LOCAL AND REGIONAL
GOVERNMENTS' REPORT
TO THE 2019 HLPF
3rd REPORT
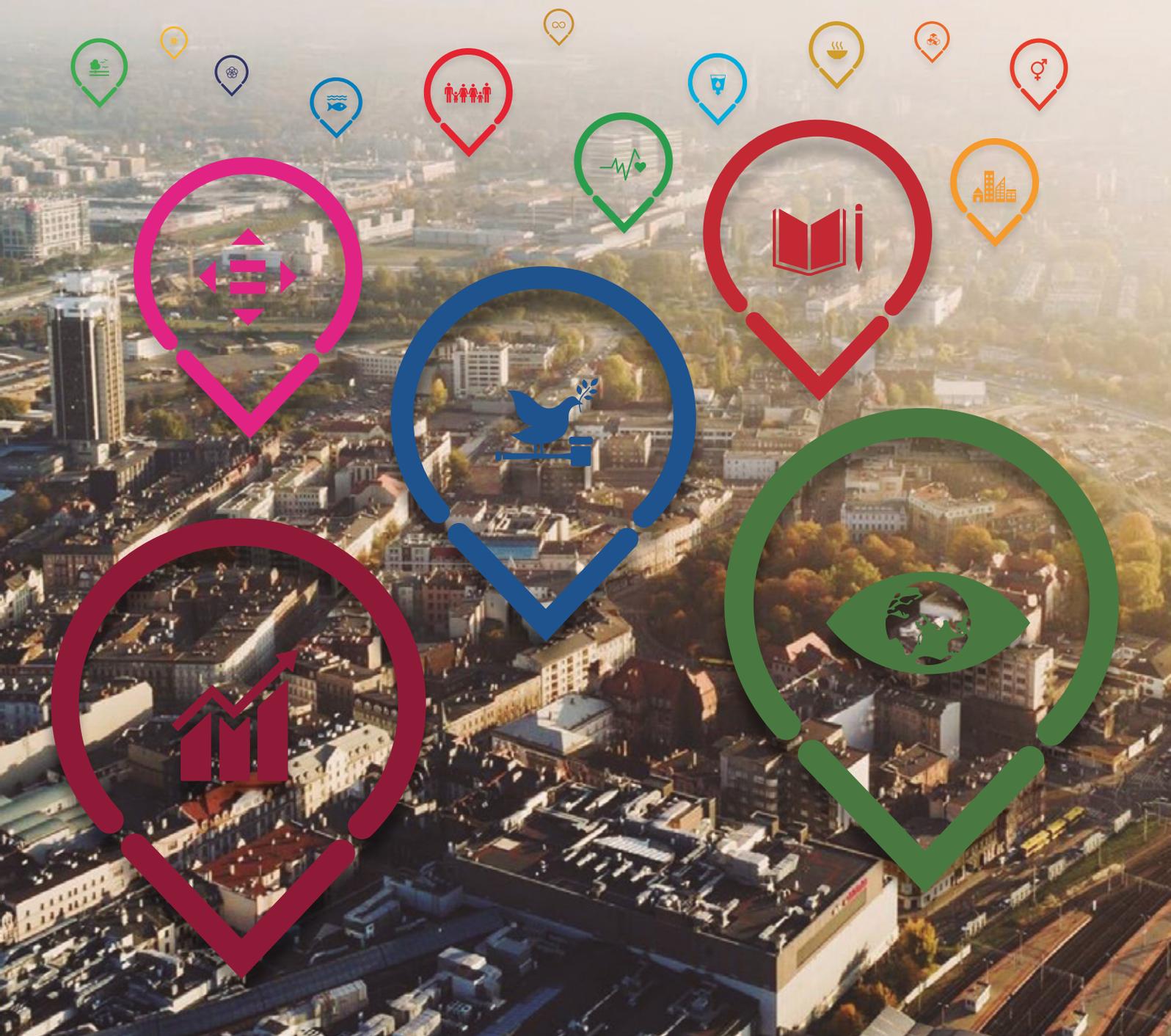
TOWARDS THE LOCALIZATION OF THE SDGs

GLOBAL TASKFORCE
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL
GOVERNMENTS

Facilitated by:

UCLG
United Cities
and Local Governments

#HLPF2019
#LISTEN2CITIES

SDG 4

Inclusive and equitable quality education[1]

SDG 4
Cities, large or small, offer countless opportunities for education[2]

E ducation is recognized by the core human rights treaties as a fundamental right for unlocking the full development of individuals and communities. Education is not only relevant from a national government perspective though, with many cities and regions also playing a pivotal role. Local and regional governments (LRGs) have a privileged position, as the first level of public administration, from which to foster relevant educational policies. In many regions they contribute to educational policies, school infrastructure, professional learning, extra-curricular activities, and also to assessing the impact of public policies on the day-to-day lives of communities. According to the UN Secretary-General,[3] disparities in education need targeted answers, structured along the lines of gender, urban-rural location and other dimensions linked to the local reality. Education is crucial for developing human capacities and creativity and essential in building cities and territories that foster social coexistence, resilience and active citizenship.

A diverse set of responsibilities assigned at local level

The scope of the responsibilities assigned to local and regional governments[4] in educational policy-making, planning, management and funding is wide-ranging. On a world average of 67 countries with available data, education is the primary area of spending of LRGs both as a share of GDP (2.6%) and as a share of the current expenditure (23.6%).[5] For federal countries, such

as Australia, Austria, Canada and Germany, it is the states, provinces or regions that are allocated education-related responsibilities. In other countries, such as Finland, the United Kingdom and Brazil, strong decentralization processes have resulted in the transfer of power concerning most schooling matters to local authorities.[6] Similarly, in the USA, school districts are responsible for raising and managing funding at the local level, with variable levels of financial support from federal government.[7] Likewise, the Republic of Korea has delegated much of its budget planning and major administrative decisions to local authorities;[8] this trend has also been followed in Denmark, Lithuania, Sweden and the Slovak Republic.[9]

Some other countries count on sub-national administrations to act as bridges between their central and regional-level; this is, for instance, the case in Spain (with its autonomous communities), Japan (with its prefectures) and Argentina (with its provinces). In other countries (such as France), although the National Ministry of Education has overall responsibility for organizing the education system, specific responsibilities and funds are also transferred to LRGs. Accordingly, cities are responsible for early childhood and primary education; intermediate levels of government (*départements*) are responsible for compulsory secondary education (*collèges*) and regional governments are responsible for secondary education and vocational education (TVET, *lycées and enseignement professionnel*).

Even though the main effort deployed in education falls under the formal education system, education needs to be considered a lifelong learning endeavour that transcends schooling. Worldwide, LRGs are critical actors with the capacity to complement and expand the impact of country-level educational policies by assuming a proactive, inclusive and rights-based approach.

[1.] This section has been produced by the International Association of Educating Cities and UCLG, with specific contributions from the UCLG Committee on Culture.

[2.] International Association of Educating Cities "Charter of Educating Cities" (1990).

[3.] 2018 Report of the UN Secretary-General, The Sustainable Development Goals Report.

[4.] In this section, the terms "city and regions" and "local and regional governments" can be used indistinctly.

[5.] OECD/UCLG 2019 Report World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment: Key Findings.

[6.] OECD (2017) The funding of school education.

[7.] Roser M. and Ortiz-Ospina E. "Financing Education" published online at OurWorldInData.org.

[8.] For more information see: http://english.moe.go.kr/sub/info.do?m=020108&s=english.

[9.] OECD (2017) The funding of school education.

SDG 4
Inclusive and
equitable quality
education

Local initiatives and policy responses[10]

Regardless of their legal responsibilities, LRGs implement a wide range of initiatives that help to advance the SDG 4 in highly strategic dimensions. One key role cities and regions play is to **promote equal opportunities in quality education** to help citizens, regardless of their age, sexual and gender identity, economic, social, cultural, religious or ethnic background, to develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required to foster social cohesion, find decent employment and fully participate in society.

A number of cities around the world, including **Rennes** (France), **Brighton** (UK), **Amsterdam** (The Netherlands) and **Adelaide** (Australia), have introduced school district zoning policies, with the aim of fighting segregation and preventing the creation of ghettoes, by ensuring that schools reflect the city's diversity. Pursuing this same objective, many have set up municipal scholarships or funding programmes which help to cover educational costs for vulnerable groups (e.g., **Guadalajara**, Mexico). Other cities provide tutoring and mentoring programmes aimed at students with learning difficulties, such as peer-tutors (e.g., **Sabaneta**, Colombia), or volunteers within the classroom (e.g., **Granollers**, Spain), to help children and youth with their school assignments. Other cities offer support strategies to enhance academic success for all, by offering extra-curricular activities, or summer camps, aimed at enriching students' educational opportunities.

Efforts are also being made to r**educe absenteeism and early school dropout**, by offering complementary educational pathways that encourage student reenrolment at school (like programmes providing pre-employment support for adolescents at risk of social exclusion, and second chance schools).[11] Specific support programmes for vulnerable groups at risk of social exclusion, such as migrants and refugees, have also been introduced by cities such as **Amman** (Jordan) and **Chyah** (Lebanon), amongst many others.

Engaging families in the educational process of their children, by offering different spaces for collaboration, is another strategy that has been used by local governments to ensure quality in education for all. **Paris** (France), **Balanga**[12] (The Philippines) and numerous other cities have set up parent training programmes to encourage

children to adhere to educational paths. This same line of action includes programmes aimed at engaging the community in its broader sense; these have been successful in cities such as **Brussels** (Belgium), **L'Hospitalet de Llobregat** (Spain) and **Montevideo** (Uruguay), providing learning experiences through civic practices with local NGO or at civic services. Other cities complement the educational curricula by offering students the opportunity to analyse and propose improvements for their city (e.g., Évora, Portugal), by offering study visits to different municipal facilities (e.g., Turin, Italy), among many others) and/or by setting up participation platforms for children and/or adults.

Gender equality (SDG 5) is inextricably linked to the right to education for all. It needs to be mainstreamed in all the different axes of intervention. To counteract the pervasive effects of gender-based discrimination, which limits educational opportunities and outcomes for girls and young women, some LRGs have assessed local barriers and adopted specific measures, such as promoting educational practices that foster greater gender equality. **San Francisco** (Argentina) offers a specific programme to prevent teenage mothers and fathers from dropping out of school by providing them with tailored educational support, and kindergarten facilities for their children. **Changwon City** (Republic of Korea) promotes the specific participation of fathers at school to help break down prevailing gender stereotypes related to child care. In Indonesia, the government of North Lombok District is working with civil society to promote adult education for women born in grassroots communities. The Women's School has led to immediate results in reducing discriminatory barriers to political participation in village and district consultative fora (see SDG 16). The practice will be replicated in villages of East and **North Lombok District**.[13] Other possible preventive strategies would involve promoting non-gender-biased upbringing, to be achieved through campaigns to raise awareness and/or mentoring programmes run at the local level. This could allow children to unlock their full potential and encourage them to challenge traditional gender roles that might otherwise influence their choice of educational pathways.

A number of **LRGs are working towards innovation in the learning process**. To do so, LRGs are collaborating with networks of local agents and the private sector, are actively involved in reinforcing innovation and the quality of learning supports and methodologies

and also offering in-service teacher training. All of these measures are relevant for ensuring quality education for all (e.g., **Viladecans**, Spain).

The city of **Tampere,** along with many others in Finland and elsewhere, is considering the **school environment** as a crucial variable for fostering student engagement in education, backed by scientific evidence. The city currently supports a programme to combat bullying in schools through emotional education, addressed to students, teachers and families. Similarly, other cities have implemented specific campaigns to raise awareness of issues such as wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. It has therefore become a priority for LRGs to ensure that schools are safe places, from risk going from gun-violence to air/noise pollution, **by providing a supportive atmosphere for their students**.

On another level, local governments are usually the authorities under whose ownership educational facilities fall, even though the activity that takes place within them may well be managed by a national or regional administration. Some LRGs, such as **Saint Etienne** (France), have set up participatory initiatives to improve the design of educational facilities. They have done this in an effort to incorporate the views and needs of the target population and to make their content more responsive to its needs (see SDG 10). This might also include removing barriers that obstruct access to these facilities, be they structural, cultural or language-related, in order to achieve greater inclusion (**Montréal**, Canada).[14] Based on this inclusive approach, **Besançon** (France) fosters coexistence and inclusion at a kindergarten where diversely-abled children are given the chance to share their daily lives (see

—— **LRGs are working towards innovation in the learning process and providing an accessible, safe and supportive environment to all.**

Box 8.

BiblioLab: creating laboratories in the libraries

BiblioLab is a program implemented by the Barcelona Provincial Council library network that develops and supports activities to foster access and knowledge through experimentation and innovative and creative methodologies in a collaborative space open to the communities. The program encompasses technological and social sciences projects as well as others related to the arts or reading and writing. The concept behind Bibliolabs introduces a new dimension of the libraries that can now be dynamic learning and experimentation spaces where users become the protagonists through the generation and exchange of knowledge.

For more information see https://bibliotecavirtual. diba.cat/bibliolab and the Barcelona Provincial Council library portal: www.diba.cat/en/web/biblioteques/.

also SDG 16). In Zambia, local governments play a crucial role in improving health interventions in school institutions **by ensuring that students have access to drinking water and sanitation (see SDG 6)**.[15] For other cities with heavy traffic, access to school for children is a concern that has led to the establishment of school paths and/or community walking buses **Auckland**[16] (New Zealand) and **Nantes** (France) among many others), aimed at reducing the use of motorized vehicles, enhancing safety, and promoting cleaner air and healthier habits.

For many LRGs, **early childhood development, education and care** offer a field of action that is highly flexible and open to their intervention, as it tends not to have such strong state-level regulation as primary or secondary education. Numerous municipal early childhood and pre-school education programmes therefore aim to provide a mechanism to compensate social inequalities and enhance social cohesion through a more local approach. Some cities, such as **Sant Feliu de Llobregat** (Spain) and **Aarhus** (Denmark), therefore focus on providing equitable access to childhood education and care services through a social pricing strategy that allows families to pay for such services in proportion to their income. In **Medellin** (Colombia), an interdisciplinary team offers a comprehensive

14. See City of Montreal portal: http://ville.montreal. qc.ca/portal/page?_ pageid=8258,90439645&_ dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL.

15. UNICEF (2013) Snapshot of WASH in Schools in Eastern and Southern Africa. See also GTF (2018).

16. See the Walking school bus initiative, available online at: http://tiny.cc/f2ok8y.

SDG 4
Inclusive and equitable quality education

programme for mothers in vulnerable situations that starts from early pregnancy and continues until children are five years old. Other cities, such as **Gothenburg** (Sweden), offer spaces dedicated to families in order to help parents to nurture child development during early infancy. By working hand-in-hand with families, which are the primary caretakers for children, these interventions also provide a platform for identifying specific needs and designing appropriate local-level social welfare policies.

The cause and effect relationship between education policies and working conditions has been emphasised in many occasions. Taking the example of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes, from a LRG perspective, ideally, they should incorporate the views and requirements of the local production base into their planning and implementation processes in order to ensure that they respond to these needs. This is not, however, always the case; TVET policies are often drafted at the national level and fail to incorporate a more decentralized perspective. Changes in national-level TVET policies may be slower or harder to implement, leaving local-level needs unsatisfied.

Regardless of the above, LRGs can design and develop complementary TVET programmes that meet the needs of local companies and foster employability within their territory. **Sorocaba** (Brazil), for instance, has introduced vocational orientation programmes and entrepreneurship reinforcement programmes through the University of the Worker Entrepreneur. The courses offered by this University are based on the needs of the local labour market, which are assessed via indicators and reports provided by the Workers' Services Offices, which works in close collaboration with the local productive sector. **Aswan**[17] (Egypt) also offers various

entrepreneurial training opportunities, aimed at all groups in society. Similarly, in **Buenos Aires** (Argentina) the local authorities are improving labour market integration and the educational inclusion of young people, through counselling and vocational orientation. Other programmes focus on protecting traditional local manufactures and crafts by training activities and entrepreneurship promotion, as in **Rosario**.

Tackling the educational needs of specific groups who are at risk of exclusion from the employment market is a line of action that many other local governments have committed to develop in order to foster a more inclusive society. For instance, the city of **Malargüe** (Argentina) has set up an employment integration centre for people whose disabilities hamper their full integration into the private sector labour market. **São Paulo** (Brazil) is currently implementing a project aimed at providing job opportunities to homeless people. In this comprehensive approach, participants follow specific training itineraries and receive social and financial support. The project builds alliances with local companies so that they can provide internship opportunities to employ participants in what may eventually become stable jobs, it has clearly interlinkages with SDG 8 and SDG 10.

Learning can take place in a variety of settings and on an on-going basis, throughout life. Educational policies must therefore keep adults and the elderly involved and motivated, engage them in relevant learning activities, encourage their personal development, and promote their wellbeing and civic engagement. LRGs are actively promoting a wide variety of initiatives that foster lifelong learning and education. Some of these focus on giving people foundational and digital literacy skills, while other

17. In 2019, UNESCO Learning City Award winners are Aswan (Egypt), Chengdu (China), Heraklion (Greece), Ibadan (Nigeria), Medellín (Colombia), Melitopol (Ukraine), Petaling Jaya (Malaysia), Santiago (Mexico), Seodaemun-gu (Republic of Korea), and Sønderborg (Denmark).

——— **Responding to specific educational needs of people, who are at risk of exclusion from an ill-equipped employment market, for instance people with disabilities or homeless, is a line of action taken by LRGs to foster a more inclusive society.**

Mural in Seattle (photo: Jamie, https://bit.ly/2Ly5TUo).

focus on personal development through culture or physical education, as at the Happy Learning Centre in **Paju** (Republic of Korea) and in the adult education programmes run in **Okayama**[18] (Japan) and in **Tunis** (Tunisia). Following a similar line of action, **Quebec** (Canada) offers university courses for the elderly, which include a wide variety of disciplines and activities, while **Shenzhen**[19] (China) has developed a learning website that integrates numerous educational resources and offers more than 100 free courses on a wide range of topics.

Complementarily, programmes aimed at facilitating the process of adaptation to the hosting community for newly arrived migrants are good examples of local-level initiatives that contribute to expanding lifelong learning. This is, for example, the case in **Vienna** (Austria), where language courses and information on local public services are provided. These programmes can also foster improved coexistence and social cohesion when local people and civic organizations are involved in the process, as happened in **Castelfiorentino** (Italy) with the Castello Alto Project, which improved social cohesion in the old city centre, which is a multi-cultural neighbourhood (see SDG 10).

LRGs can act as levers to promote **education for sustainable development, human rights, coexistence and culture. Implementing the principle of leaving no one and no place behind**, LRGs can encourage both urban and rural dwellers to protect the natural environment, adopt sustainable patterns of production and consumption, and fight climate change (as in **Surabaya**,[20] Indonesia, and **N'Zérékoré**,[21] Guinea). They can implement health and prevention strategies and run campaigns to raise awareness and improve health and wellbeing, as well as developing more caring and supportive attitudes towards others (e.g. violence-free women's networks in León, Mexico; see also SDG 16).

LRGs also promote ethical and cultural values, such as respect for other people and for nature, and promote and defend human rights). Along these lines, the city of **Seattle**[22] (USA), is committed to promoting racial equity and actively works to eliminate institutional racism through different programmes, policies and practices. Similarly, the city of **Munich** (Germany) has implemented what is a pioneering pedagogical programme in Europe: it uses the power of street football as a universal language in order to reach out to populations at risk of exclusion, which are from different backgrounds and origins.

Cities and regions thrive on cultural diversity and LRGs promote culture's contribution to sustainable development. They can do this through a range of initiatives, which include education and lifelong learning programmes. These may involve promoting access to, and participation in, cultural life through both formal and non-formal education. Examples of this include: the 'Creators in residence' programme, run by the city of **Barcelona** (Spain), which involves secondary-

18. See the Okayama city profile, available online at https://uil.unesco.org/city/okayama-city.

19. See the Shenzhen city profile available online at https://uil.unesco.org/city/shenzhen.

20. UN Environment and IGES (2017) Planning and implementing of integrated solid waste management strategies at local level: The case of Surabaya city; available online here: http://tiny.cc/ctyi8y.

21. The city of N'Zérékoré received the UNESCO Learning City Award in 2017. See the case study online: http://tiny.cc/c2zi8y.

22. See the Race and Social Justice Initiative webpage: https://www.seattle.gov/rsji.

SDG **4**
Inclusive and
equitable quality
education

school students in creative processes that are facilitated by professional artists and creative groups; and the Crea programme, in **Bogotá** (Colombia), which provides a wide range of out-of-school opportunities for education involving the arts. Elsewhere, other programmes involve improving educational activities organised in collaboration with cultural agents, such as museums, libraries and theatre companies. One such example is a series of creative writing courses for refugees and asylum-seekers provided by the Dylan Thomas Centre in **Swansea** (UK). Measures can also be adopted to promote more integrated governance of education and culture. This can be achieved through joint strategies, programmes and networks, as in the kültürLab programme of **Izmir** (Turkey), and through the educational goals included in the Charter of Cultural Cooperation promoted by the city of **Lyon** (France).

To complement these actions, LRGs also foster civic engagement and empower people to participate in decision-making processes by setting up participative platforms and community deliberation groups; this helps to bring the diverse views and needs of the population to the table. Setting up volunteer programmes and encouraging local inhabitants to participate in them and to contribute their knowledge and talents are other ways of helping to build stronger and more inter-connected communities, especially when inclusion is mainstreamed and people of different ages, genders, origins, abilities and backgrounds are contacted and become actively engaged (as in the human library of **Valongo**, Portugal).

Furthermore, some LRGs provide support to civil society organizations, either by offering training courses, guaranteeing funding, offering local facilities to promote their work, or getting them actively involved in local policy-making processes.

23. A worldwide network of local governments that supports cities and communities to ignite and develop their educating potential.

The way forward

Education and lifelong learning lie at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are indispensable for achieving them. As all the examples included in this report show, LRGs can make an important contribution to achieving the SDG 4 and so should not be neglected. Nevertheless, some key issues need to be considered in order to boost their impact, looking to the future.

Multi-level partnerships to advance in the provision of inclusive, quality education for everyone. Regardless of their legal attributions, LRGs are key actors in implementing educational policies and in improving the conditions that ensure inclusive quality education for all. For this reason, LRGs have to participate in the process of policy-making, together with Central Ministries of Education and other relevant actors within the educational sector. This multi-level cooperation in the policy-making process guarantees coherence and efficiency, a greater reach for those responsible for promoting quality in education and also better solutions to meet local needs.

Cities and regions are learning environments, irrespective of their size, population or economic strength, and offer countless opportunities for lifelong learning. Education transcends schooling and it is present across the entire city, in its public spaces, neighbourhoods and institutions. Different sectors of city management, including those responsible for health, education, culture, social welfare, urban planning, sports and leisure, and transport, provide the tools required to engage citizens in lifelong learning, to motivate them to become active learners acquire the necessary skills to develop in life, and to enjoy the opportunities the city offers. To reap the benefits of this approach at the local level, learning approaches must be mainstreamed as part of a cross-cutting priority which is applicable in all areas of intervention. However, strong horizontal integration is required to operationalize integrated planning and governance mechanisms. Besides permitting better connections between different departments, this approach helps to maximize the use of resources and the impact of outcomes. In this sense, the work carried out by the *International Association of Educating Cities*[23] proves that education is a key local policy area which has an unquestionably transformative impact at both the local and global levels.

Local and regional governments should be enhanced as hubs of innovation for in formal, non-formal and informal education. In order to provide answers to local needs through education, LRGs are currently mobilizing, articulating and forging partnerships between different local actors and stakeholders in education, such as academia, civil society organizations, and the private sector in the territory. This has already resulted in innovative initiatives that are both transforming cities and contributing to the 2030 Agenda. Within this framework, cities and regions all over the world have made varying levels of progress in eliminating some of the multiple barriers that continue to exist. These are based on gender, age, ethnicity, poverty or disabilities and stand in the way of equal rights to enjoy quality education. Even so, LRGs still have important barriers to overcome and face significant constraints on their economic and human resources. National governments must recognize the important role of LRGs and transfer to them the financial resources required to achieve better outcomes in the fulfilment of SDG 4 and provision of quality education for all.

The cultural dimension of education should be strengthened. When LRGs and other local stakeholders engage in educational work, learning processes can become better adapted to the local cultural context. This may include the use of local languages, the inclusion of locally-relevant content, and the engagement of cultural organizations and other relevant stakeholders, all of which contribute to richer learning processes. This demonstrates the need for cultural considerations to be integrated across all SDGs, both where targets explicitly refer to culture (as in SDG 4.7) and elsewhere. The UCLG *Committee on Culture* actively promotes understanding of how culture is critical for the achievement of the SDGs. The *Obs* database of good practices relating to culture and sustainable cities has so far collected over 140 examples of projects from across the world; these have indexed on the basis of their relevance to each of the 17 SDGs. In 2018, the Committee on Culture published *Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals*: *A Guide for Local Action*, which provides evidence and practical guidance on how to strengthen the cultural dimension of the localization of the SDGs.[24]

Measuring the contribution of local and regional governments to the progress made in quality education as an integral part of the global agendas is a pending challenge. The contribution made by LRGs to achieving SDG 4 needs to be monitored using a series of standardized indicators. The current lack of assessment makes it difficult to identify the impact of local policies in fulfilling the right to education for all. This has also limited the power of LRGs to campaign for, and advocate, more localised educational policy domains and to have their views considered in global dialogues. It is therefore important to encourage cities and regions to assess and monitor the contribution that they make to the global educational goals, by implementing systematized follow-up and reporting mechanisms, and also by offering them specialized training and counselling. Similarly, LRGs need to increase their participation in global networks that can make their work in advancing the 2030 Agenda on education more visible.

In conclusion, in order to advance towards a more equitable and inclusive form of lifelong education for all, regional and local government organizations must work in close cooperation with national authorities. These, in turn, should incorporate them into their strategic policy-making processes. Treating LRGs as allies in the fight to make quality education for all a reality, also calls for a strengthening of their capacity to monitor their contributions to the SDG 4 and to encourage their full, and equal, participation in global conversations relating to Agenda 2030. ❖

[24.] See examples in the UCLG Committee on Culture, Good practices database: http://obs.agenda21culture.net.

——— **LRGs should be enhanced as hubs of innovation for formal, non-formal and informal education and provide answers to local needs through education.**