

GoGlocal! in Windhoek and Stuttgart! The Neighbourhood Scale for Collective Action: Building transformative knowledge on SDG implementation and monitoring

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Abstract

Translating the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the local and institutional level is one of the critical challenges today. There are discrepancies in terms of know-how and capacity on how to integrate the SDGs into existing municipal strategies and including the perspective of people, neighbourhoods and districts. Also, varying degrees of data availability, collection methodologies and data monitoring systems exist at the local level. Overcoming the disconnect between neighbourhoods and municipal institutions is key for contributing to the global impact of sustainability goals.

The major objectives of the *GoGlocal!* Project, which was initiated in 2021, are the development of aligned, co-productive methods. Furthermore, the *GoGlocal!* seeks to establish a basis for a cross-city learning network between Windhoek, Namibia, and Stuttgart, Germany, focusing on SDG 7: affordable and clean energy, SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 13: climate action. Additionally, an objective is to interpret high-level SDG indicators in response to local contexts and needs and to translate these with a focus on the - often overlooked - neighbourhood scale.

Through three learning dialogues and one community studio the project tests a co-productive approach on the neighbourhood level focusing on 1) capacity building for

localising SDGs, 2) the identification, and testing of suitable indicators, and 3) the conceptualisation of learning networks.

The *GoGlocal!* Network involves universities, municipalities and civil society organisations. As a pioneer for Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), Stuttgart has gained experience in city-wide monitoring of SDGs, while co-productive and neighbourhood-based approaches are still in an early stage. Windhoek lacks city-wide monitoring systems, while community-led data gathering methods are practiced widely, yet remain detached from longer-term, city-wide and global development goals.

The paper reflects on the lessons learned in *GoGlocal!* It will present results on the explorative approach, and highlight preliminary results of the community studio conducted in Windhoek. This co-productive exercise suggests that SDG monitoring in cities needs to be disaggregated, and needs to consider existing grassroots processes to become meaningful for the needs of the people on the ground. Open access data can become the basis for wider recognition of data, for linking municipal strategies with the neighbourhood level and back to national and international monitoring levels.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, Co-production, SDG monitoring and implementation, Neighbourhood scale, VLR

1. Introduction

In 2015 and 2016 a number of global agreements were brought about by the United Nations with significance for the sustainable development of the world and to urban development. The Agenda 2030¹ with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and also the New Urban Agenda², can be considered the most prominent and visionary ones. The 17 goals of the Agenda 2030 with its 169 targets and 231 indicators cover different sectoral areas comprehensively, at the same time stressing the need for an integrated approach. They recognise the significant role that local governments have to play as part of a multi-level governance. In fact, 65% of all SDG targets require the involvement of local urban stakeholders to ensure their achievement³. IIED⁴ cautions that the focus is often on national goals and monitoring “with insufficient recognition of key roles of local and regional governments and urban civil society in addressing most of the SDGs”.

According to the New Urban Agenda of the UN, applying SDGs in cities can have positive impacts in several dimensions of development. Producing reliable comparable evidence and performance monitoring on the local level is considered an important instrument to evaluate this process.

SDG implementation in municipalities

There is a growing number of municipal attempts across the globe to interpret and reformulate the universal SDG indicators to respond to their local context and needs. To monitor and report on progress, cities have prepared Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). However, these attempts are mostly limited to the Global North, where particularly

¹ UN, ‘The Agenda 2030 for sustainable development.’

² UN General Assembly, ‘New Urban Agenda.’

³ Misselwitz and Salcedo Villanueva, ‘The Urban Dimension of the SDGs’, 19.

⁴ IIED, ‘The Urban Dimension of Six Global Agreements’, 3.

European cities have taken a lead. For instance, Barcelona has developed its own “Barcelona targets” and Malmö has strongly linked the SDGs to the municipal budgeting.

In Germany, Mannheim uses the SDG agenda for its strategic development plan and the City of Stuttgart is an important case for piloting local SDG monitoring. Stuttgart was the first city in Germany to test SDG indicators for municipalities, provided by a project on national level⁵, and to develop them further on a local scale. Stuttgart publishes Voluntary Local Reviews as a monitoring-instrument of the city's developments regarding the SDGs on a regular basis - “*Stuttgart – a Liveable City. The global Agenda 2030 at the Local Level*” (2019, 2021, 2023 (forthcoming)).⁶ These processes have begun to shape the city's decision-making. Approaches on the neighbourhood scale or with co-productive methodologies are, however, in early stages, particularly through area-based urban renewal projects. In the German context, research provides evidence that most municipalities need to make major adjustments to SDG targets and indicators to contextualise them locally.⁷

In Windhoek, monitoring efforts by the municipality are still limited, but rich experience exists with bottom-up data collection particularly in informal settlement communities, e.g., through the Community Land Information Program (CLIP). CLIP is a national information program gathering activity of low-income people living in informal settlements and backyards throughout Namibia. This initiative is to a large degree spearheaded by civil society organisations, particularly the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN) and the Namibia Housing Action Group (NHAG). Such informal practices often remain detached from formalised, longer-term, city-wide and national monitoring systems.

In both cities, methods such as data acquisition, evaluation, and monitoring with digital means (tablets, cell phones and digital recordings) that allow crowdsourcing and analysis of data on a broader and more regular scale and offer great potential to involve civil society, are hardly harnessed. These two divergent approaches, the difference in context and the diversity of the stakeholders involved provide a fertile ground for mutual learning and exchange of methods between both cities.

Localising SDGs

In Sub-Saharan Africa there are few examples of SDG localisation, including the municipalities of eThekweni and Cape Town in South Africa.⁸ Instead, many countries operate on the level of Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports. Namibia published two VNRs in 2018 and 2021. The 2021 VNR⁹ states, that Namibia has integrated the SDG progress report into the fifth National Development Plan (NDP5) and made progress in some areas such as social well-being, literacy, life expectancy and participation rate. Thus, the SDG implementation in Namibia is recognised on the central government level. With respect to SDG 11, the VNR states that Namibia continues to experience rapid urbanisation, causing significant challenges for sustainable urban development, including

⁵ Assmann, Dirk; Honold, Jasmin, Grabow; Busso und Roose, Jochen, 2018: SDG-Indikatoren für Kommunen – Indikatoren zur Abbildung der Sustainable Development Goals der Vereinten Nationen in deutschen Kommunen. Hrsg. Bertelsmann Stiftung, Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung, Deutscher Landkreistag, Deutscher Städtetag, Deutscher Städte- und Gemeindebund, Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik, Engagement Global. Gütersloh.

⁶ LHS et al., ‘Stuttgart - a Liveable City. 2nd Voluntary Local Review.’

⁷ Koch and Krellenberg, "How to Contextualize SDG 11?."

⁸ Croese, ‘Localisation of the 2030 Agenda.’

⁹ Republic of Namibia, ‘Namibia’s Second Voluntary National Review Report.’

service delivery of energy and water for residents living in informal settlements. The report concludes that capacity building within national and sub-national governments, including mechanisms for collecting data on human settlements need to be improved.

A number of guidelines and handbooks have been published to support policymakers and practitioners at municipal level.¹⁰ They argue that universal SDGs must be translated “to concrete situations and specific needs to create actual benefits for concrete people and their living conditions”¹¹. Localisation, therefore, means that cities need to contextualise the SDGs and consider how they can be achieved through mobilising support and action locally, while recognising the contribution by civil society particularly with regards to poor neighbourhoods.

GoGlocal! objectives in context

In this context, the *GoGlocal!* project aims to strengthen existing co-productive processes at the neighbourhood level. The objectives of the *GoGlocal!* project are threefold: i) to identify ways to interpret and reformulate SDG indicators in response to the specific local and neighbourhood context and needs, ii) to ensure inclusive participation by stakeholders through developing and strengthening co-productive processes and expansion of existing participatory tools and their digitisation for improved data management and analysis, and iii) integrate different but closely related SDGs, namely SDG 7: affordable and clean energy, SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 13: climate action. A cross-city learning network brought Windhoek, Namibia, and Stuttgart, Germany together as two cities with radically different contexts, but with the shared aim to operationalise SDGs for the benefit of their people, and particularly the most vulnerable social groups.

2. Monitoring SDG – in search of disaggregated data on the neighbourhood level

Cities in Sub-Saharan Africa have been more cautious in terms of SDG localisation. The underlying reasons are manifold such as the resistance to superimposed universal goals, the lack of guidance and support from the national level in a multi-governance approach¹², and the realisation that data is either lacking, outdated or highly aggregated.¹³ IIED¹⁴ suggests that more disaggregated data would require neighbourhood-level monitoring of the SDGs to inform urban development processes. Moreover, the SDGs are meant to be part of a “People’s Agenda” stressing the inclusion of various stakeholders into the process. However, data collection and evaluation are a contested terrain as indicators determine how sustainable urban development is defined and progress is measured. There are numerous calls for pursuing a more co-productive and participatory approach in knowledge generation.¹⁵ In the case of informal settlements, the work of the Asian Coalition of Housing Rights (ACHR), Shack/Slum Dwellers International or the “Know Your City” campaign are prominent examples.¹⁶ The Community Land Information Program

¹⁰ e.g., SDSN, ‘Getting Started with the SDGs in Cities’; GIZ, ‘Agenda 2030 in My Municipality’, Platforma and UCLG, ‘Learning Module 4: Localizing the SDGs.’

¹¹ GIZ, ‘Agenda 2030 in My Municipality’, 4.

¹² Croese et al., ‘Bringing the Global to the Local.’

¹³ Notes from workshop Connective Cities, “Strengthening the local implementation of SDGs.”

¹⁴ IIED, ‘The Urban Dimension of Six Global Agreements’, 8.

¹⁵ Cities Alliance, ‘Do You Know Your City?’; Croese and Duminy, ‘Co-Producing Urban Expertise for SDG Localization.’

¹⁶ e.g. Satterthwaite, ‘Who Can Implement the Sustainable Development Goals in Urban Areas?’, Cities Alliance, ‘Do You Know Your City?’.

(CLIP), spearheaded by the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN) and the Namibia Housing Action Group (NHAG), is recognised for its bottom-up approach to data gathering and analysis, which concurrently serves as a community building tool. These networks have long-lasting and strong support from communities in cities of the Global South. However, their active engagement in enumeration processes have not been linked to SDG monitoring.

3. Approach and Methods

The *GoGlocal!* project focuses on a differential analysis of SDG implementation in Stuttgart and Windhoek. A co-productive approach was tested during a community studio in Windhoek, using the Kabila C informal settlement in the greater Havana as a case study (see Fig. 1). According to CLIP statistics¹⁷, in Windhoek 68,935 households live in informal housing structures, colloquially called “shacks”, accommodating about 316,096 inhabitants (2021 data). Kabila C is also the location of a co-produced urban upgrading project where SDFN Ituyeni Savings Group members transformed a number of shacks into permanent buildings through a participatory process.

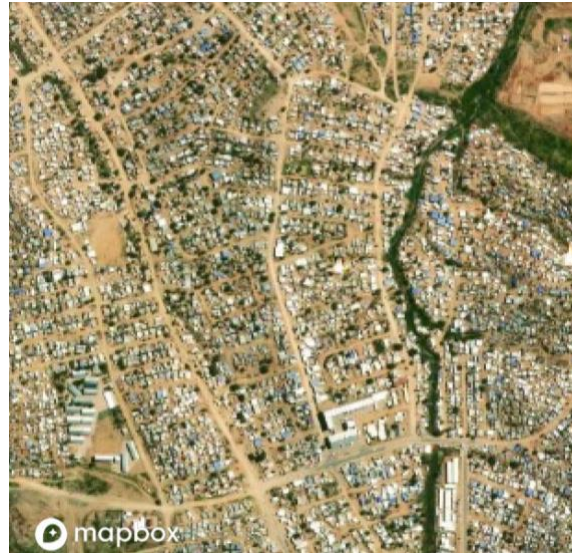


Fig. 1: Kabila C Settlement in Windhoek, Namibia (source: © Mapbox, © NASA)

The co-productive approach of GoGlocal!

The co-productive approach was pursued to ensure more effective monitoring of implementation concepts and measures to achieve the SDGs. This was accomplished on two levels:

1. The project objectives, and particularly the data acquisition processes, were discussed, refined and tested with participants from Windhoek and Stuttgart in so-called “learning dialogues”. In this format researchers and students from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) and the University of Stuttgart (UStutt), municipal staff from the City of Stuttgart as well as SDFN members and NHAG staff worked together in a cooperative way.
2. The so-called “community studio” was organised to conduct participatory data collection in the informal settlement of Kabila C in Windhoek. Within this studio, local stakeholders, and particularly Kabila C residents, were directly involved in enumerations, interviews, and discussion rounds, thus co-creating knowledge about the site and the respective development needs.

The two virtual learning dialogues carried out were designed in a co-productive format with open brainstorming sessions and discussions and few presentations. To make the exchange more interactive for participants, a virtual white board

¹⁷ Personal communication; unpublished data from the CLIP Profiling Report 2021 by SDFN and NHAG

(<https://conceptboard.com>) facilitated the continuous collection of ideas by participants. The discussions were also captured visually by a graphic artist and integrated into the virtual white board. This method assisted in establishing a veritable 'community of practice', and to verify what parameters and SDG indicators are relevant at the city and neighbourhood level. The dialogues were used to 1) verify relevant SDGs at the city-level, 2) identify key action fields, 3) assess data availability, 4) screen and evaluate existing tools and methods for quantitative as well as qualitative¹⁸, participatory data collection and analysis, focusing on digitisation and open-access, 5) explore options for co-productive monitoring and evaluation of selected SDGs at neighbourhood level. To discuss the relevance of the approach and the alignment of SDGs to existent municipal strategies, representatives from the two cities were invited to actively engage and provide feedback.

The community studio that took place in July 2022 allowed the creation of awareness with regard to the global SDGs amongst local stakeholders and discussion of the relevance of SDG implementation and monitoring at the neighbourhood level. In this context, discussion rounds were organised with the participation of key organisations such as the SDFN, the NHAG, GIZ, as well as municipal representatives from the cities of Windhoek and Stuttgart from the fields of urban and energy planning, human settlements, climate action, international relations and SDG monitoring. The focus of the studio was the testing and evaluation of data collection methods for monitoring SDG implementation. Here, the project builds on the existing methods of data collection established through CLIP. This program comprises data gathering on two spatial levels: At the neighbourhood level, a participatory survey is conducted through focus group discussions where community members create a 'profile' of the settlement and residents' development needs. At the household level, a so-called "household enumeration" survey collects detailed information about the demographics, living conditions and needs of individual households. In preparation for the studio, both surveys were supplemented with additional questions aimed at the collection of SDG relevant data. These expanded surveys were digitised via the open access tool "Kobo toolbox" to create tablet-based online questionnaires. The data collection process was conducted in a hybrid mode using both the digitised surveys and their printed versions. Over the duration of two days students from NUST and UStutt as well as community members from Kabila C collected data on the two spatial levels. For the household level, 15 dwellings were selected, including nine consolidated, permanent buildings and six shack dwellings. These samples were chosen to allow the comparison of SDG-relevant data before and after urban upgrading. Based on the findings from the above activities, a final learning dialogue is planned for October 2022 to consolidate the preliminary insights presented in this paper and develop relevant recommendations.

5. Results

5.1. Insights from the learning dialogues

The learning dialogues concentrated on similarities and differences between the cities in terms of co-production process and localising implementation and monitoring of SDGs. Three major findings resulted from this:

¹⁸ In the SDG monitoring process quantitative data (from statistical offices) is collected and analysed. In order to understand the sometimes more relevant questions about motivations, experiences and perceptions more qualitative data is needed. As a seed-funded project, GoGlocal! was initially interested to detect qualitative aspects and identify themes (categories). These can in future be used to test and monitor rather quantitative parameters, e.g. the frequency, and thereby combine qualitative and quantitative aspects in the monitoring process.

1. Firstly, the relevance of SDGs needs to be reflected in an integrated manner through action fields. In the *GoGlocal!* project two action fields (liveable spaces and affordable and energy efficient housing) were identified to allow for reflection on cross-cutting issues with regards to the three selected SDGs. This also enabled discussions to revolve around concrete and relevant priorities at the neighbourhood scale.
2. Secondly, global indicators need to be screened and adapted to what makes sense locally, especially on the scale of neighbourhoods. It was identified that most of the high-level indicators are not directly suitable for Windhoek's informal settlements. Some alternatives were, therefore, included to complement indicators like electricity liability and period of availability and its correlation to income groups.
3. Thirdly, data availability varies greatly between Stuttgart and Windhoek. With the need for disaggregated data on the neighbourhood level, there is a scarcity in data, insufficient clarity, and in some cases a reluctance to include data from bottom-up processes. In general, due to the low data availability, a focus should be put on information collection via enumeration processes. The municipal CLIP system in Windhoek was not considered a reliable data source. On a more general level, the use of terminology needs to be revised and checked in the local context (e.g. public space).

5.2. Lessons learned in the community studio

The main lessons from the community studio in Windhoek are:

1. In Namibia the monitoring and evaluation of the Agenda 2030 implementation happens at the national level, with the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) expected to take the lead in coordinating data collection and to establish a national monitoring and review system for the national implementation of Agenda 2030. Clear linkages with the local government level, NGOs and civil society are lacking. Therefore, the City of Windhoek (CoW) does not have strategies, plans and policies that explicitly recognise the SDG implementation and monitoring at city and neighbourhood level. A disconnect between CoW and the informal settlement communities further exacerbates the lack of acknowledgment of community initiatives at municipal and national planning level. This requires multi-stakeholder engagement and regular collaboration to develop mutual trust and priorities for developmental needs.
2. The study revealed that the expanded CLIP questionnaires provide a host of SDG-relevant data across all 17 SDGs (See Fig. 2). Community-led urban (informal) development and local innovations that improve residents' living environment are recognisable as positive contributions towards SDG implementation at neighbourhood level.

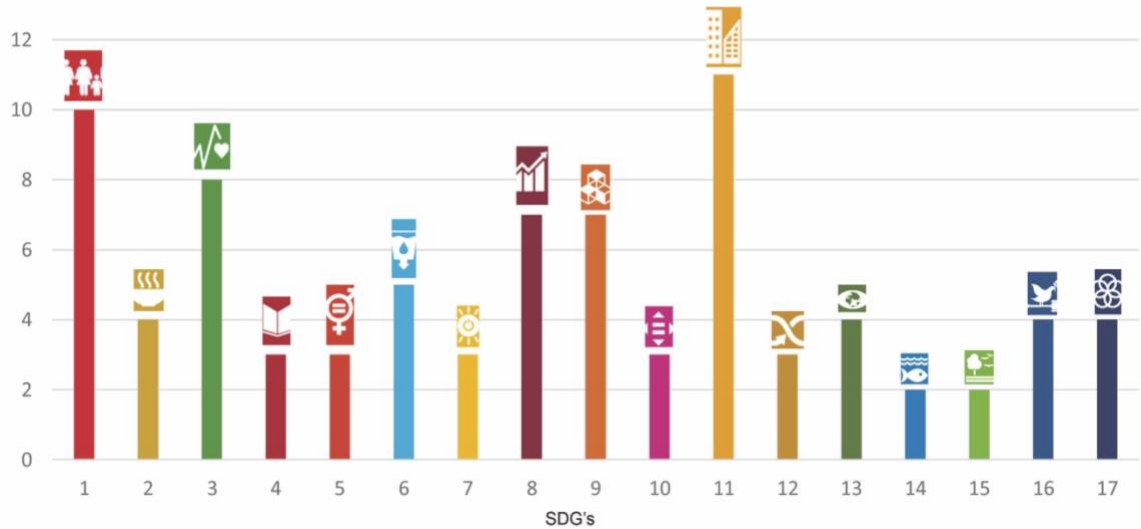


Figure 2: Number of expanded CLIP questionnaire sections relating to the various SDGs (source: GoGlocal!)

3. To make use of digital tools it becomes central to clarify the openness of data as well as the ownership of detailed data by communities that are part of enumeration and household survey processes.
4. In general, the addition of qualitative and quantitative questions around SDGs 7, 11, 13 were perceived as insightful and allowed the monitoring of improvements and strategies for the same. Regarding the settlement profile, which was captured through focus group discussions, it was possible to compare the results of our survey with the one conducted by CLIP in 2018 in the same area. Furthermore, conducting the enumeration surveys both in temporary and permanent structures at Kabila C allowed already preliminary results in differences and commonalities.
5. In the course of the community studio, particular data and results could be gathered on SDG 7, 11 and 13, e.g. how the settlement profiles changed as compared to a survey in 2018. Regarding the defined action fields, it was interesting to note that there are no significant differences in monthly household incomes between samples: it is on average 3,260 N\$ in temporary buildings and 3,311 N\$ in permanent ones (around 194 EUR). More than 28% of that is spent on energy. The results and data will be evaluated and presented in an integrated way in a subsequent paper.
6. During the feedback session the community responded that they felt more aware about the local relevance of SDGs, their own contribution towards implementation and that they are ready to collaborate with the municipality to take the lead in collecting data for the implementation and monitoring of SDGs. At the same time, the community made it clear that such processes must clearly outline the pathway towards enabling communities to act for the improvement of their living conditions. In other words, they must facilitate urban upgrading to significantly improve people's living conditions.

6. Conclusion & Outlook

The *GoGlocal!* Approach achieved a transformative knowledge and method production concerning SDG implementation and monitoring involving community-based processes and engaging a diverse set of stakeholders in co-learning processes. This approach was tested in Windhoek, Namibia, and has led to discussions about how to progress the participatory upgrading of Kabila C settlement while considering and leveraging the SDGs

on a neighbourhood and city level. While the revision of the national housing policy emphasises co-production in informal settlement upgrading, our research highlights a need for a place-specific, area-based approach, where local liaisons from the city, embedded in the community, can direct and coordinate efforts between various technical departments of the municipality and the local community.

It is paramount to monitor incremental, qualitative improvements over time, beyond absolute numbers. A balance may be found at the intersection of long and short-term SDG targets and immediate needs, validating existing grassroots processes. To address the scale of challenges facing the municipalities, it is essential to align data collection efforts with desired outcomes. This implies that at a city-wide scale aggregated, anonymised and freely accessible data may foster synergies or collaborations between various stakeholders and avoid duplications. Here simplified datasets may be more appropriate, and a modular and open access digital data collection tool is viable.

The research addresses spatial and social justice by revealing hidden asymmetries in data collection and reporting, and could help to meet all SDGs, including the focus area of *affordable and clean energy* (SDG 7), *sustainable cities and communities* (SDG 11) and *climate action* (SDG 13) as evidenced in preceding sections. To achieve this, the question of open access of data is highlighted, while ownership of detailed data by affected communities is critical.

Aligning shared data gathering modules with SDGs monitoring and implementation may unlock necessary funds (e.g. (inter)national climate change or municipal funds) to achieve SDGs and the needs of local communities in dire need of urban upgrading.

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