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BETWEEN LOCALIZATION AND REALIZATION: PARTNERSHIPS TOWARD ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN LOS ANGELES

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ABSTRACT

What does the relationship between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and human rights look like in practice at the local level? With Los Angeles as a case study, we focus on the partnership between universities and the Mayor's Office in the localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The co-creation of student "Task Forces" with city officials and the evolution of the use of the Goals in planning over time demonstrate how localization

created opportunities to identify and act on human rights issues through SDG implementation at the city level.

Keywords: Human rights; Sustainable Development Goals; city-academic partnerships; localization; task forces; data

INTRODUCTION: THE SDGs AND HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In a 2018 keynote address, then-Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti launched the Los Angeles Sustainable Development Goals (L.A. SDGs), a city-wide effort to translate and implement the United Nations SDGs and the broader 2030 Agenda in L.A. City.[1] Los Angeles was one of the first cities in the world to commit to the localization of the SDG framework. By 2024, according to U.N.-Habitat, over 196 local and regional governments have produced Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), reports documenting local-level progress on the goals and showcasing local initiatives to implement the global goals.[2] While illustrating the importance of taking on these global challenges locally, Garcetti quoted Eleanor Roosevelt speaking to the UN Commission on Human Rights: "'Where, after all, do basic universal human rights begin? In small places…' Without concerned citizen action to uphold these human rights close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."[3] Nearly five years since Los Angeles' launch, and with just over six years remaining until 2030, we return to these words and closely explore the links between human rights and the SDGs in the context of partnerships between city government and academic institutions in the local implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

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[1] Occidental College, "Mayor Garcetti Announces Partnership with Occidental to Advance Sustainable Development Goals," February 5, 2018, https://www.oxy.edu/academics/global-engagement/young-initiative/speakers-events/mayor-garcetti-announces-partnership.

[2] UN-Habitat, "Our Approach | Localizing the SDGs," https://sdglocalization.org/our-approach.

[3] *Global Ambition, Local Action - Keynote Address by Mayor Eric Garcetti at Occidental College*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Je_wx-PUgtI.

The SDGs provide a common platform to measure progress toward peace and prosperity at global, national, and local levels on pressing issues. The 17 interrelated goals are meant to be achieved by 2030, but according to UN officials, this aspiration is "in peril."[4] In theory, this set of goals aims to promote sustainable development across social, economic, and environmental spheres. Unlike its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs explicitly recognize that inequalities exist within, and not just across, countries. Furthermore, they exemplify how sustainable development requires cross-cutting rather than competing goals, with specific targets and measurable indicators. Another major difference between the MDGs and the SDGs lies in the negotiation processes.[5] Stakeholder engagement was central in the drafting stage of the agreement, evidenced by the critical role of Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) in the development and adoption of the 2030 Agenda. MGoS consisted of nine main sectors, including women and Indigenous peoples, local authorities, and nongovernmental organizations.[6]

The SDGs are notable for expanding the concept of economic development to include attention to inequalities and nondiscrimination, as well as a fundamental commitment to monitoring, evaluation, and stakeholder engagement. These contributions demonstrate how the SDG framework itself intersects with existing human rights norms. SDG 16 is one of the few explicit examples of human rights integration in the 2030 agenda, as it aims to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development,

[4] Rebecca Geldard and Stefan Ellerbeck, "Are the UN's Sustainable Development Goals on Track?" *World Economic Forum* (blog), September 11, 2023, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/09/un-sustainable-development-goals-progress-report/.

[5] David J. Gordon and Kristin Ljungkvist, "Theorizing the Globally Engaged City in World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 28, no. 1 (March 1, 2022): 58–82, https://doi.org/10.1177/13540661211064449.

[6] MGoS-CM, "Major Groups and Other Stakeholders Coordination Mechanism (MGOS-CM) Terms of Reference," December 18, 2020, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27114MGoS_TOR18_Dec_2020.pdf.

provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels," and includes targets on promoting and enforcing "non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development" (16.b) and "develop(ing) effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels" (16.6).[7] More holistically, goals such as those on food (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), decent work (SDG 8), and housing (SDG 11) echo human rights embedded in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and other relevant instruments.[8]

Scholars and practitioners alike, however, have critiqued the implicit nature of human rights principles within the context of the SDGs and their implementation. As Bexell et al. write,

> *the SDGs lack systematic references to the core human rights treaties with their related instruments. While the SDGs and human rights address similar issues, such as education, health, welfare, and many others, they build on divergent logics and are constructed differently.*[9]

One of the persistent gaps in SDG implementation, vis-à-vis human rights principles, is a more robust conception of accountability. For example, can and how will duty-bearers be held to account for the implementation (or non-implementation) of their relevant SDG commitments?

While a comprehensive response to this question is beyond the scope of this chapter, we provide key insights into the practice of

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[7] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Goal 16 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs," https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16#targets_and_indicators.

[8] UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, "Summary Table: Linkages between the SDGs and Human Rights," https://hlpf.un.org/tools/summary-table-linkages-between-the-sdgs-and-human-rights.

[9] Magdalena Bexell, Thomas Hickmann, and Andrea Schapper, "Strengthening the Sustainable Development Goals through Integration with Human Rights," *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 23, no. 2 (June 1, 2023): 133–39, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-023-09605-x.

linking human rights and the SDGs at the local level. Localization, a growing trend in work on the SDGs, gives us a useful point of entry to contribute to this debate. As with virtually all UN frameworks, the SDGs were conceived to apply at the national level. They were adopted by UN member states and call for implementation at national levels; monitoring of their indicators is largely based on data produced by national statistical systems. And yet, increasingly, entities that are not national governments are voluntarily engaging in the SDG framework, including numerous cities (as well as universities and the private sector). We propose that focusing on the city level, including both city government and community actors, gives a unique vantage point in understanding the relationship and potential of linking the SDGs and human rights. This chapter, thus, shifts the focus from the national to the city level. We pay particular attention to the case of Los Angeles, where there has been considerable engagement by city actors with the SDGs. How has that intersected with human rights in policy and practice, and what broader lessons can be taken from such intersections?

Global human rights standards and norms have developed over decades to provide both a legal anchor and social imaginary that directs how governments interact with individuals and populations. We argue that, despite fair critiques of the SDG framework's refusal to explicitly engage human rights at their onset, the process of SDG localization simultaneously makes clear the need to identify and act on human rights at the city level if SDG-based goals are to be met. Indeed, both the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have mapped ways that the SDGs and human rights can and should reinforce each other.[10] Specifically, in the case of Los Angeles, SDG localization has provided city actors with a baseline understanding

[10] "The UDHR at 75: A Conversation with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk," CSIS Human Rights Initiative, April 18, 2023, https://www.csis.org/events/udhr-75-conversation-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk. See also "The Human Rights Guide to the Sustainable Development Goals," The Danish Institute for Human Rights Methodology, https://sdg.humanrights.dk/sites/sdg.humanrights.dk/files/SDG%20database%20methodology_0.pdf.

of how and where public services need to be strengthened, with particular attention to underserved communities. This focus has shown the need for more explicit attention to human rights standards and how they may be embedded in policies and various institutions in order to address gaps that have been identified so that the SDGs can be achieved. Thus, while both the SDGs and human rights are traditionally seen as independent international frameworks, they may be better understood as frameworks that are more likely achieved when conceptualized as interdependent. Localization of the SDGs in Los Angeles – accompanied (as we shall explain) by the growth of city-academic partnerships – precisely demonstrates this potential.

LOS ANGELES AND THE SDGs

Whose Efforts?

What has L.A. City done to move toward the SDGs and its targets as well as achieve human rights standards? To answer this question, it is important to first define who we talk about when we talk about "the city." Scholars across disciplines have defined the city in different ways, from a hub, to actors not unlike the nation-state.[11] For our purposes, when we talk about the city's actions or efforts, we are talking about the city as government: consisting of multiple offices and departments, and the individuals that comprise them. We make this separation so that we can distinguish between SDG or human rights localization as a process by government actors, and localization by other actors that inhabit the city, which range from grassroots activists to private actors from the academic and industrial sectors. Furthermore, by defining the city as an organization, we can speak more precisely about the relationship between formal institutions and individuals, and dynamic processes of leadership, decision-making, and agenda-setting.

[11] Gordon and Ljungkvist, "Theorizing the Globally Engaged City"; Saskia Sassen, "On Concentration and Centrality in the Global City," in *World Cities in a World-System*, eds. Paul L. Knox and Peter J. Taylor (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 63–76, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511522192.005.

For the remainder of this section, we describe the case of Los Angeles in the broader context of the SDGs and embedded human rights norms. We begin with a brief overview of the SDGs in L.A., with a focus on the component of city-academic partnerships and "Task Forces" (TFs). We then focus on two key dimensions of the localization process: (1) TFs as a means to promote human rights; and (2) TFs as a means to strengthen capacity to address further challenges. In doing so, we highlight how the SDGs and human rights protection as well as advancement are linked in Los Angeles, citing both challenges and best practices.

City-Academic Partnerships: Introducing the Task Forces

Launched in 2018, the SDGs in L.A. is a multi-phase, multilateral project aimed at adopting and adapting the Goals across Los Angeles. It originated as a collaborative effort between the Mayor's Office, Mayor Eric Garcetti, and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. Efforts to achieve progress on the 2030 Agenda have since been explicit and well-publicized by the L.A. City government, spearheaded by staff of the Mayor's Office of International Affairs (MOIA). The VLRs are a key symbol of these efforts, as well as tools to engage with other cities, within and beyond the United States, with similar objectives. In 2019, L.A. was the first city to present a VLR that did not simply match SDG targets and indicators to existing city-level performance standards. L.A.'s VLR process included a nearly year-long, in-depth mapping strategy that categorized standards that were directly applicable, needed only slight modifications (e.g., to disaggregate from national to local level data), or were not applicable to the city context. The translated standards were then compared against existing L.A. city data to measure and present progress on indicators.[12]

The VLR itself, and the SDG efforts in L.A., were not isolated to city actors. Though one of the major outcomes, the VLR is only one product of ongoing partnerships between city and academic actors. These partnerships have taken the form of what we

[12] City of L.A. Sustainable Development Goals, "Voluntary Local Review," https://sdg.lacity.gov/our-work/voluntary-local-review.

call "TFs." While TFs are in themselves not innovative, as they have long proliferated across private and public sectors, we have a particular concept of TFs in the context of the SDGs in L.A. TFs are student research groups conducting fixed-term, problem-driven, and policy-oriented research, guided by academic advisors and overseen by a client, in this case, local government.[13]

Through the leadership of the MOIA and in partnership with various city departments, over 160 undergraduate and graduate students have participated in over 22 research projects in support of implementing and advancing various SDG targets. Broadly, the project teams play a key role in assisting the City to identify gaps in aligning plans and practices while highlighting cross-cutting issue areas for mobilizing multi-stakeholder partnerships. Since 2018, the City has partnered with multiple universities, including the John Parke Young Initiative at Occidental College, Arizona State University's Thunderbird School of Global Management, the Luskin School of Public Affairs at University of California Los Angeles, Pomona College, and the Institute on Inequalities in Global Health at the University of Southern California.

TFs have generally fallen within six key models or purposes: exploratory or mapping, stakeholder engagement, data assessment and collection, landscape analysis, best practice case studies, and proposals and recommendations (Fig. 6.1). Beyond structure, TFs have covered a vast array of themes and issue areas, grounded in the SDG framework, ranging from addressing poverty and homelessness to tackling climate change and advancing racial equity and justice.

[13] Madeleine Baer and Heidi Nichols Haddad, "Localizing the International Relations Classroom: Evaluation of Academic Partnerships with City Government," *International Studies Perspectives* 24, no. 3 (August 1, 2023): 231–47, https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/ekac008; Gaea Morales, Erin Bromaghim, Angela Kim, Caroline Diamond, Alejo Maggini, Avery Everhart, Sofia Gruskin, and Anthony Tirado Chase, "Classroom Walls and City Hall: Mobilizing Local Partnerships to Advance the Sustainable Development Agenda," *Sustainability* 13, no. 11 (January 2021): 6173, https://doi.org/10.3390/su13116173.

Fig. 6.1. Summary of Task Force Models as Presented by Morales, Chase, and Gruskin at the Carnegie Mellon Workshop on the Margins of the World Justice Forum 2022.

The TFs and Human Rights Promotion

There have been TFs that have dealt explicitly with human rights translation and implementation within the SDGs framework, and one such example is "the Wicked Problems" practicum, spearheaded by the Institute on Inequalities in Global Health at the University of Southern California in the Fall semester of 2018. The practicum, the name of which draws from the original term from design theorists Rittel and Webber, sought to address the challenge of not only integrating or mapping existing human rights conventions and treaties onto the SDG framework, but also revising understandings of SDG implementation and measurement to include explicit attention to human rights targets.[14] Given the breadth of the SDG framework, the practicum focused on the issue of homelessness, and whether and how the SDGs are equipped to target this challenge. In addition to the reports documenting links between the SDGs and human rights principles, one key contribution of the TF was to highlight a human rights-based approach to advancing the

[14] Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," *Policy Sciences* 4, no. 2 (1973): 155–69.

SDGs by framing city actors, and not just national-level officials, as duty-bearers.

There have been other TFs that, though not as explicitly tasked with addressing human rights, have also paved the way for further equity- and human rights-driven initiatives. For example, the earliest TF with Occidental College was tasked broadly with understanding how to map or align the goals with existing city-level policies in Los Angeles. Participating students brought up the potential to expand SDG 5 on gender equality, due to its binary conception of gender (i.e., women and men, girls and boys). Within the year, Los Angeles had responded with initiatives that advanced gender-inclusive language, such as in city government job postings and other employment documentation. Six years from the first TF, L.A. is one of the founders of "CHANGE–City Hub and Network for Gender Equity" (CHANGE Network) which "believes that to be successful, [city governments'] work must explicitly recognize and address intersecting inequalities predicated upon race, religion, ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression."[15] These innovations were accompanied by another set of joint TFs led by Occidental College and Pomona College, which involved working with the CHANGE Network to advance menstrual equity, grounded in conversations emerging from early TFs regarding the limited conceptualization and operationalization of gender equity and justice in SDG 5. At the local government level, Mayor Garcetti signed Executive Directive 35 in August 2022, which extends principles of gender equity beyond city government to contracting and procurement strategies.[16] These examples demonstrate the ripple effect of SDG implementation on initiatives that can serve the promotion and protection of human rights.

City government officials and university partners continue to draw heavily from the findings of the initial mapping of SDGs, and attention to the alignment of existing city policies further highlighted opportunities to expand outcomes along racial and gendered

[15] CHANGE, "About," City Hub and Network for Gender Equity, https://www.citieschange.org/about/.

[16] "Executive Directive No. 35 of August 25, 2022, Equitable Access to Contracting Opportunities," Mayor Eric Garcetti, City of Los Angeles.

lines that are not currently accounted for in the SDG framework.[17] Returning again to the work of the Wicked Problems practicum, students and city actors were able to highlight severe disparities bridging SDG 3 on health and well-being and SDG 5 on gender equality by investigating maternal health indicators across race groups. Los Angeles County, and not the City of Los Angeles, holds the primary mandate on public health matters, which presents jurisdictional challenges in acting on health initiatives. However, these lessons addressed the need for more work centering race, in conjunction with gender, as a component of sustainable development. As one of the earliest TFs, the Wicked Problems practicum helped bring human rights principles more directly into the sustainable development agenda and established key questions that continue to drive even the most recent TFs that are explicitly engaging with what it means to realize gender and racial equity within and beyond city government.

The political moment in 2020 amidst George Floyd protests and a collective call to combat systemic racism across and within levels of government institutions further embedded these ideas in the work of SDG implementation. Since 2020, there have been more TFs addressing racial equity and what it means to advance diversity, equity, and justice more broadly at the city level. The lessons from prior TFs, combined with the historic moment of the 2020 summer protests, catalyzed partnerships beyond the MOIA to integrate also the work of the Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and the Civil + Human Rights and Equity Department established in 2021.[18]

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[17] For insights from city partners, see Brenda Shockley, "Racial Justice in Los Angeles: What Can Global Truth-Telling Norms Offer?" and Angela Kim and Erin Bromaghim, "Global Human Rights Norms and City Policy in Los Angeles," both in *Human Rights at the Intersections: Transformation Through Local, Global, and Cosmopolitan Challenges*, eds. Anthony Tirado Chase, Pardis Mahdavi, Hussein Banai, and Sofia Gruskin (1st ed., Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023).

[18] The New York Times, "How George Floyd Died, and What Happened Next." *The New York Times*, July 29, 2022, sec. U.S. https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd.html; The protests of summer of 2020 were a reaction to the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis Police Department officers and a broader critique to pervasive institutional rac-

One concrete example is the creation of the Truth-in-Los Angeles project, which was explicitly grounded in SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions. This TF through Occidental College emerged directly from conversations that began in the summer of 2020 and the growing acceptance within city government of a need for more intentional, city-driven efforts to confront L.A.'s history of racial injustice. The project produced a series of recommendations on how to initiate a truth and accountability process that is responsive to the unique and nuanced history of the city, and that a restorative justice practice requires not just inclusion of, but leadership from, grassroots and civil society actors.

The evolution of TFs through the various partnerships, from their initiation to various "deliverables" (such as reports and recommendations), demonstrates the potential of local SDG implementation to advance the promotion and protection of human rights despite only implicit reference to human rights norms and standards. What these examples make clear is that the city's willingness to consistently and meaningfully engage with community stakeholders, such as universities, colleges, and their students, enabled the greater inclusion of human rights issues and approaches over time.

Measuring Matters: Data and Building Capacity for Human Rights

The City itself, and especially the L.A. SDGs process, has always been driven by data and measuring outcomes. This is most evident in the time and resources allocated to the development of the VLRs and maintenance of the SDGs' reporting platform beginning in 2018.[19] L.A. City invested heavily in building an open-access

ism across state and federal agencies in the country.

[19] City of L.A, "City of Los Angeles Indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals," https://sdgdata.lamayor.org/.

reporting platform for SDG indicator data by collating publicly available city- and county-level data across various sources. From the City standpoint, beginning by asking data-driven questions and aligning publicly available disaggregated data with SDG indicators was important for the process of establishing a baseline to measure progress, as well as for securing funding and resources from federal and other agencies that are similarly keen to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery. However, the development of the data infrastructure was also key to advancing a human rights agenda more broadly. An understanding not only of baseline progress, but also of patterns in service provision and performance, helps both city officials and the broader community of stakeholders in the city to identify who is left behind, and by how much.

One key example of this process is the Wicked Problems practicum's exploration of Black maternal health in Los Angeles. SDG 3 on good health and well-being proposes a global target for reducing the maternal mortality ratio (3.1.1) to 70 live births per 100,000 by 2030.[20] The L.A. platform uses data at the County level for this particular indicator, due to limited data availability of city-level health indicators given the county's mandate on health (Fig. 6.2).[21] The results, however, remain useful given that L.A. City is the largest of 88 incorporated cities by population, and houses key county health institutions including the Los Angeles General Medical Center (formerly LAC+USC).[22]

According to the data, the maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births) in Los Angeles County has consistently been between 16 and 18 since 2003. However, when comparing L.A. County level data to data disaggregated by race, the results are

[20] World Health Organization, "SDG Target 3.1: Reduce the Global Maternal Mortality Ratio to Less than 70 per 100,000 Live Births," https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics/topic-details/GHO/sdgtarget3-1-reduce-maternal-mortality.

[21] City of L.A, "Indicator 3.1.1: Maternal mortality ratio," https://sdgdata.lamayor.org/3-1-1/.

[22] County of Los Angeles, "Maps and Geography," https://lacounty.gov/government/about-la-county/maps-and-geography/.

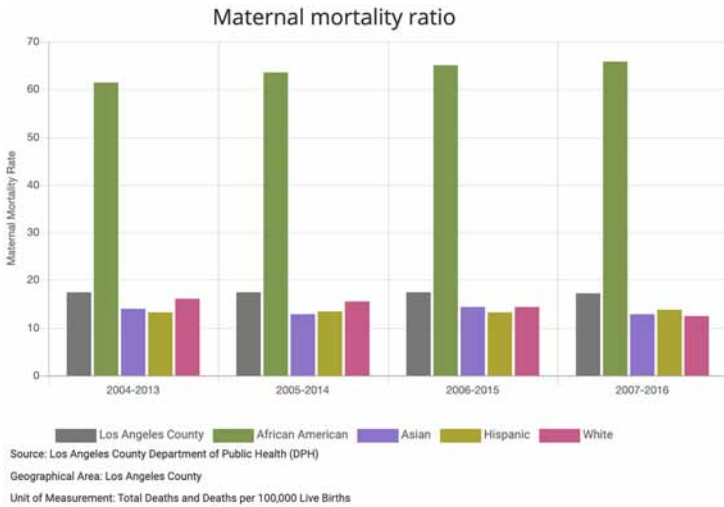

Fig. 6.2. Maternal Mortality Ratio Data from L.A. SDGs Data Reporting Platform.

quite stark. African American women have seen nearly three times the maternal mortality ratio of the county-level aggregate, and of all other racial groups independently from 2004 to 2016.

This example demonstrates the power of data to highlight existing inequalities not just in SDG implementation, but in indicators that are relevant to human rights promotion and protection. However, this data-driven approach is more in line with an inequalities framework, rather than a more holistic engagement of the human rights framework. An inequalities framework prioritizes the discovery of disproportionate burdens and access. This approach is intimately tied to a human rights framework since human rights rely on an understanding of inequality to redress inequalities and injustice in its many forms. In the case of Los Angeles, the City needed to collect data in the early stages of SDG implementation to inform and direct more project-oriented and issue-area focused TFs that supported the various strands of the SDG framework. However, an approach explicitly organized around human rights principles moves beyond inequalities, and requires,

at a minimum, six principles: universality, indivisibility, equality and nondiscrimination, participation, and accountability.[23] Thus, discovering and naming inequalities is only one element of bringing human rights to bear in the context of SDG localization. That said, attention to disparities can serve as a springboard for further initiatives that allow for deeper integration of human rights efforts into SDG implementation.

This trajectory is evident in the City's efforts to advance gender equity. In 2021, the City partnered with another TF at Occidental College to develop a set of gender-based indicators for the CHANGE Network. The resulting set of 52 proposed indicators are founded on an explicit recognition of "intersecting inequalities predicated upon race, class, religion, ethnic origin, and disability" and also encourage network members to look "beyond the gender binary."[24] A year later, L.A. City, as one of the co-founders of the CHANGE Network, co-developed a first-of-its-kind Voluntary Gender Review in 2022. The review, which brings together qualitative insights from across the network's members (Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Bogotá, Freetown, London, Los Angeles, and Mexico City), recognized the importance of addressing women's "intersecting marginalized identities such as race or ethnic origin" when assessing vulnerability and the policies put in place to address issues in healthcare and beyond.[25]

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[23] U.N. Sustainable Development Group, "Human Rights-Based Approach," United Nations Sustainable Development Group, https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach.

[24] John Parke Young Initiative on the Global Political Economy, "Measuring Gender Equity in Cities: An Intersectional Set of Proposed Indicators," June 30, 2021, https://www.oxy.edu/academics/global-engagement/young-initiative/research-partnerships-task-forces/measuring-gender-equity.

[25] CHANGE, "CHANGE Voluntary Gender Review," July 1, 2022, https://citieschangeorg.files.wordpress.com/2022/07/change_vgrreport_2022_compressed-2.pdf.

CONCLUSION: REDEFINING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR THE SDGs AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights have not emerged passively or indirectly from the localization of the sustainable development agenda. This observation is the case even for SDG 10 on inequalities and SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions, the SDGs most commonly associated with human rights. Findings from various TFs have demonstrated that the SDGs on their own are insufficient in not only measuring, but also advancing human rights norms, especially at the local level. Human rights promotion through SDG localization requires deliberate efforts by actors across both city government and the broader city community. Specifically, future partnerships can benefit from the insight of human rights experts and practitioners, as well as grassroots and civil society actors.

However, we also recognize that human rights framing may look different within the context of the broader city space, namely outside of city government. For example, some city actors may be most concerned with issues around inequalities, while grassroots actors may be more concerned with seeking accountability. City actors may also define human rights priorities differently than other members of the community. These differences may not only result in different perceptions of levels of progress, but also of where the gaps exist, and therefore, where resources should be allocated. These may be direct consequences of larger systems in which governments and other stakeholders operate. City governments often possess their own pre-existing monitoring and evaluation systems that in some ways are more explicitly aligned with an inequalities framework due to their emphasis on measuring performance and gaps. Meanwhile, academics and grassroots or civil society actors may be more in tune with the language of human rights, due to their broader networks and backgrounds. Despite these differences in language, it is important to highlight that various audiences may be working together toward the same goal.

Thus, to achieve human rights and the broader 2030 agenda, the City government–the primary focus of this chapter–must intentionally act in concert with their local communities in all phases of policy development. While activists may be engaging with

human rights frameworks in city spaces, such as in the pursuit of environmental justice or bodily autonomy, more can be done to bridge the gap in the ways city governments conceive of sustainable development and human rights principles.

We also recognize that stakeholder engagement must involve more than bilateral partnerships between cities and academia, such as in the TF model. Local community buy-in is key to moving forward from both sustainable development and human rights perspectives. Future TFs can more systematically work to identify processes and mechanisms for meaningful community engagement, and themselves better integrate diverse local perspectives, from the planning stage to its deliverables. Constructive engagements with international frameworks – the SDGs, human rights, and how we propose they can and should intersect – is thus a challenge that requires engaging all relevant stakeholders at all stages and is critical for truly advancing sustainable development.

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