item budgeted for is aligned with the city's strategy and is monitored in terms of not only delivery but also expenditure. This then assists management to ensure effectiveness and economy of projects (Govender and Reddy 2019).

The city used the mSCOA to go through and list all IDP goals and outcomes at the program level. The departmental accountants loaded all of the capital projects for a year, which could total between 3000 and 5000. Once that was completed, each project in the list was linked to a respective development agreement and respective goals, including global agreements such as the SDGs, but also other global agendas such as the New Urban Agenda and Sendai Agreement, as well as the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (Provincial Planning Commission Kwazulu-Natal 2012) and South Africa's 2030 National Development Plan (Republic of South Africa 2012). This multiscale alignment was done centrally in the IDP office to ensure consistency in the calibration process. However, the ambition is to create enough awareness and knowledge around those global agendas so that line departments can conduct these alignment exercises themselves in the future.

Through the alignment process at a capital budget level, the city started looking at how the IDP plans aligned to the SDGs and respective capital spend. The exercise revealed that the highest capital spend corresponded with projects related to SDG 6 (water and sanitation) and 11 (cities), which in turn aligned with IDP plans 3 (creating a quality living environment) and 6 (a vibrant and creative city). In other words, this allowed the city to see and track which of its plans have an impact in terms of the SDGs, again using the best-match principle using the intent of the initial project.

When comparing the budgets of the years 2017–2018 and 2018–2019, there were some variances. The largest variance concerned capital budgets that align to SDG 9 (infrastructure), where there was a significant decrease from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019 of approximately ZAR 2.1 billion (about UD$ 136 million at 2021 exchange rates). This can be explained through the completion of one of the large parts of the capital development program for 2017/2018, which meant that the city did not have to make those outlays in 2018/2019. On the other hand, the comparison revealed a misallocation in terms of water-related projects that align with SDG 6, leading to an increase in capital budget allocated to this sector from ZAR 516 million (about US$ 33 million at 2021 exchange rates) in 2017–2018 to ZAR 1.4 billion (about US$ 90 million at 2021 exchange rates) the following year. Hence, aligning the capital budget to the SDGs allowed the city to have a better insight into what it was, and should be, spending to meet relevant SDG goals and targets, contributing to supporting the financing of SDGs. The work also represented an important way of building awareness. For instance, through the process of budgeting and business planning, we discovered that 60 projects did not align with the city's direct responsibilities as local government. This represented an opportunity to engage with line departments in order to align projects more directly to the city's responsibilities and respective SDG targets. This work also contributed to the start of creating a benchmark for monitoring by using the city's financial model as the benchmark.

12.4.3 Champions and Capacity Building

The alignment of the city's responsibilities and budget to the SDGs through the IDP gave the city a strategic and high-level entry point into SDG localization. Implementation was in turn supported by institutional reform, which involved the appointment of the city's IDP manager, together with its chief learning officer and the

deputy city manager in the Human Settlements, Engineering, and Transportation cluster as champions for SDGs in the municipality. The IDP manager is responsible for strategy development, long-term development planning, IDPs, as well as assisting with the monitoring and evaluation. It therefore makes sense to allocate the functions of SDG localization to this position. The task of the chief learning officer, on the other hand, is to build awareness and advocacy around the SDGs within the organization itself and to start building up capacity at the local level. The deputy city manager for the Human Settlements, Engineering, and Transportation administrative cluster is largely responsible for the implementation of SDG 11 across the municipality by virtue of the departments that report to this office. The IDP manager reports to the chief strategy officer which in turn reports directly to the city manager, while the chief learning officer reports to the deputy city manager in the Human Resources and Capacity Building administrative cluster. Together, these three officers are responsible for supporting and translating the city's political leadership advocacy role from the global to the city level.

The work of the IDP Office on prioritization and alignment of activities with the SDGs was located in a wider change management approach. Importantly, this involved awareness raising among the executive leadership that included the municipal manager, who heads up the municipal administration, as well as the members of the city's Executive or Mayoral Committee, who together with the mayor oversee the work of the municipal manager and department heads. To this effect, the city has also put various reporting mechanisms in place, while linking reports on the alignment of the SDGs to current IDPs and capital projects to its Executive Committee. A series of workshops was also conducted with members of the city's political leadership so that when senior councilors engage in international forums and networks, they do so with full knowledge of the SDGs and the latest information available on the city's activities related to SDG localization. Reference to the SDGs is also made by speechwriters and communication teams in the offices of the mayor and city manager, contributing to raised awareness on the SDGs within, as well as outside, the city.

Awareness and capacity have to go beyond a select group of officials at a senior management level and cascade down to the rest of the organization in order to ensure effective implementation of the SDGs. The main targets of capacity building in eThekwini are members of middle management because that is where the majority of project implementation actually takes place. It is therefore important to build awareness and capacity on the content and intents of the SDGs among operational officials in order to contribute to an understanding of the important role they have to play in SDG implementation through the delivery of efficient and effective basic services. Showing how their efforts impact at the global level also contributes to an improved sense of ownership of their departmental work.

To facilitate capacity building and learning, the city hosts master classes in partnership with the Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE). MILE represents the first-ever local government-driven, practitioner-based Institute of Learning that was created in 2009 to promote learning for and by local government professionals.[2] In partnership with MILE, the city has reviewed the content of existing master classes so that they link to sustainable development and the SDGs. Whether the classes are about urban strategic planning, wastewater sanitation, recycling, or performance management, they all link to the SDGs so as to raise awareness about them among the participants of these master classes and promote the incorporation of the SDGs in their work in their respective municipalities. MILE has not only trained local councilors and officials from eThekwini but it has also functioned as a hub for train-the-trainer courses on the SDGs with officials from other African countries such as Malawi, Namibia, Maldives, Seychelles, and Morocco. Key to these courses has been the development of training modules and toolkits for SDG localization developed together with UCLG and UN-Habitat. eThekwini staff were actively

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[2] See MILE website: http://www.mile.org.za/.

involved in developing the first three manuals on the SDGs: the first relates to awareness, the second addresses planning and implementation, while a third manual covers SDG monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (UCLG 2017, 2019a, b). Reflecting the way Durban has influenced international ideas about localization is the fact that the last module was launched at the global UCLG congress hosted by eThekwini in November 2019. Since then, a fourth manual was completed on SDG localization through decentralized cooperation (UCLG 2020).

Localization is not only about implementing in situ—it is also about sharing ideas about how to localize, and eThekwini has also started working together with local universities to build the technical skills and workforce that will be required to implement the SDGs through the development of a sustainable development research agenda, through guest lectures, the review, and external examination of student papers, and to ensure that curricula are relevant to the municipal environment.

12.5 Challenges to SDG Implementation

Building awareness and capacity on the SDGs at the city level is important but should extend to all levels of government in order to facilitate a whole-of-government approach, which is crucial for effective SDG localization. This applies especially in cross-cutting policy areas such as public spaces and urban safety, issues that the city of eThekwini has been actively working on in collaboration with external partners but that require multi-level policy making and implementation, involving provincial as well as national government.

Currently, the lack of policy coherence and collaboration between the different spheres of government in South Africa hinders implementation. This is exacerbated by the lack of political leadership on the SDGs at the national government level. After the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, Agenda 2030 did not immediately have an institutional home. Some saw it as falling within

the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (DPME), while others saw it as a mandate for the national statistics office, Stats SA, which is responsible for national reporting. Only a peripheral role was accorded to national government agencies such as the Department of Human Settlements, which is signatory to the New Urban Agenda, or the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), which is responsible for local governments (Croese et al. 2021). This meant that provincial governments, which hold important mandates over crucial areas such as health, education, and human settlements, were also left out of the conversation. It was only after the development of the country's first Voluntary National Review, presented to the UN High Level Political Forum in 2019 (Republic of South Africa 2019), that different national government departments started engaging more structurally together around the SDGs.

The Durban experience suggests that multi-scale cooperation at the local level is not the only impediment to effective SDG localization. Budget constraints, exacerbated by the impact of the 2020–2021 COVID-19 pandemic, have reduced any prospects for additional national government funding for the implementation of the SDGs. This means that local governments will have to use their own internal revenues to fund SDG localization and implementation. While municipal resources may be limited, existing funding and public sector expenditure might be used and coordinated more efficiently. A new integrated planning model launched by the South African national government in 2019, the District Development Model, which counts eThekwini as one of its pilot cities, may contribute to advancing such an all-of-government approach as it gives cities an opportunity to better coordinate across the planning, budgeting, and implementation process across all spheres of government. The review of the Intergovernmental Framework Act would further assist capital investment to align with the co-created vision and strategic direction of local government.

However, there are other specific challenges that eThekwini faces when it comes to the imple-

mentation of the SDGs. Chief among them are increasing levels of informality (Patel 2013; Lund and Skinner 2004; Moyo and Gumbo 2021). In recent years, the city has experienced an influx of a large number of residents from surrounding provinces and countries. Many of these are semi-skilled and unskilled residents, while a large number of skilled and newly graduated professionals are leaving the city in search of employment. This means that the disposable income of the city's residents, compared to the country's main economic centers such as Cape Town or Johannesburg, is low. This has an impact on the cost of servicing as the ratio between disposable income and the cost of rates is high, contributing to the need to find alternative ways to generate own revenue without further burdening local rates and taxpayers, for instance, by appealing to higher equitable share transfers and other grant funding from the national government.

The realities of a larger than average informal sector in Durban are compounded by the fact that eThekwini is the only city in the country's nine provinces where some land within its jurisdiction is communally owned and therefore managed by traditional authorities, through the Ingonyama Trust, a trust set up by provincial law in 1994 to oversee land management for the benefit, material welfare, and social well-being of the members of the tribes and communities (Phakathi 2020). The complexities of who owns and runs the poorest parts of the periphery of the city make Durban a difficult, but by no means unique context in urban Africa for implementing the SDGs (Marrengane et al. 2021; Resnick 2021).

Many parts of eThekwini's urban edge have, in the past few decades, merged with communities that have built properties on land that is managed by the Ingonyama Trust Board (ITB), which decides how land will be released and considers applications for use of the land. In fact, between 60 and 70% of the city's area is in rural areas governed by the ITB. This results in challenges relating to the fact that there are large areas of informality within the city's jurisdiction, which are becoming increasingly densified. The influence of traditional authorities on matters of everyday settlement management impacts the city's service delivery mandate, its budgets for service delivery, and its ability to generate revenue from delivering those services (Beall et al. 2015). It also has a fundamental impact on how the SDGs are to be realized in African cities.

The Constitution requires that the city delivers services such as water and electricity to those in its jurisdiction. However, the existing policy framework does not allow the city to charge rates for services given to people living on government land. This means that the city must somehow pay for the cost of rolling out electricity and water services to communal areas but cannot draw revenue from the delivery of these services. This requires more hybrid solutions to governance and planning (Sim et al. 2018). In this particular case, the city has taken the interpretation of ownership of ITB land to the Constitutional Court of South Africa. In June 2021, the court ruled that the ITB is merely a notional owner of customary land, while those living on the land are the "true and beneficial owners" (Cousins 2021). This outcome is important in light of ongoing efforts of the city towards the use of smart metering and a pay-as-you-go system to enable the delivery and payment of basic services. It also highlights the extent of the interplay of politics, technology, and basic service delivery implied by the SDG localization agenda. Not all of these dynamics are easily reflected in the reporting that is associated with local action for 2030.

12.6 Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation

Most of the city's efforts to achieve the IDP/SDG objectives so far have centered around planning for alignment and implementation and building the necessary awareness and capacity to support these processes. The next step involves institutionalizingreporting on SDG implementation within the municipality. To support this work, the IDP office has started extracting all of the data and monitoring and reporting requirements across municipality against the SDGs 169 indicators over a 3- to 4-year period using annual reports and other existing local government

reporting mechanisms which are audited independently. This would provide an important basis for a Voluntary Local Review on the SDGs at the level of the city of eThekwini. On the other hand, it would also contribute to more structured efforts to streamline municipal government reporting to provincial and national government and feed into national government reporting on the SDGs.

Key to eThekwini taking this next step has been the establishment of an SDG Institutionalization Committee that is chaired by the deputy city manager and assisted by the other two SDG Champions. The eThekwini SDG Institutionalization Committee serves as a vehicle for localization, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of SDGs in the municipality. It is noted that some of the indicators by the UN may not be relevant in the eThekwini Municipality context, and therefore the localization process will serve the purpose of making amendments to these indicators so that they address the city context, thereby assisting in monitoring the progress of the municipality in meeting the targets. The mandate of the committee is to be a coordinating instrument for all SDG efforts which includes, but is not limited to, facilitating partnerships with external stakeholders such as civil society, private sector organizations, academia, and local communities, with the aim of driving and measuring local action towards the attainment of SDG targets. One of the key aims of the committee will be to assess if there are critical indicators where the city is not collecting data, so that relevant sectors can be mobilized to explore ways to collect the required data for monitoring purposes.

Ultimately, the deliverables and outputs of the committee are as follows:

- Indicator Rationalization Framework
- SDG Localization and Stakeholder Engagement Plan
- SDG Monitoring Tool, allowing the city to track progress with regards to the implementation of SDGs and monitoring progress towards sustainability
- Open SDG Platform
- SDG VLR Reporting Template, Preparation, and Submission Plan

The committee has made progress on the Indicator Rationalization Framework by hosting a series of internal meetings to align the UN indicators with the relevant performance indicators at a municipal level. The performance indicators for the city are derived from various sources such as the SDBIP, the National Treasury Outcome Indicators (commonly referred to as Circular 88 Indicators), as well as Provincial Back to Basics quarterly reporting. Key to the exercise is not to duplicate reporting but to align existing performance reporting mechanisms to actively contribute towards achieving the SDGs in the city. Through this rationalization process, the city is also able to identify reporting gaps that might exist. The city has also made progress with regards to the UN-Habitat-designed SDG Monitoring Tool and the Open SDG Platform, which is currently being piloted internally with the Water and Sanitation Department. Once the pilot has been completed, these tools would be expanded to reflect the other sectors that respond to the SDGs.

12.7   Conclusion

Internal support and awareness raising have been crucial for effective SDG localization in the metropolitan city of eThekwini. Another important factor to be taken into account are the city's partnerships with a range of organizations and networks, such as UN agencies UN-Habitat and UNDP, as well as UCLG and the European Union, which has enabled access to opportunities for cross-city learning and engagement, thereby assisting the further embedding of the SDGs at a city level.

Importantly, these partnerships have been enabled by the active presence of a growing group of key city leaders and officials at the global stage, which have contributed to the city's global exposure and credibility and the development of a coherent narrative on sustainable development at the city level. This in turn has opened up doors to additional contacts and relationships into networks beyond the initial focus on climate change and resilience, as well as strengthened

relationships with other cities and levels of government within South Africa.

These global partnerships and engagements have given the city of eThekwini an added advantage over other less well-connected or resourced cities within the country, as well as across the continent. However, Durban also shows what is possible when there is an active leadership with a clear and consistent vision that supports local sustainability champions. eThekwini's approach to SDG localization should not be seen as a required template, but merely as one of many different entry points and approaches. More than 5 years into the adoption of the SDGs there is now sufficient information on the many good practices that can help ramp up SDG localization quickly. To share and access that information, there is a need to concentrate efforts and include opportunities for those local governments that are not part of international networks so that they can also benefit from the experience of cities such as eThekwini.

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