

# EVALUATION OF THE UNDP GLOBAL PROJECT ART INITIATIVE

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# UNDP GLOBAL PROJECT

## “ART - TERRITORIAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SDGs AT LOCAL LEVEL”



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

# EVALUATION REPORT

*January 2018*



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
FIRENZE  
**DISEI**  
DIPARTIMENTO DI  
SCIENZE PER L'ECONOMIA  
E L'IMPRESA

**arco**  
ACTION RESEARCH  
FOR CO-DEVELOPMENT

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The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of UNDP.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>ADELCO</b>	National Network of Local Development Agencies (Colombia)
<b>ADF</b>	Assemblée des Départements de France
<b>AFBD</b>	African Development Bank Group
<b>AICS</b>	Associazione Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo
<b>ALDA</b>	Association of Local Democracy Agencies
<b>AMB</b>	Asociacion de Municipalidades de Bolivia
<b>ANCI</b>	Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani
<b>ANMCV</b>	Associação Nacional Municípios Caboverdianos
<b>ARCO</b>	Action Research for CO-development
<b>ART</b>	Articulation of Territorial Networks for Sustainable Human Development
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of South-East Asian Nations
<b>CA</b>	Capability Approach
<b>CAPDEL</b>	Programme de renforcement des capacités des acteurs locaux du développement « Démocratie Participative et Développement Locale » (Algérie)
<b>CDB</b>	Caribbean Development Bank
<b>CEBEM</b>	Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios
<b>CLGF</b>	Commonwealth Local Governments Forum
<b>CMECC</b>	Convenient of Mayors for Energy and Climate Change
<b>CNM</b>	Confederação Nacional de Municípios
<b>CPAP</b>	Country Programme Action Plan
<b>CPMR</b>	Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CTA</b>	Chief Technical Advisor
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DAECT</b>	Délégation pour l'Action Extérieure des Collectivités Territoriales (France)
<b>DC</b>	Decentralized Cooperation
<b>DeLog</b>	Development Partners Network on Decentralisation and Local Governance
<b>EBN</b>	European Business innovation Network
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EC DG Devco</b>	European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
<b>EC DG Regio</b>	European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
<b>ECB</b>	European Central Bank
<b>ED</b>	Evaluation Dimension
<b>EM</b>	Evaluation Matrix
<b>EQ</b>	Evaluation Question
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EURADA</b>	European Association of Development Agencies
<b>FAM</b>	Federación de Asociaciones Municipales de Bolivia
<b>FAMSI</b>	Fondo Andaluz de Municipios para la Solidaridad Internacional
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FCM</b>	Federation of Canadian Municipalities
<b>FELCOS</b>	Fondo di Enti Locali per la Cooperazione e lo Sviluppo Umano Sostenibile
<b>FLACMA</b>	Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations of Local Governments
<b>FMDV</b>	Global Fund for Cities Development
<b>FP</b>	Framework Programme
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>GPEDC</b>	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
<b>GTF</b>	Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments for Post-2015 Agenda towards and Habitat III
<b>HD</b>	Human Development
<b>I-STEPS</b>	Innovation in Sustainable Territorial Partnerships
<b>ICLEI</b>	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
<b>IDB</b>	Inter-American Development Bank
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>ILS LEDA</b>	International Links and Services for Local Economic Development Agencies
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>INIAF</b>	Instituto Nacional de Innovación Agropecuaria y Forestal (Bolivia)
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>JMD</b>	Joint Migration and Development Initiative
<b>KOICA</b>	Korea International Cooperation Agency
<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and Caribbean
<b>LDS</b>	Local Development System
<b>LED</b>	Local Economic Development
<b>LEDA</b>	Local Economic Development Agency
<b>LGLD</b>	Local Governance and Local Development
<b>LRG</b>	Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support
<b>MAPS</b>	Local and Regional Government
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>MED Cities</b>	Mediterranean Cities Network
<b>MI</b>	Multiplication Index
<b>NGO</b>	Non Governmental Organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OIF</b>	Organisation internationale de la Francophonie
<b>ORU Fogar</b>	Organisations of Regions United

<b>PADIT</b>	Plataforma Articulada para el Desarrollo Integral Territorial (Cuba)
<b>PDHL</b>	Programa de Desarrollo Human Local (Cuba)
<b>PDLT</b>	Programme of Local and Cross-border Development
<b>PAGOURDEL</b>	Programme d'Appui à la Gouvernance Régionale et le Développement Economique Local (Mauritanie)
<b>RIMISP</b>	Centro Latinoamericano para el Desarrollo Rural
<b>RIPES</b>	Réseau Intercontinental de Promotion de l'Économie Sociale Solidaire
<b>SALGA</b>	South African Local Government Association
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SDGC</b>	Sustainable Development Goal Campaign
<b>SFGD</b>	Structured Focus Group Discussion
<b>SEBRAE</b>	Brazilian Service of Support for Micro and Small Enterprises
<b>SEGIB</b>	Secretaría General Iberoamericana
<b>SHD</b>	Sustainable Human Development
<b>SI</b>	Sum Index
<b>SIDS</b>	Small Islands Developing State
<b>SNA</b>	Social Network Analysis
<b>SP</b>	Strategic Plan
<b>SSTC</b>	South-South Triangular Cooperation
<b>STEHD</b>	Sustainable Territorial Evolution for Human Development
<b>TOR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>TWG</b>	Territorial Working Group
<b>UCCI</b>	Union de Ciudades Capitales Iberoamericanas
<b>UCLG</b>	United Cities and Local Governments
<b>UDUAL</b>	Union de Universidades de America Latina
<b>UIM</b>	Iberoamerican Union of Municipalists
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNASUR</b>	Unión de Naciones Suramericanas
<b>UNCDF</b>	United Nations Capital Development Funds
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nation Country Team
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDESA</b>	United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>UNDG</b>	United Nations Development Group
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nation Development Programme
<b>UNDP BERA</b>	UNDP Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy
<b>UNDP BPPS</b>	UNDP Bureau for Policy and Programme Support
<b>UNDP BRO</b>	UNDP Brussels Representation Office
<b>UNDP CO</b>	UNDP Country Office
<b>UNDP HDRO</b>	UNDP Human Development Report Office
<b>UNDP RBA</b>	UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa
<b>UNDP RBAP</b>	UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific
<b>UNDP RBAS</b>	UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States
<b>UNDP RBECIS</b>	UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and Central Asia
<b>UNDP RBLAC</b>	UNDP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNIDO</b>	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UN Habitat</b>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
<b>UN MDG-Fund</b>	United Nations Millennium Development Goals Fund
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>UNOSSC</b>	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
<b>UNRISD</b>	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
<b>UNV</b>	United Nations Volunteers Programme
<b>UN-Women</b>	United Nation Women
<b>UNWTO</b>	United Nation World Tourism Organization
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WFLED</b>	World Forum on Local Economic Development
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization

## Executive Summary

This report describes the results of the evaluation of the UNDP Global Project “ART – Territorial partnerships for implementing the SDGs at local level” (henceforth UNDP ART Initiative), which aims at providing a broad transversal assessment of its different objectives and modalities of work, as well as strategic orientation to enhance its integration within the UNDP corporate framework.

The evaluation covers the period of the last global project document 2015 – 2017, but it also includes reference to the key findings of the mid-term evaluation conducted in 2012.

After twelve years of implementation of the UNDP ART Initiative and in coincidence with a crucial and strategic stage in its consolidation path, this evaluation represented an opportunity to assess the extent to which the ART Initiative contributed to UNDP’s effort in establishing a consistent and integrated framework on Local Governance and Local Development (LGLD) and (as means for) the Localization of the SDGs.

The objectives of the evaluation entailed a wide and transversal scope, focusing on the following evaluation dimensions (EDs):

- ED1. Achieved influence on the global policy dialogue and strategic alliances in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs implementation;
- ED2. Enabled networking and partnership-building mechanisms as effective means to integrate global/regional dialogue and alliances with joint territorial actions for SDGs Localization, though the mobilization of appropriate competences and resources;
- ED3. Support provided to UNDP country programmes, their connection and integration with global and corporate frameworks and the potential of specific processes and mechanisms to inform UNDP Country Offices (COs) work in the application of a LGLD approach and the implementation of SDGs;
- ED4. Achieved and potential mainstreaming of the UNDP ART approach and methodologies within UNDP corporate policies, strategies, and work streams.

The main features of the evaluation have been its integrated focus, multilevel approach, multi-stakeholder and participatory consultative process. Applied data collection methods included: Desk Research and Documents Analysis; Key Informants Interview; Social Network Analysis; Country studies in Cabo Verde and Bolivia; Structured Focus Group Discussion. In total, 120 people were consulted from 85 different organizations, including: UNDP / UN staff, representatives of supranational and regional organizations / networks, bilateral or territorial cooperation partners, research institutions and academia, and partner organizations in UNDP country programmes, as well as insider informants (i.e. informants with a deep knowledge of the Initiative from inside, like former staff of the UNDP ART Initiative, CTAs from country programmes) and current team members of the UNDP ART Initiative.

A key transversal focus of the evaluation was on the relevance of UNDP ART as a strategic player and key development partner for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the local level. Key informants and stakeholders recognised that UNDP can make an important difference in enabling (local) governments and involving all actors (across levels and sectors) to develop effective policies, strategies, and relevant partnerships as basis for integrated implementation frameworks.

The methodologies and tools developed, tested and consolidated through ART over the years are perceived as consistent and beneficial for UNDP in accompanying countries and territories towards the achievement of the SDGs through a holistic and silos-breaking approach. A strong coherence emerges between the integrated, inter-sectoral and universal nature of the 2030 Agenda and ART’s methodology based on the territorial approach and multi-actor platforms articulating horizontally across sectors and vertically across levels.

The evaluation defines the following six strategic features and work-streams, and their continuous inter-relation, as the overall value-added of the UNDP ART Initiative, which allow to preliminarily define its relevance in supporting the positioning, effectiveness and incidence of UNDP as key development actor for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local level: (i) Promoting an integrated territorial vision through place-based, participatory and multilevel governance and planning for SHD at the local level; (ii) Building linkages, partnerships and alliances with and between non-traditional actors within the UN system; (iii) Operating in a multilateral framework that opens up opportunities for partner organizations to interact with UN agencies and national governments; (iv) A combination of policy debate and advocacy role with implementation support in partner countries; (v) Advocacy and lobbying on territorial approach and role of LRGs; (vi) Knowledge creation, management and sharing.

UNDP through ART has substantially contributed to the growing integration of the local dimension in the development discourse and practice, in preparation and through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, favouring

the alignment of visions, concepts and approaches that will allow to further leverage synergies and complementarities between UNDP and crucial partners of the SDGs localization process.

The evaluation has also allowed highlighting the substantial contribution of UNDP through ART to position the LGLD dimension and the role of LRGs and territorial cooperation primarily on the Agenda 2030, as well as within other relevant global agendas.

The networking and partnership approach of UNDP ART is the foundation and basis of the results in influencing the overall policy debate. The social network analysis conducted has shown the breadth and strength of the relations that UNDP through ART has been able to create and enhance with a diversified group of stakeholders at global, regional, national and territorial level, representing a crucial and innovative feature for a UNDP global project. These relations have been growing in relevance and intensity from 2013 to 2017, through consolidation of long-lasting linkages and the establishment of new strategic ones.

Supported partnerships – both between UNDP and partners, and among partners themselves – appear crucial not only to enable a structural dialogue and mutual exposure, but especially to exploit synergies and complementarities among initiatives and resources within multilateral frameworks, leading to substantial multiplier effects that may not have realised without the catalytic role played by ART.

The analysis carried out confirms the validity and strength of the adopted multi-layered networking methodology, showing that many strategic partnerships enabled by UNDP ART bridge the global, national and subnational levels, through different types of cooperation modalities and translating global dialogue into concrete development inputs in countries and territories, and the other way around. Across levels, such networking approach maintains its features and value-added as a platform for aligning and harmonizing efforts, and contributes to realise multi-level governance and policy coherence in practice enabling a simultaneous relation between partners and different layers of government.

Moreover, the analysis has shown that the experience and methodologies applied by UNDP ART to enable integrated partnership and networking at different levels constitute a strong potential for enhancing UNDP corporate and COs role as facilitator in the implementation of the SDGs at the local level.

In the UNDP ART approach, global dialogue and networking find a natural accomplishment in programmatic work in countries and territories. In this respect, the cooperation and interaction between the ART Initiative and UNDP COs has considerably evolved over time, from the launching of dedicated ART Framework Programmes to the integration of the approach, its tools and partners within broader and more comprehensive LGLD programmes. Through such evolving circumstances, UNDP ART – through COs – has been and is providing relevant and effective support to national and subnational governments in the establishment of multilevel governance, multi-stakeholders' partnerships and integrated planning frameworks.

On the other hand, the evaluation concludes that ART has not yet reached its full potential in terms of supporting COs (and/through regional hubs), thus moving from ad-hoc and more demand-driven support to an organized approach embedded within an UNDP-corporate framework to SDGs localization. This will also allow to link UNDP ART partnerships and networks more closely with the programmatic offer of UNDP and specific COs.

As a result of a joint mainstreaming effort, the SDGs localization approach is gaining increasing prominence in UNDP and in the whole UN system. This constitutes the possible basis of an integrated response capacity through interagency collaboration at country and local level, which deserves an ever-stronger emphasis as SDGs become a transversal element driving the work of the different UN agencies on the ground.

The new UNDP Strategic Plan features governance issues as key transversal reference, and specifically local governance as basis for SDGs implementation. There are also various important references to local level implementation, whilst SDG localization as such seems to be a missing link. It would be therefore key to further harmonize the SDGs localization approach within UNDP (and as basis for the broader UN system) giving it a comprehensive programmatic dimension and overall policy coherence that could be profitably ensured and built-on the LGLD framework / territorial approach as developed (also) through UNDP ART.

As ground for this, the evaluation found that there has been an increasing capitalization and integration of the UNDP ART Initiative both within the UNDP and UN system. Nonetheless, there are wide opportunities for UNDP to benefit much more in the future by leveraging on the UNDP ART's networks, partnerships (especially with LRGs and territorial cooperation actors) and tested tools for its corporate mission, also in light of the on-going UN system reform and repositioning to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

The evaluation also pointed at some limitations and constraints that might affect the continued effects of the UNDP ART Initiative, namely in relation to (i) its complete capitalization within UNDP; (ii) its nature as a project; (iii) human and financial resources endowment; (iv - v) geographical outreach and wider

representation of different actors and sectors; (vi) knowledge management and coordination for enhanced programmatic and operational support.

To address above limitations and seize opportunities for improvement and consolidation that would allow to fully unlock the potential of the approach and related practices, the evaluation finally recommends to:

- Enable a stronger capitalization and integration of the UNDP ART Initiative within the UNDP and UN system.
- Further the comprehensive elaboration and systematization of the conceptual and technical/operational foundations of UNDP ART's approach and work.
- Broaden and consolidate a core international alliance of actors to turn it into a widely recognized global multi-stakeholder partnership for SDGs localization – including through the establishment of a UNDP Advisory Committee for LRGs that would allow capitalizing on and institutionalizing the crucial relations with them.
- Build a transversal UNDP-corporate work-stream on localizing the SDGs as basis for engaging a UN-system-wide perspective, through comprehensive programmatic support centered on integrated LGLD frameworks.

To conclude, this evaluation has robustly shown the relevance and effectiveness of the UNDP ART Initiative in contributing to empower integrated local development systems for the localization of the SDGs, through innovative and value adding practices in relation to multilevel governance, vertical and horizontal articulation of actors, policy coherence and development cooperation effectiveness at the local level.

However, it is only by better capitalizing, integrating and enhancing its role and functional capacities as part of UNDP corporate structures that the UNDP ART Initiative will be fully able to support the whole UNDP / UN system for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and more broadly for Sustainable Human Development at all levels.



# 1. Introduction and evaluation objectives

This report describes the results of the evaluation of the UNDP Global Project “ART – Territorial partnerships for implementing the SDGs at local level” (henceforth UNDP ART Initiative).

The evaluation was carried out over the period August – January 2018 by Prof. Mario Biggeri (Department of Economics and Management, University of Florence) and Andrea Ferrannini (Strategic Unit on Local Development, ARCO - Action Research for CO-development). Additional support was provided by ARCO, a research centre of the University of Florence with a specific background on sustainable human development and evaluation methodologies.

Having been implemented since 2005 and counting now on 12 years of experience and evolution, the UNDP ART Initiative is today a UNDP global project based at the UNDP Representation Office in Brussels and operating under the joint direction and supervision of two UNDP divisions based in New York, i.e. the Bureau for Policy & Programme Support (BPPS) and the Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy (BERA).

In coherence with its corporate mission as a ‘catalyst and facilitator of support from the United Nations system’ (UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021, p. 1) to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNDP through ART aims at empowering integrated local development systems towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda from a Sustainable Human Development (SHD) perspective.

In other words, the UNDP ART Initiative contributes to the implementation of UNDP’s integrated framework to support Local Governance and Local Development (LGLD) and aims to strengthen the existing alliances between UNDP and its global, regional, local and territorial cooperation partners in support of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local level. In this regard, it implements an integrated territorial development approach that promotes innovative territorial partnerships, offering specific instruments for reinforcing development cooperation effectiveness, coordinating initiatives in the framework of global agendas, and informing coherent and implementable development frameworks at the global and at the corporate levels.

As a multi-donor framework, UNPD through ART promotes complementarities and links between local, national and international development actors at the national and sub-national levels, at the request of partner countries. Such linkages are instrumental in stimulating demand-driven human development processes and improving development cooperation effectiveness at the local level. Therefore, the UNDP ART Initiative operates as an entry point for Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) and international cooperation actors interested in harmonizing and aligning their interventions with national and local development strategies and policies for implementing the SDGs.

**The overall objective of the evaluation is to provide a broad transversal assessment of the UNDP ART Initiative in relation to its different streams and modalities of work, thereby providing strategic orientation to enhance its integration within the UNDP corporate framework and mandate as ‘integrator platform for the UN development system’ (Report of the Secretary-General, 30/06/2017, p. 14) for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

Through the collection and robust analysis of credible and reliable information/data (see chapter 3), the evaluation is intended to provide evidence-based insights in order to:

- Capture the extent and the way how the UNDP ART Initiative supports the positioning, effectiveness and incidence of UNDP as key development partner for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through innovative and value adding practices in relation to multilevel governance, vertical and horizontal articulation of actors, policy coherence and development cooperation effectiveness at the local level;
- Capitalize on the accumulated experience and knowledge of the UNDP ART Initiative to support decision-making processes about on-going UNDP ART operations, as well as about its forward-looking evolution;
- Continue its commitment for transparency and accountability toward partners, donors and external stakeholders;
- Enable further capitalization of the UNDP ART approach, methodologies and tools within UNDP corporate structures and policies, as well as within the global policy debate.

The evaluation covers the period of the last global project document 2015 – 2017, but it takes also into consideration the key findings of the mid-term evaluation conducted in 2012 (Agostinucci and Biggeri, 2012).

After twelve years of implementation of the UNDP ART Initiative and in coincidence with a crucial and strategic stage in its consolidation path, this evaluation represents an opportunity to assess the extent to which the Initiative provides a consistent and unifying vision, approach, methodologies and tools on Local

Governance and Local Development (LGLD) and the Localization of the SDGs, in order to make UNDP's integrated responses 'coherent not merely across sectors, but also coordinated across levels (international, national, subnational and local)' as stated in its newly released UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (p. 8).

These objectives of the evaluation entail a particularly wide and transversal scope, which focuses on the following evaluation dimensions (as stated in the ToR of the evaluation, see Appendix 1):

- ED1. The analysis of how UNDP through ART influences the global policy dialogue and strategic alliances in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related SDGs implementation;
- ED2. The analysis of supported networking and partnership-building mechanisms as effective means to integrate global / regional dialogue and alliances with joint territorial actions for SDGs Localization, though the mobilization of appropriate competences and resources;
- ED3. The analysis of the support provided to UNDP country programmes, with a particular emphasis on their connection and integration with global and corporate frameworks and the potential of specific processes and mechanisms to inform UNDP Country Offices (COs) work in the application of a LGLD approach for the implementation of SDGs;
- ED4. The analysis of the mainstreaming capacity of the UNDP ART approach and methodologies within UNDP corporate policies, strategies, and work streams, including the identification of how this could be further strengthened.

Considering this scope as well as the multidimensional and multilevel nature of the UNDP ART Initiative, the evaluation is guided by the OECD / DAC criteria of *relevance* and *effectiveness* (as stated in the ToR), by which UNDP ART methodologies (i.e. process) and experience (i.e. results) are assessed in each dimension.

This evaluation report is structured as follows.

After this introduction, chapter 2 briefly reviews the conceptual foundations and evolution of the UNDP ART approach on integrated local development systems and SDGs implementation, while chapter 3 describes the evaluation framework and methodology. Chapter 4 presents a general transversal assessment of UNDP ART's relevance and key features, and then chapters 5 to 8 report the main results and findings for each evaluation dimension, respectively ED1 on the global policy dialogue (chapter 5), ED2 on networking and partnerships building (chapter 6), ED3 on support to UNDP LGLD country programmes (chapter 7) and ED4 on mainstreaming within UNDP / UN system (chapter 8). Finally, chapter 9 summarises the key findings of the evaluation (including current issues), leading to recommendations for future evolution and consolidation.

## **2. Conceptual foundation and evolution of the UNDP ART Initiative**

### **2.1 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Localization**

The vision of development linked to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the 17 SDGs is naturally multidimensional and multilevel. The Agenda strongly solicits for an integrated, sustainable and inclusive approach to development putting UNDP's Human Development approach at the limelight. Without denying the importance of international and national actors, an endogenous integrated and inclusive approach to development is inescapably implanted in the local system and, therefore, characterised by place-based institutions, culture, social-capital, as well as geographic and economic features (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014a). In a multilevel perspective, governance mechanisms at the local level matter, because this is where interactions among authorities, institutions and citizens – and thus the society as a whole – is most immediate and strongest, as well as where inequalities, forms of exclusion, power imbalances and vulnerabilities are most immediately experienced by people. Moreover, local governments play a key role in linking citizens with the State and in ensuring ownership of countries' development agendas (Romeo and Smoke, 2014; Smoke and Nixon, 2016), thus requiring to further enable them to fully assume their roles beyond service delivery, enhancing participation and accountability at sub-national levels (UNDP, 2016).

"Localizing SDGs" is a new and challenging perspective in the development arena and is becoming a keyword for several international organizations, supranational-institutions (such as the OECD, the EU, The World Bank among others, see Oxfam and ARCO, 2016, pp. 11-12) as well as for national and regional governments (UCLG, 2016). Indeed, also in light of the 2030 Agenda, the importance of dealing at the territorial level with economic competitiveness, social inclusion, human rights and environmental protection – among other objectives – is unquestionable (Pike et al., 2007; Becattini et al., 2009; Pelenc et al., 2013; Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014a).

Within this scenario, UNDP through ART aims at empowering integrated local development systems towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from a Sustainable Human Development perspective, through dynamic and iterative processes based on dialogue between actors within and across territories. The UNDP ART approach for many years has been engaged in these processes of dialogue and action for change, integrating the human development paradigm with the territorial perspective (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014a). Nowadays, this is deeply connected to the Localization of the SDGs as new reference paradigm, in order to make its principles of universality, inclusivity and integration (across sectors and levels) operational and based on context-specific processes.

The results of this evaluation will constitute an additional opportunity to review and strengthen the conceptual foundations of this approach, representing an important input to the elaboration of an integrated conceptual and analytical framework for possible future applications in terms of results-based M&E.

## 2.2 The perspective of Sustainable Human Development at the local level

Theoretically, the Sustainable Human Development (SHD) approach can be easily linked to UNDP's SHD paradigm, as well as to the literature on local development and place-based theories (Pyke et al., 1990; Barca et al., 2012; Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014a; Becattini, 2015).

The SHD paradigm – introduced by the UNDP and firmly rooted in Amartya Sen's capability approach (CA)<sup>1</sup> – combines various dimensions of well-being based on the basic needs approach and the following pillars: equity, sustainability, participation / empowerment and productivity (UNDP, 1996). According to the HD perspective, 'the main objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives' (Haq, 1995, p. 29).

Indeed, 'The view of human beings as the "primary ends" of the process of development calls for emphasis to be placed on what people get from development, not only what they put into it' (Anand and Sen, 2000, p. 84) and on their participation and commitment in the development processes (Sen, 1999). Being a people-centred paradigm derived from an agency-based and opportunity-oriented theory, SHD contributes to the conceptualization of the multidimensionality of development: people's real freedoms in daily life are central to the development process, and the territories where the people live and interact are at the core of the process of change (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014a). This is because the territory constitutes the socio-institutional setting and arena for collective action that directly shapes individuals' and social groups' daily life and well-being (Ostrom, 2000). Individuals, families and communities are inexorably embedded in institutional, cultural, social, geographical and economic terms within their territorial society (Biggeri et al., 2017).

The "working" performances expressed by a territorial system (i.e. the characteristics and functionings) where individuals live and interact are key resources and conversion factors that give to economic agents the opportunity to achieve their objectives and to individuals the capability to flourish (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014a). Therefore, this argument steers HD thinking towards the notion of "Sustainable Human Development at the local level", and simultaneously offers a different perspective for local development, which is based on the evolutionary expansion of equity, sustainability, participation and productivity within territorial contexts. In the framework of the 2030 Agenda, these processes and related outcomes will be monitored and measured through the SDGs (with their targets and indicators).

The notion of sustainability, overarching the SDGs, is crucial in stressing the importance of long-term thinking, not just in environmental terms but also in economic and social equity terms, considering how a progressive view of development and politics should challenge social injustice, disparities and instability (Anand and Sen, 2000; Harvey, 2000; Pike et al., 2007). Sustainable development processes are thus underpinned by public scrutiny and deliberation, where open discussion, debate, criticism and dissent – that is, participation and active involvement – are the fundamental political and civil rights that sustain informed choices (Sen, 1999), leading the developmental trajectories of communities and territories.

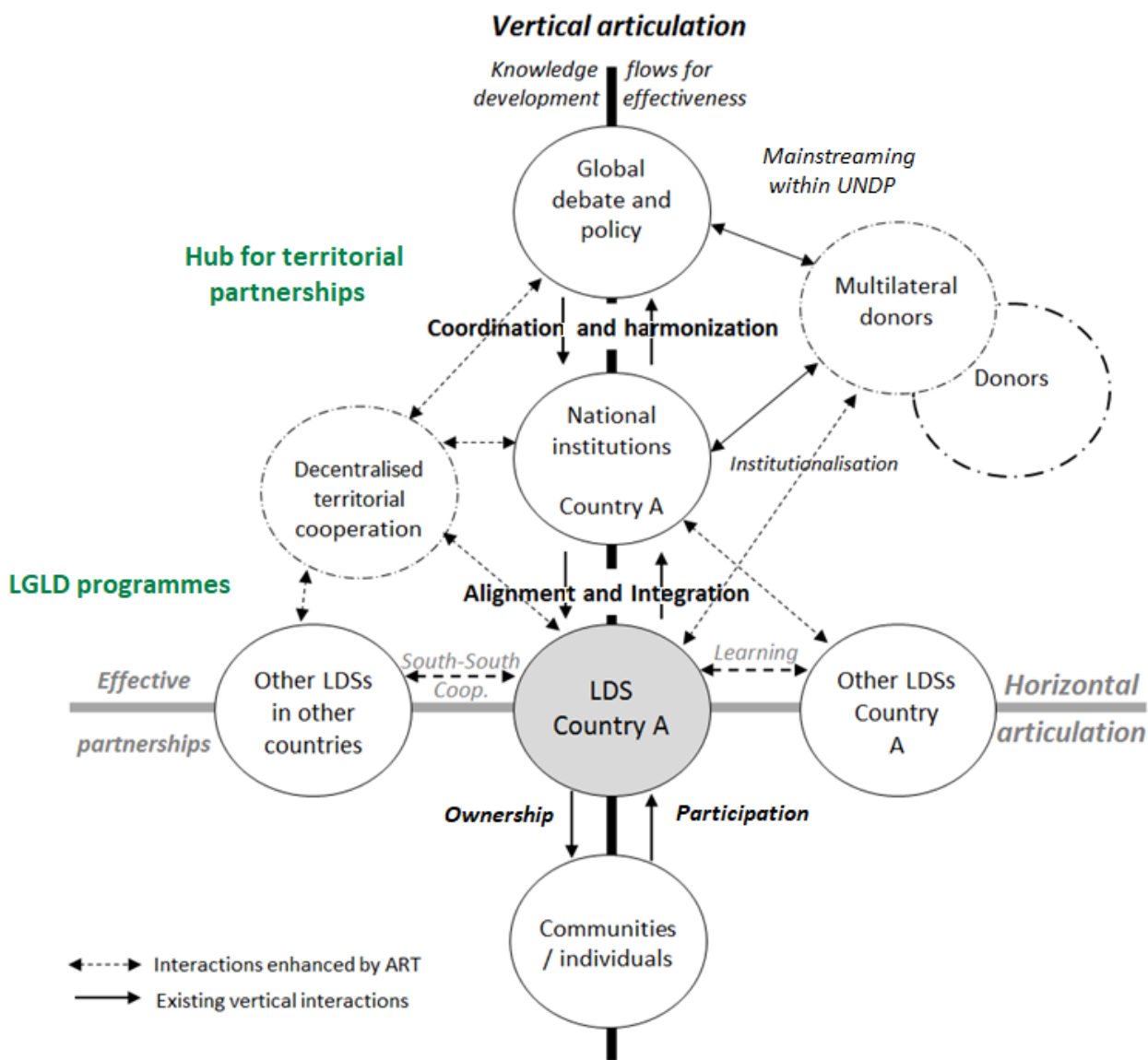
Embracing this conceptual perspective, UNDP through ART enhances multilevel processes that involve many stakeholders – e.g. international bodies, central and local government institutions, civil society organizations, communities' groups and associations, private sector, academia – at local, national and international levels. As assessed in the mid-term evaluation (Agostinucci and Biggeri, 2012) and described in Figure 2.1, the vertical and horizontal articulation of multilevel dynamic processes is probably the key feature

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<sup>1</sup> According to Sen (2009, p. 17), 'the capability approach proposes a change – a serious departure – from concentrating on the means of living to the actual opportunities of living in itself', that is, human flourishing in terms of functionings and capabilities. Human development is, therefore, conceived as a process of expanding the capabilities – abilities and opportunities – of people to lead the kind of life they have reason to value (Sen, 1999 and 2009; Nussbaum, 2000).

of the “operating mode” of the UNDP ART Initiative. In particular, the local / national and the global / international dimensions are connected and integrated along two main coordinates: vertically, through multilevel governance and policy coherence; and horizontally, through global/regional alliances for policy dialogue and partnerships within and across territories.

Figure 2.1 The UNDP ART multilevel intervention logic



Source: Adapted from Agostinucci and Biggeri (2012) and Biggeri and Ferrannini (2014a)

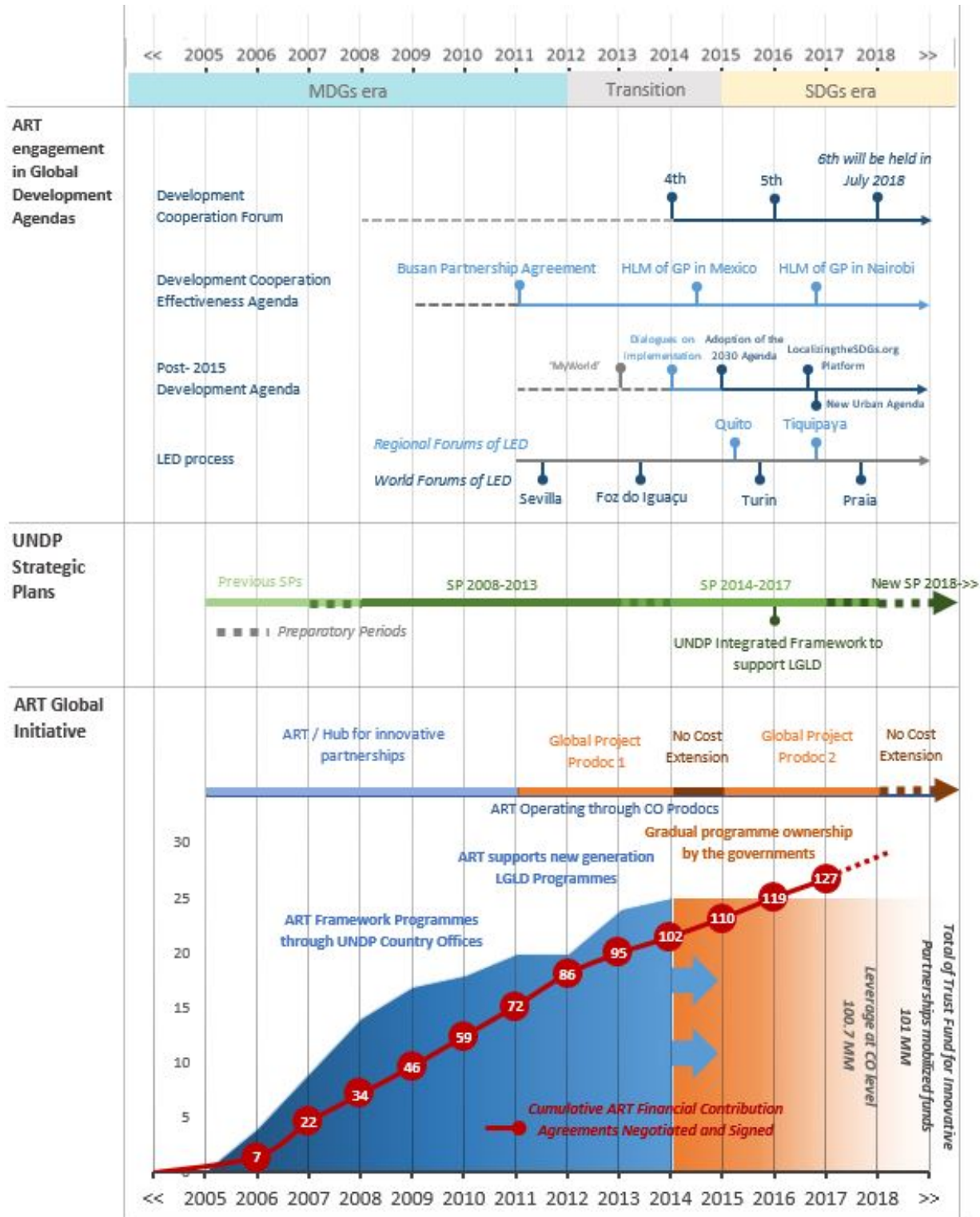
The complex array of stakeholders' actions and interactions at the local level, as well as at the national and the international levels, requires a multilevel strategic dialogue for the implementation of the Agenda, based on a two-ways (bottom-up and top-down) integrated governance approach. As multilevel outcomes, the collective responses to the desired changes are expressed by the global actions for SDGs but, at the same time, they are locally landed through participation and planning, and concretely pursued through the enhanced access to services and economic opportunities for tangible improvements in the quality of life and opportunities of the local population.

SHD at the local level can be conceived – in line with the UNDP perspective – as ‘a process of enabling the local system to function in order to facilitate the expansion of the real freedoms that people enjoy in an integrated and sustainable manner’ (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014a, p. 11). Therefore, UNDP through ART is also contributing to the key theoretical challenge of robustly reconciling this multilevel and multidimensional complexity with the UNDP’s Sustainable Human Development paradigm (as further explained in Annex 1).

### 2.3 The evolution of the UNDP ART Initiative

Figure 2.2 illustrates the evolution of the UNDP ART initiative in parallel to the global development scenario.

Figure 2.2 Evolution of the UNDP ART Initiative



Source: UNDP ART Initiative

### **3. Evaluation framework, methodology and data collection**

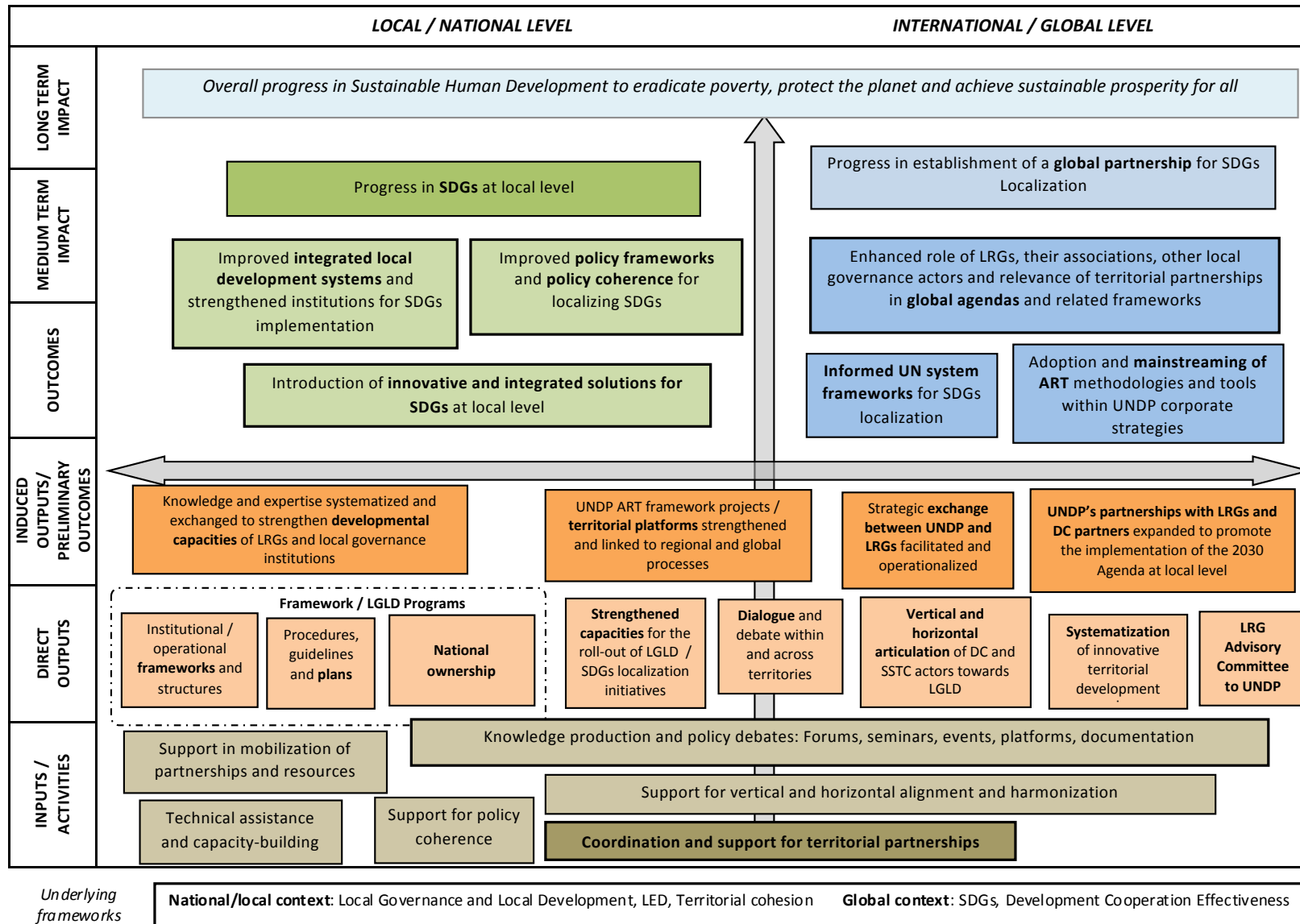
An integrated evaluation framework has been elaborated to address, capture and reflect the articulation and complexity of the UNDP ART Initiative, linking different streams of work, ranging from knowledge creation / diffusion and policy debate to networking and concrete implementation.

The evaluation approach starts with the reconstruction of the rationale or theory of change of the UNDP ART Initiative, as designed by the evaluation team after preliminary desk review and consultation with UNDP ART team. The theory of change – represented in Figure 3.1 (next page) – is a description of how the Initiative is supposed to achieve its expected results, and it is built through a combination of a theoretical model (i.e. the sustainable human development paradigm in this case), and a results chain. A results chain allows to map the causal relations of the different factors and effects associated to the Initiative along a sequence input-outputs-outcomes-impacts, which in this case is applied on two interrelated levels: local / national (left-hand side) and international / global (right-hand side).

The underlying conceptual framework is the “lens” through which the different evaluation dimensions associated to the UNDP ART Initiative are observed and interpreted, and it represents the underlying basis for elaborating and adopting a set of evaluation questions and indicators. This in turn should allow addressing the key “thrusts” or qualifying features of the Initiative in a way that can be useful for drawing policy and strategic conclusions and recommendations.

On this basis, the evaluation framework starts with the introduction of core evaluation questions (EQs) matching the previous described dimensions (EDs) and the key UNDP ART’s areas of work. In turn, these core evaluation questions are organized within an Evaluation Matrix (see Appendix 2), which represents the guiding format of questions, including sub-questions (both on process and results) and corresponding indicators and data collection methods. The methodology, in consideration of its complex and multi-dimensional scope, is based on a mixed-methods approach to capture different aspects (via triangulation) and to obtain reliable results (see Annex 2). The evaluation has been mostly centred on qualitative analysis supported to any possible extent by quantitative data analysis.

Figure 3.1 Theory of Change underlying the evaluation of the UNDP ART Initiative



Source: Authors

Table 3.1 resumes the connection between EDs, key areas of work, EQs and evaluation methods.

Table 3.1 EDs, EQs and evaluation methods

<i>Evaluation Dimensions</i>	<i>Key areas of work</i>	<i>Evaluation Questions (EQs)</i>	<i>Evaluation Methods</i>
<b>ED1 – Global policy dialogue</b>	Influencing international development policies	<i>EQ1: To what extent has UNDP through ART been contributing to the global policy dialogue on the Agenda 2030 and the implementation of SDGs at the local level?</i>	DR + DA, KII
<b>ED2 – Networking and partnership-building</b>	Harmonization and alignment of territorial cooperation partners towards global development frameworks and alliances, and UNDP corporate and country programmes for LGLD	<i>EQ2: To what extent has UNDP through ART been contributing to effectively promote multilevel networking and partnership-building for joint territorial actions in support to SDGs Localization / LGLD initiatives?</i>	DR + DA, KII, SNA, CS
<b>ED3 – Support to UNDP LGLD country programmes</b>	Facilitation of the implementation of the 2030 agenda at the local level through multilevel LGLD and LED systems and capacities	<i>EQ3: To what extent has UNDP ART been effectively supporting the efforts by UNDP, LRGs and other local governance actors to implement integrated and multilevel LGLD frameworks for the SDGs?</i>	DR + DA, KII, CS, SFGD
<b>ED4 – Mainstreaming within the UNDP</b>	Informing of relevant corporate UNDP policies	<i>EQ4: To what extent is UNDP ART approach relevant to inform and integrate UNDP corporate policies and programmes at global and country level?</i>	DR + DA, KII, CS

Source: Authors

Data collection methods can be briefly described as follows (see Annex 2 for more detailed information).

#### Desk Research (DR) + Documents Analysis (DA)

In-depth review of relevant strategic, programmatic and monitoring documents provided by UNDP ART coordination team, as well as documents / reports / articles produced by UNDP / UN offices and other partner organizations at international, regional, national and local level.

For a complete list of analysed documents and reports, see the references in Appendix 5.

#### Key Informants Interview (KII)

Structured individual interviews with 59 key informants aimed at stimulating at once a retrospective and prospective analysis and capturing the general opinion and appreciation of consulted informants in relation to the broad strategic standing of the UNDP ART Initiative. The evaluators had the opportunity to meet in person around a half of consulted informants at the occasion of their simultaneous presence at the IV World Forum of LED that took place in Cabo Verde in October 2017.

#### Social Network Analysis (SNA)

A structured questionnaire was submitted to all key informants to explore the direct network relations at global, corporate and country level in order to visualise and understand the diverse relationships, making social relationships and knowledge flows visible and comparable.

#### Country studies (CS)

Analysis of selected UNDP programmes at country level (coordinated by UNDP COs and national governments, and supported by the UNDP ART Initiative) to validate transversal issues and/or complete the analysis at the level of countries' experiences. This analysis is instrumental to assess: on the one hand, the evolution of the UNDP ART approach and work in relation to new global and national contexts and related challenges; on the other hand, the experimentation of tools and mechanisms at national and local level within a multilevel framework for policy dialogue, networking and partnerships.

Two main case-studies were analysed through in-country missions – i.e. Cabo Verde and Bolivia. Additional analysis concerning UNDP ART programmes in Mauritania, Algeria, Cuba and Uruguay was conducted through interviews and consultations with relevant UNDP COs representatives (as well as, in the case of Mauritania, with representative of partner government institutions).



### Structured Focus Group Discussion (SFGD)

SFGD with key programmes' stakeholders at national and local level were also conducted for the analysis of the programmes in Cabo Verde and Mauritania (based on the method designed by Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014b), in order to collectively discuss relevant dimensions of analysis.

The choice of the data collection approach in this evaluation strictly follows the UNDP Evaluation Policy Guidelines, the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results and the UNEG "Ethical Guidelines for the Evaluation".<sup>2</sup>

In particular, the main features of the evaluation, which contribute to determine its specific nature as a reflexive and recursive exercise, have been:

- Integrated focus, placing a strong emphasis on the value of the overall UNDP ART approach and practices as bridging elements between processes and results at different levels;
- Multilevel approach, which entails a focus on both the global coordination, networking and mainstream level, as well as on the implementation and support mechanisms for the SDGs at country and local level;
- Multi-stakeholder and participatory consultative process, based on the strong involvement of local, national and international stakeholders as a basis to incorporate different partners' and informants' views and perspectives along with joint learning and collective reflection.

**Overall, the evaluation can count on a total number of 120 consulted people (from 85 different organizations / offices),** including: UNDP / UN staff, representatives of supranational and regional organizations / networks, bilateral or territorial cooperation partners, research institutions and academia, and partner organizations in UNDP country programmes, as well as insider informants (i.e. informants with a deep knowledge of the Initiative from inside, like former staff of the UNDP ART Initiative, CTAs from country programmes) and current team members of the UNDP ART Initiative. **This figure confirms the depth and robustness of the analysis conducted through a multi-stakeholder and participatory approach.**

The complete list of consulted people is presented in Appendix 3.<sup>3</sup>

To conclude, it is important to remark that throughout the evaluation process (whose stages and timeline are reported in Appendix 4) the Evaluation Steering Committee played a key supervision function, providing specific orientation and contribution in correspondence with key steps of the process (i.e. inception, consultation process, presentation of preliminary findings and final report). At the same time UNDP ART team members crucially facilitated consultations with key informants and in-country missions, identifying and providing also relevant information and data, and actively participating to the consultation process. Finally, the designated focal person of the UNDP ART team provided substantive support and a smooth coordination and communication.

## **4. Relevance and key features of the UNDP ART Initiative**

This chapter presents an overall assessment of the relevance of UNDP ART as a strategic player within the context of SDGs implementation, based on its key features and value-added according to the opinion of key informants and stakeholders.<sup>4</sup> This chapter thus provides a broad transversal understanding of how the UNDP ART Initiative supports the positioning, effectiveness and incidence of UNDP as key development partner for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, linking its key features and value-added to the four evaluation dimensions. These preliminary insights will then be discussed in more details over the next chapters.

Starting from the understanding of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a transversal, indivisible and universal strategic platform providing a common vision and framework across governance

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<sup>2</sup> The obligations of evaluators (i.e. independence, impartiality, credibility, no conflicts of interest, honesty and integrity and accountability) and the obligations to participants (i.e. respect for dignity and diversity, rights, confidentiality, avoidance of harm) have been fully respected throughout the evaluation.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to highlight that most interviews have been recorded – upon explicit permission of the interviewee – and carefully transcribed in order to allow a robust objective analysis of answers and provided information by the whole evaluation team, avoiding the risk of interviewer's misunderstood interpretation.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout the report, direct quotations from interviews are reported between inverted commas and in italics, without mentioning the name of the interviewee for the sake of confidentiality.

levels and sectors, key informants agreed on the importance of localizing the SDGs to deliver effective responses and make sure “to leave no one behind”. In particular, consulted informants recognized that:

- The 2030 Agenda and SDGs are not implementable without local actors, whose capacities ultimately shape the delivery of tailored responses to economic, social and environmental issues;
- It is fundamental to tailor the global vision to the local context, bringing down macro objectives and ideas to the level of concrete results for communities and people;
- SDGs require reaching targets not only nationally “on average”, but rather across territories (and especially the most vulnerable ones) within countries, thus making the Localization of the SDGs not only a vector of democracy and cohesion, but also a multiplier of different investments;
- While challenges become more and more global / regional, solutions are increasingly local through the coordination of different partners / stakeholders.

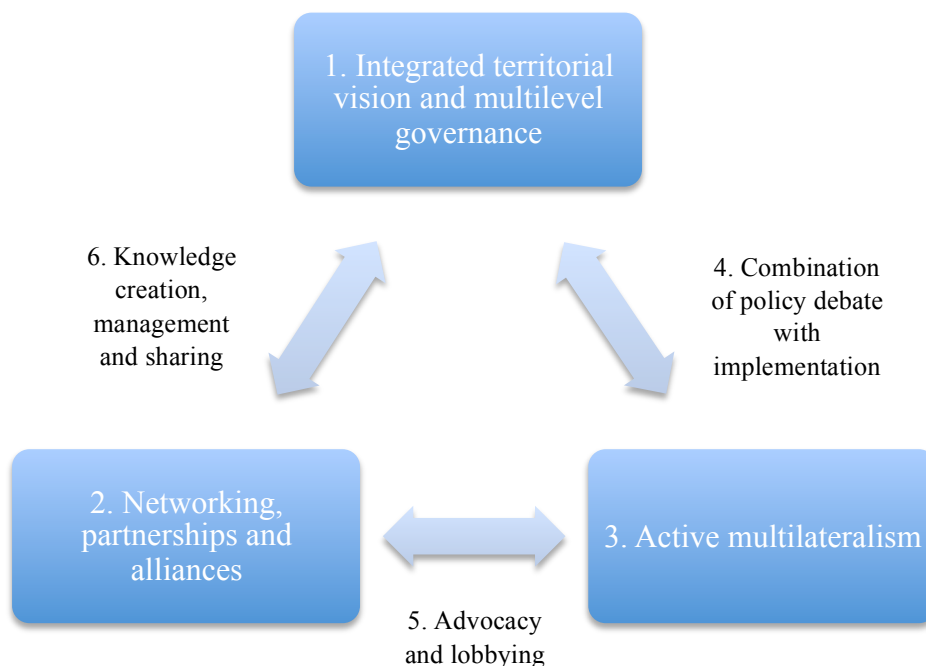
In this regard, it is recognised that UNDP can make a big difference involving all actors (across levels and sectors) to develop effective strategies and enabling governments to strengthen relevant partnerships to implement an integrated agenda like the 2030 Agenda.

**In other words, the methodologies and tools developed, tested and consolidated through ART over the years are perceived as consistent and beneficial for UNDP in accompanying countries and territories towards the achievement of the SDGs through a holistic and silos-breaking approach. Therefore, a strong coherence emerges between the integrated, inter-sectoral and universal nature of the 2030 Agenda and the integrated territorial approach based on territorial multi-actor platforms articulating horizontally across sectors and vertically across levels.**

To link the global vision of the agenda with the realities where people live and interact, interviewees stressed the importance for UNDP to structurally involve LRGs, due to their proximity to citizenship, responsibilities and capacities, contributing to make them not only aware of the Agenda but especially capable, accountable and strategically linked to the country-level processes led by national governments. Moreover, the involvement of territorial cooperation partners in the implementation of the SDGs at the local level contributes to make the 2030 Agenda truly universal, by fostering direct linkages and synergies with strategic planning for SDGs in regions and cities in respective countries.

Six key features have emerged during the evaluation, characterising the nature and value-added of UNDP ART as developed, consolidated and evolved in 12 years of experimentation and practice within the international development cooperation arena. These key features are strongly linked in a synergic continuous process (Figure 4.1), while Table 4.1 reports the shares of interviewees’ answers to an open question (without any interference) about the main characteristics / strategic features of UNDP ART.

Figure 4.1 Strategic features of UNDP ART



Source: Authors

Table 4.1 Interviewees' answers on strategic features and value adding functions of the UNDP ART Initiative

Strategic features and value-added	% of interviewees	Note
1) Integrated territorial vision and multilevel governance	68.1%	Mostly highlighted by partners
2) Networking, partnerships and alliances	68.1%	Mostly highlighted by partners and UNDP / UN staff
3) Active multilateralism	44.7%	Mostly highlighted by partners
4) Mutually-feeding combination of conceptual and implementation work	23.4%	Mostly highlighted by insider informants
5) Advocacy and lobbying	17.0%	Mostly highlighted by UNDP / UN staff
6) Knowledge creation, management and sharing	25.5%	Mostly highlighted by insider informants

Note: Results are based on interviews with 47 different informants (multiple answers question).

Source: Authors

### 1) Promoting an integrated territorial vision through place-based, participatory and multilevel governance and planning for SHD at the local level.

UNDP ART is given credit to have strongly contributed to introduce an integrated territorial approach and operationalize a LGLD framework through the articulation of a) actors and sectors horizontally within territories, b) multilevel planning processes, and c) territorial and national priorities with international cooperation opportunities, as well as through the empowerment and ownership of local and national actors.

This key feature is reflected in all the evaluation dimensions: firstly, such integrated territorial approach is precisely what ART promotes within the global policy debate (ED1) and within the UNDP / UN system (ED4); secondly, it is what UNDP through ART contributes to make effective at country and local level (ED3) through its support; thirdly, it constitutes the common ground of its global network of partnerships and alliances (ED2), especially for the Localization of the SDGs.

#### Illustrative quotations

*'Its value-added is to have an integrated and holistic territorial approach that allows to work in a coordinated way to foster human development, LED and tackle inequalities.'*  
(Territorial cooperation partner)

*'This territorial approach overcomes both the traditional top-down approach of forcefully landing policies at local level without knowing territorial dynamics, as well as the risks of extreme localism that doesn't take into account national policies and regional / global scenarios.'*  
(Insider informant)

*'UNDP ART has been working on a integrated approach even before there was an integrated agenda and has already piloted it as its modus operandi, not just looking at local governance from a government perspective or decentralization, but rather how to integrate environment, LED, social issues, etc.'*  
(UNDP staff)

### 2) Building linkages, partnerships and alliances with and between non-traditional actors within the UN system.

UNDP through ART works as a networking "hub" and as a partnership/alliance-based programme, especially with Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) and territorial cooperation actors.<sup>5</sup>

The ART initiative is recognised by its key role in supporting UNDP to value and embrace an integrated territorial approach in which local governments and their associations play a fundamental role, therefore potentially contributing to reinforce its capacity to deliver on SDGs-related targets that require adaptive responses to rapidly evolving development scenarios.

Furthermore, UNDP through ART is given credit to facilitate horizontal articulation and dialogue across territories, enabling coordination and harmonization mechanisms that concur to define homogenous frameworks for intervention, thus strengthening the credibility and the effective role of territorial cooperation

<sup>5</sup> According to UNDP (2016, p. 19), 'UNDP understands territorial partnerships in a broad and inclusive sense, where local and sub-national governments, civil society, the private sector, foundations and academia engage in mutually benefitting partnerships across countries to advance sustainable human development at the sub-national level.'

actors (also within a South-South perspective) not simply as donors but as strategic partners for the implementation of inclusive and sustainable territorial development dynamics.

This key feature relates not only directly to ED2 (on networking and partnership-building) but can be seen as distinctive of the way how ART operates also to influence the global policy dialogue (ED1), to mainstream its approach, methodologies and tools within the UNDP / UN system (ED4), as well as to support country LGLD programmes at national and local level (ED3).

#### Illustrative quotations

*'UNDP ART opens LRGs, cities and local actors to the UN system.'* (LRGs' network)

*'UNDP ART is not only a platform that works in the South in the field of development; UNDP ART is also a tool to empower territories and the effort of international cooperation actors. It is a new way of doing development cooperation.'* (Territorial cooperation partner)

*'I consider very important the fact that the UNDP ART Initiative has a multilateral connotation. It does not create a dual relation between partners, but it enlarges the domain of partnerships and collaboration both between partners and territories and both in vertical and horizontal direction between different levels of governance (vertical and horizontal). This multiplier effect of partnership improves the effectiveness of cooperation.'* (Territorial cooperation partner)

### 3) Operating in a multilateral framework that opens up opportunities for partner organizations to interact with UN agencies and national governments.

UNDP ART's partners (e.g. supranational and regional networks, bilateral and territorial cooperation actors) strongly recognise that it concurs not only to enhance their linkages with UNDP (see previous point), but especially to promote an "active multilateralism". According to this novel concept, it represents a sort of UN "umbrella" for the articulation of different actors with global agendas and increasing their legitimacy, credibility, visibility, voicing spaces and potential to deploy synergies with UN agencies and national / local governments. In other words, key partners highlight that UNDP through ART contributes to bring their initiatives and interventions to the public policy dimension and it allows a) their simultaneous alignment / harmonization with multilateral frameworks, national strategies and local priorities, and b) stronger policy coherence within countries and territories, thus contributing to make international development cooperation more effective.

This key feature is visible primarily concerning its partnerships (ED2), as well as the efforts by ART to mainstream its approach at UNDP / UN level (ED4) and at national / local level (ED3).

#### Illustrative quotations

*'UNDP ART represents what UNDP has to offer for LGLD [...] it is a continuation and consolidation of UNDP strengths.'* (UNDP staff)

*'It allows local innovations and practices to be elevated to a multilateral framework and potentially converted into public policies.'* (LRGs' network)

### 4) Combination of policy debate and advocacy role with implementation support in partner countries.

According to most consulted partners, the work of UNDP ART on global policy dialogue (see chapter 5) is coherently complemented by an impactful and results-oriented work on the ground (e.g. its accumulated experience on LED) in terms of design and testing of tools, tailored technical assistance, support and follow-up to UNDP COs and partners, enabling conditions for alignment and harmonization of development interventions. These elements are then often systematized to feed back into the international debate and policies to implement global agendas.

This value-adding feature of ART cuts across all the evaluation dimensions, particularly by connecting ED1 with ED3 through continuous feedback loops, in order to align partnerships and alliances towards LGLD initiatives and Localization of the SGDs (ED2) and to inform the UNDP / UN system work (ED4).

#### Illustrative quotations

*'UNDP ART is able to contextualize languages, interventions and programmes especially for the implementation of SDGs, but looking also at overall multilateral global frameworks.'* (Territorial cooperation partner)

*'UNDP ART is a laboratory and experiment on how to connect global, national and local levels through both top-down processes and bottom-up policies.'* (Territorial cooperation partner)

#### 5) Advocacy and lobbying on territorial approach and role of LRGs.

UNDP is given credit to have been instrumental to enhance global advocacy on the Agenda 2030, and particularly through ART on positioning the SDGs localization issue, supporting to raise the voice and role of LRGs' associations on issues that they have been advocating and lobbying for over many years.

This key feature is particularly related to ART influencing on the global debate (ED1) and on the UNDP / UN system (ED4), and it is clearly connected with its work on global networking and partnership building (ED2).

#### Illustrative quotation

*'UNDP ART with its holistic approach showed that the role of the territories are fundamental in cooperation. They empower the understanding that the territory is the appropriate dimension for sustainable development.'* (Territorial cooperation partner)

#### 6) Knowledge creation, management and sharing.

The accumulation of knowledge, experience and practices by UNDP through ART and by its partners is mostly systematized, constituting a sort of depository / platform for concrete learning and knowledge transfer of flexible approaches, methods, tools, capabilities, knowledge, etc. In this regard, the world and regional Forums on Local Economic Development, the virtual tools and other direct exchange mechanisms promoted by UNDP through ART and its partners allows capitalising territorial experiences and giving them an international visibility and relevance.

This key feature connects with all the evaluation dimensions, being distinctive of the way UNDP through ART i) takes part in the global policy debate (ED1), ii) allows capitalizing on synergies with and between partners (ED2), iii) supports the implementation of LGLD programmes at national and local level (ED3), and iv) fosters the mainstreaming of its approach, methodologies and tools within the UNDP / UN system (ED4).

#### Illustrative quotations

*"UNDP ART allows having a platform to collect and conceptualize the different good practices, find tools and share experiences".* (Territorial cooperation partner)

*'UNDP ART played an important role in bringing good practices, codifying and sharing them.'* (UNDP staff)

**These six strategic features and their continuous inter-relation constitute the overall value-added of the UNDP ART Initiative, and allow to preliminarily define the terms of its relevance in supporting the positioning, effectiveness and incidence of UNDP as key development actor for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.**

Each of the following chapters (5 to 8) will thus dig deeper on how this general argument is supported by robust evidence, leading to the identification of key findings and potential opportunities for evolution and consolidation.

## 5. ED1 – Global policy dialogue

This chapter provides evidence and answers to the Evaluation Question No. 1:

*To what extent has UNDP through ART been contributing to the global policy dialogue on the Agenda 2030 and the implementation of SDGs at the local level?*

and its sub-questions on: 1) the contribution to the post-2015 debate towards the configuration of the 2030 Agenda; 2) the contribution to foster dialogue, strategic alliances and partnerships for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs localization; and 3) the contribution to the overall international development debate in accordance with the Agenda 2030.

*The main issue to be assessed here is whether, within a context for global policy dialogue that is increasingly multi-actor and multilevel, UNDP ART has been able to effectively inform the debate on the role of LRGs and the local / territorial dimension of implementation.*

In particular, UNDP ART has been integrating efforts within the context of the UN system (e.g. with UN-Habitat, ILO and several UNDP Bureaux and office) and has been working in collaboration with the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments (GTF)<sup>6</sup> and important LRGs' networks, such as UCLG and ORU FOGAR. Therefore, it has been feeding a strong interactive and partnership process towards common and complementary goals, which also required substantial efforts for alignment and compromise of visions and roles. The evidence and results presented in this chapter should thus be attributed to all partners.

### 5.1 The post-2015 debate and the configuration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

It is widely recognized by key informants and confirmed by documented evidence that UNDP through ART has devoted considerable time, financial, human and networking resources to contribute and influence the debate on post-2015 development agenda<sup>7</sup>. The UNDP ART Initiative has certainly been, according to the vast majority of consulted interviewees, an important actor of the discussion and reflection, in coherence and as follow-up to the results achieved in support to the MDGs framework (see the mid-term evaluation – Agostinucci and Biggeri, 2012) and its continuous engagement on development cooperation effectiveness since the HLF-4 in Busan (2011).

In February 2014, UNDP (and specifically its ART Initiative, due to its expertise on LED and territorial approach) and UN-Habitat, on behalf of UNDG and together with the GTF, were appointed to lead the dialogue on "Localizing the Post-2015 development agenda" (i.e. one of the 6 global dialogues on the means of implementation).<sup>8</sup> This assignment can already be seen as a first sign of trust, reliance and credibility gained by the UNDP ART Initiative within the UN system over the years.

The value-added generally associated to UNDP ART participation and role within the post-2015 debate is two folded. Firstly, UNDP ART was in a good position to track all the process, discussion and debate being part of UNDP / UN system and thus tapping also into high-level meetings in New York where local governance actors took active part before adoption. Vice-versa, interviewed UNDP staff remark that UNDP in general has extensively benefited the global networks and connections that UNDP ART engaged in the debate. Secondly, UNDP through ART was able to enrich the debate by providing concrete examples and evidence-based results from the several countries it worked in over the years.

Having UNDP through ART historically engaged with LRGs and their associations respectively on LGLD approach and initiatives (and similarly UN-Habitat on urban issues), it clearly emerges that UNDP ART was instrumental in facilitating their participation in the whole process. The strong supportive effort to mobilize the

<sup>6</sup> The Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments is a coordination and consultation mechanism that brings together the major international networks of local governments to undertake joint advocacy work relating to global policy processes. It was set up in 2013 to bring the perspectives of local and regional governments to the SDGs, climate change agenda and New Urban Agenda in particular.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to clarify here that focus is uniquely placed on the role played by UNDP through ART, not by the whole UNDP corporate system on the post-2015 debate.

<sup>8</sup> The process was implemented jointly with national governments, local government and their associations, citizens and communities, including civil society organizations, academia, think-tanks and private sectors organizations. In summary, national dialogues took place in 13 countries, local dialogues were held in 10 countries, six regional dialogues were organized in 2014 along with four global dialogues and a final High Level Global Dialogue (Turin, 14<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> October 2014).

LRGs and to bring their voices in this debate is widely recognised and documented (see UNDG, 2015), but it is also important to remark that it has been a mutually reinforcing process: on the one side, LRGs' networks may have played a weaker role and not taken part in the core discussions without UNDP ART (and UN-Habitat), which opened them the door to the UN system enhancing their voicing, advocacy and lobbying position; on the other side, without such networks (which also devoted substantive time, financial, human and networking resources) it would have been almost impossible to effectively mobilise LRGs, as they recognise the strong leadership and representative role primarily to UCLG as well as to other global (e.g. ORU FOGAR) or supranational / regional networks (e.g. EU Committee of the Regions, CLGF, etc.).

Similarly, the participation of territorial cooperation partners in the debate on post-2015 was also relevant (with respect to their capacities and representation) thanks to the UNDP ART's connections and relations. Most of them highlight that UNDP through ART played (and continues to play) a central role to bring and represent territorial cooperation actors' voice, reflections and experience in the international debate, being active in diffusing information, knowledge and opportunities for participation.

Apart from the main report of the dialogue on "Localizing the Post-2015 development agenda" (UNDG, 2015), Table 5.1 shows three illustrative examples – without any intention of exhaustiveness – of relevant reports and declarations released resulting from the post-2015 debate to provide evidence on the integration of key principles of Localization and territorial dimension.

Table 5.1 Analysis of post-2015 debate and outputs on selected documents

Document	Evidence and comment
UN (2014), <i>The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet. Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Agenda</i>	The report strongly endorses the role of LRGs and local governance, in particular related to the need of innovative and inclusive partnerships at all levels with effective local authorities (Par. 23, 81, 145, 149i) and building on existing national and local mechanisms and processes (Par. 149i). In addition, it states ' <i>many of the investments to achieve the SDGs will take place at the sub-national level and led by local authorities</i> (Par. 94)' and ' <i>These strategies will also have to be reviewed, and implemented at the local level, with the full engagement of local authorities. In many instances, subnational and local authorities, including mayors, are already leading the charge for sustainable development</i> ' (Par. 128).
UNDG (2015), <i>Delivering the Post-2015 development agenda. Opportunities at the national and local level</i>	To have the local dimension of development and implementation included even before officially releasing the 2030 Agenda is regarded as a major achievement in political and advocacy / lobbying terms.
UN (2015), <i>Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</i>	In general terms, the 2030 Agenda remarks that ' <i>Governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities</i> ' (Par. 45) and the commitment to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress also at the subnational level. More specifically, the role of local authorities and communities is mentioned in relation to sustainable urban development and management (and the whole SDG#11 is dedicated to cities and human settlements), water and sanitation, climate change-related planning and management, integration of ecosystem and biodiversity values in planning processes, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Source: Authors

**All in all, we can surely affirm that UNDP through ART has substantially contributed to the growing integration of the local dimension in the development discourse and practice, in preparation and through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, if compared to the previous MDGs framework and despite the ambition of many partners to see it even more firmly included.**

**Illustrative quotation**

*'Now if you ask a country about localizing the SDGs and role of LRGs, nobody complaints or think it's weird...before 2014 national governments have always been scared about having mayors around, conceiving them as part of the State to be controlled... we have been working with all other movements about LRG's responsibilities and tasks for SDGs... you cannot tell them what do to if they are not involved in the process.'* (UN staff)

## 5.2 Dialogue and policy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs localization

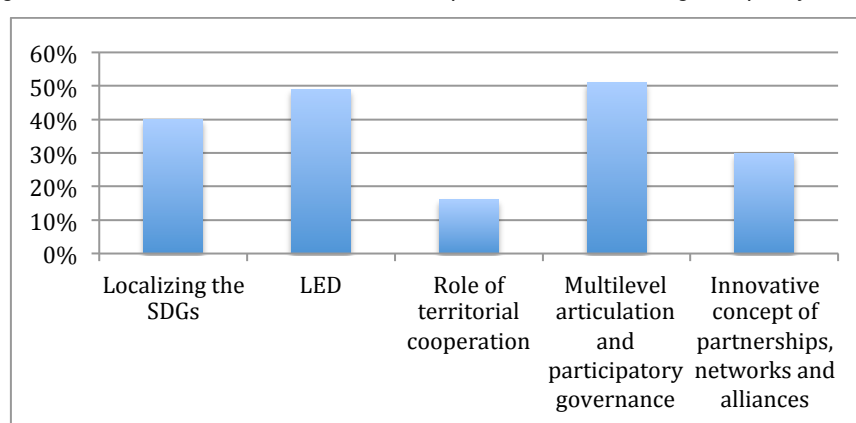
After the SDGs were officially launched, UNDP, UN-Habitat and the GTF (particularly through UCLG) decided to continue their collaboration in 2016-2017 through further complementary work – for instance jointly building the virtual platform on localizing the SDGs, organizing joint training activities and developing related tools and materials, jointly organizing and/or participating to events and information sessions.

Even though it appears too early to assess the operational implications of such partnership in terms of planning and implementation mechanisms, the collaboration has already generated positive results and clearly presents potential for the future. A high number of local governance actors have been sensitized on the process, which has generated political commitment and an interest in building an alliance among engaged stakeholders to advance the SDG localization agenda at the global level, through joint advocacy efforts and at country/local level, through the development and sharing of knowledge and collaboration in capacity development processes.

Therefore, recalling what already discussed in chapter 4 about the positioning of UNDP through ART as strategic player within the context of SDGs implementation, it is important at this stage to assess the extent to which UNDP ART is continuously influencing the dialogue and policy towards the Localization of the SDGs, making the “Localization language” – which includes concepts and topics regarding decentralization processes, integrated territorial approach, multilevel governance and articulation, LED and territorial cooperation – more commonly used by a vast majority of development cooperation actors.

First of all, data collected through interviews with key informants allow to report the main topics that UNDP through ART is contributing to promote and advance in the global policy debate, as presented in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Interviewees’ answers on main topics advanced in the global policy dialogue



Note: Results are based on interviews with 37 different informants (insider informants have been excluded from the sample), who have been asked to freely indicate the three most relevant topics UNDP through ART promoted in the debate.

Source: Authors

According to informants, these topics were enhanced in the debate through three main means: the World and Regional Forums on Local Economic Development (see box below), the organization of – and/or participation to – other relevant events at international, regional and national level, and the use of social networks (i.e. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) for the dissemination of knowledge material.

### Box: The World and Regional Forums on Local Economic Development (LED)

LED is nowadays widely conceived to have the potential to land the global partnerships and strategies at the local level, in order to trigger a change in the quality of citizens’ life and wellbeing, ensuring a balance between socio-economic growth, equity and environmental quality and increasing the resilience of the most vulnerable. Well implemented pro-poor and inclusive LED is regarded to enable local governments to address poverty, unemployment and social deprivation, through strategies for promoting youth employment, empowering disadvantaged and marginalized communities, supporting skills development, and promoting gender equity and equality, among others. Also in countries disrupted by conflict or in social and economic transition, the LED approach is recognised to contribute to on-going reconciliation, decentralization and democratization processes.

In this regard, interviewees give central credit to the World and Regional Forums on LED having been able – as reflected in the final declarations of the Forums – of **bringing LED at centre stage with a broad policy-based and cross-cutting focus, and conveying consensus on its potential as a recognized comprehensive approach and framework for enabling SDGs implementation at the local level** (e.g. principles of universality, inclusion, cross-



sectorial planning, etc..).

The peak of the process is widely identified in the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Forum on Local Economic Development held in Turin (Italy) on October 2015 (one month after the official launch of the 2030 Agenda), where the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon strongly and personally endorsed the whole territorial dimension of development through its speech:

*'Thus, in the new 2030 Development Agenda, local development is a key dimension and a strategic approach in achieving all the proposed goals. By localizing the SDGs we aim to reach women and youth, and the poorest and most marginalized and excluded people we can no-longer leave behind. Making our development local could help drive countries' success in eradicating poverty, and in reducing inequality and environmental degradation'.*

The relevance and effectiveness of the Forums is centred on their capacity to brings together a diversity of actors at different levels, as a “global” and/or “regional” platform for multidimensional synergies, including policy dialogue, advocacy, sharing of good practices and experiences, and concrete partnerships. This is also reflected on the gradual evolution and diversification of the membership of its Executive Committee: from two (i.e. FAMSÍ and UNDP ART) for the 1<sup>st</sup> World Forum in 2011, to seven organizations (i.e. UNDP, ILO, UCLG, ORU Fogar, FAMSÍ, SEBRAE, Metropolitan City of Turin) together with hosting institutions for the last 4<sup>th</sup> World Forum in 2017, along with new entities having joined as “Associates” to the Executive Committee (i.e. CLGF, RIPESS, OECD, FMDV) reflecting the integration of new focus areas like the Social and Solidarity Economy, LD finance, etc.

As for participation data (Table 5.2), it is possible to highlight the remarkable number of participants and the increasing number of countries being represented in both global and regional Forums, as well as the diversified range of participants making these Forums relevant venues for policy debate, knowledge sharing and networking.

*Table 5.2 Participation at the World and Latin American Forums on LED*

<i>Forum</i>	<i>No. of participants</i>	<i>No. of countries</i>	<i>Sectoral distribution</i>
1 <sup>st</sup> World Forum (Seville, Spain – 2011)	1300	47	NA
2 <sup>nd</sup> World Forum (Foz de Iguacu, Brazil – 2013)	4232	70	38% public institutions; 25% development agencies and international organizations; 14% academia; 12% NGOs; 11% private sector
3 <sup>rd</sup> World Forum (Turin, Italy – 2015)	>2000	130	37% public institutions; 18% NGOs; 17% private sector; 16% academia; 11% practitioners; 1% media
4 <sup>th</sup> World Forum (Praia, Cabo Verde – 2017)	2729	85	21% LRGs or LRGs' association 20% national government; 20% Local economic development agency, cooperative or other; 15% private sector; 12% NGOs; 6% international organizations and development agencies; 6% academia
1 <sup>st</sup> Latin American Forum (Quito, Ecuador – 2015)	350	23	NA
2 <sup>nd</sup> Latin American Forum (Tiquipaya, Bolivia – 2017)	1470	35	NA

Source: Authors on data provided by UNDP ART

After the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Forum in Turin, a feedback survey was conducted, allowing here to highlight the following results: 76.7% of respondents were extremely or quite satisfied with the content presented in the sessions; 47.2% of respondents declared the Forum extremely or fairly allowed them to interact/network with other speakers/attendees; 71.9% of respondents were extremely likely or very likely to attend a similar event again in the future. Unfortunately, a satisfaction survey was not conducted also after the previous Forums (and not yet after the last one) and thus it is not possible to analyse participants' satisfaction over time. Anyway, relevant qualitative information will be provided in chapter 6 concerning networking and partnership-building opportunities.

Finally, it is important to highlight the Forum process goes in parallel and matches the promotion and introduction of LED as a core component of national LGLD programmes for SDGs localization (e.g. in Mauritania, Cabo Verde, Algeria), making again consistent the value-adding feature on the combination of policy debate and advocacy role with implementation support in partner countries through different operating modalities.

The forum process is a interesting example of how UNDP through ART provides networking opportunities and promotes partnerships around key thematic issues such as LED. Various distinct features can be pointed out when analysing the process: i) it is demand driven, thereby focusing on thematic issues that are of wide interest and importance (as evidence, no budget for participation is made available); (ii) it links relevant stakeholder groups including governments, private sector, civil society and academia (even though in still weaker terms concerning private sector organizations, NGOs and their networks, and scientific / research entities); (iii) it adapts its focus in line with important international developments (since Turin 2015 the forum conceives LED as a means for implementing the 2030 agenda at the local level); (iv) it strives to highlight and promote key thematic areas that might have a strong potential not yet entered into mainstream development planning of UN agencies (i.e. Social and Solidarity economy as a means to tackle rising inequalities, among others).

Finally, it is worth highlighting that from an initial small group of two organisers (UNDP and FAMSÍ) over time the Executive Committee was enlarged to fifteen international organisations (as evidence of the relevance of the forum and its thematic focus). As it is further described in chapter 8, it is most likely that also as a result of the visibility and increasing prominence of the WFLED process, UNDP has included LED within its new Strategic Plan.

In the period 2015-2017, the UNDP ART Initiative directly organized or took part into more than 150 seminars and events at international, regional and national level. For the sake of simplicity and synthesis, a shorter list of illustrative examples is reported and commented in Annex 3.

Regarding social networks, it is possible to highlight the following data (Table 5.3).

*Table 5.3 Engagement data regarding UNDP ART's social networks*

<i>Social network</i>	<i>Data*</i>	<i>Additional information</i>
Facebook page "UNDP ART Initiative"	1,446 likes 1,467 followers	It reaches on average 2500 people per month, with a single post reaching on average 400 people, with peaks of 1000 people per post.
Facebook page "World Forum of LED"	6,492 likes 6,524 followers	It reaches on average 2000 people per post, with peaks of 9600 people for videos and other contents.
Twitter account "UNDP ART Initiative"	2,149 likes 1,620 followers 5,172 tweets	1200-2500 impressions per tweet on average.
#localizingSDGs (2016-2017)	Estimated social media reach: 142,254; Social media interaction: 3,786; Social media likes: 3,139; Positive mentions: 98%	
YouTube channel "UNDP ART Initiative"	14,156 views 106 subscribers	In 2017 the channel was viewed by more than 7000 people, marking an increase of 44%. NB. Videos have also been posted and directly integrated in other social media channels reaching an higher number of users.

\*Updated on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017

Source: Data provided by UNDP ART based on Facebook insights, Twitter analytics and Brand24 app.

**All in all, the analysis shows the instrumental role of events and social networking in holding partners and the wider public informed and engaged to make the Localization of the SDGs increasingly central within the global policy debate.**

The results of the interviews conducted with key informants allow identifying the following tools enabled by UNDP ART with its partners as the most relevant ones for SDGs localization:

1. Capacity-building for LRGs (i.e. Roadmap and training modules on SDG localization);<sup>9</sup>
2. Virtual knowledge sharing through the "Localizing the SDGs" Platform;<sup>10</sup>
3. UNDP ART's social networks;
4. Forums and meetings.

Other concrete actions and tools less frequently mentioned are: support to local diagnostic analysis and planning; participation within country programmes as multilevel articulation platform; resources' mobilization; joint participation to call for proposals by donors.

As for capacity-building, it is important to remark the wide outreach of the Trainer's Guide "Learning Module 1: Localizing the SDGs / Introduction" jointly elaborated by UNDP, GTF, UCLG, UN-Habitat and Barcelona Provincial Government, which was directly used in a wide number of training sessions after its release in June 2017, such as (among many others)<sup>11</sup>: June 2017 in Tiquipaya, Bolivia; June 2017 in Cordoba, Spain; July 2107 in Jakarta, Indonesia; October 2017 in Praia, Cabo Verde; October, 2017 in Quito, Ecuador; November 2017 in Cordoba, Argentina.

**Within the framework of this evaluation, the work-stream on training is clearly showing its potential to pave the way for an effective combination of awareness-raising with direct support to implementation for the Localization of the SDGs, besides further widening the range of actors (at global, national and local level) that UNDP through ART can engage with.**

The "Localizing the SDGs" Platform was established as main instrument for the systematization of knowledge and tools on SDGs Localization, and Table 5.4 provides key data on users' engagement.

<sup>9</sup> A Roadmap for localizing the SDGs was presented at the 2016 High Level Political Forum as the first tool to raise awareness, promote and present the phases of the SDG localization process. After the initial awareness raising, materials to build and strengthen the capacities of local governance actors to lead the SDG localization were developed. The training modules were used in several trainings of trainers at the regional level in Europe, Latin America and Africa, with a multiplier effect at country level.

<sup>10</sup> The platform is a knowledge sharing space, gathering tools and guides that can support local policy makers in transforming the global goals into concrete action. The platform, jointly launched with GTF and UN-Habitat, is also offered as interactive space, where users can share their stories, lessons learned, events, encouraging a dialogue and sharing of the latest activities for SDG localization.

<sup>11</sup> Training sessions are specifically led and organized by UCLG (see [www.learning.uclg.org](http://www.learning.uclg.org)).

Table 5.4 Engagement data regarding the “Localizing the SDGs” Platform

Indicator	Data
No. of users’ engagement (2017)	1,300
No. of sessions (2017)	23,000
Average session duration (2017)	5 minutes
No. of visited pages (2017)	73,007
% of returning visitors	53.4%
No. of submitted documents / stories / events	380 documents / 140 stories / 165 events
Main languages	English, French and Spanish (+ Google plug-in allowing translation to more than 90 languages)
No. of downloads	NA

Source: Data provided by UNDP ART on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017 based on Google Analytics

**Based on collected quantitative and qualitative evidence, the Platform seems one of the major results and benefits achieved by UNDP through ART and its partners, as innovative virtual tool for continuing advocating and further positioning the localization approach.<sup>12</sup>**

However, whilst confirming the general positive assessment of the Platform’s potential in showcasing and enabling access to a large number of relevant experiences and tools for SDGs localization, some partners suggested some room for improvement, including (i) a better capitalization through systematization of the vast amount of concrete experience that UNDP, UN agencies and especially LRG’s associations have accumulated and could share, and (ii) a stronger guidance through a clearer identification and display of the best tools available for adaptation and replication, which would avoid the risk of losing the right track in such a wide virtual Platform.

Even if it is premature to assess the consolidated impact of enabling institutional and organizational arrangements for SDGs Localization at global level (see for instance the *Local and Regional Governments’ report to the 2017 HLPF*), it is crucial to make an introductory reference here – as it will be further and extensively addressed in other parts of the report – to an important on-going effort that UNDP through ART is conducting with the aim to establish a **global multi-stakeholder partnership for Localizing the SDGs**.

Keeping up the momentum generated by Dialogues on localizing the SDGs and the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNDP ART has started to engage a large number of local, regional and national governments, as well as other local governance actors to build an alliance for localizing the SDGs. This Multi Stakeholder Partnership initiative, which capitalizes on the extended collaboration with LRGs’ networks and some national governments, envisages to position further the issue of SDG localization on the international policy agendas and advance the SDG implementation process through the sharing of experiences and perspectives among an engaged group of leading local governance actors.

Finally, as another evidence of the role and importance of UNDP ART in the on-going global policy dialogue for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, it is important to highlight the influence that UNDP through ART achieved on a number of key policy documents and documented best practices promoted by partner organizations, such as DCF, European Commission, European Parliament Research, European Committee of the Regions, UCLG, EuroLat, etc.<sup>13</sup> Annex 3 reports an accurate analysis of selected illustrative documents.

**In this regard, the influencing capacity of UNDP through ART is clearly supported by relevant evidence, and goes well beyond the simple provision of punctual inputs thus favouring the alignment of visions, concepts and approaches that will allow to further leverage synergies and complementarities between UNDP and crucial partners of the SDGs localization process.**

<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to remark also that Helen Clark – former UNDP Administrator – strongly endorsed the Toolbox for Localizing the SDGs – along with other key features of the approach advanced by UNDP through ART – during the CLGF Conference 2015.

<sup>13</sup> The influencing and mainstreaming within the UNDP system is later discussed in chapter 8.

### 5.3 Contribution to the overall development debate (additional global agendas)

Documented evidence and perceptions by interviewed key informants allow discussing the extent to which, in addition to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, other global agendas and policy debates within the UN system have gradually embraced inputs and topics that UNDP through ART has effectively introduced and/or promoted, thus contributing to the overall development debate beyond the implementation of the SDGs.

Primarily, it is worth highlighting the specific contribution of UNDP ART in enhancing the urban and the development effectiveness agendas, as detailed in Table 5.5.<sup>14</sup>

Table 5.5 Influencing on global agendas

Global agenda / policy area	Evidence
<p><b>New Urban Agenda</b></p> <p>Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN (2016).</li> </ul>	<p>In line with the spirit of SDG#11, the New Urban Agenda promotes an integrated urban and territorial approach for the achievement of sustainable development and prosperity for all, supporting ‘territorial systems that integrate urban and rural functions into the national and subnational spatial frameworks’ (Par.49) and ensuring the involvement of subnational and local governments in decision-making processes. In addition, it strongly endorses i) territorial cooperation to develop capacities, fostering exchanges and mutual learning at all levels and by all relevant actors; and ii) the role of LRG’s associations, their involvement in national consultations on development priorities, in peer-to-peer learning, in subject-matter-related partnerships and collaborative on a global, regional, national, subnational and local scale.</p> <p>It is important to recall that over the past years, UNDP also through ART contributed to the international process leading to the definition of the New Urban Agenda, via the organization of sessions in several preparatory meetings – jointly with HABITAT, GTF and ORU FOGAR, as well as during the Habitat III event in Quito (October 2016) – in particular through the organisation of a corporate session entitled “Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals: Making cities for all”.</p> <p>Specific inputs were also provided to the formulation of policy papers on LED and urban development in the framework of the preparatory work for Habitat III.</p>
<p><b>Development Cooperation Effectiveness</b></p> <p>Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global partnership for effective development co-operation (2016).</li> </ul>	<p>UNDP ART’s inputs have been long part of the discussion of effective development cooperation at local level since HLF-4 in Busan (2011).</p> <p>Since Busan, and through the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> High Level Meetings of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation respectively in Mexico City (2014) and Nairobi (2016), UNDP ART has organized relevant side events (including, in Nairobi, from a SDGs localization perspective). In Nairobi, ART inputs were also included in the outcome document of the HLM-2, which stresses the importance to develop inclusive and global partnerships; to strengthen transparency, accountability, local leadership and ownership; the role of LRGs to localize SDGs; and the role of multi-stakeholder platforms for action.</p> <p>Moreover, specific relevant methodologies and tools for development cooperation effectiveness were developed through the UNDP ART framework programme in Ecuador (“Measuring the effectiveness of development cooperation at the local level”) and applied also in other countries in parallel with the introduction of specific instruments (e.g. the “Maisons du développement” introduced at regional level in Morocco in the framework of the ART GOLD programme to coordinate and harmonise different DC partners’ support).</p> <p>In addition, UNDP through ART is strongly supporting the engagement of the GTF within the Global partnership for effective development co-operation, having pushed for it (in particular UCLG) to represent all LRGs by gaining a seat within the Steering Committee.</p> <p>It is also worth mentioning the UNDP ART engagement with the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) in the framework of a policy of dialogue started in 2014 with the aim of rethinking the development cooperation paradigm, through direct ART inputs as well as facilitating the identification and involvement in the process of relevant LRGs.</p>

Source: Authors

Other global agendas are increasingly embracing relevant elements for the ART approach, even though there has not been in these cases a direct contribution and influence of UNDP ART on their discussion and design. In particular, the new UN framework “Sustaining Peace” – officially adopted by Member States in the UN General Assembly in the Resolution A/RES/70/262 – displays a specific potential for integrating UNDP ART-supported practices and methodologies, building in particular on LGLD frameworks and multi-

<sup>14</sup> A minor relevance and influencing is reported on the migration debate (e.g. through the Global Compact for Refugees and Migrants), on climate change (e.g. through COP-21 and COP-23) and on financing for development (e.g. Addis Ababa Action Agenda), despite the high potential and importance of informing also these debates according to many interviewees.

stakeholder platforms, as well as LED, as basis for restoring / enabling effective institutions, enhancing cohesion and a renewed social contract between local actors. Indeed, the SG's Advisory Group on Experts on the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peace-building Architecture remarked that 'New approaches need to be found, which understand peace-building [...] as having more to do with strengthening local domains of governance than trying to re-establish strong central authority' (UN 2015a, Par. 21), and similarly the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations called for a stronger engagement with local communities for inclusive and participatory peace processes (e.g. UN 2015b, Par. 39iii, 151, 233, 238, among others). This new concept of "Sustaining Peace" makes clear the need for the dissolution of silos and the advancement of a strongly coherent and integrated approach, recognizing that development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. In addition, it calls for a "platform approach" to convene all relevant actors for coordination, information-sharing, development of good practices and financing (Par. 4).

Similarly, the World Humanitarian Summit (held in Istanbul in May 2016) proposed to set in motion an agenda for humanitarian action to be 'as local as possible, as international as necessary', recognizing the need of locally-led and coordinated responses tailored to their contexts (OCHA, 2016 and 2017). Therefore, within the new Agenda for Humanity, 2 out of 24 strategic transformations deal with the local dimension: "Reinforce not replace local and national systems" (Core responsibility 4A) and "Invest in local capacities" (Core responsibility 5A).

#### 5.4 Final remarks on key findings and opportunities

**Whilst it is not possible to attribute the described influence on the global policy dialogue directly and exclusively, the evidence provided throughout the chapter has allowed to highlight the substantial contribution of UNDP through ART to position the LGLD dimension of implementation and the role of LRGs and territorial cooperation primarily on the Agenda 2030 as well as within other relevant global agendas.**

More specifically the evaluation found that UNDP ART fulfilled an instrumental role in facilitating:

- The participation of LRGs and territorial cooperation partners in the whole process of dialogue on the Agenda 203 and its implementation at the local level, enhancing their voicing, advocacy and lobbying position within the UN system;
- Multilevel, inter-sectoral and cross-country debates and exchanges engagement in the global policy dialogue;
- The advancement of relevant topics within the debate on the 2030 Agenda, e.g. Localizing the SDGs; LED; Role of territorial cooperation; Multilevel articulation and governance; Innovative concept of partnerships networks alliances;
- Effective contributions to international policy debate through the Forums of LED, the organisation of events (and/or the participation to events organised by other partner institutions), the diffusion of knowledge through social networks, virtual platforms and learning activities;
- Effective support to policy documents and documented best practices promoted by partner organisations (e.g. at EU level on territorial approach, Localization and territorial cooperation; in Andalucía, Valencia and Brazil on Localizing the SDGs both internally and in partner countries).

**The networking and partnership approach of UNDP ART** – which will be further and specifically discussed in the next chapter related to the evaluation question 2 – **is the foundation and basis of the results in influencing the overall policy debate.** The analysis of available evidence and modus operandi of ART actions geared at influencing global development policy dialogues allows to positively highlight the following key elements and features:

- UNDP ART seems not intending to influence the processes by itself (nor merely as UNDP), but to facilitate likeminded alliances of different organizations to strengthen joint impact and outreach to influence international policy debates.
- These policy-influencing processes appear to be designed as continued and long-term partnerships, which are not limited to one policy agenda and evolve over time to adapt to changing circumstances or new evidences emerging from the international debate. This feature is also beneficial to build trust that can then be converted into effective partnerships around different thematic of interest;
- UNDP ART acts as facilitator and convener through an effective "network of networks" approach, leading to a balanced and integrated set of inputs and suggestions by a very large number of actors, as well as the inclusion of multi-level consultation mechanisms and horizontal coherence.
- These processes always combine a political dimension with a more technical component geared at providing evidence as well as elaborating conceptual frameworks and/or relevant approaches for

implementation. Linking international policy debates with support to concrete interventions in countries and territories adds credibility and is enriching for the debate (see again Figure 4.1).

- Interventions in this domain have a multi-faceted nature, as they are never limited to one-off inputs for a specific event or political setting, but rather include a diversified mix of interventions and diversified entry points to gain leverage on different international policy debates.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the positive results of this “model” applied by UNDP ART and its partners, there is room for further improvement and more effectiveness within the approach based on the following considerations:

- The advocacy efforts of ART and its partners sometimes lack an in-depth analytical and conceptual foundation. The assumption that each of the engaged partners dispose of sufficient studies and conceptual work to present solid arguments during the process is valid but risk to fall short when new issues or concepts are promoted and put forward within international debates<sup>16</sup>. It would be therefore useful to involve and provide a central role for the academic sector within the alliances and stimulate the elaboration of key studies in order provide sound conceptual basis to the arguments brought forward, thereby further strengthening the lobbying efforts. An interesting and complementary option might also be an enhanced connection and collaboration with the UNDP HDRO in New York for joint publications on the local / territorial dimension of development.
- A more comprehensive systematization and dissemination of outcomes would be equally conducive to a robust and well-informed advocacy effort in support to global policy dialogue, including through the design and implementation of follow-up and monitoring systems on the incidence of forums and events (e.g. satisfaction surveys, periodical surveys, etc.).
- It is also worth pointing out that national governments are generally less represented than LRGs in supported processes. A closer collaboration with national governments would specifically allow to influence many of the policy forums within the framework of the UN system. As it is further described in the next chapter on networking and partnership, the engagement with some actors and sectors (e.g. international networks of NGOs, private sector organizations, financial institutions), as well as various relevant UN Agencies could also be further intensified (e.g. UN Women, UNCDF, UNIDO, IFAD, UNESCO, UNICEF).
- More emphasis could also be set on enabling a more coherent in-house (UNDP) approach when preparing interventions to influence international policy dialogue. Tapping into and involving all relevant sectors of UNDP (Bureaus, COs, Regional Centres, etc.) might be a demanding exercise but would considerably strengthen the arguments brought forward by ART and its partners. On the other hand, ART’s partner networks might add considerable value to other policy dialogues led not by ART but by different UNDP units (e.g. the Alliance on monitoring Goal 16). Other examples might include the Sustaining Peace concept and the New Agenda for Humanity.
- A stronger corporate perspective would also facilitate a UNDP-wide implementation of relevant new policies and approaches. As it is further described in the chapter on mainstreaming ART within UNDP, its nature as a project allows flexible and effective interventions and impactful alliances, but on the other hand falls short when it comes to rolling out and provide full programming and implementation support capacity in relation to new and comprehensive approaches or innovative development paradigms, e.g. advancing and backing on-going efforts in SDGs localization, LED, etc. On the other hand, tools that have been developed between ART and its partners, for example the virtual platform on localizing the SDGs, could be better promoted with UNDP COs and put at their disposal.<sup>17</sup>

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15 The development effectiveness debate, for example, was being influenced through the organisation of side events within the main Global Partnership meetings in Busan, Mexico and Nairobi, but also involved the organisation of relevant side events during the Development Cooperation Forum (in various instances) and the EU Assises de Cooperation Decentralise and other important policy gatherings, e.g. the WF of LED (Foz de Iguazu, 2013), UCLG Executive Committees, UN HABITAT World Urban Forum (Medellin, 2015) and the joint preparation of policy papers and studies (see joint policy paper with UNDESA for the DCF 2014).

<sup>16</sup> For example, LED as such is widely documented but its specific added value as a means for localizing the SDGs is not sufficiently documented and studied. Another example would be the localizing process itself. Even though it is meanwhile commonly accepted that localizing is one of the key features for a successful implementation of the new agenda, there is relatively little academically sound work on what exactly is meant by localizing the SDGs and how that relates to previous and/or other important local (human) development concepts. Finally, the territorial approach, one of the main basis of ART’s approach over the last decade, bears similar implications. Even though there is enough work done on the territorial approach itself, there are not sufficient studies on its relevance as a foundation for the localizing approach.

<sup>17</sup> This would not only allow the COs to profit from the policy evidence and best practices around localizing the SDGs, but would also allow to very effectively position the rather scattered work UNDP COs are doing and present it to a large and relevant stakeholder group, including potential donors and partners.

## 6. ED2 – Networking and partnership-building

This chapter provides evidence and answers to the Evaluation Question No. 2:

*To what extent has UNDP through ART been contributing to effectively promote multilevel networking and partnership building for joint territorial actions in support to SDGs Localization / LGLD initiatives?*

and its sub-questions on 1) global networking and territorial partnerships within multilateral frameworks to foster the SDGs implementation, and 2) enabling networking and partnerships at national and local level to foster integrated frameworks for LGLD and SDGs Localization.<sup>18</sup>

The 2030 Agenda is an inherently multi-partner framework. It is therefore crucial for its successful implementation to extend the SDG 17, thus “land” networking and partnership building at the territorial level. Such networking, if implemented by a multilateral agency like UNDP, adds value to the SDG implementation as (i) UNDP acts as a neutral convener of networks and stakeholders, which allows for bringing together very different actors that normally would not engage nor cooperate with each other, and (ii) UNDP with its close to universal presence in countries has the potential to connect this networks and partnerships to concrete national and local development initiatives and priorities.

*The main issue to be assessed here is whether, within the context of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNDP through ART has enhanced multilevel networking and partnership frameworks by connecting and aligning different actors for joint actions in support to SDGs Localization.*

### 6.1 Global networking and territorial partnerships within multilateral frameworks to foster the SDGs implementation

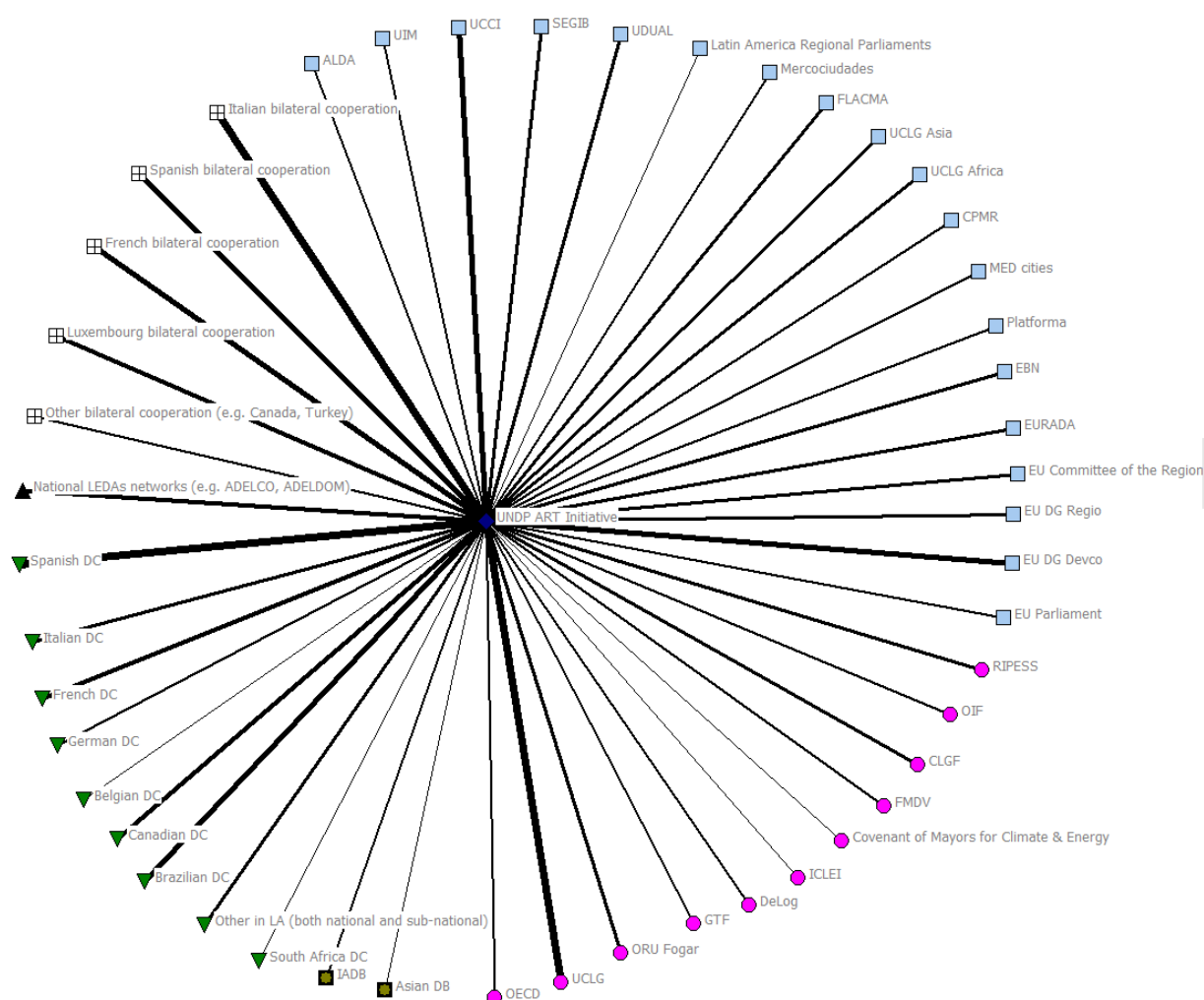
First, in order to assess the positioning of UNDP ART as a global networking facilitator – in line with its role as global convener and platform for SDGs implementation as stated in its new SP 2018-2021 – it is important to represent graphically its network relations with international and regional partners (Figure 6.1). It should be recalled that the figures throughout this chapter provide a simplified representation for the sake of showing intensity and relevance of network relations. In addition, the methodology (see Annex 2) allows depicting only the direct linkages between UNDP ART and other stakeholders, without capturing indirect impacts and multiplier effects (e.g. among partners) that are typical of the networking role played by UNDP through ART. Indeed, the represented relationships do not take place on a “centralised” basis (and thus are not centred around ART) and each actor has its own network of relations, while UNDP through ART plays rather a convening and connecting role within an open multi-actor dynamic.

**It clearly appears from the figure the breadth and strength of the relations that UNDP through ART has been able to create and enhance over the years with a diversified group of stakeholders at global, supranational, regional, national and territorial level, representing a crucial and innovative feature for a UNDP global project.**

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<sup>18</sup> It is important to recall here that both quantitative and qualitative data have been collected through interviews with key informants (including UNDP ART team) for the global level (6.1), and with CTAs of country LGLD programmes selected as case-studies for the national and local level (6.2). These data – analysed through the methodology described in chapter 3 – allow obtaining a robust evidence to answer the Evaluation Question.

Figure 6.1 Global networking relations of UNDP ART



Note: The thickness of the arrows indicates the relevance and intensity of the relations.

Source: Authors

Today, the UNDP ART Initiative engages with about 50 networks at different levels, which provide in turn access to hundreds of additional partner networks and respective members. Certain categories of actors (e.g. territorial cooperation partners) are grouped by country for the sake of simplicity. The relevance and the intensity (both grades on a 1 to 5 scale) increased respectively by 51.8% and 57.8% between 2013 and 2017. Considering simultaneously relevance and intensity,<sup>19</sup> the MI increased by 70.5% and the SI by 54.2%. These results are due to the new entrants in the network (i.e. from 37 to 48) and to an increase in the level of relationships: the average score of the relevance increased by 18.8% while the one for intensity by 23.5%. Considering the average of the two indicators, the score of MI increased by 31.4% and the score of SI by 19.9%.

Some relations obviously appear more relevant and intense than others, like relations with: UCLG (due to the whole joint work on Localization), the Spanish decentralized cooperation as well as the Italian and Spanish bilateral cooperation (being long-lasting traditional partners of UNDP ART since its early years); more recent partners (with strengthened relations after 2013), such as EU DG Devco (which finances the CapDel programme in Algeria), the French and Luxembourg bilateral cooperation, the Canadian decentralized cooperation (i.e. FCM), the Brazilian decentralized cooperation (i.e. CNM, SEBRAE and ITAIPU), and UCCI.

<sup>19</sup> The index MI is based on the multiplication between the relevance and the intensity, while the index SI is given by the sum of the two scores.



Nonetheless, some sectors and categories of actors appear to be still under-represented within these network relations, primarily:

- International networks of NGOs, which could be aligned towards the whole Localization approach as crucial actors working on the ground for local development and SDGs implementation;
- Private sector organizations and international / regional networks of enterprises and cooperatives (apart from specific cases of LEDAs networks in Colombia and Dominican Republic), mostly relevant for LED processes;
- International Financial Institutions, banking and micro-finance organizations, again as potential partners for investments, funding and LED processes.

Relations with academia and research institutions are established, including at local level and jointly with territorial cooperation partners, but could be further systematized and integrated with UNDP ART programming and support mechanisms, as key sources of knowledge creation and capacity-building.

Other potentially relevant actors that could be further connected to the networking effort include development banks (as relevant investment and implementation partners) and philanthropic foundations (as potential new donors and partners of LGLD initiatives across the world).

The collected evidence – including specific views and feedbacks provided by key informants and consulted stakeholders – along with a review of ART practice provides a strong basis for an analysis of the relevance and distinct value of its approach to networking and partnership building as instrumental to the 2030 Agenda and particularly to its implementation at the local level.

More specifically, **UNDP through ART plays a catalytic role to establish and promote divers multi-level partnerships, which eventually lead to manifold ripple effects, i.e. allowing the different partners within a strategic alliance to establish individual and additional partnership processes and alliances around their specific themes of interest. This is specifically pronounced as ART is strongly focused on facilitating and catalyzing relationships with and between different international networks that mostly have members and associates also at national as well as territorial levels.**

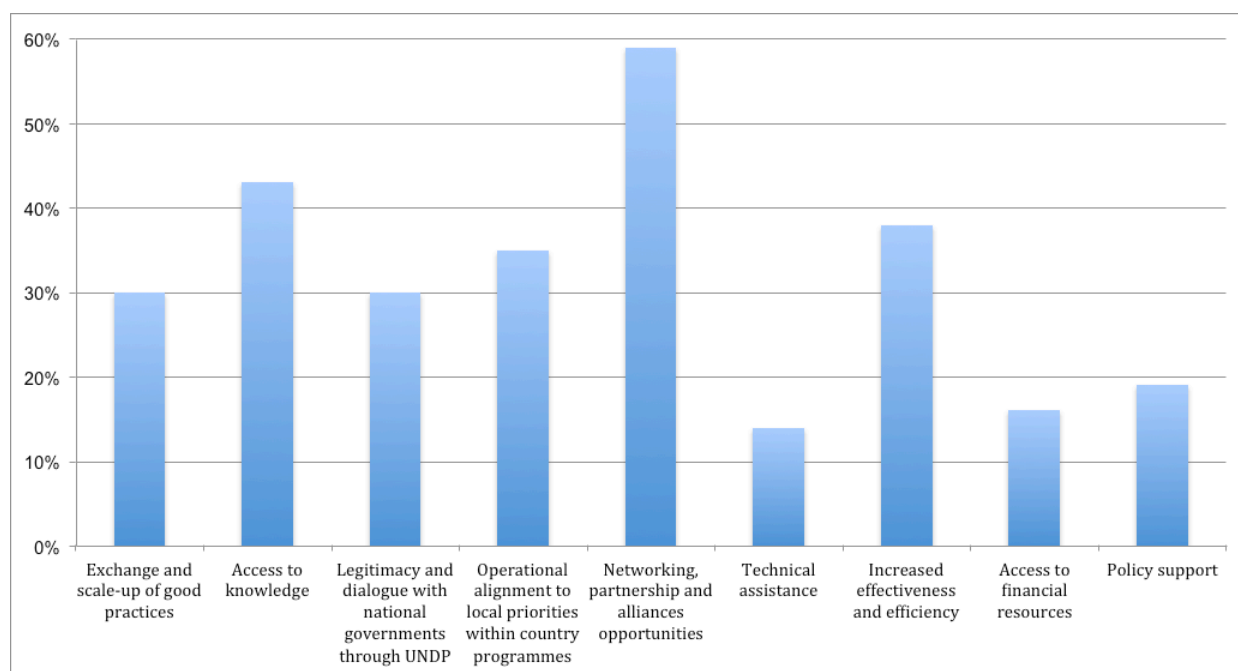
The key role of UNDP ART as effective convener and facilitator of dynamic partnerships for local development and local governance across a diversity of actors and levels is specifically recognized by consulted UN/UNDP staff, bilateral as well as decentralized cooperation partners, who reflect from their respective standpoints the value of such catalytic function for: tapping and integrating sources of knowledge and capacities; harmonizing and coordinating different and complementary partners' interests and actions in alignment with national and local needs and priorities; promoting synergies with and between local actors in the different territories and enabling a coherent dialogue between them and external (i.e. national, regional, global) interlocutors and potential partners.

#### Illustrative quotation

*'Only for the fact to be part of the UNDP and to work so intensively in the field has a preferential attitude and way to be network facilitator. The UNDP logo is very facilitating in doing partnerships, networks and collaboration. Their way of working is very decentralized and they operate at the grassroots level, so they know territorial network that would have been inaccessible for territorial cooperation partners. Moreover, they organize events, such as the World Forum on LED, where it is very easy to meet partners, actors and stakeholders.'* (Territorial cooperation partner)

Overall, the interviewees' perceptions and assessment of the main benefits deriving from these networking and partnership-building role of UNDP through ART as presented in Figure 6.2 confirm the arguments discussed above and provide further insights on the specific functions enabled and improved through access to and interaction with networks within a multi-level and multi-actor framework.

Figure 6.2 Interviewees' answers on benefits from networking and partnership-building enabled by UNDP ART



Note: Results from multiple answers question are based on interviews with 37 different informants (insider informants have been excluded from the sample).

Source: Authors

The overall networking role of UNDP ART is mostly played through the same means discussed in chapter 5 – i.e. Forums, meetings, platforms, advocacy events – which mobilised a large number of people and organizations (with their own expertise and practices), including from UN agencies. This often results in the alignment and signature of specific cooperation agreements with partners. Table 6.1 presents illustrative examples for each type of actors and different nature of the cooperation engaged.

Table 6.1 Illustrative examples of agreements between UNDP and selected partners

Type of partner	Organization	Object of agreement
Bilateral cooperation	DAECT (France)	Raising awareness of French decentralized cooperation actors about SDGs' Localization process and LGLD initiatives.
Regional network of LRGs	FLACMA (Latin America)	Raising awareness and empowering LRGs in LAC in the SDGs localization process.
National network of LRGs	CNM (Brazil)	Strengthening the role of municipalities for the Localization of the SDGs, especially concerning monitoring and accountability, both in Brazil (locally and nationally) and at regional / international level.
Territorial cooperation	Agència Catalana de Cooperació al Desenvolupament (Spain)	Identifying and analysing successful practices of Localization of the SDGs at sub-national level (i.e. regions within countries) to foster peer-2-peer dialogue and exchange.
Territorial cooperation	Government of Balears (Spain)	Support to the productive capacity of local farmers in Bolivia within local economic development strategies and frameworks.
Territorial cooperation	Municipality of Madrid (Spain)	Enhancing and promoting urban initiatives in order to foster local governance and inclusive socio-economic development, favouring equality, communal living and peace-building cities in the framework of the Localization of the SDGs.
Inter-municipal Fund	FAMSI (Spain)	Provision of fellowships allowing up to 15 young professionals being fielded in UNDP COs (e.g. Cabo Verde, Bolivia, Tunisia and others) and Brussels.
Academia / Universities	UDUAL (Latin America)	Extensive cooperation at different levels (organization of the World and in particular Regional LED Forums in Ecuador and Bolivia; organization of annual events...)

Source: Authors

Further relevant examples of new partnerships arising out of a process of dialogue facilitated by ART include the partnership between CNM and the National Association of Cabo Verdean Municipalities (ANMCV),

developed in the framework of the Forum process and within the “Programa Plataformas Locais para o Sucesso dos ODS em Cabo Verde”, and the partnership between FELCOS (Italy) and the municipalities of Sacaba and Tiquipaya within the programme “Programa de Desarrollo Territorial” in Bolivia.

Moreover, in certain cases UNDP ART acts as match-maker between organizations, creating connections that can then result in formalised or informal cross-national partnerships and alliances for LGLD Initiatives.<sup>20</sup> An illustrative example concerns the linkage between FLACMA and UDUAL to connect the engagement of Latin American universities on LED with LRGs: such connection was facilitated by UNDP through ART during Habitat III in Quito (October 2016), thus boosting a potential collaboration that had not been explored in the past.

Specifically, regarding territorial cooperation actors, it is possible to report the following data over the period 2015-2017 (Table 6.2) as evidence of the role played by UNDP through ART to facilitate the harmonization and alignment of their expertise (e.g. on LED, service delivery, etc.) and to mobilize their financial and technical resources in the framework of UNDP’s integrated LGLD strategies and country programmes.

*Table 6.2 No. of agreements and partnerships aligned (2015-2017)<sup>21</sup>*

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of agreements signed between UNDP and territorial cooperation partners</i>	<i>No. of partnerships aligned towards UNDP LGLD programmes</i>
2015	7	41
2016	4	40
2017	5 new agreements signed (Madrid, Balears, Cataluña, FAMSI, CNM-ANMCV); 3 agreements in the final negotiation stages (Valencia, Andalusia, Extremadura)	40 (estimated)

Source: Authors on data provided by UNDP ART

**All supported partnerships<sup>22</sup> – both between UNDP and partners, and among partners themselves – appear crucial not only to enable a structural dialogue and mutual exposure, but especially to exploit synergies and complementarities among initiatives and resources within multilateral frameworks, leading to substantial multiplier effects that may not have realised without the catalytic role played by ART.**

In sum, the work of UNDP ART in promoting and articulating LGLD networks at different levels can be instrumental for consolidating UNDP role and outreach in the implementation of the 2030 agenda. Informants highlight that the global multi-stakeholder partnership for localizing the SDGs is on a good track, especially considering that SDGs have officially been launched only two years ago and thus giving credit to the substantial efforts undergone by UNDP through ART and its partners. Yet it is still at an early stage of a process that will require some key elements to consolidate (see conclusive remarks for further detailed elements), and in particular:

- i) A stronger follow-up and support mechanisms by UNDP to make the partnership effectively operational;
- ii) The involvement of important missing actors and sectors within the network;
- iii) The introduction and gradual institutionalization of concrete tools and mechanisms for the implementation of joint initiatives for SDGs localization within LGLD frameworks.

<sup>20</sup> This often happens also by facilitating visits of stakeholders from partner countries to Brussels in view of strengthening technical and financial cooperation with the EU and Brussels-based partners. For instance: the missions to Brussels of local and national authorities of Morocco and Bolivia in 2015, which resulted in political and technical alliances respectively supporting the regionalization process in Morocco and the economic diversification in Bolivia; the mission to Brussels and Luxembourg of a delegation of stakeholders from Cabo Verde in 2017 during the 5th Assises of Decentralized Cooperation, which allowed to engage with DG Devco, the Luxembourg bilateral cooperation and territorial cooperation partners (e.g. Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region, Basque country) to support the implementation of the new “Local Platforms for SDGs” programme.

<sup>21</sup> 100% of agreements signed and partnership aligned in 2017 are focused on LGLD and SDGs Localization, with around 60% concerning LAC countries (e.g. Ecuador, Bolivia, Uruguay) and 40% African and Arab States (e.g. Cabo Verde, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia).

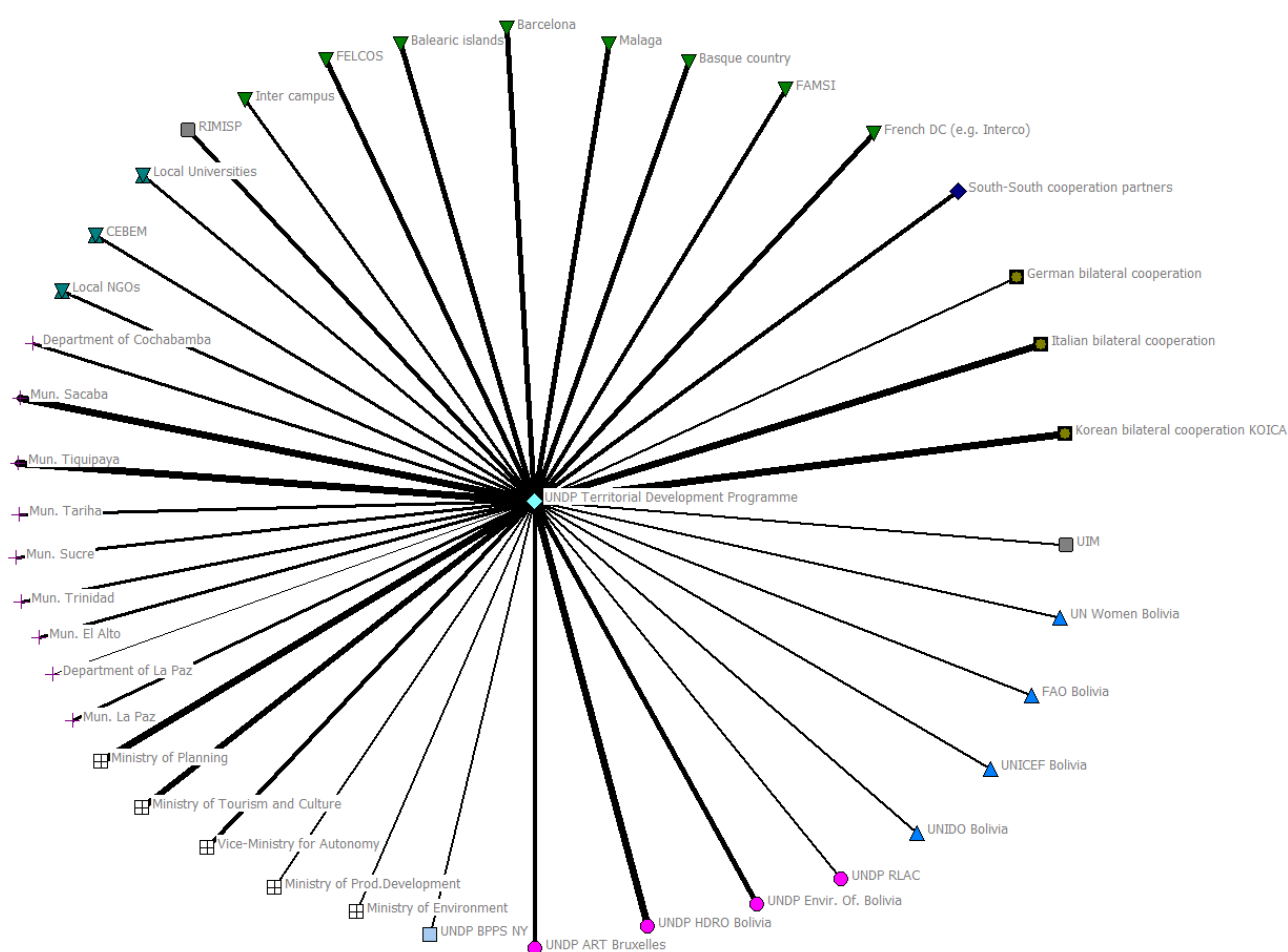
<sup>22</sup> In total, in the period 2016-2017 the UNDP ART’s Trust Fund received around US\$ 101 million through more than 120 financial contribution agreements negotiated and signed with 63 donors / partners.

## 6.2. Enabling networking and partnerships at national and local level to foster integrated frameworks for LGLD and SDGs Localization

Similarly to the previous section, the evaluation methodology and tools allow analysing the networks of partners at national and country level in the selected country programmes supported by UNDP ART. In particular, this section provides evidence of the footprint of the networking and partnership-building approach promoted by UNDP through ART to foster integrated frameworks for LGLD and SDGs Localization in Bolivia in the illustrative case of the “Programa de Desarrollo Territorial” (both country and sub-national networks in the case of the Department of Cochabamba), while similar evidence for Mauritania and Algeria is reported in Annex 4.<sup>23</sup> More detailed information on the countries’ case-studies will be provided in chapter 7 and in Annex 5.

First of all, Figure 6.3 represents the overall network relations of the programme in Bolivia, with linkages involving both UNDP / UN office and agencies, bilateral and territorial cooperation actors, as well as national, sub-national and local governments and actors.

Figure 6.3 Networking relations of the “Programa de Desarrollo Territorial” in Bolivia (national level)



Source: Authors

At present, the UNDP Territorial Development Programme in Bolivia has relevant direct relations with 41 stakeholders at different levels (noting again that certain categories of actors are grouped for the sake of simplicity). The total relevance and the intensity increased respectively by 50.8% and 29.6% between 2013 and 2017. The MI increased by 39.2% and the SI by 40.3%. These results are due to the new entrants in the network (i.e. from 27 to 41). On the other side, the average score of the relevance decreased by -0.7% and the intensity by -14.7%. Considering simultaneously relevance and intensity, the decrease was -8.3% for MI

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that Cabo Verde is not included in this analysis due to the very incipient and starting-up stage of the programme “Programa Plataformas Locais para o Sucesso dos ODS em Cabo Verde”.

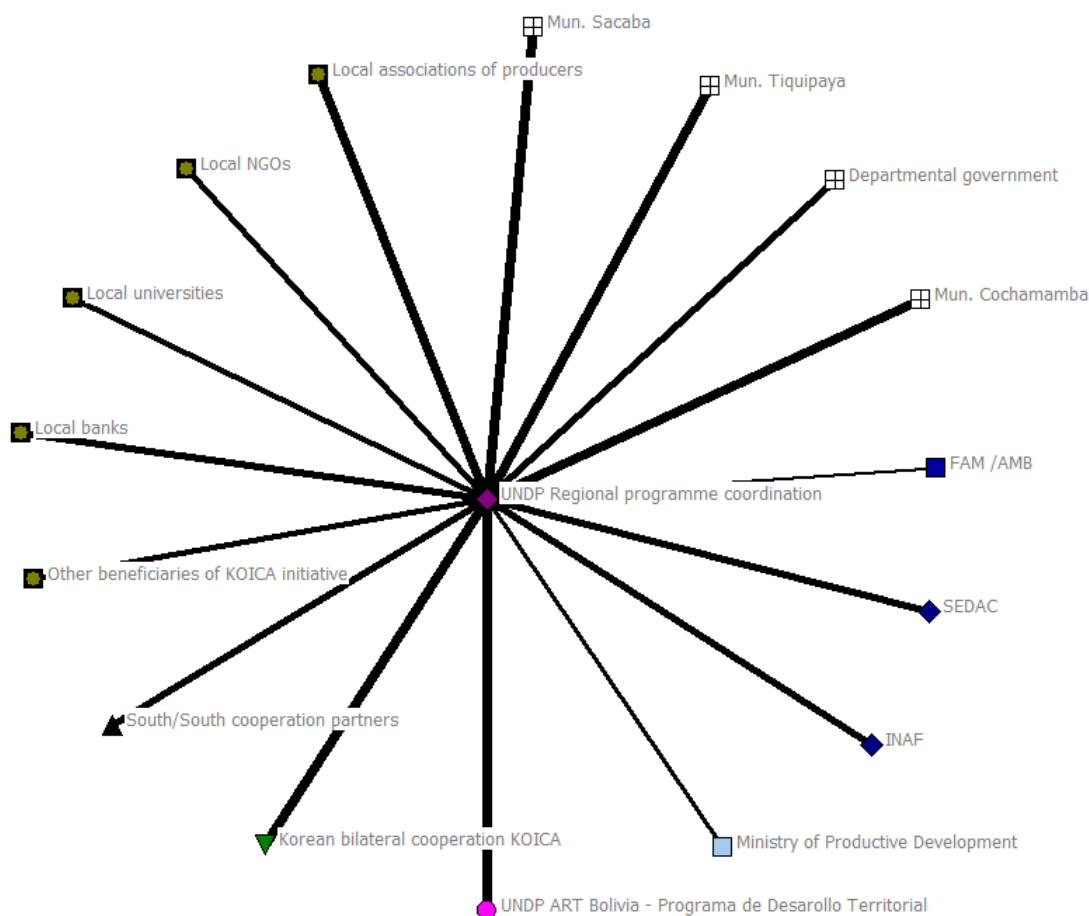
and -7.6% for SI. This means that new entrants widened the network and increased the total scores, but the averages for relevance and intensity decreased.

First of all, it clearly appears the breadth of the network and the high number of partners that the programme interacts with, thanks to its long-lasting consolidation that has allowed connecting with several institutions and organizations. As shown, the programme engages a high number of relevant and intense relations, both within UNDP (e.g. with the Human Development Report Office), with bilateral cooperation agencies such as the Korean KOICA and the Italian AICS, different ministries of the national government (e.g. on Planning, Tourism and Culture and vice-Ministry for Autonomy) and municipalities (in particular Sacaba and Tiquipaya as beneficiaries of a project funded by KOICA – see below). Several territorial cooperation partners present also relevant and intense relations with the programme, contributing to mobilize resources and expertise. On the other side, some networking relations disappeared over the years (for changing priorities or other relational issues), such as the ones with the organizations listed in the bottom left-hand corner.

At sub-national level it has been possible to collect data and analyse the networking relations in the Department of Cochabamba (Figure 6.4), where the programme is currently implementing the Saemaul Undong initiative funded by the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

Nowadays, the UNDP Regional Programme Coordination in Cochabamba has relevant direct relations with 16 main stakeholders (or groups of stakeholders) at different levels. In this case we have no comparison with 2013. On average, the relevance and intensity of relations are respectively 4.75 and 3.63, indicating that partners at the local level are on average both very relevant and with intense relationships (MI and SI average are consequently very high too). Among other relations, it is worth highlighting i) how, with the support of ART, the programme contributed to reinforce the alignment between municipalities, departmental governments and national government, overcoming potential constraints in dialogue and engagement due to opposed political visions; and ii) its engagement with three local NGOs to make them contribute to the programme adding their own resources and expertise, thus obtaining mutual benefits in terms of additionality, impact and visibility.

Figure 6.4 Networking relations of the “Programa de Desarrollo Territorial” in Bolivia (subnational level – Department of Cochabamba)



Source: Authors

The analysis of the programme's network in Bolivia illustrates well the appropriation of some key working principles of UNDP ART by both the CO and its key institutional counterparts. This includes: the importance of working with national as well as all other levels of governance and to connect them with each other; the facilitation of relevant initiatives that are implemented through different partners aligning with and complementing other initiatives in the same territories; the promotion of an overall coherence and integration between partners and actions at different levels. The recent organization in Bolivia of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Forum on Local Economic Development for Latin America and the Caribbean further demonstrates the interrelatedness and potential implications of UNDP ART networking with a diverse multiplicity of actors and across levels, including policy dialogue, advocacy and concrete partnership facilitation in the territories.

### 6.3 Final remarks on key findings and opportunities

**A key thrust since the take-off of the UNDP ART Initiative has been that building coherent and integrated partnership frameworks from global to local levels is a crucial determinant of Sustainable Human Development. The analysis carried out confirms the validity and strength of the adopted multi-layered networking methodology, showing that many strategic partnerships enabled by UNDP ART bridge the global, national and subnational levels, through different types of cooperation modalities and translating global dialogue into concrete development inputs in countries and territories, and vice versa.**

Across levels, such networking approach maintains its features and value-added as a platform for aligning and harmonizing efforts that would be otherwise dispersed, and contributes to realise multi-level governance and policy coherence in practice enabling a simultaneous relation between partners and different layers of government.

The analysis has also shown that there has been a clear increase in overall relevance and intensity of networking relations from 2013 to 2017, having consolidated long-lasting relations (e.g. with UCLG, Spanish territorial cooperation, Italian and Spanish bilateral cooperation) but also engaged in new ones (e.g. with EU DG DEVCO, DG REGIO, French and Luxembourg bilateral cooperation, Canadian and Brazilian territorial cooperation, UCCI).

UNDP ART's approach to building partnerships involves recognizing and including all relevant stakeholders into strategic alliances around goals and tasks, based on respective functions and capacities. Integrating and confirming the findings of the mid-term evaluation, the interviews and the networking analysis conducted during the present evaluation revealed that the UNDP ART Initiative has managed to implement such strategic and holistic vision of partnership and alliance in various cases (e.g. in relation to the various forms of partners' engagement across levels and thematic areas, as well as in relation to complex processes such as the World Forums on LED). In other cases, as for example in relation to the establishment of a global multi-stakeholder partnership on Localizing the SDGs, the process is still on-going and will require further efforts and specific inputs for its consolidation.

More specifically the evaluation found that UNDP ART fulfilled an instrumental role in:

- Serving as important facilitator and coordinator of a wide network of relations with a diversified group of multi-sectoral stakeholders at global, supranational, regional, national and territorial level;
- Effectively coordinating and harmonizing international cooperation interests (e.g. bilateral and territorial actors) towards local and national needs (and within a global vision of sustainable development), facilitating and creating the condition for the mobilization of their financial and technical resources in support of implementing UNDP's integrated LGLD strategies and country programmes;
- Enhancing structural dialogue and mutual exposure with and among partners to exploit synergies and complementarities among initiatives and resources within multilateral frameworks, leading to substantial multiplier effects;
- Applying its global networking and partnership-building approach to foster integrated frameworks for LGLD and SDGs localization also at national and sub-national level (e.g. Bolivia, Mauritania and Algeria).

Concerning the broader key issue of promoting SDGs localization through multilateral action and networks, the analysis has shown that the experience and methodologies applied by ART to enable integrated partnership and networking at different levels constitute a **strong potential for enhancing UNDP corporate and COs' (and at large by UNCTs) role as facilitator in the implementation of the SDGs** at the local level. More specifically, concrete tools like the TWGs could be turned into local hubs / platforms for SDG localization and the NCCs may constitute a prefiguration of national institutional frameworks for SDG implementation.

As a key objective of UNDP ART – and central to UNDP strategic positioning and engagement as facilitator of the 2030 Agenda implementation – is the establishment of a global multi-stakeholder partnership for localizing the SDGs, a number of further specific considerations and recommendation is therefore provided in this respect:

- If the core partnership among UCLG, UNHABITAT and UNDP is supposed to grow into a widely recognised global multi-stakeholder partnership the process needs to be further institutionalised and defined in terms of its rationale and objectives. This should be accompanied by the production of appropriate guidelines and procedures.
- Such institutionalisation should go hand in hand with widening the scope of participation to include all relevant stakeholders, further and above the current core group of stakeholders. In particular, it would be important to gain several key strategic partners that will help to widen the alliance and reach the necessary economy of scale: national governments (for the political influence and financing capacity); the private sector (for its potential in financing but also SMEs as key territorial partners); international networks of NGOs (as crucial actors working on the ground for local development and SDGs implementation); research centres and universities (for their contribution to build more robust knowledge and evidence, as well as shaping the scientific debate).
- UNDP should also strengthen its relationship with the main strategic partner for localizing the SDGs, i.e. the LRGs and their international and national associations. In the view of the evaluators it is recommendable to implement the UNDP Advisory Committee for LRGs as proposed but not yet realised within the initial ART project document.
- Following the example of the WF on LED process, UNDP might want to consider the establishment of an annual or bi-annual conference on localizing the SDGs that could become a trademark and a forum for knowledge exchange and the dissemination of best local practices. It would also be advisable to establish a system of integrated and coordinated follow-up on issues addressed in the resolutions emanating from the conferences.
- Implementing a multi-stakeholder partnership on localizing the SDGs would also allow (and require) UNDP to act as a knowledge broker for sustainable and innovative local level solutions generated within the context of the integrated territorial systems for LGLD.
- Further enhancing the interaction with EU-level institutions and OECD would allow taking advantage of high potential synergies and complementarities on the diffusion and application of an integrated territorial approach to sustainable development for the 2030 Agenda both within the EU and in partner countries.

**Strengthening its role as facilitator and catalyst of a multi-actor partnership, UNDP will be able to effectively convey its offer as a UN-system-wide enabler for the implementation of the SDGs.** Such partnership should be aligned with UNDP's strategic plan, and possibly complement specific activities and tools, e.g. SDG global and country platforms, extending the partnerships also to the local level; as well as UN-system-wide considerations for sub-national SDGs-related actions (e.g. the initial thinking on the Local2030).

## 7. ED3 – Support to UNDP LGLD country programmes

This chapter provides evidence and answers to the Evaluation Question No. 3:

*To what extent has UNDP through ART been effectively supporting the efforts by UNDP, LRGs and other local governance actors to implement integrated and multilevel LGLD frameworks in support to the implementation of the SDGs?*

and its sub-questions on 1) connecting national and territorial initiatives to multilevel LGLD frameworks in support to the implementation of the SDGs, and 2) enhancing national and local institutional capacities for SDGs Localization / LGLD initiatives.

It should be recalled here the mid-term evaluation conducted in 2012 focused extensively on the operationalization of the approach promoted by UNDP ART at local level (see Agostinucci and Biggeri, 2012 and the case-studies of Colombia, Ecuador and Morocco in its annexes). Instead, this evaluation uses the analysis of case-studies of country programmes to validate transversal issues and/or complete the analysis through country-level experiences to assess (i) the evolution of the UNDP ART approach and work in relation to new global and national contexts and related challenges; and (ii) the experimentation of tools and mechanisms at national and local level in connection with multilevel frameworks for policy dialogue, networking and partnership building. In other words, information and data from country programmes are used as input for the overall analysis, and not conceived as evaluations of their specific performances and results.

*The main issue to be assessed here is whether, within the context of the 2030 Agenda, UNDP through ART provides relevant and effective support for LGLD initiatives and programmes coordinated and implemented by UNDP COs and national institutions.*

As a bottom-line, it is key to reflect on the gradual evolution of UNDP ART role from the direct implementation and coordination of country programmes in more than 20 countries between 2005-2013<sup>24</sup>, to the provision of strategic orientation, technical assistance and punctual expertise, as well as facilitation of global and regional networking and partnership building (see Figure 2.2).

Overall, over the last three years (2015-2017) the UNDP ART Initiative has provided support and/or contributed to strengthen and/or fostered national ownership in a wide number of countries (Table 7.1).

*Table 7.1 List of supported UNDP COs and country programmes (2015-2017)*

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>List of UNDP COs / Country programmes</i>
UNDP LGLD programmes strengthened	25	Albania; Algeria; Bolivia; Brazil; Burundi; Cameroon; Cabo Verde; Colombia; Cuba; Djibouti; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; Gabon; Haiti; Lebanon; Mauritania; Morocco; Myanmar; Nicaragua; OPT; Pakistan; Tunisia; Uganda; Uruguay.
LGLD programmes with full national ownership	8	Colombia; Cuba; Dominican Republic; El Salvador; Lebanon; Mauritania; Morocco; Uruguay.
Formulation of programmes (or components) supported based on specific UNDP ART expertise	10	Algeria; Cabo Verde; Mauritania; Mexico; Paraguay; Tunisia; Myanmar; Bolivia; RBA for the formulation of a regional programme on Migration and Local Development in West Africa; RBAS for the formulation of the sub-regional MADAD proposal.

Source: Authors based on information provided by UNDP ART

### 7.1 Analysis of case-studies

As already anticipated in chapter 3, a combination of a long-term country LGLD programme with a consolidated experience (i.e. in Bolivia), and two “new generation” LGLD programmes (i.e. in Cabo Verde and Mauritania) were selected as illustrative case-studies (Table 7.2) to obtain relevant evidence and derive lessons learnt also for other country programmes.

<sup>24</sup> See the mid-term evaluation conducted by Agostinucci and Biggeri in 2012.



Table 7.2 Main features and relevance of the case-studies

Programme	Starting year	Main objectives	Focus area	Relevance
<u>Bolivia</u> Programa de Desarrollo Territorial	2008	Improving the effectiveness of integrated territorial development processes, through an approach based on local platforms able to articulate initiatives, levels and sectors	2 Departments / 11 Municipalities	Its evolution and continuous adaptation to the national political situation
<u>Cabo Verde</u> Programa Plataformas Locais para o Sucesso dos ODS em Cabo Verde	2017	Piloting a new “platform” approach to promote the Localization of the SDGs, by enabling the dialogue, articulation and coordination between different levels of power and across actors interacting in the same territory	3 islands / 3 Pilot municipalities	Its innovative “platforms approach” in a One UN country, with illustrative features also for Small Islands Developing States (SIDS)
<u>Mauritania</u> PAGOURDEL – Programme d’Appui à la Gouvernance Régionale et le Développement Economique Local	2011	Supporting the national strategy for decentralization, local governance and local development with an inter-sectoral perspective	8 regions	Its strong national ownership in a phase of crucial evolution of the institutional framework and the opportunity to introduce DEL as a political priority

Source: Authors

Additional insights were also gained through consultation with relevant UNDP staff dealing with other country programmes<sup>25</sup> in Algeria, Cuba and Uruguay.<sup>26</sup>

The analysis of the three-main case-studies is summarized in Table 7.3, organizing findings into different topics of interest (see Annex 5 for a detailed analysis of each case-study).

First of all, in all cases it is clear how the evolution or the design and start-up of the programmes is based on the key features of the approach promoted by UNDP through ART, especially concerning multilevel articulation, integrated strategic planning and participatory processes. These features also appear to address in a tailored manner the implications of the institutional, political and economic setting at national and local level, aligning also with national strategic plans. This is also confirmed by the analysis in the additional countries that have been considered: in Algeria, where the programme design has been triggered on a national government’s demand aimed at making the new Constitution operational for the promotion of participatory democracy; in Uruguay, where the programme was adapted in light of the classification as high-income country by the World Bank; in Cuba, where it consolidated its role as framework platform for inter-agency and cooperation coordination at local level.

Secondly, a strong national ownership characterises especially the programmes in Cabo Verde and Mauritania with central governments being fully involved (with political responsibilities) in the programmes’ implementation. This is even stronger in the case of Uruguay (where the national government itself is fully funding the programme), Algeria (as the national government has complete control over the implementation) and Cuba (where the multilevel platforms approach is increasingly institutionalised in public policies for local development).

Thirdly, it clearly emerges a significant strategic support by UNDP through ART especially for i) the design and start-up of new programmes – i.e. in Cabo Verde and Algeria, but also in Mauritania for the new approach and work-streams – and for ii) the promotion of partnerships with cooperation partners,

<sup>25</sup> It is important to recall that in-country missions were conducted in Cabo Verde and Bolivia, while data and evidence on the other case-studies were collected through in-person interviews (i.e. Mauritania and Uruguay), Structured Focus Group Discussion (i.e. Mauritania) or remote interviews (i.e. Cuba and Algeria).

<sup>26</sup> In Algeria the “CapDel – Démocratie participative et développement locale” programme is characterized by its new fundamental relation with the EU as a donor and its direct work with the national government and pilot municipalities, in light of a new national constitution; in Cuba, the “PADIT – Plataforma Articulada para el Desarrollo Integrado Territorial sostenible” programme is of specific interest for its national ownership and consolidated evolution of the territorial approach since 1998; in Uruguay, the “Desarrollo Humano y Gobernabilidad a escala local” programme for its national ownership (government-funded programme) and implementation in a country being classified as high-income country since 2013.

engagement in global / regional debate and networks, systematization and interchange of experiences, although less structured and systematic within long-lasting programmes (i.e. Bolivia, Cuba and Uruguay).

Fourthly, in all the main case-studies (as well as in Cuba) the approach underlying these programmes has influenced the new UNDAF 2018-2021 at country level, having been increasingly integrated also due to the positive synergies and multiplier effects with other UNDP / UN initiatives.

Finally, country programmes face similar challenges, especially with regard to: i) financing the implementation of local strategic plans, ii) operating within very politicized contexts with risks of drastic political discontinuities, iii) enabling effective approaches for small municipalities with still limited autonomy and space for manoeuvre and capacities, despite the need to align their strategic plan to different agenda and perspectives, e.g. SDGs, national agenda and plans, gender perspectives, environmental agendas); iv) continuously accessing adequate strategic and technical support to the gradual implementation of programmes with a complex and ambitious architecture.

Table 7.3 Key findings from illustrative LGLD programmes

	<b>Bolivia</b>	<b>Cabo Verde</b>	<b>Mauritania</b>
<i>Design, start-up and evolution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidation of the approach for multilevel articulation and planning</li> <li>- New phase of operationalization in concrete projects in order to avoid 'articulating the clouds'<sup>27</sup></li> <li>- Wide institutional and networking relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multilevel platforms approach</li> <li>- Careful and participatory design process</li> <li>- Robust selection process of pilot municipalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidation and evolution of the previous (ART GOLD) programme in a new scenario</li> <li>- Government demand to support and accompany the upcoming regionalisation reform process</li> <li>- Integration of LED and SDGs Localization into integrated strategic planning processes</li> </ul>
<i>Approach</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adaptation of the approach within a complex planning architecture</li> <li>- Balanced approach between its technical and political components</li> <li>- Relevance to link-up the <i>Agenda Patriótica 2015</i> and national plan for economic and social development with the SDGs at local level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appropriateness of approach for SIDS and SDGs implementation in the country context</li> <li>- Coherence and alignment with national strategic plan (inspired by the SDGs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Translation of national strategies and plans into regional governance and strategic planning frameworks</li> <li>- Active role to enable the strategic functionings of local development systems for Localizing the SDGs</li> </ul>
<i>Ownership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Endorsement and alignment with national government but need to reinforce its national ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong ownership even through national government change</li> <li>- Political responsibility of the Prime Minister for programme implementation</li> <li>- Active involvement of LRGs since the design process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong leadership and commitment of national government based on the attainment of the previous programme</li> <li>- Coherence between national policies and multilevel governance for SDGs implementation</li> <li>- Active involvement of LRGs since the design process</li> </ul>
<i>Support by UNDP ART</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supportive role by UNDP ART through programmatic support, elaboration of new initiatives and partnership building with regards to DC partners, but without a structured and systematic interchange</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic role of UNDP ART for design, start-up, networking and partnerships, systematization and scale-up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full support in the identification, design and start-up phase, including technical mission to Spain and Morocco;</li> <li>- Further strategic support in SDGs localization and LED components of the programme</li> </ul>
<i>Contribution to UNDP / UN effectiveness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New UNDAF endorsing an integrated territorial approach</li> <li>- Strong integration within UNDP and use of TRAC funds</li> <li>- Illustrative collaborations with HDRO and Environment office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Influence on new UNDAF</li> <li>- Enabling conditions for inter-agency coordination in a One Un system</li> <li>- Strong synergies with GEF (Global Environmental Facility)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integration of consolidated approach in the new UNDAF</li> <li>- Room for increased articulation and inter-agency efforts at UNDP CO level: programme as potential</li> </ul>

<sup>27</sup> This metaphor was used to remark the risk of a vague articulation of promises without any concrete effect on actions and results.

	within UNDP CO	Small Grants programme	platform for channelling and harmonising UNDP and UN system action in the country
<i>Relevant challenges</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Complex and very politicized scenario; very high turnover of public servants in local and national governments that jeopardizes stability of actions; limited capacities at local level in public institutions</li> <li>- Risks of making planning simply a bureaucratic exercise (required by higher-level institutions and international organizations) in small municipalities</li> <li>- Limited financial and human resources within the CO; need to mobilize partners and resources to ensure continuation of actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financing the implementation of local strategic plans and think beyond project duration</li> <li>- Turn the initial project into a real one UN – Government platform for implementing the SDGs</li> <li>- Translate the dynamism of the WF on LED into longer term strategic partnerships and initiatives</li> <li>- Addressing major country challenges through the project, i.e. decentralisation /regionalisation, equal and inclusive LED strategy, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risks of shifting institutional architecture and absence of coherent legal framework across national level and regions</li> <li>- Timely mobilization of appropriate partners and resources for ensuring adequate technical support to the implementation of the programme's components in close relation with the evolution of the national political and regulatory framework</li> </ul>

Source: Authors

## 7.2 Final remarks on key findings and opportunities

The cooperation and interaction between the ART Initiative and UNDP COs has considerably evolved over time (see Figure 2.2), from the launching of dedicated ART Framework Programmes to the integration of the ART approach, tools and partners within broader and more comprehensive LGLD programmes. **If UNDP's LGLD framework will continue to be applied as the programmatic basis for channelling CO's efforts to localize the SDGs, the ART Initiative is well positioned to provide strategic and tailored support to COs for an effective SDGs implementation at local level.** This will require avoiding a technical blue-print approach but continuously innovating and tailoring solutions to face relevant challenges in terms of national and local mind-sets, capacities, political willingness, leadership and institutional frameworks.

Based on the different case studies the evaluation found that UNDP ART succeeded in:

- Experimenting a new “multilevel platforms approach” based on careful and participatory design processes, triggered on demand by national governments (e.g. Cabo Verde, Mauritania and Algeria);
- Consolidating the approach for multilevel articulation and planning and accompanying its evolution according to changing political, economic and social conditions (e.g. Bolivia, Cuba and Uruguay);
- Channelling strategic support to UNDP COs in the formulation of new LGLD initiatives and consequently also in mobilising partnerships, technical expertise and resources (e.g. Cabo Verde, Mauritania and Algeria);
- Successfully linking LRGs from partner countries to global / regional policy debates and stakeholders' networks, which fostered fruitful exchange and sometimes the systematization of relevant experiences.
- Achieving strong leadership, ownership and commitment of national governments (e.g. Cabo Verde, Mauritania, Algeria, Uruguay and Cuba), as well as coherence and alignment with national strategic plans inspired by the SDGs (e.g. Cabo Verde and Mauritania) and enhanced Integration of LED and SDGs Localization into integrated strategic planning (e.g. Cabo Verde, Mauritania, Cuba);
- Effectively adapting the approach to complex and evolving planning systems and decentralization mechanisms (e.g. Bolivia, Mauritania, Cabo Verde, Uruguay, Cuba);
- Facilitating the active involvement of LRGs since the design and consultation processes (e.g. Cabo Verde, Mauritania, Algeria) to strengthen their commitment and ownership;
- Effectively influencing and integrating the approach within the new UNDAF 2018-2012 (e.g. Bolivia, Cabo Verde, Mauritania, Cuba) and increasing the articulation and inter-agency efforts at UNDP CO level (e.g. Bolivia and Mauritania), and even more strongly in Cabo Verde due to the enabling conditions of operating within a One Un system.

The analysis of these case studies, the interviews with a wide range of stakeholders also from other countries combined with the findings of the mid-term evaluation allows to determine the following snapshot analysis of UNDP ART's support to COs in terms of LGLD / localization of the SDGs:

- Actively supporting programmatic work in partner countries and territories has always been a fundamental pillar of UNDP ART. The overall approach was always subject to implementation in the field to produce the necessary evidence that would then be used to inform national and global policy debates.
- The modalities and ways of engagement between the Initiative and COs has changed over time; partly due to changed funding and donor relationships, and partly due to the corporate decision to mainstream the work of UNDP ART through the LGLD framework and lately on localizing SDGs.
- Despite the different modalities of engagement with COs over time, it appears that ART accumulated relevant programmatic expertise and a partnership network to support COs in their strive for implementing integrated LGLD initiatives / localize the SDGs.
- However, it appears that such support is still provided more on an ad hoc basis, very much depended on specific country office requests, rather than on a systematic and strategic support system. This seems partly to be due to the lack of relevant systematizations and guidelines produced by the UNDP ART Initiative itself (e.g. on design and start-up processes of LGLD programmes, on engaging territorial cooperation partners within COs' programming, on LED programming and implementation, on institutionalized mechanisms for multilevel and inter-sectorial articulation, etc.), but also to the lack of a comprehensive corporate system of support COs towards LGLD and localizing the SDGs.

UNDP presently seems at a crucial stage of evolution, aligning itself with the 2030 agenda and reshaping its strategy and positioning within the overall UN system in such a way that facilitating the SDG achievement of countries will be an overall priority for the organisation. Achieving the SDGs also at local level will hence gain importance and probably become a crucial work stream for the organisation.

**Yet it seems that ART has not yet reached its potential in terms of supporting COs, thus moving from ad-hoc and purely demand-driven support to a more organized and systematised approach that combines strategic orientation, technical support as well as information and facilitation to access potential partnership and funding opportunities.** There is a case for an important in-house reflection on a possibly more effective way of organizing work and synergies between ART and/through COs and regional hubs. This could contribute to streamline a UNDP “umbrella approach” for SDGs localization through a corporate application of the LGLD framework, and make partnership and networking methodologies more linked with the programmatic offer of UNDP and to specific COs initiatives.

The following initial considerations and recommendations reflect on how ART – or the approach, processes and tools promoted through the Initiative – could become a relevant pillar of such endeavour.

- The UNDP integrated framework on Local Governance and Local Development (LGLD) has a potential to serve as excellent basis to frame a more comprehensive corporate work stream on localizing the SDGs.
- To provide meaningful support to COs in the LGLD/SDGs localization area, the different relevant initiatives/programmes and competencies existing within UNDP corporate structures should be aligned and harmonised in a UNDP-wide comprehensive programmatic support system (involving all Bureaus and Regional Centres). Such system would also constitute a necessary basis for framing support provided by other partners through a possible global multi-stakeholder partnership on localizing the SDGs (as discussed in the previous chapter).
- Such comprehensive programmatic support system would also constitute a basis for mutual learning and exchange, allowing the organisation to capitalise through a common conceptual basis on the often dispersed and uncoordinated efforts of UNDP COs to support governments in localizing the SDGs.<sup>28</sup>
- UNDP ART and its partner networks are in a good position to add considerable value to such possible corporative effort, but in order to do so it should be able to adapt once more its ways of operating, e.g. producing and disseminating relevant guidelines for COs, extending global partnership processes in order to more closely involve the needs and potential of COs.

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<sup>28</sup> This could also be done through continued facilitation of exchange among country LGLD programmes, both through Forums and missions, as well as through periodical meetings between CTAs and coordinators;

## 8. ED4 – Mainstreaming within the UNDP / UN system

This chapter provides evidence and answers to the Evaluation Question No. 4:

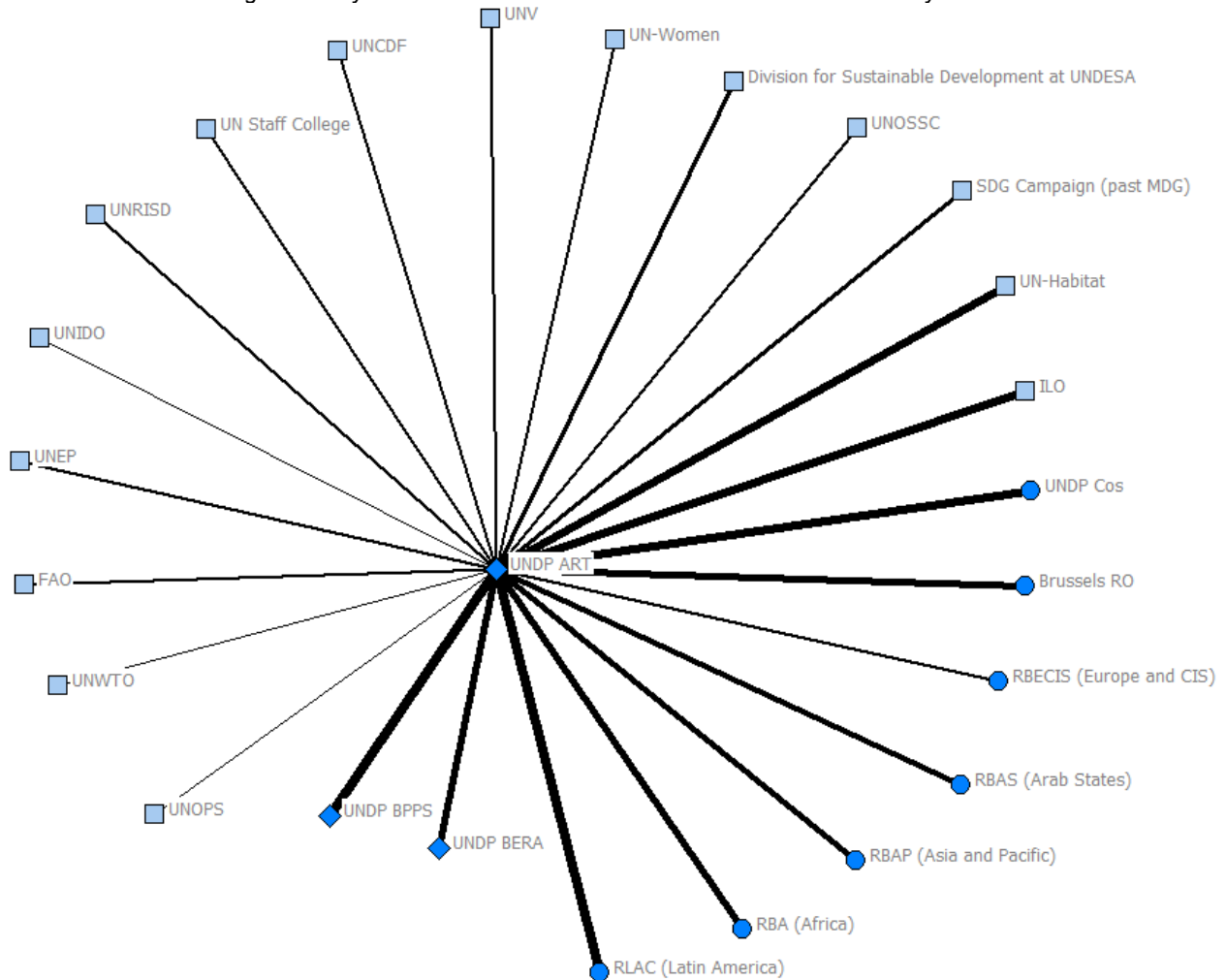
*To what extent is the UNDP ART approach relevant to inform and integrate UNDP corporate policies and programmes at global and country level?*

and its sub-questions dealing with 1) alignment and integration with key UNDP global corporate policies and plans, and 2) relevance for future UNDP corporate policies and plan.

*The main issue for assessment is the extent to which UNDP ART is increasingly integrated within the UNDP corporate framework to serve the UNDP mandate as ‘integrator platform for the UN development system’ (UN ECOSOC, Report of the Secretary-General, 30/06/2017, p. 14) for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*

As a basis for the following discussion, it is important to represent the systemic relations that UNDP ART engages with other UNDP Bureaux and UN entities (Figure 8.1), showing the extent to which it builds on synergies and articulation and it mainstreams its approach within the UN system.

Figure 8.1 Systemic relations of UNDP ART within the UNDP / UN system



Source: Authors

The UNDP ART Initiative in 2017 has relevant direct relations with 25 stakeholders within the UNDP and UN system. The relevance increased by 32% between 2013 and 2017, while the intensity increased by 18.1%. Considering simultaneously the relevance and intensity, the MI increased by 29.9% and the SI increased by 25.8% (with two new relationships, i.e. from 23 to 25). Considering the average of the two indicators, the score of MI increased by 19.5% and by 15.7% for SI. This means that relevance and intensity were strongly increasing over the last years.

It clearly appears – unsurprisingly – the strength of its relations within UNDP BPPS and UNDP BERA, as well as with UNDP COs, whose LGLD programmes and initiatives have been supported over the recent years. Similarly, UN-Habitat and ILO emerge as the two main partner UN agencies, the former concerning the whole set of activities on the Localization of the SDGs, the latter on the field of social economy and LED, particularly through the joint organization of the World Forums (as well as elaboration of joint proposals). Nonetheless, some relations that may potentially be relevant appear to be weak or missing, such as with UN Women, UNCDF, UNIDO, IFAD, UNESCO and UNICEF<sup>29</sup> (among others), and the location in Brussels is pointed by some key informants as a limiting factor for an enhanced integration within the UN and UNDP systems.

## 8.1 Synergies and mainstreaming within the UN system on Localizing the SDGs

As the Localization of the SDGs enabled through a LGLD integrated framework constitutes the current main strategic focus of the UNDP ART Initiative – it is crucial to analyse the extent to which it is permeating and mainstreamed in the UN system. In this regard, it should be recalled that the debate and elaboration of tools on the Localization of the SDGs is still at an early stage of consolidation. Nevertheless, current efforts undergone by UNDP through ART and its partners should be positively highlighted, especially when considering that the SDGs have officially been launched only two years ago and all the advances that were already accomplished.

First of all, the UNDG is devoting central attention to tailoring SDGs to sub-national and local contexts, to foster vertical and horizontal policy coherence, to apply multi-stakeholder approaches for SDGs Integration, and review progress also at sub-national level.

The Interim Reference Guide to UNCTs on the Mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda (UNDG, 2015) appears to share several distinctive elements of the “Road Map for Localizing the SDGs”, elaborated by the GTF, UN-Habitat and UNDP ART, especially regarding awareness-raising and advocacy, the role of horizontal and vertical partnerships and multilevel governance and the importance of tailored implementation at the local level. The last update (March, 2017) of the Reference Guide is even more strongly aligned with the Localization approach as in particular:

- It emphasizes that LRGs should be regarded as important new partners within national and global partnerships for the SDGs (p. 26);
- It clearly points the need for localizing the SDGs (especially in complex settings) and for vertical policy coherence, conceiving the subnational level as ‘the key site of delivery and development’ (p. 130);
- It pushes towards the imperative of “*Glocalizing* the 2030 Agenda” through institutional coordination mechanisms, multi-stakeholder consultative bodies and forums, Local Agenda 21s and networks, monitoring and review at the local level, impact assessment processes, integrated modelling (p. 6);
- It highlights the importance of reviewing how well existing subnational and local development plans – in content and ambition – against the comprehensive scope of The 2030 Agenda and SDGs (p. 5).

The UNDG Guidelines to Support Country Reporting on the SDGs (drafted in January 2017) stresses the need for subnational multi-stakeholder consultations and reviews, inclusive and participatory subnational dialogues on SDGs implementation to develop common understandings, as well as monitoring territorial-level progress, opportunities and challenges in implementing effective development cooperation principles. UNDP through ART has recently provided additional inputs to reinforce the pivotal role of LRGs in monitoring the SDGs.

The 2016 report on the shared results of the UNDG (UNDG, 2017) highlights that 72% of UN Country Teams (UNCTs) have forged partnerships with LRGs, especially in the policy areas of gender equality (SDG#5), health and well-being (SDG#3) and quality education (SDG#4). In addition, the 2015 report on the results of UNDG coordination indicates that one indicator to evaluate the UN development system in response to the 2030 Agenda is the provision of ‘integrated, evidence-based policy advice and thought leadership, to support countries to embed the 2030 Agenda into national and *local plans and budgets*’ (italics added).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> It has to be reminded that ART is bound to corporate (UNDP/PG/RAI) channels that orient and thus limit its discretion when it comes to engaging specific relationships within the UN system. UNDP/RAI is managing an informal UN group including actors that are relevant within the context, and that could constitute the basis for envisioning more structured relationships also for ART in the future.

<sup>30</sup> Moreover, both UNDG’s reports provide example of several countries where UNCTs pushed for Localization, among others: in Lao People’s Democratic Republic, with a localization workshop to introduce the new agenda and its implications for provincial planning; in Ethiopia, with a macro-level action plan to support the Government in roll out and

These elements are strongly aligned with the strategic vision of adopting a “whole-of-government” approach, which also crucially involves LRGs and their associations in all stages of planning, implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda. This approach has been highlighted by the Deputy Secretary-General's remarks at High-Level Political Forum Event “Getting Governments Organized to Deliver on the SDGs” (July 2017):

*‘Successful implementation will also depend to a great degree on local authority actions. A number of countries have been working to engage local authorities in implementing the SDGs. The UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration has called for developing local 2030 Agendas. It has noted the need to move away from top down relationships and, instead, ensure that central and local governments work as partners. And the resources and capacities of local governments need to be commensurate with their responsibilities.’*

Building on this vision and commitment, the Executive Office of the UN Secretary General has recently launched a new initiative called “Local2030: Hub for Sustainability Solutions”, which recognizes that the 2030 Agenda is ‘essentially a local agenda’ and thus aims at fostering ‘innovative partnerships and a new, action-oriented model for SDGs implementation that will allow local actors to deliver more at scale, identify and address significant gaps and overcome barriers to progress’.<sup>31</sup>

In this regard, it is primarily important to highlight a strong mainstreaming achievement also deriving from the whole work that UNDP through ART – along with its main partners – has long promoted to introduce the local and territorial dimension and the engagement with LRGs for the implementation of the SDGs. Having reached the core of the UN system with such a strong endorsement and commitment by the Executive Office of the Secretary General itself is undoubtedly a central result that may further push for a permeation of the approach, methodologies and tools discussed in this report within the whole UN development system. Even though the framework is not sufficiently advanced yet, there is future potential to leverage a strong complementarity in this area (and avoid overlaps and dispersion of efforts), as UNDP’s concrete experience and partnerships may inform and nurture the Secretariat vision and priorities on the Local2030 initiative and other similar initiatives related to the implementation of the Agenda and SDGs localization.

Another key pillar of the UNDG’s policy support to the implementation of the SDGs at the country level is the MAPS (Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support) approach, which focuses on 1) landing the SDGs into national, sub-national and local plans through mainstreaming work to raise public awareness, 2) targeting resources at priority areas through robust analytical works for the design of policy interventions, and 3) providing technical expertise for policy support.

It is key to highlight that the MAPS approach since its adoption mirrors the UNDP ART approach in many respects, based on key shared principles such as the importance of multi stakeholder partnerships, multi level governance systems, integrated approach, policy cohesion and the partnership principles of the “whole-of-government” and “whole-of-society”. As a result, specific tools including multi-level governance and multi-actors’ consultative platforms, integrated planning and monitoring systems at sub-national level are introduced in the MAPS reference guide.

UNDP ART has taken an active role to enhance the MAPS approach at UNDP level in three ways:

1. Directly participating to UNDP BPPS MAPS mission to Djibouti in November 2016, aimed at mainstreaming SDGs in national and local strategies, and accelerating their implementation.<sup>32</sup>
2. Actively participating to the three-day MAPS Missions Workshop (as well as its follow-up) organised by UNDP BPPS in January 2017 to help ensure shared thinking and a core set of tools within UNDP

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Localization of the 2030 Agenda; in Pakistan, with national- and provincial-level consultations and agreements on Localization and implementation of the 2030 Agenda; in Indonesia, to transform its MDGs Secretariat into a SDGs Transition Secretariat and to localize the SDGs at the district and provincial levels; in the MENA region, to provide leadership to move towards a comprehensive and resilience-based response to the crisis in Syria built on collaboration between national and subnational partners and the international community; in Tanzania, on area-based joint programmes and sub-national coordination mechanisms, including linking humanitarian and development concerns; in Cambodia, to put in place cross-sectoral reforms of public financial management and public administration, embedding democratic practices within local governance; in Ukraine, to raise awareness on the 2030 Agenda through local consultations in the capital and in 10 regions across the country.

<sup>31</sup> This initiative involves as partners several UN agencies (including obviously UNDP and UN Habitat), related intergovernmental organizations (like the GTF) and other international organizations, such as UCLG, proposing to operate as a hub of networks and resources and convergence point to catalyse knowledge and solutions. Finally, the Local2030 initiative declares that ‘the Hubs’ focus on the local needs expressed by communities will accelerate the One UN’s ability to prioritize and deliver joint solution and service-provision when needed and requested’.

<sup>32</sup> The participation to the UNDP BPPS MAPS mission to Sri Lanka was also foreseen, but then postponed.

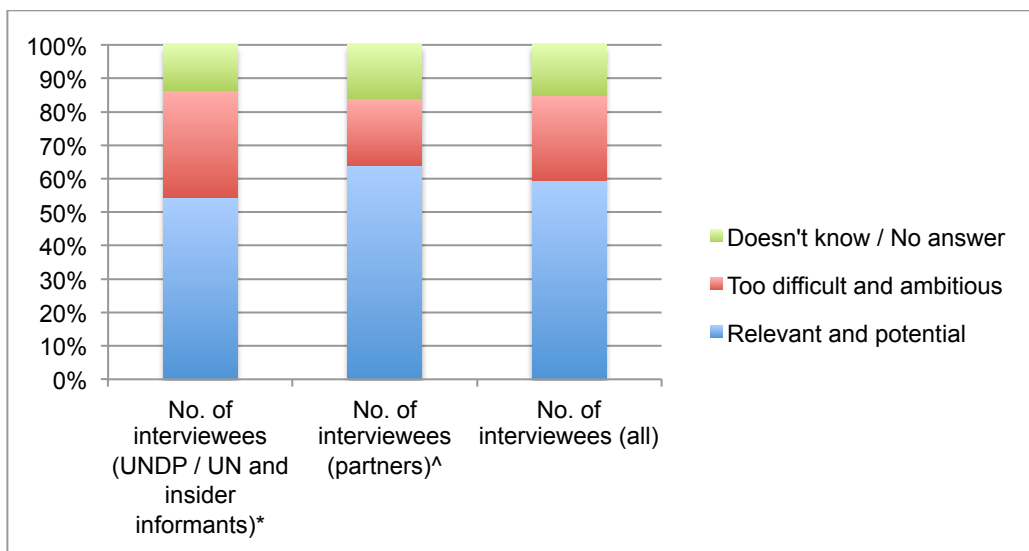
about integrated policy support for SDGs implementation using the MAPS approach. In this regard, UNDP ART shared experience and best practices to inform future multidisciplinary MAPS missions on the relevance, tools and recommendations for the Localization of the SDGs;

3. Contributing to the design of the “Rapid Integrated Policy Assessment” (RIPA), a tool that will be soon launched to help countries assess their readiness for SDGs implementation by reviewing national plans against the SDGs.

**To conclude, SDGs localization anchored to multi-level policy and institutional frameworks is gaining increasing prominence in UNDP and in the whole UN system as basis of an integrated response capacity at country and local level. In this regard, as SDGs are becoming a transversal element of the response of all UN agencies on the ground due to their integrated nature, this calls for an ever-stronger emphasis on the importance of a UN system-wide approach to inter-agency collaboration, also at the local level.**

In this regard, answers from interviewees point to the relevant potential of UNDP through ART to improve the development effectiveness of the overall UN system, especially at the local level, as shown in Figure 8.2.

Figure 8.2 Interviewees’ answer on the relevance of UNDP ART to enhance UNDP / UN development effectiveness on SDGs implementation.



\* Results are based on interviews with 25 UNDP/UN staff and insider informants;

^ Results are based on interviews with 22 partners

Source: Authors

Indeed, despite resistances the UN system is increasingly moving towards inter-agency approaches<sup>33</sup> also in light of its on-going reform and the strong commitment in this direction of the Secretary General. In this regard, when tackling complex integrated challenges, the territorial approach is regarded as appropriate means to gather together all actors and partners, starting with UN entities as already in the case of a new joint UN project on LGLD in Malawi and the on-going joint UN project (evolved from a previous UNDP ART GOLD programme) in Lebanon to strengthen local governance in facing the refugee crisis.

**As anticipated in relation to the local2030 Initiative, there is a strong potential for complementarity between UNDP combined role as convener of strategic global partnerships and enabler of their operationalization in countries and territories, and the promotion of Secretariat initiatives aimed at enhancing a coordinated vision and policy responses for local level SDGs implementation in the framework of the UN system and beyond.**

<sup>33</sup> In this regard, it is interesting to note that the 2015 report on the results of UNDG coordination reports an increase in UNCTs with shared offices at sub-national level and UN common premises by +13% between 2014 and 2015, which represent an interesting trend that UNDP through ART can further contribute to strengthen.



## 8.2 Alignment and integration within UNDP

The assessment of the overall consistency of the approach promoted by UNDP ART with the current UNDP Strategic Plan 2013-2017 is based both on the perception of key informants (i.e. UNDP staff and insider informants) as well as on evidence collected through desk-based documents analysis.

To begin with, the global project document of the UNDP ART Initiative elaborated in 2015 states that it aims at contributing to:

Outcomes:

- *SP Outcome 3: Countries have strengthened institutions to progressively deliver universal access to basic services*
- *SP Outcome 7: Development debates and actions at all levels prioritize poverty, inequality and exclusion consistent with our engagement principles*

Outputs:

- *Output 3.2: Functions, financing and capacity of sub-national level institutions enabled to deliver improved basic services and respond to priorities voiced by the public*
- *Output 7.6: Innovations enabled for development solutions, partnerships and other collaborative arrangements*
- *Output 7.7: Mechanisms in place to generate and share knowledge about development solutions*
- *Output 7.8: Governance institutional, and other critical bottlenecks addressed to support achievement of the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals*

Interviewees generally agree with this interpretation of the consistency between UNDP ART and UNDP SP 2013-2017, having ART an impact especially on governance, livelihoods and economic development for poverty eradication. In addition, UNDP through ART is given credit to “transcend the silos” of the SP, introducing a sort of innovation in the traditional business and operational model of UNDP. However, this added-value also explains some of the difficulties faced by the UNDP ART Initiative in mainstreaming its approach within the UNDP, as it doesn’t precisely fit in a unique strategic area, thus requiring to find its own operational space by dealing with several other more focused initiatives.

A direct analysis of the SP 2013-2017 allows highlighting its endorsement and call for strengthening local governance – as the level closest to citizens – in terms of planning, management and monitoring, in strong connection with national priorities (p. 23). Indeed, since its early premise the SP recognises that ‘Inequalities are widening within countries’ (p. 3) and thus partnerships bringing together communities, private sectors, foundations and civil society, and coordination of action across levels will require innovative mechanisms and support.

Throughout the SP, the role of local governance and its enhancement are connected to several policy areas, such as (among others): environmental and electoral justice; effective maintenance and protection of natural capital; sustainable access to energy and improved energy efficiency; early economic revitalization for post-conflict and post-disaster recovery; peaceful resolution of disputes; developing local regulations on environmental management; incentives to conserve and sustainably utilize biodiversity, growing markets for sustainable products and services benefiting the poor. This recognition may let to expand the number of SP Outputs that UNDP through ART can potentially impact on, by including also those related to conflict and risk reduction (e.g. 5.2 and 5.5) and to post-conflict and post-disaster (e.g. 6.1, 6.2 and 6.4). This is in line with the selection of relevant Outcomes and Outputs of the SP to the LGLD framework reported in UNDP 2016). Moreover, despite the SP does not endorse a platform approach, it calls for ‘a more flexible multidisciplinary issues-based development solutions approach and to programme and implement in a more integrated fashion’ (UNDP, 2016, p. 2). However, the integrated territorial approach seems not to be directly included in the picture, as well as the role of territorial cooperation.

It’s also important to note that the “Evaluation of the SP, global programme and regional programmes (2014-2017)” explicitly recommends to expand assistance at sub-national level (#3), to strengthen subnational capabilities for urban and rural development planning, governance and risk assessment (#4) and to continue to provide guidance and thought leadership on how to translate the post-2015 agenda also at subnational levels through clear local priorities and coherence with the global agenda. The official response to these recommendations – included in the drafting of the new UNDP SP 2018-2021 –is that ‘UNDP will ensure that poverty eradication as an irreversible process will guide the strategies, policies and systems that UNDP will support in *its engagement with national and subnational counterparts and partners.*’ (italics added)

The new UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021 – officially approved by the Executive Board on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2017 – presents strategic principles and features anchored to the 2030 Agenda that may be potentially very relevant to further consolidate the approach promoted by the UNDP ART Initiative, as shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Analysis of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (italics added)

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Illustrative quotations</i>
<b>Integrated approach</b>	- UNDP works as an ' <i>integrator</i> across policy, programmatic and organizational silos' (par. 10) - 'There are as yet no comprehensive, widely applicable systems or methodologies for <i>integrated approaches to interconnected development challenges</i> ' (par. 26) - UNDP has to 'deliver an <i>integrated offer</i> to government partners' (par. 64)
<b>Partnership-based approach</b>	- It aims at promoting " <i>whole-of-government</i> " and " <i>whole-of-society</i> " responses (par. 12) within a 'partnership-based approach to <i>leverage the range of skills and resources needed for effective solutions</i> , both from within the United Nations system as well as from other partners.' (par. 23) - It looks to 'leverage domestic and international, public and private <i>investments</i> , and greater <i>capacities</i> to promote innovation, South-South <i>cooperation and knowledge-sharing</i> ' (par. 31) - It aims at enhancing 'its emerging and future leader development programmes to focus more on partnership development and <i>multi-stakeholder dialogue and negotiation</i> ' (par. 76)
<b>Territorial inequalities</b>	- It highlights that 'Countries that are dealing with structural transformations at the national level may have <i>regions or communities where basic development needs still need to be met</i> ' (par. 7 and p. 22)
<b>Multilevel governance</b>	- It remarks that 'Integrated responses need to be coherent not merely across sectors, but also <i>coordinated across levels</i> (international, national, subnational and local)' (par. 8) - It requires to 'establishing and maintaining inclusive, responsive and <i>accountable governance at national and local level</i> ' (par. 28) - It supports the 'development of <i>institutional arrangements for coordinated action at national and subnational levels</i> (e.g., for jobs and livelihoods creation, basic service provision, access to financial and non-financial assets and social care and protection)' and 'Enabling greater <i>voice and participation of the poor in structures and processes of governance</i> will be essential as well, to promote agency and well-being' (par. 43)
<b>Strategic planning</b>	- It intends helping 'plan, prioritize, sequence and finance integrated policy solutions to complex challenges', ' <i>strengthening long-term planning</i> ', as well as 'strengthen capacities for whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to manage complex interventions' (par. 44).
<b>Platform approach</b>	- It foresees ' <i>country support platforms</i> [that] will help countries to design and deliver integrated solutions to complex development problems that require multi-sectoral action across economic, social and environmental issues' and 'creating effective mechanisms for <i>multi-stakeholder, "whole-of-society" approaches to the Goals</i> ' (par. 49). - 'The platforms will support the <i>iterative ideation, design, testing and deployment of solutions packages</i> implemented by coalitions of partners' (par. 52).
<b>Technical and policy advisory support</b>	'The <i>global development advisory and implementation services platform</i> is intended to serve a dual purpose: firstly, to provide high-quality technical and policy advisory <i>support to country platforms and UNDP country programmes</i> ; and secondly to <i>support UNDP global knowledge, innovation and partnership-building efforts</i> ' (par. 57).
<b>Inter-agency collaboration</b>	- It aims at 'generating sufficient support and <i>collaboration from other agencies to provide truly integrated multidimensional solutions</i> ; and mobilizing the resources needed to establish and operate effective country platforms' (par. 89).
<b>South-South and triangular cooperation</b>	- It foresees ' <i>efforts to capture, disseminate and help implement these solutions</i> through South-South and triangular cooperation approaches' (par. 59).

Source: Authors

Nevertheless, the local / territorial dimension of development (and the Localization of the SDGs) and the role of LRGs still appears quite dispersed or implicit throughout the plan. For instance, they are not explicitly mentioned in some crucial paragraphs, e.g. on deepening partnerships outside the UN system (par. 15, which does not include territorial cooperation partners, either) and on the country support platforms (par. 49 to 56). Similarly, it has to be noted that Annex 4 of the SP on prototypes and pilots of country support platforms for the SDGs does not include any example from LGLD programmes supported also by UNDP through ART, as those analysed in detail in chapter 7.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> For instance, the Annex includes the illustrative support by UNDP in Cabo Verde to mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals into the national development planning process but it does not include any reference to the "Local Platforms" programme that would have perfectly fit the discussion about on-going, nationally-owned, multi-stakeholder and "whole-of-society" approaches to the Goals supported by UNDP.

On the other side, a preliminary analysis of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-21 allows identifying the Outcomes and Outputs on which UNDP through ART may potentially impact on in the future (Table 8.2).

Table 8.2 Analysis of the IRR Framework for the UNDP SP 2018-2021

<b>Outcome 1: ADVANCE POVERTY ERADICATION IN ALL ITS FORMS AND DIMENSIONS</b>		
<i>Signature solution</i>	<i>Output</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
#1 <b>POVERTY</b>	1.1.1 Capacities developed across the whole of government to integrate the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and other international agreements in development plans and budgets, and to analyse progress towards the SDGs, using innovative and data-driven solutions	Number of countries that have development plans and budgets that integrate international agreements across the whole-of-government: a) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development b) Paris Agreement c) Other international agreements
#2 <b>GOVERNANCE</b>	1.2.1 Capacities at national and sub-national levels strengthened to promote inclusive local economic development and deliver basic services including HIV and related services	Number of countries where national and sub-national governments have improved capacities to plan, budget, manage and monitor basic services  Number of countries with inclusive local economic development (LED) strategies and plans in place: a) With institutional frameworks for implementation in local and regional governments b) With public-private partnerships at scale for accelerating catalytic LED initiatives c) With urban development plans and strategies in line with the New Urban Agenda under implementation
	1.2.2 Enabling environment strengthened to expand public and private financing for the achievement of the SDGs	Volume of additional resources leveraged through public and private financing for the SDGs with UNDP support at sub-national level (public and private)
<b>Outcome 2: ACCELERATE STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</b>		
#1 <b>POVERTY</b>	2.1.1 Low emission and climate resilient objectives addressed in national, sub-national and sectoral development plans and policies to promote economic diversification and green growth	
<b>Outcome 3: STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE TO SHOCKS AND CRISES</b>		
#1 <b>POVERTY</b>	3.1.1 Core government functions and inclusive basic services restored post-crisis for stabilization, durable solutions to displacement and return to sustainable development pathways within the framework of national policies and priorities	Number of crisis affected countries supported by UNDP, upon request, with targeted interventions to strengthen core government functions for sustainable recovery and improved service delivery
#2 <b>GOVERNANCE</b>	3.2.2 National and local systems enabled and communities empowered to ensure the restoration of justice institutions, redress mechanisms and community security	Number of countries with national and local systems restored or adopted
#3 <b>RESILIENCE</b>	3.3.1. Evidence-based assessment and planning tools and mechanisms applied to enable implementation of gender-sensitive and risk-informed prevention and preparedness to limit the impact of natural hazards and pandemics and promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies	Number of countries with sub-national mechanisms for mitigating risks to urban centres
<b>Tier Three: Organizational Performance</b>		
<b>Outcome 2: Organizational efficiency and effectiveness for programme delivery</b>		
	2.1 UNDP recognized as a development partner of choice	Percentage of partners perceiving UNDP as a valued partner to their organization

Source: Authors

In sum, despite the absence of an explicit related output, governance issues are of transversal relevance throughout the SP, and specifically local governance as basis for SDGs implementation. There are also various important references to local level implementation, whilst SDG localization as such seems to be a missing link. As already discussed in other parts of the report, it would be therefore key to further harmonize the SDGs localization approach within UNDP (and as basis for the broader UN system) giving it a comprehensive programmatic dimension and overall policy coherence that

could be profitably ensured and built-on the LGLD framework / territorial approach as developed (also) through UNDP ART. On the other hand, the inclusion in the new SP of a specific output and related indicators on LED capacities, including provisions for plans and institutional frameworks, can be seen as a result of the extensive (combined policy and field) work carried out by ART in this area.

Key informants also agree that the approach promoted by UNDP ART can perfectly fit in the new SP, especially in supporting UNDP as integrator and convenor of partners for alignment and harmonization through a new integrated “multilevel platforms” approach, which UNDP through ART has been supporting for several years in a number of countries. Moreover, some interviewees also remark that, in light of the new SP, the approach, methodologies and tools promoted by UNDP ART can also be instrumental to enhance the complementarities between sustaining peace / humanitarian initiatives and development processes.<sup>35</sup>

Along with the mainstreaming on other global agendas and policy areas that have already been discussed in chapter 5.3 (i.e. on Sustaining Peace, Agenda for Humanity, New Urban Agenda, Development Cooperation Effectiveness), it is important here to highlight the influence of the approach promoted by UNDP through ART on other UNDP policies, as reported in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3 Influencing on selected UNDP policy areas

<i>UNDP Policy area</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<b>UNDP “Integrated framework to support Local Governance and Local Development”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full integration of the approach with all its key distinctive features, conceptual foundation for SHD and for the Localization of the SDGs.</li> <li>- Inclusion of all pillars and tools of the approach.</li> <li>- Key informants’ opinion as main influencing and mainstreaming output of UNDP ART within the UNDP system.</li> </ul> <p>Nb. Direct influence of UNDP ART in the elaboration of the integrated framework.</p>
<b>UNDP How-to Guide on “Local governance in fragile and conflict-affected settings”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full integration of the approach with all its key distinctive features.</li> <li>- Examples derived from UNDP ART approach, methodologies and tools (directly mentioned) for many activities included in the guide.</li> <li>- Inclusion and analysis of concrete case-studies taken from UNDP ART experience, i.e. Colombia, Sri Lanka and Lebanon.</li> </ul> <p>Nb. Provision of inputs from ART team and direct involvement in the elaboration of the guide by UNDP BPPS team.</p>
<b>UNDP “Sustainable Urbanization Strategy”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integration of many traits of the UNDP ART approach, e.g. multilevel governance, horizontal alignment, coherence between local processes and national strategies, integrated systems approach.</li> <li>- Remarks on decentralized cooperation as innovative modality for horizontal partnerships and technical cooperation to address complex urban issues, mentioning the UNDP Hub for Territorial Partnerships / ART Initiative as focal point to tap into these potentials.</li> <li>- Highlights to the role of relevant traditional partners of the UNDP ART Initiative (e.g. UN Habitat, UCLG, ICLEI) and direct reference to its strong collaboration with UCLG.</li> <li>- Direct reference to the integrated framework for LGLD and its core elements.</li> </ul>

Source: Authors

In line with this internal mainstreaming of UNDP ART approaches and methodologies, it is also useful to mention three further illustrative examples of direct collaboration between ART and other UNDP structures at international, regional and country level:

- A) UNDP ART and the Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI) – implemented by UNDP and other five agencies (i.e. IOM, ILO, UNHCR, UNFPA and UN Women) – attempted to coincide in countries and geographic areas to foster multiplier effects due to the common underlying approach on territorial development;
- B) UNDP ART provided inputs and financial support to the elaboration of the “UNDP Local and Urban Governance Dashboard” by UNDP RBAP, as a data analytical tool that enables cities and LRGs to prioritise the needs of communities and subsequent investments by tracking progress against the SDGs. Such tool was already piloted in some countries in Asia and Pacific (e.g. in Indonesia and Philippines, with successful results) and it is now given visibility (through YouTube and the “Localizing the SDGs” platform) and promoted by UNDP ART for application in other countries (e.g. Cabo Verde and Mauritania).

<sup>35</sup> For instance, the integrated territorial approach and methodology promoted by UNDP in Colombia was used also to support the national government and local communities to deliberate on the peace agreement by taking into consideration the voice of all governance actors at the territorial level.

- C) UNDP ART supported the elaboration of the “Roteiro para a Localização dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável: Implementação e Acompanhamento no nível subnacional” by the UNDP CO Brazil, which adapts the roadmap published by the GTF, UN-Habitat and UNDP ART to the Brazilian context, including for instance reference to the relevant collaboration between CNM and UNDP ART.

Concerning relations with UNDP Regional Hubs, the RBLAC has been historically most exposed to the approach promoted by UNDP through ART, due to the long-lasting presence of the Initiative and its support to LGLD initiatives in the region. More recently, the RBA has also gained growing exposure and relations with ART’s work through the formulation and launching of the new programmes in Cabo Verde and Mauritania.

However, while the approach has been proposed to UNDP COs in the RBAS area to an increasing extent in recent years, its extension to the Asia and Pacific region will require a tailored adaptation, for instance by adjusting the territorial cooperation modality to a different cultural environment and promoting city-city interchange within the region.

Finally, it is important to anticipate and highlight the potential of some on-going activities that UNDP ART is working on to further SDGs localization frameworks.

First, ART is working on the elaboration of a new UNDP Global Project on Local Governance and Local Development to Localize the SDGs, which will build on the integrated framework for local governance and local development (LGLD) to strengthen sub-national integrated systems (in both urban and rural local areas, with a focus on secondary municipalities and those experiencing fragility) towards the promotion of sustainable development. This project will certainly benefit of and fully incorporate the long-lasting experience, value-added and lesson learnt of the UNDP ART Initiative in key areas including dialogue and support to LRGs as leading actors in the SDGs implementation and localization process.<sup>36</sup>

Second, as already discussed in previous chapters, as part of this new global project UNDP ART foresees to promote and launch a multi stakeholder partnership for localizing the SDGs, as a local-to-global mobilization campaign aimed at feeding the debate and enhance political commitment and awareness, especially by national States, to embrace and promote an integrated local governance perspective for the implementation of the SDGs. In particular, the Alliance could engage and push forward UNDP ART action for SDGs localization in key areas including advocacy, policy influence at international level, joint partnerships and initiatives at territorial level, knowledge creation and dissemination – with the aim of animating and enhancing a joint dynamic effort and continuously mobilising new partners at different levels. It will be crucial in this respect to strengthen synergies and complementarities, avoiding risk of overlapping efforts, with other initiatives at UN level (e.g. Local2030).

### 8.3 Final remarks on key findings and opportunities

The evidence discussed in this chapter shows that **there has been an increasing capitalization and integration of the UNDP ART Initiative both within the UNDP and UN system. Nonetheless, there are wide opportunities for UNDP and other UN agencies to benefit much more in the future by leveraging on the UNDP ART’s networks, partnerships (especially with LRGs and territorial cooperation actors) and tested tools (e.g. National Coordination Committees, Territorial Working Groups, International Cooperation Guidelines, LEDAs) for its corporate mission, especially in light of the UN Reform and the newly released UNDP SP 2018-2021 or the SG report on Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.**

The UNDP ART Initiative was fully aligned with UNDP SP 2014-2017, which called for strengthening local governance in terms of planning, management and monitoring – in strong connection with national priorities – in several policy areas. It remains relevant with regards to strategic features of the new UNDP SP 2018-2021, such as i) the need for integrated responses coordinated across levels, partnerships-based approach (“whole-of-government” and “whole-of-society”) and multi-stakeholder dialogue and negotiation; ii) the recognition of territorial inequalities; the call for institutional arrangements for coordinated action at national and subnational levels; iii) the application of a platform approach at country level; the relevance of technical and policy advisory support, inter-agency collaboration and SSTC; or, iv) the objective of implementing

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<sup>36</sup> The draft project document includes the following three outputs: A) Integrated local governance and development solutions and systems implemented; B) Local capacities for implementing the Agenda 2030 strengthened; C) A Global Alliance and Territorial Partnerships for Localizing the SDGs promoted.

integrated LEDs systems as mentioned within the IRR Framework of the new SP. The SG report on the repositioning of the UNDS (p. 18) specifically mentions localizing within UNDP's new roles and responsibilities within the UN development system.

Key evidence-based findings of the evaluation related to the integration and mainstreaming of the ART initiative within UNDP and the broader UN system include:

- Wide systemic relations, especially strong with UNDP BPPS, UNDP BERA and UNDP COs, as well as with UN-Habitat (on Localization) and ILO (on social economy and LED);
- Full alignment with UNDG's request of tailoring SDGs to sub-national and local contexts, fostering vertical and horizontal policy coherence, applying multi-stakeholder approaches for SDGs integration, and reviewing progress also on sub-nationally adapted SDGs;
- Diffusion of the approach to the core of the UN system as highlighted by the initiative "Local2030: Hub for Sustainability Solutions" launched by the Executive Office of the UN Secretary General;
- Important potential to improve the development effectiveness of the overall UN system at the local level.

The evidence gathered through this evaluation, combined with findings of the mid-term evaluation, allowed to determine the following **key elements and competencies associated to the UNDP ART Initiative's practice and experience that are potentially interesting for further consolidation and mainstreaming within UNDP's corporate work-streams and structures**:

- Programmatic experience and competencies  
ART has developed over the time core competencies and methodologies that are relevant for the localization of the SDGs and the UNDG proposed MAPS approach. This experience refers to multi-level governance approaches (territorial WGs and CNCs), the territorial approach as a multi stakeholder process enabling policy coherence and integrated development solutions, as well as its experience in fostering cooperation effectiveness at local level (GP process; Territorial Development Guidelines for development partners).
- Multi-stakeholder partnership networks at the local level  
The importance of creating multi-stakeholder partnerships for the implementation of the 2030 agenda has been frequently highlighted, not the least through the introduction of a proper SDG on partnership. It has been reiterated within the SG report through an entire section on partnerships for the 2030 agenda. ART's multi-stakeholder partnership networks are specifically of interest as they gather all local stakeholders that are relevant for the localization of the SDGs, hence very much complementary to other UNDP networks and partnerships.
- Cooperation with global and regional association of LRGs  
These consolidated partnerships could become strategic entry points for translating UNDP's national SDG platform approach also to the local level. This is also in line with a SG report recommendation asking for stronger relations ships with LRGs for SDG implementation. In particular, UNDP could benefit of ART's engagement with European LRGs, which are among the most advanced in implementing the SDGs at regional and local level, to position itself as a knowledge broker in linking and fostering exchanges with the localizing experiences within partner countries where LGLD programmes are in place.
- Access to territorial cooperation networks  
With the approval of the 2030 agenda DC initiatives have become more dynamic and active again. By capitalising upon the DC networks and partnerships associated to the ART's work, UNDP could tap into relevant additional technical and financial resources and align them with UNDP/UN initiatives for localizing the SDGs in partner countries.
- Building new EU partnerships  
ART is currently developing interesting possibilities with DGREGIO, a EU directorate new to UN cooperation. This is an interesting perspective that could potentially enrich UNDP's work in urban governance and provide access to a vast amount of well documented urban and territorial development practices and networks (e.g. INTERREG).
- International multi-stakeholder partnership processes  
The World Forum of LED process comprises a large amount of very relevant partners that are looking at jointly promoting integrated and inclusive LED initiatives that could well be directed to complement specific partner country processes on localizing the SDGs (UNDP or UNCT-led).

It is difficult to translate above elements into concrete proposals as the organization is still in the process of defining its future strategic orientations. Through its new SP, UNDP positions itself as a key broker and facilitator for the implementation of the new development agenda. This is confirmed by the SG report that sees UNDP as an operational platform and provider of advisory services to specifically also support the

localization and monitoring of the SDGs. On this basis, and in line with the ToRs of this evaluation, the following main recommendations can be provided, which might have to be reviewed in line with respective future strategic, programmatic or business model changes.

- Overall, as extensively discussed in various parts of the report, localizing the SDGs could become an important transversal agenda for UNDP, extending its national level platform approach towards the subnational level.
- UNDP could cease the momentum and take an actively leading role in promoting a more streamlined UN system also at the local level, with the aim of effectively projecting *delivering as one* to the local level. This would allow local governance stakeholders to be more systematically involved in UNDAFs and CPAPs elaborations, thereby facilitating their effective implementation at local level.
- UNDP could use its new and integrated LGLD strategy and programmes not only to promote a more comprehensive approach to its local development interventions, but also as a key strategic framework for furthering overall system coherence (including governments as well as all UN agencies and Development Partners) and development effectiveness at local level through improved local level institutional frameworks that allow to implement the agenda more effectively.
- UNDP could build upon current existing partnerships on localizing the SDGs (e.g. with HABITAT, ILO) and further strengthen relations and engagement with other UN agencies like UN Women, UNCDF, UNIDO, IFAD, UNESCO and UNICEF (among others). Enhanced connection with the UN Secretariat's Local2030 initiative will allow taking advantage of crucial synergies and avoid dispersion of efforts (and confusion for partner and stakeholders).
- UNDP could capitalise upon previous efforts and alliances and establish the proposed multi-stakeholder partnership on localizing the 2030 agenda, thus further opening itself to new partnership opportunities and modalities that would concur to enhance its brokering role within a multi-level network of territorial actors, and mobilising new technical and financial resources towards UNDP or UNCT-led localizing initiatives.

## 9. Key findings and prospects

Based on the detailed assessment conducted throughout the report, this final chapter aims primarily at resuming the key findings (including relevant issues and limitations). This paves also the way to the identification of recommendations for the future evolution and consolidation of UNDP ART Initiative in supporting the positioning, effectiveness and incidence of UNDP as key development actor for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

### 9.1 Key findings and value-added

The evaluation has shown that the six key features introduced in chapter 4 (see Figure 4.1) – namely, 1) integrated territorial approach and multilevel governance, 2) networking, partnerships and alliances across different levels and functions, 3) “active multilateralism” 4) combination of policy dialogue with implementation support, 5) advocacy and lobbying, 6) knowledge creation, management and sharing – underlie all the evaluation dimensions and how their continued integration constitute the overall value-added of the UNDP ART Initiative.

Firstly, **within the context of the global policy dialogue and debate that is increasingly multi-actor and multilevel, UNDP ART has been able to gain a relevant space to effectively inform the discussion on the key role of LRGs and the local / territorial dimension since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and through the different processes and steps associated to its gradual implementation, as well as within other key global agendas** like the new urban agenda and the development cooperation effectiveness agenda.

In this regard, the influencing capacity of UNDP through ART is clearly supported by relevant evidence (see chapter 5), which goes well beyond the simple provision of inputs to partners' documents, but mainly shaping an increasing alignment of vision, concepts and approaches that will allow to further leverage the synergies and complementarities between UNDP and crucial actors.

Secondly, **results in influencing the overall policy debate are intimately connected with the approach and the catalytic role played by the UNDP ART Initiative to enable effective multi-level networking and partnership building.** Indeed, **the breadth and strength of the relations that UNDP, through ART, has been able to create and enhance over the years with a diversified group of stakeholders at global, supranational, regional, national and territorial level** (see chapter 6) appear specifically

**relevant and instrumental to the core nature of the Agenda 2030 as an integrated, intersectoral and universal framework.**

This multilevel partnership has manifold multiplier effects, allowing joint advocacy for a common vision on the potential of the integrated territorial approach for achieving the SDGs, enabling structural dialogue and mutual exposure, and exploiting synergies and complementarities among partners' initiatives and resources.

Moreover, this networking and partnership-building approach of UNDP ART unfolds from the global to the national and sub-national levels, maintaining its features and value-added as a platform for brokering, aligning and harmonizing efforts within a coherent multilateral framework.

**UNDP ART has succeeded to convey a strategic and integrated/holistic perspective on promoting partnership and alliances, based the flexible integration of different actors' functions and capacities to achieve shared visions and objectives.**

**This has strong implications for enhancing the role of UNDP (at corporate and COs level) as key actor and facilitator in the SDGs localization process. Specifically, territorial partnerships promoted through ART, if well aligned with a localizing effort at corporate and COs level, can remarkably contribute to enhance UNDP role as global broker and catalyser of knowledge and innovation.**

On another hand, the full potential of such perspective in terms of ad-hoc global institutional and organizational / operational arrangements for SDGs implementation are still in the making, as in relation to the establishment of a global multi-stakeholder partnership for localizing the SDGs.

Thirdly, **the articulation of different actors' capacities and resources through multilevel networking and partnership frameworks finds a natural accomplishment at national and local levels, where concrete support to national and local governments and their partners in the programming and implementation of integrated LGLD systems constitutes a pillar of the working modality of the ART Initiative.** This produces the necessary evidence to inform global policy debates, thus adding value and credibility to the whole approach.

Collected country-and local-level evidence has confirmed that **UNDP ART is successfully managing at once to (i) consolidate its long-standing support to effective systems for multilevel governance and integrated planning, adapting it to evolving circumstances and institutionalising key related processes and tools; and (ii) channelling strategic support to introduce new programming frameworks at the demand and in direct dialogue with national governments, through a 'multilevel platform' approach adapted to fully embed an SDGs localization perspective.**

The way how this support is channelled to COs is significantly changing in parallel to its mainstreaming through comprehensive LGLD and SDGs localization frameworks. In this context, the evaluation (see chapter 7) has confirmed that **UNDP ART – through programmatic and technical expertise combined with an extensive partnership network – is still providing relevant and effective support to UNDP COs and their institutional partners in accompanying their efforts to implement comprehensive LGLD systems and localize the SDGs.** On the other hand, it appears that, despite its relevance, such support has not reached its full potential and is still prevalently provided based on punctual COs requests rather than on a more systematic and strategic relation.

Lastly, due to its combined work on policy dialogue and advocacy, networking and partnership-building and implementation support in partner countries, **the ART Initiative is increasingly integrated both within the UNDP (corporate) and the broader UN system** (see chapter 8). **The approach, methodologies and tools developed, tested and consolidated by ART over the years have appeared to be consistent and beneficial for UNDP and other UN agencies' support to countries and territories, constituting a cross-cutting and integrated reference framework for the implementation of the SDGs through a holistic and silos-breaking approach, as well as for effective development cooperation at the local level.**

Indeed, localizing SDGs through LGLD and multilevel governance frameworks constitute an increasingly important area of work for UNDP. There is significant evidence of alignment and transversal strategic relevance of key UNDP ART's features with the new UNDP strategic plan for 2018-2021. Yet, specific distinct elements of UNDP ART could be further leveraged and mainstreamed as part of UNDP (and other UN Agencies) corporate work, to complement and enrich the SDGs localization paradigm, thus building an integrated response capacity at the national and local level. This includes: multi-stakeholder partnership frameworks at the local level, as well as national and international levels (like the WFLED); cooperation with global and regional associations of LRGs, including the ground-breaking work with European LRGs, with its potential to contribute in fulfilling the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda and leveraging the expertise, networks and commitment of EU actors for SDGs localization, thus further positioning UNDP as a global knowledge broker; systematic access to decentralized cooperation networks.





## 9.2 Current issues and limitations

This transversal evaluation of the UNDP ART Initiative has allowed also to identify some relevant issues and limitations that currently affect a full capitalization of the key features and value-added of its approach, methodologies and tools, as well as a fulfilment of partners' expectations.

For the sake of simplicity, limitations are grouped into two broad categories: internal (i.e. related to structural / corporate issues at UNDP level) and functional (i.e. related to the way how UNDP ART operates).

### 9.2.1 Internal issues at UNDP level

#### 1. *UNDP capitalization on its ART Initiative*

It is generally highlighted that UNDP corporately has not sufficiently capitalised on the ART Initiative, and it could benefit much more from leveraging on its partnership networks, specifically with LRGs and their associations, and tested tools (e.g. on LED, multi-stakeholders' partnerships, horizontal and vertical articulation) for its corporate mission, especially in light of the newly released UNDP SP 2018- 2021, the ongoing UN Reform and the recent SG report on repositioning the UN system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. The potential of the ART Initiative to articulate and integrate different UNDP's work-streams contributing to the localization of the SDGs could be further exploited, as much as the internal understanding and knowledge of the key features of its approach, as basis for a stronger coherence and articulation of actions and initiatives at country and regional level.

#### 2. *The nature of ART as a project*

Despite increased mainstreaming within UNDP corporate work, operating as a project constitutes an important structural limitation of the UNDP ART Initiative. If it allows flexible and effective actions through agile alliances, it certainly affects the capacity to roll-out comprehensive development approaches and paradigms through structured and consistent medium / long term support. Moreover, this limits the possibility to (i) leverage the full potential of ART experience and networks of relations, particularly working with LRGs and their associations as key actors for the implementation of the Agenda 2030, as well as the scope for structural and continued engagement and synergy with other key partners (e.g. with territorial cooperation partners); and (ii) respond to the increasing requests for support coming from UNDP COs and Regional Hubs in a more systematic and strategic manner.

#### 3. *Human and financial resources*

The limitation in terms of human and financial resources appears nowadays as a strong bottleneck hampering its potential and consolidation. Despite the wide credit given to the current and past teams of the UNDP ART Initiative in terms of commitment, competences, capacities and achievements, working with such a wide network of partners across levels calls for a more appropriate level of resources (e.g. number of staff members, number of senior-level advisors, funds to mobilize external technical expertise) to maintain its value-added and scale-up its support and outreach.

### 9.2.2 Functional issues of the UNDP ART Initiative

#### 4. *Geographical coverage*

UNDP ART has only partly reached certain regions of the world (i.e. Asia and Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa) due to a longer-lasting engagement with donors and partners operating in other regions (LAC, Northern Africa), limited resources to widen its outreach, as well as specific contextual issues. On top of that, operating as a project can limit options in defining the scope of geographical coverage as a result of a longer-terms strategic perspective.

#### 5. *Engagement with a diversity of actors and sectors*

Despite the impressive network of partners and stakeholders (see chapter 6), the limited structural engagement with some categories of actors appears as a constraining factor for a stronger impact especially on LED and knowledge creation / diffusion. This limitation refers in particular to the relation with international networks of NGOs and CSOs and the private sector (e.g. business organizations and networks, services providers, finance institutions). Important relations with academia and research institutions are established and could be further enhanced, as they constitute a necessary basis to consolidate the conceptual and technical basis of UNDP ART work. Moreover, relations with strategic organizations like the EU and OECD are still in progress and with considerable room for improvement.

#### 6. *Knowledge management and coordination for programmatic and operational support*

The elaboration and streamlining of adapted conceptual frameworks, methodologies and tools (developed and tested both internally as well as by relevant partners in different contexts) for the Localization of the SDGs is still incipient, as much as the systematization and adaptation of best practices for concrete application in different contexts. Similarly, the need emerges for a stronger follow-up and coordination support – beyond the networking and convenor role played by ART through the organization of Forums, events, virtual platforms – to further leverage on the potential of strategic partnerships and alliances and generate agreements for joint initiative on territorial development and LGLD for the Localization of the SDGs.

### 9.3 Opportunities and prospects for evolution and consolidation

As anticipated, the key findings of the evaluation, combined with a few discussed limitations undoubtedly open windows of opportunities for improvements and for future evolutionary trajectories, in order to fully unlock the potential of the approach, methodologies and tools promoted by UNDP through ART and further support the positioning, effectiveness and incidence of UNDP for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at local level, especially in light of the new UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

This leads to the following main recommendations to:<sup>37</sup>

- **Enable a stronger capitalization and integration of the UNDP ART Initiative within the UNDP and UN system.**

- Overcoming the project nature of the UNDP ART Initiative to make it more structurally embedded as transversal thematic and functional “hub” within the UNDP corporate system;

- Reviewing / improving and systematize the way how UNDP ART provides (directly or through regional Bureaus and Hubs) technical and policy advisory support to UNDP COs and partners (e.g. through specialized rosters, virtual tools, ad-hoc methodological guidance), as the increasing awareness on the Localization of the SDGs will lead to increased demand for support;

- Fostering a wider leverage on ART’s expertise, networks and partnerships, through enhanced systemic communication, knowledge exchange and triangulation with UNDP Bureaus, Hubs and COs;

- Systematizing and showcasing existing solid experiences, practices and procedures on multi-stakeholder partnerships and multilevel platforms approaches at country and local level, along with illustrative successful examples of articulation within UNDP, to contribute and feed the future operationalization of the SP;

- Positioning and leveraging the potential of the its approach, methodologies and tools to complement and enhance key corporate thrusts and work-streams, like strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus through integrated LGLD initiatives (also in light of the Sustaining Peace concept and New Agenda for Humanity), including the role of LED in peace-building and conflict prevention.

- **Further the comprehensive elaboration and systematization of the conceptual and technical / operational foundations of UNDP ART.**

- Furthering engage the academia with a specific role in the production of targeted analysis and studies backing the conceptual and technical work of the Initiative;

- Enhancing cooperation with the HDRO in NY (as well as at country level) for joint research and publications;

- Elaborating and disseminating relevant thematic guidelines for COs;

- Introducing systematic monitoring and follow-up systems in relation to the different streams of activities, including the implications and results of networking and partnership agreements also through partners’ feedbacks, perceptions and suggestions in strategic decision-making.

- **Broaden and consolidate a core international alliance of actors to turn it into a widely recognized global multi-stakeholder partnership for SDGs localization.**

- Institutionalizing the alliance and endowing it with a clear rationale, objectives, working tools and procedures, strengthening UNDP role as facilitator and catalyst;

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<sup>37</sup> More extended and detailed reference is included in the chapters dealing with the four evaluation dimensions.

- Building and/or intensifying relations with key strategic actors that are currently less involved and represented in ART-supported dialogue processes, including (i) national governments, (ii) the private, financial as well as philanthropic sector, (iii) networks of NGOs and CSOs;
- Further strengthening and consolidating relations with LRGs, including through the eventual implementation of a UNDP “Advisory Committee for LRGs” to enable a deeper engagement of UNDP corporate management with global and regional associations of LRGs, possibly including – as far as possible – territorial cooperation partners.
  - o **Build a transversal UNDP-corporate work-stream on localizing the SDGs as basis for engaging a UN-system-wide perspective, through comprehensive programmatic support centered on integrated LGLD frameworks.**
- Aligning and harmonizing SDGs relevant initiatives, leveraging competences and networks of different UNDP offices and structures;
- Systematizing ways of channeling support to COs, either directly through strategic and methodological guidance tools, and/or integrating other partners’ resources and competencies;
- Further declining, integrating and mutual alignment of ART’s practice with other specific UNDP/UN initiatives and tools like the SDGs global and country platforms, initial formulation of a Local2030 initiative etc.;
- Enhancing the strategic positioning of the UNDP ART Initiative in the international development arena as possible driver of a unified UNDP approach to influence the global policy dialogue on SDGs localization;
- Promoting and streamlining an integrated response capacity at national and local level applying UNDP ART’s practices and tools within integrated LGLD institutional frameworks to further the overall UN system coherence and development effectiveness at the local level;
- Enhancing a UN system-wide approach to inter-agency collaboration, extending and strengthening relations to seek synergies with other key UN Agencies, as well as with the UN Secretariat.

**To conclude, this evaluation has robustly shown the relevance and effectiveness of the UNDP ART Initiative in contributing to empower integrated local development systems for the localization of the SDGs, through innovative and value adding practices in relation to multilevel governance, vertical and horizontal articulation of actors, policy coherence and development cooperation effectiveness at the local level.**

**However, it is only by better capitalizing, integrating and enhancing its role and functional capacities as part of UNDP corporate structures that the UNDP ART Initiative will be fully able to support the whole UNDP / UN system for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and more broadly for Sustainable Human Development at all levels.**

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The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of UNDP.

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