



Event Summary

“Strengthening Post-VNR Best Practices on SDG16”

An online webinar hosted by the [TAP Network](#) and [UNDP](#)

Tuesday, 10 March 2020 at 12:00-1:30pm GMT

Summary

This webinar focused on the experiences, lessons learned, and best practices of governments and other stakeholders working on post-Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes for Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16) and the 2030 Agenda more broadly. Speakers looked to provide their insights and experiences of translating the VNR processes into political action, policy change, and how repeated VNR reporting can be linked to national development processes.

This webinar is part of a partnership initiated between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Transparency, Accountability, and Participation (TAP) Network to further explore emerging best practices and challenges related to advancement of SDG16 as part of VNR process, with focus on the post-VNR follow up and how this can be linked to national planning and development processes. Country experiences are being collected to feed into a new resource to be launched (as a draft for further consultation) in May 2020 to inspire member states and national stakeholders such as civil society and the private sector on how to include reflections on post-VNR follow up on SDG16 as part of their VNR process. The final resource will be published in Fall 2020 with plans to implement national capacity building multi-stakeholder workshops.

Speakers included:

- Mr. Joern Geisselmann, Advisor, [Partners 4 Review](#) (P4R)
- Mr. Peter van Sluijs, Senior Strategist, [Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding](#) (CSPPS)
- Ms. Margarita Cano, Asesora Técnica Especializada, [Secretaría de Planificación y Programación de la Presidencia](#) (SEGEPLAN) de Guatemala
- Ms. Ameyovi Alice Goza, Founder and President, [International Association of Women and Young Leaders](#) (AIFJL) in Togo and part of [UNDP's 16x16 Initiative](#)
- Ms. Fiona Dawe, Head of Sustainable Development Goals, [United Kingdom Office of National Statistics](#) (ONS)

Partners 4 Review

Mr. Joern Geisselmann of P4R opened with an introduction of the concept of follow-up or post-VNR and then shared a few observations concerning trends and country experiences.

Follow-up is action taken in response to findings from the VNR. It ensures that the implementation process moves forward. This implies that: 1) the VNR should not only review past implementation, but also agree on next steps based on the identified lessons learnt, challenges and good practices; 2) immediate follow-up action, such as reporting to parliament and/or the media is vital; 3) Concrete actions should be taken to implement the next steps and policy recommendations; 4) actions that are not a direct result of the VNR, but that nevertheless help move the follow-up or post-VNR process forward, e.g. conducting a performance audit or a peer review; and 5) the mechanisms established during or before a VNR should be institutionalized and continued after the VNR.

P4R identified a number of countries undertaking follow-up activities after the VNR. **Mongolia** conducted a systems analysis of drivers, bottlenecks and impacts and developed short- and long-term actions to tackle air pollution; **Guatemala** committed to host workshops to discuss recommendations evolving from the VNR process and then communicate these to sector ministries; **Mexico** involved the Ministry of Finance during follow-up to map all

applicable budget lines and programs with SDG indicators; **Georgia**, introduced SDG architecture, including a multi-stakeholder SDG Council, thematic working groups and an Annual Forum to share and debate experiences related to SDG implementation; **Germany** established an annual Sustainability Forum as a multi-stakeholder dialogue forum organized by the Chancellery.

Finally, P4R provided some insights on other approaches for moving the 2030 Agenda forward after the VNR, including utilizing supreme audit institutions, localizing the agenda, and undertaking peer reviews and other forms of peer exchange to foster mutual learning and encourage action.

Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding

Mr. Peter van Sluijs of CSPPS provided experiences on engaging civil society in VNR and post-VNR processes, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected countries (FCAS).

In 2019, CSPPS, in coordination with the TAP Network, UNDP, and other partners, organized its [Ready for Review](#) project to support and strengthen the engagement and capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) in FCAS. The key objective of the Ready of Review project has been to ensure and foster meaningful inclusion, participation, and contribution of national and local CSOs in the government-led process on SDG16 consultation, review, and validation.

CSPPS has observed that many countries are not fully utilizing consultative processes to develop and present a good, quality, and realistic view of progress. In this sense, the VNR is not being used as a management tool with which the national agenda can be steered to yield better results in the future. Moreover, these reviews are being seen as an end product rather than as a means of determining what needs to happen next to move the Agenda forward.

Meaningful inclusion, participation, and stakeholder engagement—and concrete action—must be carried over into the follow-up processes to the VNR to accelerate progress on SDG16 and the Agenda more broadly.

Secretaría de Planificación y Programación de la Presidencia de Guatemala

Ms. Margarita Cano of SEGEPLAN discussed Guatemala's efforts to mainstream and implement SDG16 and the 2030 Agenda following its first VNR in 2017 and second in 2019.

For its 2019 review, **Guatemala** changed its VNR processes from a solely government-led approach to a whole-of-society approach, which involved representatives from local government, CSOs, the private sector, and congress. This adjustment fostered more meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement in the review processes and enabled the government to collect far more usable data than it had in 2017. In designing its policies for 2020 since its most recent VNR, the ministry took into account the results from the country's review and used these to develop the goals of its new government for the next four years.

Coordination and engagement with the different branches of government continues to be a challenge. However, this coordination and broader stakeholder engagement was also good opportunity to not just improve the report but to also increase general buy-in and commitment the SDGs. For example, in 2019, a meeting was coordinated between the presidency, the judiciary, the congress, and other stakeholders to sign a public commitment to SDGs and the country's national development priorities.

Going forward, Guatemala is continuing to build upon the work and processes it has already established for the VNRs. The government has also committed to present a third VNR in a couple years.

International Association of Women and Youngs Leaders (AIFJL) and UNDP's 16x16 Initiative

Ms. Alice Goza of AIFJL and UNDP's 16x16 Initiative for young leaders presented on her experiences around the engagement of youth and the human rights community in VNR and post-VNR processes.

In official reviews, it is often difficult to take into account the data of civil society organizations and actors, and the participation of young people is often not very well supported. In 2017, civil society organizations in **Togo** created an alternative report for the VNR and AIFJL conducted an online survey to identify how youth organizations were doing to accelerate action on SDG16. However, the findings from these efforts were never included in the national government's review. In 2018, better internal coordination helped to allow civil society's involvement in all phases of the review process—thanks in particular to a dynamic team of young people from civil society who pushed for inclusion. Several CSO actors took part in the HLPF in New York with the support of the government.

Going forward, the continuation of the structuring of civil society, especially of youth organizations, is essential. Civil society must continue to produce reports and documents in order to have clear and reliable statistical data on progress towards achieving the SDGs. Finally, support for the capacity building of young people in their efforts to participate in VNR and post-VNR processes is critical, especially given the positive impact youth groups are achieving on the ground.

United Kingdom Office of National Statistics

Ms. Fiona Dawe of the ONS discussed the United Kingdom's efforts to improve its SDGs data collection and aggregation for and since its VNR in 2019.

The ONS has embarked on an innovative initiative to make UK data around the SDGs more readily accessible to the its government and other interested stakeholders within the country and elsewhere around the world. It's [Open SDG and National Reporting Platform](#), which is a free-to-reuse, open source SDG reporting and monitoring solution developed in collaboration with the US government and the Center for Open Data for Enterprise. The software is completely customizable and a number of other countries around the world are replicating and customizing this site for their own contexts.

The UK has actively worked to share this site with other countries and provide technical support to national statistics offices and other stakeholders interested in creating their own platforms to house their country's data on the SDGs. Currently, there are around 13 countries who have created or are working to create their own platform based on the UK's Open SDG website. The ONS team is working with some of these countries directly to implement their platforms, while others are utilizing the self-help instructions for creating their own site which the ONS has published directly on the platform. The UK is happy to provide support to other countries interested in undertaking their own initiatives to create similar platforms and can host in-person country workshops or provide remote support depending on what the country needs and what supports the ONS has available.

Audience Discussion

The interactive discussion included interventions around the role of the private sector, UN agencies, and national human rights institutions in post-VNR processes. Additionally, participants posed questions on non-official data, standardizing measurements, and building governmental capacities to better collect and aggregate data for SDG16.

Next Steps:

The TAP Network and UNDP will host additional consultations to collect experiences and lessons learned on post-VNR activities for SDG16, including an [online survey](#) (deadline for inputs is 31 March 2020). In country workshops will take place in a select number of countries which have submitted or plan to submit a subsequent VNR.

The first draft of the Post VNR Best Practices will also be released in May 2020 and consulted with Member States and other SDG16 Stakeholders to ensure it provides helpful and needed guidance.

The final resource will be published in Fall 2020 with plans to implement national capacity building multi-stakeholder workshops on ways to incorporate VNRs in national planning and budgeting processes with a focused lens on SDG16.