



# Engaging parliaments on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs: representation, accountability and implementation

A handbook for civil society



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## About this handbook

This handbook aims to provide guidance to civil society organisations (CSOs) on how to engage with parliaments and parliamentarians to promote, support and track the implementation of the **United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** (the 2030 Agenda). The 2030 Agenda is not solely a government agenda and cannot be delivered by governments alone. Civil society actors can position themselves as partners along with other stakeholders to help make the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a reality. While operating at different points in the political spectrum, legislatures and CSOs both contribute to national development and can support each other in helping to realise the SDGs.

**Chapter 1** briefly presents the main features and functions of parliaments and explains their relevance to SDG implementation. It shows how the constitutional responsibilities of parliaments provides a forum for CSOs to raise concerns, share inputs and discuss the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national and sub-national levels.

**Chapter 2** discusses entry points into parliamentary activity for civil society actors seeking to integrate the SDGs into political decision-making and policy implementation in their country. It also identifies the inputs and interventions CSOs can make in parliamentary debates to influence policies, laws, budgets and parliamentary oversight. This chapter, in particular, outlines a number of ways in which the powers of parliaments and individual members of parliament (MPs) can advance the SDGs in real terms.

**Chapter 3** is the most action-oriented part of this handbook. Drawing on experiences and lessons learnt, it addresses three key questions:

- (1) How, when and who should CSOs approach when working with parliament on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs?
- (2) What engagement strategies are most valued by MPs themselves?
- (3) What challenges can civil society actors encounter and how can these be addressed in order for parliament to prioritise the 2030 Agenda?

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# The 2030 Agenda

Adopted in 2015, the 2030 Agenda is a global development framework, which guides development policy and practice at national, regional and global levels until 2030. The 17 SDGs, an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, are a global call to action to end poverty worldwide, to protect the planet, and to promote peace and prosperity for everyone, everywhere.

## **An inclusive and participatory process**

Building on the lessons learned during the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs emphasise broad-based participation and ownership in implementation and review. During the three years leading up to the adoption of the Agenda 2030, a wide range of stakeholders participated in the process of putting the goals together.

## **A universal but nationally-owned agenda**

One of the most striking differences from the earlier 'business as usual' MDGs is the universality of the SDGs. The single all-encompassing agenda identified common challenges that exist in every country context. The three aspects of sustainability – social, economic and environmental – span across all goals and target major global issues. But rather than a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to implementation, countries translate the globally defined goals, targets and indicators into their own national contexts and devise actions to guide their own SDG processes, with the participation of local, national and global stakeholders.

## **A pledge to leave no one behind**

The 2030 Agenda calls for structural and longer-term changes including tackling harmful social norms and reversing discriminatory policies to leave no one behind. Moreover, governments also committed to prioritise the hardest to reach, which demands greater contextual analysis to understand who is left behind, why and how to address those challenges.

## **An interlinked and indivisible agenda**

Understanding the interlinkages between the various goals and targets, as well as the ways in which these can be leveraged during implementation to accelerate progress across multiple objectives, is central to the overall success of the Agenda.

## **Measuring and reviewing progress**

A multi-level system of review with national, regional and global components allows for the consolidation of knowledge, peer learning, and accountability to citizens. At the global level, progress towards the 17 Goals and their 169 constituent targets is measured through 232 indicators and overseen by the global Inter-Agency Expert Group (IAEG). This set of global indicators complements and underpins nationally-owned SDG indicators and allows for global monitoring. The IAEG is made up of national statistical offices, with the UN Statistics Division as its Secretariat.

## **SDGs and the opportunity for new partnerships**

As the broadest, most ambitious development agenda ever agreed at the global level, the SDGs will only be realised by joint action across every sector and area of human activity. International organisations, national politicians, cities, businesses, public administrations, schools, youth groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), philanthropic organisations, voluntary groups and others are all challenged to act.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources are necessary to support the achievement of the SDGs in all countries.

The SDGs do not constitute a separate, stand-alone process but rather a framework for action on different streams of work in development and environmental protection. Any organisation whose mission is to end poverty and hunger, secure better access to basic services like health, education or energy, combat climate change, protect the natural

environment, or promote peaceful, just and truly participatory societies, is in fact carrying out work that is relevant to the SDGs. Likewise, the 2030 Agenda reaches across many, if not all, aspects of government and parliamentary business. A parliament's constitutional responsibility to steer their country's sustainable development directly impacts SDG implementation whether it is framed this way or not given that the 2030 Agenda reaches across many, if not all, aspects of government and parliamentary business.

## The SDGs

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

# 1. The case for engagement



## MAIN TAKEAWAYS

- Countless CSOs all over the world are participating in and monitoring the implementation of the SDGs through their diverse roles, priorities and experiences.
- Parliaments, through their constitutional mandate, play an integral role in realising the 2030 Agenda, representing the interests of citizens and localising the implementation of the SDGs through deliberate efforts to ensure action at the sub-national level.
- Operating in the same sphere of national and international development and at various points of the spectrum of political processes, legislatures and CSOs play complementary roles and can potentially facilitate and support each other in working towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

## 1.1 | Why should civil society engage with the 2030 Agenda?

**“We acknowledge the role of the diverse private sector, ranging from micro-enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals, and that of CSOs and philanthropic organisations in the implementation of the new Agenda.”**

Para 41, General Assembly Res 70/1, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

Whether it is through participation in political decision-making, advocacy, networking and lobbying, policy dialogue and design, promoting good governance and human rights, holding governments accountable, representing otherwise voiceless constituencies or providing services on the ground – a strong civil society can be a positive difference for sustainable solutions on the ground.

Most, if not all, civil society actors working on human rights or social and environmental protection are already carrying out work that supports the 2030 Agenda. As the broadest global development framework ever adopted, the framework provides a strong basis for integrating civil society causes in all areas of sustainable development. Agreed to and adopted by all UN member states, it includes

commitments to the principles of inclusion and participation. This means that all stakeholders have a place in the process and positioning a cause within this framework can strengthen the political will to address it.

Other aspects of the 2030 Agenda that can benefit civil society include:

- **Countries are accountable for the success of the agenda.** Your cause should be supported by at least one if not more of the SDGs. By adopting the 2030 Agenda, countries committed to deliver on all of them in an integrated fashion.
- **A agenda friendly to civil society.** The framework repeatedly emphasises the need for

open, transparent, inclusive, participatory governance, a focus on the most marginalised, the importance of civil society participation. This means that you have a place in the process and that your messages should be heard and considered.

■ **Transformative change in the way governments work on development: window of opportunity.**

The SDGs have brought a real change in how many governments approach their national sustainable development work, including reviewing structures, workplans, operations and budgets. Reflecting the mainstreaming of the SDGs, new mechanisms are being established to facilitate interaction between government ministries and a range of other public institutions, as well as external stakeholders. These mechanisms should provide new opportunities for civil society to engage with their country's decision-making.

■ **Targets and indicators as a tool to focus development efforts on transformational issues.**

The SDGs offer a concrete set of targets and indicators which gauge progress on both sectoral development issues and cross-cutting themes of environment, equality and human rights. The indicators and related data give a wealth of information helpful for CSOs, including for targeting of CSO projects, guiding policy analysis, crafting advocacy messages and measuring impact of interventions at country-level. The open data movement, which advocates for transparency in government data, could vastly support this aspect by making useful data openly available.

■ **A common framework for advocacy:** The 2030 Agenda reflects the linkages between all areas of

human activity across social, economic and environmental dimensions. Within the broad perspective of the SDGs lies the opportunity to link specific public interest issues with the broader themes of development. The all-encompassing agenda provides diverse groups of stakeholders with a common language and framework of reference to coordinate their interests, messages and asks. It therefore offers great potential for new synergies between different actors and topics.

Building on the lessons learnt from the MDGs, the negotiations that developed the 2030 Agenda were the most consultative and inclusive process in the history of the UN. This allowed many civil society groups and actors to interrogate and influence the agenda to ensure a more robust and relevant framework. Thanks to this, the current framework better reflects the full spectrum of civil society concerns and is better suited to supporting the realisation of civil society goals to ensure a better future for people and planet.

Civil society and other stakeholders continue to contribute to the implementation and follow up phases. The goals are flexible enough to package advocacy interests, expertise, and constituency representation in ways that preserve a specific CSO's mission and values. While some work on the entirety of the 2030 Agenda, others focus on individual SDGs and their interlinkages with the three pillars of sustainable development (social, environmental and economic). Others concentrate on sectoral issues or focus on making the principle of 'leaving no one behind' a reality on the ground, raising awareness about communities, groups and people that are especially vulnerable or marginalised.



**Figure 1:** CSOs and the SDGs.

## 1.2 Why should civil society engage with parliamentarians on the 2030 Agenda?

**“We acknowledge also the essential role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments.”**

Para 45, General Assembly Res 70/1, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

**“Parliaments are the indispensable institutions of representative democracies around the world. Whatever their country-specific rules, their role remains the same: to represent the people and ensure that public policy is informed by the citizens on whose lives they impact.”**

*Global Parliamentary Report – IPU, UNDP (2012)*

Parliaments are elected bodies organized along party lines. MPs perform their work via several channels, including through committees that are entrusted with responsibility for a specific policy sector or specific current affairs. Some committee debates may be elevated to a full, or plenary session of parliament. Bills considered by committees are also discussed and formalised in plenary. No two parliaments operate in exactly the same way; their setup, mandate and functions vary from country to country.

The main role of parliaments as legislatures is to pass laws and budgets and oversee the actions of government. In doing so, the parliament also fulfils its representative function to reflect the interests of all segments of society. It articulates interests into policies and laws, and works to ensure such policies are effectively implemented. In addition, in most countries, parliament's approval is required for the

country to enter into international legally binding agreements and treaties. It is good to note that parliament's ratification is not required in case of the 2030 Agenda which is a non-binding UN Resolution. This said, some parliaments have formally endorsed the Agenda or adopted parliamentary SDG action plans. Monitoring the country's commitment to and implementation of international commitments such as the SDGs is also the purview of parliaments.

With regards to the SDGs, parliaments oversee and contribute to their national development agendas which, in turn, contributes to the achievement of the global agenda. They may approve national development plans, monitor their implementation by governments, approve national development budgets and loans, and, in recipient countries of Official Development Assistance (ODA), they act as guarantor to aid providers.



### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

#### What's in it for parliament? Benefits of engaging with CSOs

CSOs can support parliamentarians by:

- Filling information, expertise or skill gaps.
- Providing access to the voices of citizens and facilitating feedback loops.
- Supporting MP agendas and priorities.
- Supporting parliament oversight activities.



## RESOURCES

*Parliament's role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: a parliamentary handbook*  
– GOPAC, IDB, UNDP (2017)

This handbook provides a comprehensive overview of how parliaments worldwide can and do engage in the SDG process. While it is designed as an easy-to-use reference point for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, it can help all development actors navigate through parliament's role in implementing the SDGs. The handbook lists good practices and tools from around the world that can be adapted, as needed, to the national context.



**Figure 2:** Parliaments and the SDGs.



## IN PRACTICE

**Parliaments mainstreaming the SDGs**

**Pakistan:** Parliament established an SDG Secretariat to provide technical assistance to parliamentarians to effectively oversee SDG implementation, address legislative gaps, and ensure the rights of their respective constituents. In addition, the Speaker of the National Assembly established parliamentary task forces at federal and provincial levels to oversee and support legislation supporting the SDGs.

**Sri Lanka:** Through a motion in parliament, a Select Committee of Parliament on the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was established in October 2016. The committee is mandated to make recommendations to ensure that the UN 2030 Agenda for SDGs is achieved in the country.

**Nigeria:** To enhance the legislative and oversight roles of parliamentarians on implementation, two SDG select committees were established in 2017 – in the Senate and in the House of Representatives.

**Finland:** Parliament's Development Policy Committee has been mandated to monitor and follow up on SDG implementation from the development policy perspective.

**Romania:** Parliament has reviewed the mandates of existing standing committees to mainstream the SDGs.

**Trinidad and Tobago:** A new Joint Select Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development has been established.

For more examples of how the SDGs are being mainstreamed in parliaments and other institutions all over the world, see: *Compendium of national institutional arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* – UNDESA (2018)

In their work on national development and political process, legislatures and CSOs play complementary roles. Through different means, parliaments and CSOs both play a role in keeping the government accountable as key oversight actors while creating feedback loops between government and citizens. Both can work to ensure the participation of the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalised people in the decision making process. Both have at their disposal different, but complementary, powers and tools to push for change. In all these objectives and functions, they can support and facilitate each other's work. Naturally, not every MP and political party has an interest in, or affinity with, all the values reflected in the 2030 Agenda and the same

diversity applies to civil society actors. However, the 2030 Agenda, including its main principles and the SDGs, offers an opportunity of dialogue and reflection about the routes towards sustainable development at the national and sub-national level. Both parliaments and CSOs are critical players in this debate. A strong and constructive relationship between parliament and CSOs is a step towards an accountable, effective and participatory democracy. This is a precondition for sustainable development as underlined by Goal 16 – promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.



## THE BASICS

### Why is engaging parliament on the SDGs important for civil society actors?

Supporting the legislature in its law-making, budgetary and oversight roles, as well as leveraging its influence and access to the executive can help advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The same is true for work aimed at keeping parliament accountable for its responsibilities vis-à-vis the mainstreaming of SDGs into its everyday work. Parliaments have a key role to play in the design and implementation

of a country's sustainable development policies, laws and budgets. A parliament committed to the SDGs may be a receptive forum for presenting and debating CSO inputs, be it data, citizen testimonies, expert analysis, advocacy messages or educational materials. Well-targeted interventions by civil society actors can raise the quality of debates and scrutiny in the parliament and improve SDG policy outcomes.

## 2. Parliamentary points of engagement



### MAIN TAKEAWAYS

- Understanding the entry points into parliamentary processes is the first step to successfully engaging parliamentarians on the SDGs.
- Such entry points include opportunities for influencing national decision making beyond the executive.
- The core parliamentary functions of law making and oversight as well as its role in the budget cycle present opportunities for CSOs to advance both the 2030 Agenda as a whole or champion specific SDGs.

This chapter reviews the different areas of parliamentary life that offer civil society actors opportunities for intervention.

PARLIAMENT	MPs
<p><b>LAW-MAKING, BUDGETING, OVERSIGHT AND REPRESENTATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliament provides a point of intervention into law-making and budget review and approval processes. By tapping into parliamentary business, CSOs have the opportunity influence what is decided.</li> <li>• Parliamentary discussions place issues on the public agenda.</li> <li>• Representing all citizens and regularly interacting with all branches of government, parliament provides a bridge by articulating and advocating people's needs to policy makers.</li> <li>• Parliament provides a public forum and avenue for voicing and debating social concerns.</li> <li>• As an assembly of elected representatives from across the country, parliament provides a forum for voices beyond the capital.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEADERSHIP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence and access: MPs, particularly senior ones, may be able to provide good office and leverage their relationships with members of government to foster reforms. Such influence is particularly strong in the Westminster system where ministers are also MPs. Parliamentarians can facilitate a dialogue between civil society and the executive by, for instance, helping to set up a meeting or to bring certain issues or initiatives to the attention of high-level ministry officials.</li> <li>• Broadening the supporter base: getting MPs involved in, for instance, petitions or public campaigns, is a great way for organisations to extend their supporter base and engage people from outside their immediate network.</li> <li>• Greater visibility and political weight of campaigns: the official support of MPs to public initiatives adds credibility and raises profile.</li> <li>• Through a range of channels including speeches, round tables, discussion groups and constituent communications, MPs can share information on SDGs, national campaigns and can amplify CSO messages. They can also move the SDG agenda along by opening up discussion space and being thought leaders.</li> </ul>

**Figure 3:** Opportunities provided to CSOs by parliament and MPs

## 2.1 | Law-making for the SDGs

Law-making is the process by which parliament considers draft legislation and passes it into law. Regardless of who created and submitted a draft bill, parliament reviews these before they become laws and often has the power to amend. It can also reject a bill entirely. Some parliaments are more active in developing draft bills through the right of initiative, while others rely on the government to develop, draft and introduce the law for debate.

In any given national context, implementation of the SDGs is likely to take a partly legal form. Not least, there are SDG targets that focus on the presence and character of legal frameworks. Depending on the country's legal system, approaches to implementation could take formal shape as laws, statutes, directives and the like as part of a range of policy and programme approaches. While legislation is rarely the complete policy response necessary to tackle the objectives affirmed in the SDGs, it is often a critical first step or component of action.

In several countries, national development plans (NDPs) are drafted (often adopted as a law) setting out a multi-year strategic roadmap, which outlines key priorities and indicators for measuring success. Many countries have identified their NDPs as the primary tool for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and alignment of the SDGs. Reviewing and, where necessary, amending a national development plan is a first step to creating a coherent blueprint for the country's development consistent with the SDGs. Development strategies may also take other forms, for instance, a national sustainable development strategy, national poverty reduction strategy, green growth roadmap, etc.

Importantly, such instruments do not necessarily need to take the form of legislation but could also be provided by other types of documents that set

out a country's vision for its development – such as planning frameworks, roadmaps or white papers. All such documents can be debated in parliament. Some countries are yet to develop such strategies. Many have in place policies and roadmaps on major and interconnected areas relevant to the national development strategies, such as social policy, macroeconomic and growth policy, trade policy, investment and technology policy, development financing, or state-owned enterprise reform.

As an agenda spanning all areas of human activity and the environment, the SDGs may eventually need to be reflected in a country's full legislative body. For instance, making Goal 7 – affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all – a reality may require countries to put in place legislation to speed up the roll out of renewables and increase electrification. In countries with high levels of illiteracy, Goal 4 – ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all – may necessitate legislation to increase the access and quality of primary and secondary education. Where maternal mortality remains high, Goal 3 – ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages – spells out the need for access to essential care and services, which may require amendments to public health laws.

This work will also need to bear in mind that the individual goals are not separate but part of a single integrated agenda which will require consideration of the the impact progress towards one goal will make to other goals. For example, Goal 7 on Affordable and Clean Energy will need to be delivered with consideration to the environment, consumption, equality etc, while the realisation of Goal 4 on Quality Education will also contribute to the realisation of Goal 3 on Good Health and Well-Being.



## THE BASICS

### Who can propose laws?

- **Government** – regardless of the political system, most legislation is initiated, drafted and submitted to parliament for review by the government.
- **MPs** – MPs can introduce and draft laws.
- **Citizens** – in countries where civic legislative initiative exists, a voter can draft a legislative bill that then needs to gain popular support through a petition. If the number of signature meets the pre-defined minimum, citizen's bills are placed on parliament's agenda for discussion or, in some cases, placed on the ballot allowing the public to vote on it through a popular initiative referendum.



## IN PRACTICE

### Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament

The Disability Intergroup is an informal meeting group of Members of the European Parliament, composed of members from across the various European Member States, as well as across party lines. Formed in 1980, this large group of over one hundred parliamentarians was formed to seek pan-European legislative solutions to problems faced by European persons with disabilities.

Today, the Disability Intergroup is focused primarily on promoting and creating legislation related to access to public services and facilities, which will result in greater social mobility and freedom of movement for persons with disabilities. The Intergroup is also involved in the

review of European commitment and progress regarding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), as well as formulating the European Disability Strategy in line with the goals of the Europe2020 initiative. In addition, the Disability Intergroup is closely involved with the promotion of the European Disability Card and the European Disability Act, which would bring the entire European Union into line with the standards set forth in the CRPD.

The European Disability Forum provides the Secretariat of the Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament. For more information, consult the [European Disability Forum website](#)



## PLANNING TOOL

### Assessing whether laws are fit-for-purpose

To align with the SDGs and the principles of indivisibility and universality, the cross-cutting themes of the 2030 Agenda may need to be systematically reflected across sectors in national legislation. Parliament and civil society actors can support this process by calling for the executive branch to formally consider the SDGs and questions such as:

- Is legislation coherent in how it puts the SDGs into practice? Does it respond, directly or indirectly, to the vision laid out in the 2030 Agenda?
- Is the proposed law mindful of the inequalities between and within different groups in society, and of differential outcomes on such groups?
- Does it positively (or negatively) affect the interests and wellbeing of those furthest behind?

**“MPs in every country in the world have a vital role to play in the delivery of the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development. Agenda 2030 is universal, it is comprehensive and, of course, it is ambitious. We will only see progress at the rate and speed that is required if parliamentarians actively contribute to national debates and decisions on strategy and budgeting, involving the people they represent, including organised civil society, and they hold governments and donors to account. If we are to truly leave no one behind, parliamentarians have to step up to the mark, represent those most excluded and ensure that governments prioritise the actions that will make the most significant difference.”**

Ret Hon Lord Jack McConnell, Chairperson, All Party Parliamentary Group on the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development, UK

Influencing legislation is an important way to push for change. For civil society actors whose strategy is to advance the SDGs through legislation – whether through the NDP or other legislative acts – engaging with parliament provides a critical opportunity to influence the law-making process.

Advocacy groups can use the 2030 Agenda as a framework to create political incentives to initiate laws, amend or withdraw proposals, be it through lobbying or campaigning. They can call for law-making processes to address those being left behind by bringing in the voices of marginalised social groups and communities and providing evidence of their neglect.

The information that MPs have access to affects their decision-making capacity and determines the extent to which they can assess proposals. Translating the transformational promise of the

2030 Agenda and specific SDGs into actionable legislative proposals will require decision-makers to consider a range of social, cultural, gender, environmental, human rights, poverty and economic impacts. To support them, expert groups feed in knowledge and skills on issues related to the given piece of legislation. Through these groups, CSOs can provide essential input from the vantage point of their unique expertise and experience.

Finally, in countries where mechanisms exist for citizens to directly propose legislation, it will be critical to work closely with parliamentarians and parliamentary groups to maximise the chances for such a bill to pass. The most common forms of civic bills are citizen’s initiative bills, in which the electorate votes on a law by ballot, and agenda initiatives, in which processes exist through which civil society have the opportunity to propose laws for discussion by parliament.



## RESOURCES

*La participación de la sociedad civil en el proceso legislativo chileno* – UNDP Chile (2017) gives an overview of civil society’s participation in the legislative process.

*Changing the Law: A Practical Guide to Law Reform* – Commonwealth Office of Civil and Criminal Justice Reform (2017) provides more detail on the law-making process.

*The Legal & Economic Empowerment Global Network* website provides more information on SDG-enabling law reforms.



## IN PRACTICE

**Kenya:** NGO Kituo cha Sheria partnered with the Kenyan Parliamentary Human Rights Association (KEPHRA), the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the Chief Justice to create a plan for better integrating Goal 16 into draft national legislation and utilising momentum around the SDGs to promote draft legislation in parliament. As a result, Goal 16 was integrated into the Legal Aid Bill, the Access to Information Bill and the Community Land Bill. Indicators to track Goal 16 were also integrated into the draft National Human Rights Policy and Action Plan.

Read more in *Goal 16 advocacy toolkit: a practical guide for stakeholders for national-level advocacy around peaceful, just and inclusive societies*



## PLANNING TOOL

## Assessing legislation

- Have the original objectives of the law been achieved in quality, quantity and time, when measured against the base case of what would have happened without the intervention of this law?
- To what extent has the law brought about the achievement of the objectives or has it induced activity that would not otherwise have occurred?
- Has implementation been affected, adversely or advantageously, by external factors?
- Have any significant unexpected side effects resulted?
- Have all the inputs required from Government and the private sector been made as planned?
- Have any of the allocated resources been wasted or misused?
- Has the law implementation led to any unfairness or disadvantage to any sector of the community?
- Could a more cost-effective approach have been used?
- What improvements could be made to the law and its implementation that might make it more effective or cost-efficient?
- Overall, is the law suited to meeting the desired objectives?
- Have assumptions made during the plenary passage of legislation (on costs, or timings, or impact) held true and if not, why not?

Source: *Post-legislative scrutiny: guide for parliaments*, Franklin De Vrieze, Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), [www.wfd.org](http://www.wfd.org) (2017)



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*The Legal & Economic Empowerment Global Network* website provides more information on SDG-enabling law reforms.

## 2.2 | Budgets for SDG implementation

Undertaking budget analysis for advocacy is a powerful way to achieve SDG-related goals. Sound, transparent and well implemented national budgets can serve a variety of social goals – from poverty reduction (SDG 1), gender equality and women’s empowerment (SDG 5), access to basic services (SDGs 2, 3, 4, 6, 7) or sectoral issues, just to mention a few. A number of SDG targets identify action on specific aspects of national budgets. Adequate public financing is critical for ensuring that any law and policy related to the SDGs achieves its intended results. Furthermore, the SDGs provide a new opportunity to achieve major gains in participation and accountability, including through the budget process. Participation and accountability are critical to strengthening democratic practices, fighting corruption and making sure public funds serve their intended goals. Finally, for NGOs which rely on public funding for their activities, allocations in the national budget are relevant for their very existence and access to resources.

The ambition of the SDGs demands that countries place a very explicit focus on financing for development, including through the strengthening of domestic resource mobilisation and the implementation of official development assistance commitments. Parliaments, in collaboration with CSOs, can play an important role in ensuring accountability. CSOs in developed countries can work to push for more Official Development Assistance (ODA) to be directed towards SDG implementation overseas and policy coherence between aid and trade policy. Meanwhile, CSOs in developing countries can advocate for more ODA to be allocated towards SDG implementation and use the 2030 Agenda commitments to call for more transparency and accountability at home. Moreover, partnerships between CSOs and parliaments across different countries could allow for the possibility of transboundary accountability.

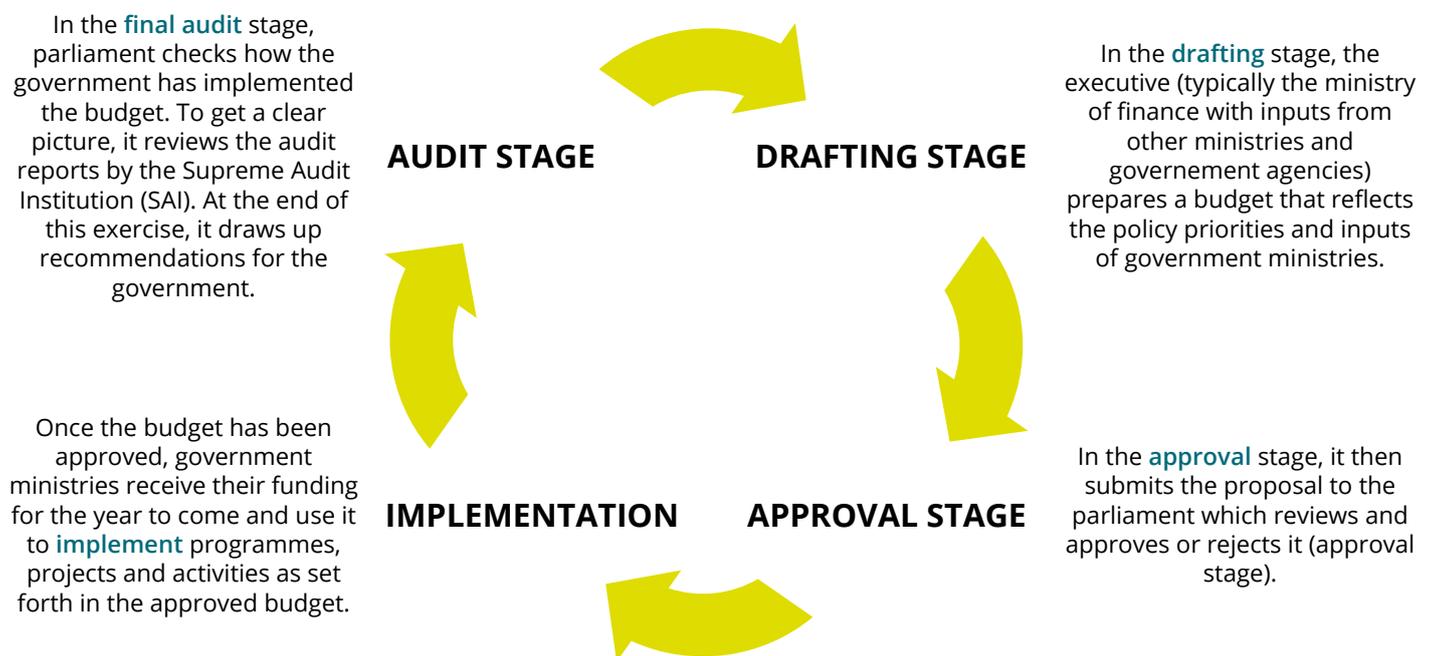
National budgets are critical to the implementation of the SDGs in a two-fold way:

- **What is being funded?** If the SDGs are to be a success and truly leave no one behind, it will be critical that their implementation is adequately funded and that financing is targeted at actions that reach the most marginalised communities. As a gateway for the allocation of public resources, the budget process determines the quality of a country’s development policies. A policy which is not supported by a country’s annual budget or medium-term revenue and expenditure framework will fall short of its means of implementation. Formulating the budget is thus the first step in determining what the government can afford to spend and how it will spend it.
- **How is the budget implemented?** Behind Goal 16 – promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels – lies an understanding that greater budget transparency, stronger oversight, and accountability can contribute significantly to better development outcomes and lay the groundwork for the implementation of the entire 2030 Agenda. Where a country’s expenditures and revenues are shrouded in secrecy, sustainable development suffers. A lack of transparency enables breaches of the rule of law and clientelist practices, which undermine efficient spending and leave people behind. Weak or limited transparency constitutes a major threat to public finances, in particular to emerging and developing economies. Participation and representation in the agreement of budgets is also important to ensure no one is left behind. Vulnerable and marginalised groups can be left behind not only in the outcomes and actions arising from budgets, but from exclusion from the political processes that decide them.

GOAL 16	
<b>Target 16.6</b> Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels	<b>Indicator 16.6.1</b> Primary government expenditures as a proportion of original approved budget, by sector (or by budget codes or similar)

**Figure 4:** Indicator 16.6.1 includes a specific metric on budget tracking.

A country's budget planning usually follows an annual cycle as illustrated in figure 4.



**Figure 5:** The national annual budget cycle.



## IN PRACTICE

**Sierra Leone:** The SDGs were linked to the country's 8 Pillars of the Agenda for Prosperity, the 3rd Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, and aligned to each spending category of the 2016 National Budget which was approved by parliament in November 2015.

**Serbia:** The National Assembly is working together with GOPAC Serbia and UNDP to establish budget monitoring tools that track its SDG expenditures and impacts.

Read more on the [UNDP Serbia website](#)



## PLANNING TOOL

**Assessing whether the budget is fit-for-purpose**

- Does the budget allocate enough funds to SDG-related actions? Does this funding reach ministries and departments to which it has been allocated?
- Are SDG policies outlined in the budget being implemented?
- Are projects and activities on track to meet their deadlines? If not, are delays justified, and how are they being addressed?
- Is the budget done in a format that allows tracking of funding per SDG?
- Are all sources of government income reflected in the budget including foreign development aid?
- Are funds being re-directed towards agencies and activities that were not outlined in the budget? If so, what is the justification?
- Do the SDG-related expenditures represent good value for money?



## RESOURCES

*A guide to budget work for NGOs*, International Budget Project (2001)

*A guide to tax work for NGOs*, International Budget Partnership (2006)

*Open budgets for Sustainable Development Goals* blog by Claire Schouten, International Budget Partnership (2015)

*SDGs, Budgets and parliaments* e-learning course

*Using aid and budget analysis for advocacy*, Development Initiatives (2014)

## 2.3 | Oversight of how the executive is implementing the SDGs

While the 2030 Agenda will require action from all parts of society, national governments bear the largest responsibility for its success. Putting SDGs into practice will require governments to work across policy areas, set priorities and make difficult choices in the face of tough trade-offs. Government ministries, departments and agencies will need to coordinate their work to find the balance between, at times, competing priorities.

Parliament's oversight function is one of the cornerstones of democracy and oversight is a vehicle for holding the executive to account – for its actions and for policy implementation in accordance with the laws and budget. Monitoring how effectively the government implements its SDG commitments is a responsibility of parliament and a key role for civil society actors. Where civil society and parliament facilitate each other's work, oversight is most effective.

### How engaging with parliament on oversight can support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Parliament has at its disposal formal tools which give it direct access to ministries and government bodies responsible for implementing policy and laws. When summoned by parliament, government officials are obliged to respond. When raised by the parliament, an issue automatically becomes a matter of public record and may bring important issues into the public debate.

Civil society actors can engage in this process by providing inputs on how the 2030 Agenda and specific SDGs are being implemented. Contributing expertise and experience in service delivery, CSOs can assist committees, caucuses and all-party groups, as well as individual MPs, to better understand the experiences on the ground: what works, what does not, and why. CSOs can also play a role in bringing affected people's perspectives into parliamentary deliberation, particularly those

of marginalised and vulnerable groups. Lastly, in their capacity as watchdogs, CSOs may be able to provide data on how well governments are performing from an early stage. In these ways and more, they can enrich a parliament's understanding of the SDGs and complement information made available by the government.

### How does parliament hold the government accountable?

Parliaments can exercise their right to scrutinise and question the actions of governments through a number of formal channels. These will vary from country to country, as will the extent that parliament can meaningfully impose sanctions on the government. CSOs should consider both these formal channels as well as informal engagement with individuals or groups of MPs in their efforts to track the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Both channels can be used, in different ways, to address SDG implementation.

#### *Requesting clarification*

Parliament can call on ministers to clarify or discuss policies during committee or plenary sessions. Members can ask questions in writing and face-to-face during question time sessions. During these sessions, individual legislators or groups of MPs can ask ministers directly about the effectiveness of their programmes and policies during plenary sessions. These questions can give way to broader debates on the policy at hand or lead to a vote approving or disapproving the issue discussed. In addition, parliamentary committees can request government ministries to provide them with up-to-date documentation and information – such as copies of government contracts – where this is considered essential for oversight.

#### *Committee hearings and oversight*

Committee hearings are also an important tool for oversight, investigating a specific matter with input from experts, civil society groups or constituents.

Committees can also assess in more depth whether laws, policies and programmes are effectively implemented in support of the SDGs and, if not, make recommendations on how to improve implementation.

### ***Inquiries into matters of public interest***

Parliaments can set up ad hoc committees or commissions to carry out in-depth investigations on specific issues of public importance. These commissions usually benefit from greater access to information than normal committees. Their powers may include summoning witnesses to testify under oath, confronting one witness with another, requesting or seizing documents, ordering searches, organising field visits, and more. Committees of inquiry are a commonly used oversight instrument in parliaments around the world and may be used to investigate important cases of corruption or abuse of power.

### ***Plenary debates***

In plenary, all MPs can voice their views and communicate feedback from their constituents, no matter the size or location of their constituency. They can also advocate for specific parliamentary actions.

### ***Review and confirmation of executive appointees***

Some parliaments have the power to scrutinise executive appointments to high public offices, including the judiciary, state-run companies, national banks and development funds and the like.

### ***Parliamentary committee on post-legislative scrutiny***

In a number of countries, parliaments have created so-called post legislative scrutiny committees.

These committees are tasked to do a legislative review of adopted laws. This can be a broad legislative review, the purpose of which is to evaluate whether and to what extent a piece of legislation has achieved its intended purpose. It can also refer to a more focused evaluation of how a piece of legislation is working in practice. In order to answer these questions, parliamentary staff often, with support from external expertise, are required to produce a legal and technical review of the law under consideration.

### ***Parliamentary caucuses and cross-party groups***

In some parliaments, members will organise themselves across party lines to learn, coordinate and promote the mainstreaming of development issues beyond committee work. Some parliaments have established cross-party groups or caucuses specifically on the Agenda 2030, while in others existing caucuses consider relevant SDGs issues. For example, a women's caucus can embrace SDG 5 (gender equality) as part of its agenda, a climate change caucus can focus on SDG 13 (climate change) and an education caucus will advocate for SDG 5 (access to education). Caucuses and cross-party groups are informal and have no official status within the parliament. However, they can be an important driver for the initiation of new laws, broad public consultations as well as a space for non-partisan debate and learning by MPs all of which will help to advance the work in committees. MPs are also able to act outside the formal committee structures through a range of processes that are generally not codified in the rules of parliament.



## STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Promote parliamentary engagement in Voluntary National Reviews** – Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are critical elements of the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda as they are the main global mechanism through which national governments report on their implementation progress. VNRs are expected to be “voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders” (Para 84).

The main objective of VNRs is to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and to mobilise multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs.

CSOs have several roles to play in pushing for inclusive and participatory VNR processes, including to promote the participation of parliament. They can call for VNR reports to be presented to parliament before they are shared at the UN High Level Political Forum and advocate for debriefings to take place afterwards.

Find out more about the VNRs on the following websites: [UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform Global Alliance for Reporting](#) – supported by UNDP



## IN PRACTICE

### Examples of parliamentary SDG caucuses around the world

**Zambia:** MPs in parliament formed a caucus on the SDGs (July 2015).

**Pakistan:** The Pakistan National Assembly established a cross-party working group of parliamentarians from all major party groups in 2015, with the goal of providing information about the SDGs and the role of the parliament in their implementation, as well as creating a venue for coordination of the overall SDG implementation. Read more about Zambia and Pakistan in [Fast facts: parliaments and SDGs](#) – UNDP (2016)

**Kenya:** The Kenya Parliamentary Caucus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will collaborate with the UN Country Team (UNCT) to promote and advocate on the SDGs (October 2017)  
Read more on the [UNDP Kenya website](#)



## RESOURCES

*Global parliamentary report 2017 – parliamentary oversight: parliament’s power to hold government to account* – Inter-Parliamentary Union

*Parliament’s role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: a parliamentary handbook* – GOPAC, IDB, UNDP (2017)

*Parliaments, Supreme Audit Institutions and the oversight of extractive industries* e-learning course

*Post-legislative scrutiny: comparative study of practices of post-legislative scrutiny in selected parliaments and the rationale for its place in democracy assistance* – WFD (2017)

*Mutual accountability: a guidance note for national policy-makers and practitioners* – ECOSOC, BMZ (2014)

*Evaluating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals* – GlobeScan, SustainAbility (2017)

## 2.4 | Parliament as an enabler of civic space

Political institutions, including parliaments, must set a clear pathway to enabling equal participation, representation and leadership opportunities for all parts of society, in all their diversity.

The space where citizens do the work of representing people's interests and improving the wellbeing of their own and other communities can be impeded by rules which limit the right to peaceful protest, prevent NGOs from receiving funding, restrict engagement in political life, control social media content, or increase the bureaucratic burden and cost for registration and operation.

An alarming global trend towards shrinking civic space has been documented across regions and political regimes. The reasons for this can range from government's concerns over 'foreign interference' and 'politicised' activism and criticism, to a belief that restrictions of civil and political liberties may be necessary to promote security and counter terrorism. The conditions in which CSOs operate, then, differ greatly from country to country. While some operate in societies conducive to active, free and meaningful participation, others may be facing significant barriers to effectively engage in the public life.

At the core of the 2030 Agenda lies a realisation that peaceful, just and inclusive societies based on

respect for human rights are a prerequisite for sustainable development. This is expressed most clearly in Goal 16 to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, but there are links in parts of the agenda. Where civil society actors face restrictions that violate fundamental freedoms of peaceful assembly, association and expression, the basic conditions for the success of the SDGs are strongly hindered, while Goal 16 cannot be attained at all in such a context.

Facilitating public involvement in political decision-making is one of the key functions through which parliaments fulfil their constitutional mandate. As a bridge between the executive and the public, parliaments have a potential to act as a natural champion for free, safe and vibrant civic space. Furthermore, by being responsible for the review and passing of laws, legislatures have a key role in creating conditions for civil society actors to operate freely and independently. Individual MPs can also support the enabling of civil society space in many ways, including by inviting them as witnesses, making statements about their work, featuring them in publications and talking about them at public events.



## THE BASICS

### What is civic space?

The environmental factors determining the extent to which members of society are able – either individually or collectively – to engage in civic action. Or, in other words, the conditions that make a meaningful and vibrant civil society possible (or not) in a given context. Source: UNDP

When civic space is open, citizens and civil society organisations are able to organise, participate and

communicate without hindrance. In doing so, they are able to claim their rights and influence the political and social structures around them. This can only happen when a state observes its duty to protect its citizens by respecting and facilitating their fundamental rights to associate, assemble peacefully and freely express views and opinions.

Source: CIVICUS



## RESOURCES

*The global state of democracy – exploring democracy's resilience* – International IDEA, Global State of Democracy (2017)

*2017 state of civil society report* – CIVICUS (2017)

# 3. How to engage parliament to advance the 2030 Agenda



## MAIN TAKEAWAYS

- There are multiple practical opportunities for civil society actors to feed into the parliamentary processes for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This chapter highlights key avenues for engagement.
- CSOs can adapt and develop their strategies for engagement based on their organisational objectives and expertise.
- Engaging with parliament on the SDGs may be mutually beneficial: CSOs gain additional entry points into the legislative and oversight process, while MPs get access to the diverse expertise, know-how and inputs from civil society.

## 3.1 Before you start: is parliament the right partner for advancing the 2030 Agenda?

Before you set out to engage with your national parliament or its members, consider the following factors:

- What do you want to change and why? How do you want to achieve it?
- How can you connect the reality that you are aiming to change with the commitments presented in the SDGs?
- What are your concrete proposals in terms of legislation and policy change?

In general, a country's law-making, budget and oversight processes take place at the national level. However, some issues are decided at the regional or local level. Although local government competencies and resources differ greatly from

country to country, you may well find that SDGs are advancing the most at the subnational level.

Any engagement strategy presents both opportunities and costs. While the SDGs offer unprecedented political opportunities for governments, the breadth of the agenda will necessarily require political actors to identify priorities and approaches to delivering on the various targets and indicators. Not all MPs and political groups may be supportive of your specific ask, message or approach. By understanding the political landscape of your parliament and its level of commitment to the SDGs, you will be able to gauge whether the time and resources required for constructive engagement outweigh the opportunities.



## PLANNING TOOL

### Assessing whether to engage parliament

If your work on the SDGs focuses on, or contributes to, political advocacy, being clear about your objectives is critical. Before deciding on whether or not to engage the parliament, you will need to establish:

What is it that you want to achieve: what is your issue?	<i>How can you frame it using the 2030 Agenda or specific SDGs?</i>
How do you propose to achieve it? What is the change you are seeking to achieve? Which processes will need to be targeted for the change to happen?	<i>Law-making, adequate funding, or policy implementation / enforcement?</i>
Which actors can help you champion your cause?	<i>Government ministries, parliamentarians, local governments, CSO coalitions, public figures? How do they relate and what are the synergies between people, policy processes and in influence?</i>
What institutions to engage: at what level are the SDGs issues decided at?	<i>Sub-national governments and legislatures may play a key role in establishing and localising the SDGs.</i>
What action can your target audience take to further this cause?	<i>Public statements of support; introduction of new laws or policies; promotion of such proposals throughout the process; raising public attention?</i>

## 3.2 | How to engage and what to offer

“We have extensive experience of setting up All-Party Groups (APGs) around Europe and at the Danish Parliament, including one on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights which I co-founded 11 years ago. Regarding the APG on the SDGs, from the outset, we decided that we wanted to take a multi-stakeholder approach to our work and invite all stakeholders to engage and cooperate with us, and we found that Global Focus as an umbrella of more than 80 NGOs was the most suitable partner to support the secretariat role. It is both a resource issue, as we do not have a budget in parliament or receive any help from the parliamentary secretariat. But it also provides a strong framework for a close dialogue with the CSOs and gives us a sense of what is going on in civil society regarding the SDGs. We are very grateful for the cooperation with Global Focus as it increases our outreach and gives us valuable knowledge. We would not have the same opportunities to reach as many people and engage in as many activities without our cooperation with civil society. Combining the legitimacy that lies in parliamentary engagement with the broad foundation of Global Focus gives our work a strong leverage with the potential to make real change.”

Kirsten Brosbøl, Chair, All-party Coalition on the SDGs in Denmark

The following section outlines ten ways in which civil society actors can find opportunities to engage their parliament on the SDGs. These approaches include those that engage the core functions of law making, budget planning, oversight and representation, as well as those that engage more informal political influence and access to the executive that individual MPs benefit from.

**1. Feeding in expert knowledge** – civil society groups can examine how the government is planning to implement the SDGs through its policies, laws and budgets. Based on this analysis, they can then offer important considerations to make sure that legislative proposals do not discriminate, and that funding is fully informed by the principle of leaving no one behind. When in regular contact with different sectors of society and interest groups, they can transform their

concerns into actionable and well-argued proposals. In doing so, they can highlight issues which may not otherwise receive enough political attention. Independent impact assessments or ex-post legal assessments of laws by civil society actors can show whether public services budgeted for by the government effectively respond to the specific circumstances of relevant population sub-groups and whether laws are achieving their specific objectives.



### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Demonstrate awareness of complexity** – MPs are going to be more inclined to see civil society policy advocates as credible if they demonstrate a nuanced and in-depth understanding of complex substantive matters, including an appreciation of the associated trade-offs.

**2. Collecting, analysing and interpreting data** – to review whether the government’s proposals leave no one behind and target areas most in need, parliament will need to understand the impact of policies and budgets on certain parts of society. High-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by factors – such as income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant to national contexts – provide critical evidence to inform

decision making. Making such data available is in itself the focus of SDG 17, target 18 and a key principle of SDG review at all levels. Parliament will have a fuller, more nuanced picture of development if it receives information from CSO sources, in addition to that provided by government and the national statistical system. Interpreting and presenting data is an important and much-needed skill civil society groups can provide to support parliament’s oversight of SDG implementation.



### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Personalise the issues** – well presented testimonies from civil society can add a human face to an issue that is difficult to ignore. Depending on the issue, personal stories may be remembered and valued more than data and numbers.

**3. Local intelligence** – quantitative data such as statistical figures are not the only form of data that is useful for parliaments. In many developing countries it is often very hard to obtain data and other sources of information can be of great value to parliaments. Qualitative data and traditional forms of knowledge are also critical for informing decision-making. Local communities, indigenous groups and minority organisations can use parliamentary consultation to present testimonies from SDG policy and budget stakeholders. Citizen-generated evidence and contextualised local knowledge can provide a snapshot of progress in local contexts.

**4. Budget advocacy** – SDG advocacy has most impact when coupled with advocacy for adequate budget allocations. Additionally, SDG implementation may be impacted by budget cuts, for example by those directed at social and environmental programmes. Civil society advocates can play a role in supporting the least organised and represented groups to call for adequate financing and defending existing programmes from cuts by supporting them to increase their visibility and to raise their voices.



### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Help to close the loop** – by informing debates and contributing social research, CSOs can help create regular feedback channels between citizens and parliament.

**5. Demanding more transparency and accountability** – this could consist of calling on governments or statistical bodies to release data and models underlying SDG targets and indicators. Or it could involve pressuring responsible ministries to share key documents

publicly and in a timely manner, giving the parliament and the public sufficient time for scrutiny. Advocating for parliaments to hold public hearings and debates on the SDGs is another example.



#### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Ensure your messages are evidence-based** – policy issues relating to the SDGs have implications for key national agendas including economic growth and macroeconomic stability. For this reason, policy arguments should be backed up with solid evidence. However, this evidence does not need to be always presented in quantitative form. Grassroots testimonies and local knowledge can serve compelling policy arguments.

**6. Public campaigns around the SDGs** – another means of engaging MPs can be through public campaigns. Having drawn significant public attention since its conception, the 2030 Agenda is an overarching theme for creative campaigning. Awareness-raising and action

campaigns other forms of mobilisation such as walkathons encourage and create opportunities for the broader public to be directly engaged in the SDGs. Being a face of a popular SDG campaign can add visibility to an MP's profile and electoral agenda.



#### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Boosting parliament's oversight efforts** – where state or private sector actors do not respond to, or rebuke, parliament's attempts to hold them accountable, civil society can assist by campaigning in support of parliamentary activity.



## PLANNING TOOL

### Target your messaging

MPs are more likely to support initiatives and listen to messages that are targeted, specific, well-packaged, and not dramatically at odds with their views, values, and electoral promises. To communicate your SDG messages effectively, consider the following:

- Coordinate with other CSOs – receiving uncoordinated inputs from multiple CSOs makes it difficult for MPs to give such inputs due consideration. Coordination among CSOs can ensure coherence of messages, minimise unhelpful and non-strategic duplication, and maximise impact on the legislative process.
- Set the right tone – build your messages on common ground rather than seeking out divisive issues. Emphasise shared values and interests around the 2030 Agenda and frame your messages in positive rather than negative terms.
- Tailor your messages – present arguments as compelling, strategically-framed policy messages adapted to the changing political contexts and the audience.

**7. Public scrutiny** – civil society actors can help to identify and bring to light the misconduct of public officials, including cases of negligence or corruption which undermine progress towards the SDGs. They can also conduct independent investigations of fraudulent practices in the private sector. Moreover, CSOs have been increasingly mapping, analysing and explaining the role of tax and the harmful impacts of tax evasion and tax avoidance on development. Many have advocated to integrate these issues within the 2030 Agenda and are using the related SDGs to further their cause during the implementation phase. Examples of relevant SDG targets include 16.4 – by 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime – and 16.5, substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms. Being able to feed such findings to the parliament may be especially important when spaces and opportunities for civil society

to exercise freedom of expression are severely constrained.

### 8. Increasing policy and budget literacy

– the inherently technical nature of certain laws and national budgets and the use of inaccessible and highly specialised language are a major barrier to the participation of SDG advocates and citizens in the law-making process and budget planning cycle. However, while budgeting is a complex exercise, it is not only about applying complex procedures and techniques. It is essentially about making choices: deciding what is most needed to make the SDGs a reality, and how it can be done most efficiently. These choices can and should be communicated in a language that citizens can understand. Educating citizens through training and educational materials are valuable activities that CSOs can undertake to make SDG policies and budgets more participatory and transparent.



## STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Consider developing a citizen budget** – some CSOs prepare citizen budgets which explain the national budget as well as outline who is responsible for its implementation. The SDGs provide an engaging and accessible new framework to link public spending to development goals. Such initiatives have great potential to promote greater public engagement with the budget.



## IN PRACTICE

### SDG capacity building retreat for MPs in Sierra Leone

In June 2017, Sierra Leone Coalition 2030, a civil society alliance for the SDGs, held a capacity-building retreat with 25 MPs. The training targeted the most strategic figures in parliamentary work on the SDGs: members of the informal Parliamentary Action Group on the SDGs and parliamentary leadership including the Deputy Speaker, the Majority Leader and others. In order to maintain institutional memory beyond the electoral term, the training also engaged parliamentary clerks. The participants expressed the need to gain more knowledge on the SDGs to be better equipped to carry out their representation, oversight and monitoring functions. In addition to providing technical capacity, the training was also used as an opportunity to develop a Memorandum of Understanding setting out a plan for continuous engagement between the civil society alliance and Members of the Parliamentary Action Group on the SDGs.

Read more in the [2030 coalition engages parliamentarians article on the Africa Young Voices website](#)

**9. Training for CSOs and MPs** – training offered by CSOs to MPs and other civil society actors can go a long way in raising awareness of the SDGs and how they should be implemented. This can result in better interventions and oversight of the 2030 Agenda. Identifying local and international best practices on how the

SDGs are being implemented can assist the legislature in making better choices. Collaboration amongst CSOs to ensure a single approach to training led by parliament would be beneficial to avoid the risk of uncoordinated demands on MP time and resources.



## IN PRACTICE

## Engaging parliaments in Scotland and Bangladesh

To boost coordination around the SDGs, some CSOs have set up platforms to network, share knowledge or exchange experiences.

Scotland's SDG Network coordinated an *open letter* to Scottish political parties, parliamentary committees, the Scottish Cabinet and all 32 local authorities from organisations and individuals across Scotland. The letter called on these key decision makers and institutions to show their commitment to delivering the UN SDGs in Scotland by publishing the specific actions they are taking that relate to the 17 critical areas reflected in the SDGs.

In Bangladesh, *Citizen's Platform for SDGs* brings together 74 CSOs from across the country working on the SDGs. The platform aims to "provide an opportunity to track the progress of SDG delivery; sensitise policymakers towards challenges in implementation; bring transparency in the implementation process, and; facilitate exchange of information and coordination among all those working on the SDGs in Bangladesh." The platform will also facilitate relevant stakeholders to work in support of the poor and marginalised, particularly for the achievement of Goal 16.

**10. Strengthening accountability through national audits** – the auditing process aims at assessing the effectiveness of government practices to improve the use of public resources. Parliament conducts oversight of public accounts through its own oversight tools and by reviewing the reports of the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI). Countries are beginning to explore the use of audits for reviewing the implementation of the SDGs. Since monitoring government performance is the core mission of

many CSOs, their activities are complementary to those of SAI and parliament. In some countries, parliaments and SAIs have been reaching out to CSOs to request them to contribute to the national audit process. In other countries, CSOs have been proactively scrutinising the legitimacy and quality of government spending. In various parts of the world, CSOs have been involved in audit planning by providing data and research, as well as communicating audit results.



## IN PRACTICE

## SDG audits

In Brazil, the Federal Court of Accounts developed a framework to aggregate performance audit results to monitor and review the implementation of the SDGs at the national level.

In India, the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General has scrutinised funding for SDG implementation, and is currently planning an audit on the government's SDG preparedness.

Read more in *Overview of institutional arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda at national level* – UNDESA (2017)

## 3.3 | Avenues for engagement

There are multiple practical opportunities to feed into parliamentary processes for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The following section identifies the main entry points, some of which are facilitated by committees, caucuses, party groups or individual MPs, and some proactively by CSOs themselves.



### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Target the influencers** – MPs who are most active or influential within their party group can promote your initiative among their party colleagues. Senior parliamentarians can draw on their influence and relationships with members of government and other parties to set the agenda and advance the issue you are working on. Investing in and building and maintaining a relationship with such members can support longer-term objectives of the 2030 Agenda, as their influence often outlives their parliamentary career. Political influencers can continue to hold sway as ministers, city mayors or party executives.

### 3.3.1 | Public hearings

As explained earlier in this handbook, public hearings are formal meetings in which citizens and groups are asked to testify before a committee and in which the committee members have the opportunity to ask questions. The formal record of a public hearing offers an opportunity to document how those impacted by a draft law or subject are affected and their recommendations for change.

Hearing directly from government ministers and stakeholder including CSOs on the impact of government programme delivery, lessons learned and the needs and expectations of citizens gives MPs a fuller picture of how the SDGs are being mainstreamed in their country. Information and feedback received through hearings makes MPs better equipped to engage on the SDGs with government actors and stakeholders.

#### Advocating for a hearing

While some legislatures are constitutionally obliged to hold public hearings on certain matters, for example the annual budget, in most parliaments

hearings are not mandatory. As a rule, hearings are held only on certain issues and draft laws. For this reason, one way of engaging parliaments on the implementation and follow up of the 2030 Agenda can be by advocating for public hearings on issues that committees are focused on. This normally involves approaching the committee's chairperson or a like-minded member.

#### Taking part in a hearing

A valuable and constructive contribution to a hearing is the best first step to establishing a long-standing working relationship with a committee and its members. It can, for instance, increase the chances for an organisation or coalition to be kept in the loop on a particular topic and for invitations to hearings, less formal meetings or events. Being well prepared will also allow your organisation to engage with other actors in the room which form the larger advocacy community.

#### Follow up

It is usually possible for representatives from

organisations that have provided witnesses to attend the committee meetings that follow up the public hearing. This is a good opportunity for your organisation to follow up on your contribution and to keep abreast of the committee's considerations.

### Public hearings on the budget

Engaging with the parliament on the budget takes place primarily through a budget committee. In some countries, this committee holds public hearings to receive inputs from citizens, experts and

interest groups. In other cases, a budget committee will open its proceedings and meetings to the media and the general public. In contrast to hearings, these public debates do not offer civil society actors the chance to make direct contributions but provide insight into the annual budget process and the content of what is being discussed and agreed. In some systems, the parliament's oversight and audit responsibilities are led by a separate Public Accounts Committee (PAC), some of which offer similar opportunities for engagement.



## IN PRACTICE

### SDG congressional hearings in Korea

The Korean National Assembly's SDG Forum has been holding open meetings, public hearings and has run two campaigns on the SDGs with the purpose of creating more awareness among civil society actors and citizens at large.

Find out more on the [UN's sustainable development knowledge platform website](#)



## PLANNING TOOL

### How to advocate for a hearing

- Research committee members – identify those most involved and interested in the issues covered by the SDGs.
- Approach committee members – those with whom you have an established relationship will have the best chance of success.
- When approaching the committee chairperson or member, emphasise the benefits of holding a hearing on the SDGs.

### How to prepare for a SDG-related hearing

- In some countries, participating in a public hearing requires an invitation by the committee. If you are invited to take part, understanding the hearing announcement, registration process and the hearing protocol will help you make the most of the opportunity.
- Be clear on what you want to communicate and what your main messages are.
- Familiarise yourself with the legislative agenda

around the relevant SDG issue and the 2030 Agenda.

- If the purpose of the hearing is to consult on a draft law, study the proposal in detail.
- Normally, witnesses to a hearing are expected to prepare a written submission and a short oral presentation. When preparing an oral presentation, study the rules of procedure. Depending on the parliament, witnesses are granted different amount of times to present. Timing your presentation well is important considering that the time allocated may be as little as 5-10 minutes.
- For written contributions, inquire in advance about the format of submissions with the committee staff as some committees require a set format.
- You may be requested to submit your presentation in advance of the hearing.
- Be prepared for questions. Oral presentations are normally followed by a Q&A.

### 3.3.2 | Public meetings

Committees can organize informal public meetings in which citizens and CSOs are invited to attend and provide comments on draft laws or an investigation. These could take place through parliament or through specific constituencies. They are usually less formal than hearings and allow for

freer exchange between committee members and other participants. They can provide an opportunity for CSOs to ask MPs about their stance on the SDGs and engagement with civil society. It is not uncommon for such meetings to be organised with prospective MPs during electoral campaigns.



#### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Visibility: an important drive** – engaging with civil society on the SDGs offers MPs an opportunity to become more visible and popular with voters. You can increase such visibility by publicising meetings and drafting press releases or parliamentary questions that can give your MP a chance to shine.



#### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

##### Keeping things manageable

Parliamentarians and staffers are extremely busy people who often juggle engagement on several committees and groups with their constituency work and other initiatives. Anything you can do to make things easy for them is much appreciated. This could include drafting meeting requests to ministers, drafting parliamentary questions or reports, or taking care of meeting logistics.

### 3.3.3 | Private meetings

A recent survey among MPs in the United Kingdom shows that building a personal relationship with a few MPs is the most effective strategy to lobby parliament in favour of development outcomes. In this respect, private meetings are a successful way to put your issues forward. This can provide MPs with a more detailed and nuanced level of knowledge on the SDGs that can enhance what has been gained from more official engagements. For CSOs, private meetings are often an

opportunity to ask MPs for support or to act as SDG champions in parliament. Once a strong working relationship has been established, civil society actors can use private meetings with MPs and staff to regularly exchange and feed in information around respective activities. Be sure to prepare for the meeting and be familiar with the MP and their work.



#### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Prepare for private meetings** – be prepared to keep your meetings short and to-the-point. Be clear about what you're asking for. Prepare any documentation that you wish to distribute at the meeting in advance. Keep it brief and user-friendly but make sure to include accurate data which justifies your ask.

### 3.3.4 | Parliamentary cross-party groups or caucuses

Run by and for MPs, cross-party groups or caucuses may sometimes allow the participation of individuals and organisations from outside parliament. For example, in the UK Parliament there are 605 all-party parliamentary groups (APPGs), including 137 country groups and 468 subject groups, which bring together members of both houses and outside experts. Where such a group exists, information on membership can typically be found in the official parliamentary register, on the group's website, or obtained from its secretariat.

The benefits of approaching these groups and attending their meetings include:

- **Access to members of various political groups** – informal structures typically involve members

from various political groups and promote a dialogue between their members. Establishing contact with a caucus may prove more strategic than approaching individual members alone.

- **Impact** – caucuses and cross-party groups are important for forging a parliamentary consensus on issues. Having discussed a matter within an informal group, members can carry out advocacy within their own party, in committees and in parliament. If your SDG message receives the support of any of the group's members, it may travel beyond the caucus to reach the various party groups and committees.



#### IN PRACTICE

##### United Kingdom

The NGO network Bond has been hosting the secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the SDGs and provided policy briefings and recommendations to UK parliamentarians and relevant committees on the implementation of the SDGs.

Find out more on [Bond's website](#)



#### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Avoid partisanship** – seeking support of members of multiple groups can help you build political traction across party lines and electoral cycles, making sure that the SDGs are still part of the agenda regardless of changes in the political landscape.



#### RESOURCES

*Crowdlaw and open data policy: a perfect match?* – blog by Stefaan Verhulst, [thegovlab.org](#) (2016)



## IN PRACTICE

## CSO network support to the all-party SDG Coalition Secretariat in the Danish Parliament

In 2016, Global Focus, a Danish network comprising 80 development and humanitarian CSOs decided to become more involved with the Danish Parliament and Government on the 2030 Agenda. One of the main challenges was the need to develop new relationships with MPs and government representatives beyond their existing allies in order to increase CSO influence on the SDG implementation.

Global Focus partnered with other networks and organisations, including the Danish 92-group (which focuses on the environment), the private sector, unions and local authorities to organize a major multi-stakeholder conference in the Spring of 2017. More than 150 CSOs, politicians, government representatives and other stakeholders debated Denmark's implementation of the SDGs at home and abroad.

Following up on the conference, Kirsten Brosbøl, a Danish Social Democrat, established an All-Party Coalition on the SDGs in the Danish Parliament. The purpose of this coalition is to engage policy makers and civil society with the 2030 Agenda. The Coalition currently has 46 MPs including representatives from all political parties and meets several times throughout the year. It also organizes

meetings with ministers and organizes an annual multi-stakeholder forum. The coalition has also set up an advisory board comprised of 15 people representing major stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, trade unions, consumers, academia and others.

Having demonstrated its capabilities to mobilise a wide range of stakeholders for the 2030 Agenda, Global Focus was invited to provide support to the all-party coalition Secretariat and advisory board, in partnership with the Danish 92- group. This has translated into closer, institutionalized engagement with members from almost all parties within the Danish Parliament, with strategic opportunities to promote issues on the parliament's agenda and to recommend speakers for debates and discussions related to the SDGs. Consequently, Global Focus has been able to develop understanding of the SDGs among Danish MPs.

The opportunity to provide support to the Secretariat was also an opportunity for Global Focus to develop its organisational skills, improve its understanding of political processes, increase internal capacity and improve its ability to tailor messaging.

### 3.3.5 | Crowdlaw or crowdsourced law-making

This is a tech-enabled approach to drafting legislation or constitutions, that offers a more direct public engagement avenue than the traditional method of policymaking. It is an emerging field of practice which is slowly gaining momentum around the world, bringing together citizen advocates, lawyers, platform developers, government employees and research scientists. While development strategy is not currently an area of

legislation which is being crowdsourced, this approach open doors for citizens and CSOs to contribute to legislation related to the various aspects of the SDGs in the most direct way. Initiating or becoming involved in crowdlaw initiatives allows citizen advocates to bring the SDG perspective into legislative drafts on issues related to sustainable development.

### 3.3.6 | Other forms of consultation

Sometimes, committees and MPs offer other forms of engagement to CSOs:

#### Parliamentary committees

- **Research** – CSOs can provide inputs to research commissioned by committees that seeks an understanding of public opinion on a specific subject. Surveys are particularly helpful for gathering quantitative data to inform committee deliberations.
- **Web-based consultation** – a growing means of consultation is to use the internet to seek comments on draft laws or specific topics. This can be done through online surveys or a broader request for comments. This type of consultation can result in a large number of submissions. CSOs can support the process by making submissions which consolidate the inputs of a broader community.
- **Field visits** – in order to get a first-hand look at the impact of a draft law or government activity, committees can travel to visit specific communities or groups. For example, if a committee is considering a new law on health insurance, it may want to visit health facilities in a local community to meet with physicians, nurses, health care workers and patients and hear their perspective on the draft law. As many CSOs work

in far-flung areas, field visits provide a good opportunity for advocates outside the capital to interact with MPs. Remember to take photos as they are useful for communication materials.

#### Individual members

- **Social media** – communication technology has become important for many MPs and political parties, who increasingly interact with the public during debates via social media and other web-based tools. In some countries, live-tweeting by MPs during committee, plenary and electoral debates has become a new form of public discussion that CSOs can engage in.
- **Constituency office hours** – civil society representatives and concerned citizens can access their MPs during their constituency sessions to communicate their concerns. Depending on the local context, this might take place in a local party office, community centre, door-to-door or on a local street corner.
- **Town halls** – in some parliaments, MPs host regular town hall meetings in their constituency giving citizens the chance to meet and discuss issues with them. Some of these events are organized around specific themes or topics. Others serve as reporting sessions in which an MP provides an update on recent parliamentary activities.



#### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Engage constituents** – community-based and local organisations can mobilise constituents to contact their MPs on SDG issues. Such an approach can be very effective; parliamentarians take interest in matters their constituents feel strongly about and are often less likely to ignore their demands than those of organised advocacy groups. Constituency statistics can be useful for tailoring broad communications. This could include information on how your constituents are affected by a particular issue or how an issue in their constituency compares to the national average. Moreover, in a non-constituency system, MPs will seek ways to better connect with the people they represent and the SDGs provide an important new agenda to connect on. When approached by constituents about the SDGs, MPs can take matters a step further by raising it in a committee meeting or writing to a relevant government minister for instance. Constituents more strongly connected to their MPs are potential SDG allies.



## PLANNING TOOL

### WHO TO ENGAGE

#### What relevant committees, caucuses or groups exist?

Identifying the committees or parliamentary groups most relevant to the topic of your work will help you to determine who you should engage with in the first instance. As mentioned previously, some parliaments will have a single committee mandated with SDG coordination in place while others will have an SDG caucus or a cross-party group. Familiarize yourself with the relevant group's agenda to find out what actions have been taken so far, what the status of the committee process is and what the next steps are.

Committee clerks are also important players who can facilitate participation in committee induction events, public hearings and the commissioning of external research. Also, depending on the political and party system of a country, political parties play a critical role in shaping policy on different issues. Hence important avenues for influencing the outcomes in parliament might include political party conventions and working groups.

Where SDG-specific committees or groups do not exist, it is important to find out if, how and when the Agenda 2030 or specific SDGs have been discussed at the parliament, whether this was in plenary or in sectoral parliamentary committees or groups. Which MPs were actively engaged? What form did the debate take? How strategic is it to advocate for setting up a specialised SDG structure? Knowing the degree to which your parliament or the relevant committee has engaged with the SDGs can help you package your messages and gauge the appetite of MPs for supporting an issue framed as part of the SDGs.

#### Who are the right people to reach out to?

Which are the MPs who may be supportive of

your initiative? Which ones may be interested in championing it? Looking at members of the relevant committees is a good starting point, although the membership of informal parliamentary groups – caucuses or cross-party groups – can also help you identify MPs sympathetic to your goal. While party affiliation may be an initial indication of an MP's views, looking at the motions they have tabled, their websites and social media will give you a fuller picture. Engaging a wide range of MPs will help to increase overall awareness and reputation of your organisation and its messages. Being on a politician's radar increases the chances of them seeing you as a credible and relevant source of information on the topic.

#### Build and maintain a good working relationship

Continuous engagement in the political process, offering actionable input on a regular basis or being active at key events will help you maintain a relationship with an MP or a committee. Getting to know the staff in your MP's office is a good way to keep in touch as assistants, advisers and committee clerks will typically be the primary point of contact.

### WHEN TO ENGAGE

#### Timing your interventions: when does your parliament sit?

No parliament sits all year round. A session is the period during which the house meets almost every day continuously to conduct business. This is therefore the right time to engage with parliamentary committees. There are usually two or more sessions in a year. During periods called recesses, members can carry out their other duties. Recess is often an opportunity to reach out to MPs active in their constituencies.

## 3.4 | Effective SDG advocacy: approaches that work

### Coalition-building

It is easier for MPs to interact with a limited number of forums than to maintain direct relationships with many individual CSOs. Horizontal coalitions that bring together various types of CSOs and speak with a unified voice carry more political weight and have a higher chance of successfully influencing change. Furthermore, alliances provide good value for money thanks to the way they prevent duplication of work. For these reasons, setting up national CSO coalitions can provide a valuable platform for tracking the implementation of the SDGs.

### Building partnerships

Your parliamentary work may be supported by building partnerships with other influential figures such as national or local government leaders, public figures, private sector leaders, representatives of international organisations and NGOs or celebrities. Campaigns featuring influential figures can build motivation, spread esprit de corps and extend public reach. Importantly, they can also galvanise participating MPs to take concrete action in the parliament.



### STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

**Visibility: an important drive** – engaging with civil society on the SDGs offers MPs an opportunity to become more visible and popular with voters. You can increase such visibility by publicising meetings and drafting press releases or parliamentary questions that can give your MP a chance to shine.

## 3.5 | Overcoming challenges

As organisations embark on parliamentary engagement, they often face a number of common challenges around technical and financial capacity, competition around access and a reluctance by parliament to engage.

### Technical capacity constraints

For organisations new to parliamentary engagement, generating strong evidence, developing technical policy arguments, carrying out strategic advocacy and communicating tailored messages will require new capacities and skills. For organisations used to different modes of operation and engagement, this could also mean re-evaluating their organisational strategy and boosting fundraising activities.

#### Action points:

- Train staff on how to develop and adapt evidence to influence political and policy processes.
- Evaluate and review organisation strategy.

### Financial capacity constraints

Funding constraints may impair the ability of CSOs to engage with parliaments. Lack of sufficient resourcing limits their ability to invest in staff and volunteers, develop the necessary research and technical skills and maintain engagement with MPs. In addition, many CSOs rely on short-term funding, which may lead to a short-term vision and a less strategic approach to change. Working in networks and alliances can be a strategic way to maximize resources and outreach in the face of these challenges.

#### Action points:

- Look to broaden the donor base (avoiding reliance on a single donor) and funding options.
- Investigate new funding pools and fundraising opportunities brought about by the SDGs. Examples of donors supporting civil society work

on SDGs can be found on the SDG Funders website.

- Find out about available free support to develop technical capacity (see resources box).

### Reducing competition through a coalition approach

Working in silos, CSOs can end up competing for access to MPs, influence and limited funding which may leave larger players monopolising the space. As emphasised throughout this handbook, the SDGs present an unprecedented opportunity for partnerships. Taking a coalition approach to parliamentary work can help to overcome the challenge of competition between partners. Moreover, it can develop valuable linkages between different types of CSOs that are not necessarily in competition but do not usually work together – such as policy advocates and academics.

#### Action points:

- Map the field to identify organisations which can complement your expertise, bring additional value to your campaigns, or share valuable experience. In terms of complementing skillsets, partnering with other civil society actors may be an answer to capacity constraints. For instance, a group of technical experts that struggles with communicating and promoting its research may benefit from the communication and advocacy support of campaigning, activists or media groups.
- Seek collaborations across interrelated areas of the SDGs can help craft more holistic and multifaceted campaigns. The latter are likely to attract broader support, being relevant to parliamentarians with various interests and expertise.
- Finally, the global reach of the 2030 Agenda can harness collaborations beyond country borders where partners are much less prone to

competition and instead can benefit one another by sharing valuable experiences and approaches that work.

### Parliament reluctant to engage

While some parliaments have been increasingly open to citizen participation, others continue to offer limited or no real opportunities for intervention and advocacy. In some countries, entry points into parliamentary politics have been the preserve of business lobbies benefiting from far greater capacity and resourcing than civil society.

#### Action points:

- Build public pressure. Campaigns and web-based platforms which attract significant attention and participation of citizens may be a way to encourage MPs to engage. Working with the media – traditional media as well as dedicated campaign websites and social media – can help you get your message or initiative across to a wider audience and gain widespread support. The momentum and social traction created by such initiatives can influence the parliament to change its rules of procedure and regulations to become more open to civil society engagement. Notably, such initiatives can increase citizen involvement in decision-making, making people feel they can make a difference.
- Approach prospective parliamentary candidates. Where the current parliament is slow or reluctant to engage, writing to or meeting with prospective parliamentary candidates and political groups during electoral campaigns can be an effective medium or longer-term strategy. Follow your country's electoral timetable to time your outreach. When successful, such exchanges result in bringing the SDGs into party manifestos and individual campaigns, making them more visible to the general public; few campaigns receive as much public attention as those around general elections. These approaches should be solely linked to promoting the SDGs and 2030 Agenda issues to avoid being partisan. In some places, as well as attending debates, CSOs might organize a candidate debate and pose questions. It can be helpful to share questions in advance to improve the chances of a substantive answer.
- Join the Open Government Partnership (OGP). The OGP is a multilateral initiative that brings together governments and civil society to secure concrete commitments to promote open government, empower citizens, fight corruption, and make use of new technologies to strengthen governance.



## RESOURCES

### Training courses

Training for civil society actors on how to participate in political decision-making has been offered by development partners, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the National Democracy Institute (NDI), the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) and national development agencies, to name a few. There are numerous examples of large national and international NGOs and academic organisations which offer similar opportunities. You can read more about the following examples online: WFD, Macedonia: *Lobbying for change: WFD's support to human rights CSOs in Macedonia* OSCE, Kyrgyzstan: *Training of trainers for civil activists on how to lobby parliament*

### Publications

*Get your voice heard: a guide to campaigning at Westminster* – UK House of Commons  
*Developing and sustaining an effective lobbying campaign* – Irish Haemophilia Society (2006)  
*Guidelines for lobbying parliament* – University of Cape Town  
*Lobbying Parliament: a guide for NGOs* – National Democratic Institute (NDI)  
*11 ways NGOs can work with politicians* – The Guardian (2015)  
*The Goal 16 advocacy toolkit: a practical guide for stakeholders for national-level advocacy around peaceful, just and inclusive societies* – TAP Network

### Websites

[OpeningParliament.org](http://OpeningParliament.org)  
[Open Government Partnership](http://Open Government Partnership)

### 3.6 | What can you realistically expect from engaging parliament on the 2030 Agenda?

Parliament's relationship with civil society is highly complex. First of all, CSOs can be numerous and represent sometimes radically different values, principles and approaches. Community-based charities, independent think tanks, trade unions and business associations are all considered CSOs.

Secondly, MPs and parliamentary groups are also not homogenous. Their background, interests, approach and working style can vary considerably. The relationship one MP or party may cultivate with CSOs may be very different from that of another. Engagement strategies that work for some NGOs and MPs will not necessarily work for others.

Thirdly, the social and political context makes all the difference to the nature of, and scope for, the CSO-parliamentary relationship. The degree to which citizens are aware of their right to demand accountability is an important factor in determining social support for CSO engagement. Engagement strategies that work in one context may not be equally successful elsewhere.

Given the multitude of CSOs, it is impossible for parliament to develop equally strong relationships with all of them. What is more desirable and realistic is to develop a practice of mutual respect and dialogue. While the views and agendas of some CSOs may be at variance with those of parliament or its individual members, open lines of communication can help create the social consensus that is required to pass draft laws. The 2030 Agenda comes with an understanding that all parts of society have an important role in ensuring the SDGs are achieved across the globe and that, through a constructive working relationship, both parliaments and CSOs can play an effective role.

An active and engaged parliament is critical for the successful implementation of the SDGs and CSOs have several important roles to play in making this engagement effective and support the realisation of the 2030 Agenda's promise to leave no one behind.



## Together 2030 – from policy to action

Together 2030 is a civil society initiative that promotes national implementation and track progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Initiative, set up in December 2015, aims at generating knowledge and project voices from different civil society and stakeholders around the world on the challenges and opportunities for the 2030 Agenda. Together 2030 brings together actors to discuss the way to formulate and implement roadmaps at the national level and hold governments to account at all levels.

[together2030.org](http://together2030.org)

