



# MAINSTREAMING SDG 16:

Using the Voluntary National Review to Advance  
More Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies









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# SPECIAL MESSAGES

## for “Mainstreaming SDG 16: Using the Voluntary National Review to advance more Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies”

**Alan George**

**First Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations**

“The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed inequalities between and within countries and this has serious implications for sustaining peace, upholding justice and engendering inclusive societies. It is therefore critical for Governments and all relevant stakeholders including the United Nations, Parliaments, Civil Society and Academia to collaborate, coordinate efforts and support the advancement of more peaceful, just and inclusive societies by mainstreaming SDG 16 in all National Development priorities. This Guidance Resource would thus be helpful to focus post VNR actions on how best to support SDG 16 implementation at National and Sub-National levels especially as it relates to COVID-19 response and recovery. This useful, timely and relevant resource if utilised appropriately, would also ensure that the VNR of Member States are maximized for SDG 16 impact, including improved subsequent reporting at the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development”

**Erick Nidal Thomas**

**Senior Policy Advisor, Social Development, Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the UN**

“SDG 16+ is the bedrock for the entire 2030 agenda and the COVID-19 pandemic has proven this link to be inextricable, laying bare the costs associated with a failure to mainstream SDG16+ in our institutions. While the VNR review is a powerful tool to analyse progress and challenges on SDG16+, it is also a means to an end. Setting out innovative guidance for how to transform the VNR process into concrete action, as this document does, could not come at a better time. As we enter the Decade of Action, we must seize the challenge of COVID-19 as a generational moment for transformative change—let us be unwavering in our pursuit of justice and equality and strive for a world where no one is left behind.”

**Sarah Lister**

**Head of Governance, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP**

“Across the globe, COVID-19 and pandemic response efforts are disrupting governance practices in fundamental ways, deepening pre-existing inequalities and bringing significant implications for SDG16 and its components of peace, justice and inclusion. Effective action in these areas is today more important than ever—not only to deliver on SDG16 but to unlock progress across the entire SDG spectrum. It is for this reason that the Voluntary National Review and the processes that precede and follow the VNR are so important and merit special attention. This timely and important resource offers a wealth of guidance and practical lessons to inform these processes and is of relevance to a range of actors and constituencies. It is my hope that it will be put to good use, and that effective reporting on SDG16 at national and sub-national levels will be used not only to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and its promise to ‘leave no one behind’ but to help guide sustainable COVID-19 recoveries.”

**Judith Kaulem**

**Executive Director, Poverty Reduction Forum Trust in Zimbabwe  
Co-chair International Steering Committee, TAP Network**

“The integral role played by the Voluntary National Reviews in the 2030 Agenda and SDGs follow-up cannot be over-emphasized. In addition to being presented and shared at the High-Level Political Forum, the process towards their production provides an opportune moment to localize the 2030 Agenda by rallying together all key stakeholders, thus ensuring local ownership of the Agenda. In their watch-dog role, civil society organizations may require additional tools and support to execute that mandate and demand accountability from their governments. This guidance is a go-to-resource, that provides a ‘whole of society’ approach to both governments and CSOs. It includes necessary tools to take the VNR one crucial step further—to use the recommendations identified in the VNR and link it firmly into national development plans and priorities.”

**Peter van Sluijs,**

**Coordinator, Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS)  
Co-chair International Steering Committee, TAP Network**

“The systematic civil society inclusion in VNR and post-VNR processes—and linking these to national planning, policies and frameworks—is critical to realising not only SDG 16 at all levels, but also the larger 2030 Agenda, all whilst manifesting a true ‘Leave No One Behind’ approach. It is good to see this resource emphasising the importance of partnerships in processes related to the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review. It provides important building blocks on how these partnerships can be set-up, rolled out and effectively support coordinated and concerted local follow-up action towards greater impact for all. I hope this resource document finds its way to the audiences it is meant to provide guidance for and will result in accelerated advancement of SDG16 at local, national and international levels.”

**Michelle Breslauer**

**Senior Manager, Governance and Peace  
United Nations Global Compact**

“The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the importance of partnerships to the achievement of the 17 SDGs, and the VNR process is a key opportunity for Government to engage responsible business as a partner. This is particularly important to advance SDG16 as the achievement of peace, justice, and strong institutions requires multi-stakeholder action, with the private sector working as a complement to Government action. Moreover, by engaging business and wider civil society in implementing and reporting on SDG 16, the VNR process, including the post-VNR process, can be a tool to increase inclusion, transparency, and accountability at the local level. This engagement must extend past the delivery of the VNR to link reporting to the advancement and implementation of national development plans.”

**Ambassador Sarah E. Mendelson**

**Distinguished Service Professor of Public Policy, Carnegie Mellon University &  
Alexandra Hiniker  
Executive Fellow, Sustainability Initiatives, Carnegie Mellon University**

“With the world’s first Voluntary University Review, Carnegie Mellon is demonstrating the important role universities play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a university, we have a particular commitment to educate the next generation, to create knowledge, and to lead by example. Undertaking these efforts using the framework of the SDGs will help advance collective action on this ambitious agenda by 2030. The VUR can help also help explain the paradigm shift involved in the SDGs—they are about the environment but also about creating peaceful, just, and inclusive societies—the core of SDG 16.”

# LISTING OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>ACRC</b>	Anti-Corruption and Civil Right Commission	<b>ICHR</b>	Independent Commission for Human Rights
<b>ATI</b>	Access to Information	<b>IDEA</b>	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
<b>BPs</b>	Budgetary Programmes	<b>IDC</b>	International Development Committee
<b>CAR</b>	Central African Republic	<b>IDLO</b>	International Development Law Organisation
<b>CBS</b>	Dutch National Statistics Office	<b>IDPS</b>	International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
<b>CEPEI</b>	Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional	<b>INFF</b>	International National Financing Frameworks
<b>CGR</b>	Comptroller General Office	<b>IFI</b>	International Financial Institutions
<b>CHRAJ</b>	Commission on Human Rights and administrative Justice	<b>IO</b>	International Organisations
<b>CNOSC</b>	National Coalition of Civil Society Organizations for the New Deal	<b>KOICA</b>	Korea International Cooperation Agency
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease of 2019	<b>LNOB</b>	Leave No One Behind
<b>CSPG</b>	Cross-Sectoral Planning Groups	<b>LRG</b>	Local and Regional Governments
<b>CSPPS</b>	The Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding	<b>MTNDP</b>	Medium-Term National Development Plan
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization	<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)	<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>DIHR</b>	Danish Institute for Human Rights	<b>NYCs</b>	National Youth Councils
<b>ECOSCO</b>	UN Economic and Social Council	<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>NANHRI</b>	Network of African National Human Rights Institutions
<b>FCV</b>	Fragility, Conflict and Violence	<b>NHRI</b>	National Human Rights Institution
<b>FinTech</b>	Financial Technology	<b>NMRF</b>	National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up on human rights obligations
<b>FOIA</b>	Freedom of Information Act	<b>NSO</b>	National Statistics Offices
<b>GANHRI</b>	Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions	<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>GCLN</b>	UN Global Compact Local Networks	<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product	<b>OGP</b>	Open Government Partnership
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit	<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>GOPAC</b>	Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption	<b>ONS</b>	Office of National Statistics (United Kingdom)
<b>GRI</b>	Global Reporting Initiative	<b>OSJI</b>	Open Society Justice Initiative
<b>HLPF</b>	High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development	<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment
<b>HRC</b>	United Nations Human Rights Council	<b>RCPCA</b>	National Peace Recovery and Consolidation Plan
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarter	<b>SAI</b>	Supreme Audit Institution
<b>IAEG-SDGs</b>	Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, Mandate and Membership	<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>IATWG</b>	Inter-Agency Technical Working Group	<b>TAP</b>	Transparency, Accountability and Participation Network
<b>ICC</b>	SDGs Implementation Coordination Committee	<b>TI</b>	Transparency International



<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UN Global Compact</b>	United Nations Global Compact
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNCAC</b>	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>UNDESA</b>	United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNGA</b>	United Nations General Assembly
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNODA</b>	United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNOSSC</b>	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
<b>UNSD</b>	United Nations Statistics Division
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Coordination Frameworks
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>VLR</b>	Voluntary Local Review
<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Review
<b>VSR</b>	Voluntary State Review
<b>WBG</b>	World Bank Group
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Why this Guidance Resource?

Amidst extraordinary and unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19, compounding already strained systems of governance globally, failing institutions, shrinking civic space and increasing social unrest driven by entrenched, structural injustice, this resource seeks to support the realization of more peaceful, just and inclusive societies through Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process.

Now five years into the 2030 Agenda, the world is backsliding on SDG 16. Intended for a range of actors and institutions, this resource provides policy guidance and case studies on advancing SDG 16 implementation at national and subnational levels by more effectively leveraging VNR and post-VNR processes. Ultimately, the question is: how can we ensure that the VNR is maximized for SDG 16 impact, including improved subsequent reporting?

As such, this resource first introduces the 2030 Agenda, SDG 16, and the VNR, before detailing approaches to mainstreaming and accelerating SDG 16 implementation through the VNR. This including the what, who and how of approaches highlighted. Finally, the resource adheres to a set of guiding principles, including that which underpins the entire 2030 Agenda: Leave No One Behind.

## What are some of its Key Findings and Messages?

Since 2016, there has been an increase in the number and quality of VNRs, indicating their growing relevance and utility for governments and other stakeholders. As of HLPF 2020,<sup>1</sup>

205 VNRs have been presented

from 168 countries



More than twice as many countries – 47 – presented in 2020 than in 2016 (22).

## SDG Coordination Bodies or Mechanisms as a means of strengthening VNR processes and SDG 16 Implementation

As part of this growth, increasing attention has been placed on SDG Coordinating Bodies and Structures. They bring together government institutions and incorporate the SDGs into integrated policies, and corresponding budget lines, with actions attributable to the responsible ministries, departments and agencies, including in terms of SDG 16 and related priorities. They can also systematically incorporate other stakeholders, such as NHRIs and civil society. As such, well-functioning coordination structures are, in and of themselves, a means of SDG 16 implementation. However, while

85% of countries provided

information on follow-up and review

processes at the national level in 2019



often through coordination structures, how reporting occurs, by whom and to whom, is often still unclear, ultimately pointing to issues of accountability.<sup>2</sup>

Additional focus has been placed on how post-VNR processes can be used to translate SDG 16-specific VNR commitments and findings into national action as linked to national development plans, sector strategies and the like.

## Government Oversight and Stakeholder Engagement – Accountability and Practicing a Whole of Government and Whole of Society Approach

Related to accountability, this resource highlights the role of parliaments and Supreme Audit Institutions – from government audits on SDG implementation and integrating anti-corruption mechanisms to parliamentary committees ‘reporting back’ on a government’s VNR and integrating the SDGs into the work of parliament.

1 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF 2020). Secretariat Background Note: *Voluntary National Reviews at the 2020 High-level political forum on sustainable development*, p. 1. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26384HLPF\\_2020\\_Background\\_note.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26384HLPF_2020_Background_note.pdf)

2 Kindornay, S. (2019). Presentation: *Progressing National SDGs Implementation: Fourth Edition: An independent assessment of the Voluntary National Review reports submitted to the High-level Political Forum in 2019*. <https://sh.ccic.ca/PPT-ENG>

Whether as related to strengthening institutions, increasing access to decision-making, reducing corruption or supporting the rule of law, these bodies are directly relevant to SDG 16 implementation. While nascent, there is growing acknowledgement of their role and unfulfilled potential in supporting VNR and post-VNR processes.

Fundamental to accountability and to the whole-of-society approach is civil society engagement – in VNR design, delivery and follow-up. This is particularly true amidst shrinking civic space. Meaningful and diverse civil society participation in VNR processes not only reflects inclusive and effective governance and decision-making, but also helps to ensure that SDG 16-related provisions in a VNR are taken forward.

Where possible, follow-up should be tied to national development plans, dialogues and/or sector strategies, ideally through existing points of entry and with a focus on aligning SDG 16-related government programmes and projects with those implemented by civil society. This can help mainstream implementation, consolidate the multi-stakeholder processes and better capture progress.

### Civil society also plays a key role

in supporting those most at risk of being left behind by filling data gaps, providing relevant programming and advocating for groups not otherwise properly seen or heard.<sup>3</sup>

Other important stakeholders include academia and research institutions (especially in terms of monitoring and reporting), the media and journalists (in terms of accountability, awareness-raising and access to information) and the private sector.

### Localization and Ownership: Listening and Engaging from the Community-level Up

A foundational tenet of the 2030 Agenda, the promise to “leave no one behind”, highlights the importance of inclusion, engagement and impact from the ground up. Local and regional governments (LRGs), with strong,

democratic and accountable institutions, are prerequisites for achieving SDG 16. National governments themselves have stressed that they cannot tackle the 2030 Agenda alone, and all SDGs have targets directly related to the responsibilities of local and regional governments. However, according to the

### 2019 Localizing the

### SDGs Report

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42 percent of countries reporting in 2019 consulted LRGs in VNR preparation, and only 33 percent were involved in national coordination mechanisms.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to LRGs, localizing SDG 16+, more broadly understood, speaks to the critical importance of meaningfully engaging civil society and non-state leaders and stakeholders, at various levels of governance, in order to ground SDG 16 and the VNR in lived realities and impact. Particularly now as communities globally continue to struggle with COVID-19, it is critical to focus on localizing SDG 16 and, to this end, to linking VNRs with Voluntary State Reviews (VSRs) and Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs).

### Data and Related Reporting Mechanisms

Data continues to challenge SDG 16 progress tracking, affecting not just coverage but also the quality of data available for SDG 16 and related targets. However, such challenges may also present an entry point for civil society and other stakeholders in data collection and disaggregation, as well as in monitoring and reporting. Given various data gaps, there are increasing calls to include non-official data sources alongside official data sources in broadening global and national monitoring of SDG 16. Separately, civil society spotlight reports can help to ensure an independent and robust assessment of progress.

Particularly in a COVID-19 world, more innovative and inclusive ways of generating, incorporating, disaggregating and managing data are needed. Ultimately, greater coherence, communication and collaboration are required among National Statistics Offices, UN custodian agencies, National Human Rights Institutions,

<sup>3</sup> OECD (2018), *Development Co-operation Report 2018: Joining Forces to Leave No One Behind: Chapter 6: Putting the last first? Civil society's role in leaving no one behind*. OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/dcr-2018-en>.

<sup>4</sup> Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments (2019) *3rd Local and Regional Governments Report, Towards the Localization of the SDGs*. <https://www.global-taskforce.org/3rd-local-and-regional-governments-report-towards-localization-sdgs-launched-2019-hlpf>



civil society and other data providers. In bridging the gap with civil society, data collected by civil society can then be validated or used by NSOs, a process that saves resources and empowers civil society organizations.

Data, in turn, provides a useful foray into leveraging other similar frameworks and reporting cycles for strengthened SDG 16 implementation and human rights reporting mechanisms in particular. Reporting can often seem burdensome to governments and other stakeholders. Linking the VNR with related reporting and review mechanisms and frameworks not only allows for greater policy coherence, coordination and impact, but may also broaden the number of stakeholders engaged and make better use of data generated by National Statistical Offices and other data sources.

### Financing and Partnerships

Amidst already declining Official Development Assistance, greater focus needs to be placed on innovative solutions to funding and financing gaps facing governments, civil society and other stakeholders working to advance SDG 16. Political and financial investments are critical to accelerating progress on SDG 16, with development agencies, international financial institutions and international organizations all having a fundamental role to play.

Multi-donor funding schemes and a greater use of innovative, institutional partnerships, in addition to ODA, to support programmes and policies that address both COVID-19, as well SDG 16 related priorities and targets, will be critical to supporting the underlying systems and social cohesion required to “build back better”. Further, standardizing a global approach to mapping ODA to the SDGs or their respective targets that allows for comparable monitoring may help in future alignment and prioritization of support as reflected in VNRs and NDPs. This may be particularly true for SDG 16 as an enabler of all other SDGs.

Going forward, a country’s VNR, as linked to a National Development Plan (NDP), including revised NDPs and based on inclusive, multi-stakeholder processes, offers direction in how to best support SDG 16 implementation at national and subnational levels, including as related to COVID-19.

### Strengthening VNR Design and Moving Forward in this Decade of Action and Accountability

When designing the VNR process, immediate next steps should be identified, such as reporting back to parliament and/or the media about the VNR presentation as well as longer-term implementation. Furthermore, issues related to budget allocation and SDG data need not only be addressed during the VNR, but also subsequently. Actions that are not necessarily directly related to the VNR, but that can nonetheless drive post-VNR implementation, should also be considered. This includes peer reviews and performance audits.

SDG 16 is set to again be under review in 2021. Against a COVID-19 backdrop and with only 10 years left in the 2030 Agenda, this next VNR process brings with it particular challenges as well as important opportunities in supporting countries and other stakeholders towards transformative change.

To ensure that the world emerges from the COVID-19 crisis stronger,<sup>5, 6, 7</sup>

the UN, all governments and all  
partners need to stay the  
course together

Indeed, the Decade of Action  
and Decade of Accountability

are rallying calls for more collaborative and innovative action, political mobilization and investment. UNGA,

5 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF 2020). Secretariat Background Note: *Launching the decade of action at a time of crisis: Keeping the focus on the SDGs while combatting COVID-19*, p. 3.

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26298HLPF\\_2020\\_impact\\_COVID19.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26298HLPF_2020_impact_COVID19.pdf)

6 United Nations. Decade of Action – United Nations Sustainable Development. United Nations.

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/>

7 TAP Network 2030 (2020). SDG Accountability Portal: About the Campaign for a Decade of Accountability for the SDGs.

<https://sdgaccountability.org/decade/>

HLPF, other forums and online platforms are to be leveraged for accelerated action, accountability and inclusion. As we mark the UN's 75th anniversary and in a world such as ours, collectively doubling down on SDG 16, through VNR processes and as a goal and as an enabler, is as pressing as ever.





# INTRODUCTION

## Setting the Scene and Overarching Objective

COVID-19 has laid bare the severe and deep-seated socio-economic and political inequalities dominating societies globally. In a world already troubled by a rise in corruption and unrest; an erosion of media freedoms and the rule of law; diminishing civic space and trust in public and private institutions; and an increase in violence globally,<sup>8</sup> COVID-19 has put into stark relief such deep-seated injustices and fragility, calling for a new social contract. In the words of the UN Secretary-General,

**“the response to this pandemic, the widespread discontent that preceded it, must be based on a new social contract**

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and a new global deal that create opportunities for all and respect the rights and freedoms of all”.<sup>9</sup>

In “building back better”, this resource seeks to support the advancement of more peaceful, just and inclusive societies through Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) of the 2030 Agenda. It does so by offering guidance and good practices on how the Voluntary National Review (VNR) can be best used to advance and accelerate Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) implementation at national and subnational levels.<sup>10</sup>

**Ultimately, it is at national and subnational levels that peaceful, just and inclusive societies will be achieved**

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In utilizing this resource, please reference the “Navigating This Resource” section below for an overview of the topics and actors addressed throughout.

## Navigating this Resource and What It Contains

Guidance and good practices herein approach the VNR as a tool for strengthened SDG 16 (and all SDGs) impact across actors and institutions, and as linked to national development plans (NDPs) and strategies, as well as related frameworks and state and local processes.

The remainder of the Introduction is meant to briefly outline the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) on peaceful, just and inclusive societies, and the Voluntary National Review process. It will also address overarching challenges and opportunities for support, as well as highlight the guiding principles used when producing this document.

Part 1 is focused on Mainstreaming and Accelerating SDG 16 Implementation through the VNR process. It is divided into 12 chapters and covers a wide range of institutions, sectors and actors and how each can be engaged or best utilized for strengthened SDG 16 implementation through the larger VNR process. Part 2 offers insight and lessons learned for improved repeat reporting, focusing on the design of the VNR for stronger implementation (of SDG 16 and all SDGs). With 10 years left in the 2030 Agenda, Part 3 highlights additional opportunities for SDG 16 engagement as we collectively continue in this Decade of Action and Decade of Accountability to realize peace, justice and inclusion and the larger 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

From governments to parliaments, supreme audit institutions and national human rights institutions, and from civil society to media, the private sector, and the UN and other international organizations, this resource draws from more than 40 interviews and consultations as well as desk research incorporating over 100 sources.

8 As noted in the Secretary-General’s 2020 SDGs Progress Report, “in 2019, the number of people fleeing war, persecution and conflict exceeded 79.5 million, the highest level recorded since these statistics have been systematically collected”. UNDESA (2020). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020*, p. 21. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2020.pdf>

9 UN Secretary-General (2020). Speech transcript: *Secretary-General’s Nelson Mandela Lecture: “Tackling the Inequality Pandemic: A New Social Contract for a New Era”*. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-07-18/secretary-generals-nelson-mandela-lecture-%E2%80%9D9Ctackling-the-inequality-pandemic-new-social-contract-for-new-era%E2%80%9D9D-delivered>

10 Saferworld (2019). Briefing: *Time to invest: how to support action on SDG16*, p. 4. <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1224-time-to-invest-how-to-support-action-on-sdg16+>

As such, it is intended for a diverse audience of practitioners and policymakers engaged in SDG 16 and the VNR, reflective of the multi-stakeholder perspectives included herein.

Highlighting the universality of SDG 16, case studies draw from over 20 countries, include recommendations for the reader and bring in national, state and local perspectives. Key resources are also listed at the end of each chapter for supplementary analysis and review. For more on the specific topics, processes and actors addressed, please see the Table of Contents.

In supporting a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach, policy and programmatic coherence, coordination and partnership – vertically, horizontally and within and across stakeholder groups — are emphasized throughout this resource. To this end, the case is further made for broad inclusion in, and ownership of, the VNR process as critical to SDG 16 implementation, through continuous engagement and action across actors and institutions and with a particular emphasis on civil society. Additional attention is placed on linking VNR processes with national development plans and strategies, as well as to other relevant frameworks, including human rights reporting and follow-up, to streamline implementation, avoid duplication and meet multiple objectives.

Finally, this guidance resource builds upon and complements a variety of other related resources referenced at the end of each chapter and throughout the footnotes.

## Background: The 2030 Agenda, SDG 16 and the Voluntary National Review

Adopted in 2015 by all 193 UN Member States,

Transforming Our World: the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable

Development



(the 2030 Agenda) is a 15-year global plan of action “to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all, while strengthening universal peace in larger freedom”.<sup>11</sup> In many ways, the 2030 Agenda, with its pledge to “Leave No One Behind” (LNOB) and its

17 SDGs and 169 targets



builds upon its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).<sup>12</sup>

However, unlike the MDGs and as one (of several) distinguishing features, the SDGs include a goal that is centered on

transparent, accountable and

participatory governance

rule of law



and peaceful societies: SDG 16.<sup>13</sup> Specifically, SDG 16 seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, to ensure access to justice for all and to develop effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Also unlike the MDGs, the SDGs also apply to all countries universally.

The VNR is a voluntary, Member State-led, peer-learning process through which progress made in achieving the SDGs is presented. As a tool, the VNR is being increasingly undertaken by Member States to capture successes as well as challenges in realizing the 2030 Agenda.<sup>14</sup>

## SDG 16 as a Sustainable Development Goal and as an Enabler

SDG 16 is identified as both an outcome and enabler of sustainable development, given its interlinkages with other SDGs. Without peace, justice and inclusion, achieving SDGs such as ending poverty (SDG 1), ensuring education (SDG 4) and promoting economic growth (SDG 8) can be difficult or impossible. Responsive and

11 United Nations (2015). *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

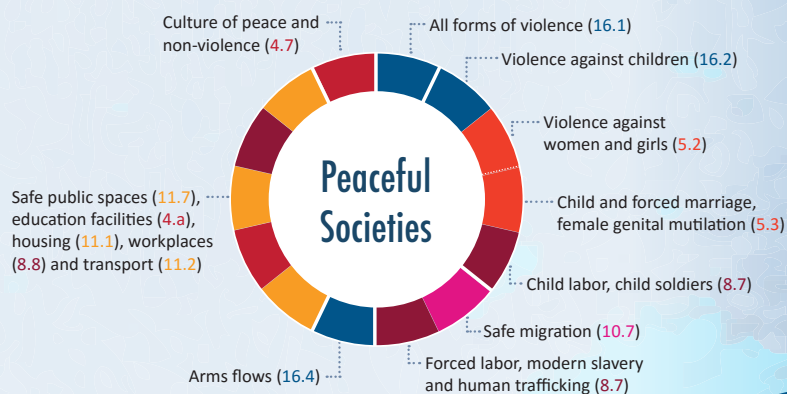
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication>

12 UNDESA. *The 17 Goals*. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

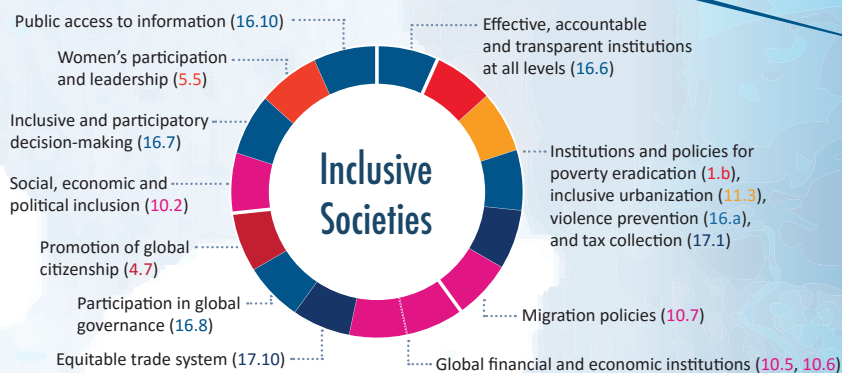
13 TAP Network (2016). Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit: A practical guide for stakeholders for national-level advocacy around Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, p. 17. [http://tapnetwork2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/TAP\\_AdvocacyToolkit\\_1pgFINAL.p](http://tapnetwork2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/TAP_AdvocacyToolkit_1pgFINAL.p) Antonio Maria Costa of UNODC (2008). Rule of law: A “missing” Millennium Development Goal. Speech Transcript:

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/rule-of-law-a-missing-millennium-development-goal.html>

14 For more on the VNR process, please see the [UN DESA's 2020 VNR Handbook](#).



  
We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence.



**PATHFINDERS**

FOR PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

[www.sdg16.plus](http://www.sdg16.plus)

accountable institutions uphold the rule of law and protect human rights and ensure equal opportunity and access to basic services. At the same time, strengthening women's participation and leadership (SDG 5) connects to improving inclusive and participative decision-making. To this end, beyond [SDG 16's 12 targets](#) there are [24 targets from seven other SDGs](#) that are linked to peaceful, just and inclusive societies.<sup>15</sup> Together, these targets are referred to as SDG16+.<sup>16</sup> While focused on SDG 16, this resource will also refer to SDG 16+, when relevant.

In addition, and importantly, SDG 16 carries the human rights principles of inclusion, participation, transparency, accountability, equality and non-discrimination. Such principles underpin the 2030 Agenda and are expressly translated into action in SDG 16 targets. SDG 16, therefore, is a catalytic and critical component of an integrated 2030 Agenda, grounded in human rights and focused on bringing about more inclusive and just systems, an ambition made all the more relevant, given the current global context.

As an enabler of all SDGs, SDG 16 should also be seen as a guiding pillar for all follow-up actions to implement and mainstream various SDGs post-VNR.

## Voluntary National Reviews and the High-level Political Forum

As alluded to, the<sup>17</sup>

VNRs are the follow-up and review

component of the

2030 Agenda

Carried out by national governments, they are meant to track progress in implementing the Agenda and its SDGs at country level.<sup>18</sup> They aim to facilitate the sharing of experience by governments and other stakeholders in order to identify opportunities and challenges for

acceleration, while strengthening policies and government institutions and mobilizing multi-stakeholder support and partnership towards SDG implementation.

Conducted by developed and developing countries and involving a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society, VNRs are presented at the

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

which takes place annually under the auspices of the

UN Economic and Social Council

(ECOSOC).<sup>19, 20</sup>

While the official presentation of a VNR at HLPF is an important step it is not an end in of itself

Rather, it is a means to accelerate action, transformation, accountability and stronger subsequent reporting. The VNR should provide a comprehensive and honest report on a country's situation in SDG implementation and indicate next steps in addressing challenges identified in order to accelerate action and fine-tune implementation strategies. On the heels of HLPF, post-VNR processes offer an important opportunity for accelerating actions across stakeholders for coherent delivery of SDG 16 and the larger 2030 Agenda.

At the 2019 HLPF and for the first time since the 2030 Agenda's adoption, SDG 16, among others, was subjected to a detailed review. As part of this campaign leading up to HLPF 2019, a coalition of SDG 16+ global initiatives supported a series of<sup>21</sup>

15 Global Alliance (2019). *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion*, p. 24.

<https://www.sdg16hub.org/content/global-alliance-enabling-implementation-2030-agenda-through-sdg-16-anchoring-peace-justice>

16 For more on SDG 16 and SDG 16+, please see the [Pathfinders Roadmap](#) and the Global Alliance's "[Elements](#)" of Peace, Justice and Inclusion.

17 Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. Voluntary National Reviews Database. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

18 For more on Voluntary Local Reviews and Voluntary State Reviews and how they interact with VNRs, please see Chapter 4.

19 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC): Home. <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/home>

20 UNDESA (2020). *Handbook for preparation of Voluntary National Reviews for the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF 2020)*.

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25245Handbook\\_2020\\_EN.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25245Handbook_2020_EN.pdf)

21 SDG 16 Hub (2019). The SDG16+ Consultations. <https://www.sdg16hub.org/hlpf2019/consultations>



six regional technical

consultations on

SDG 16+

www

Aiming to highlight progress on monitoring, reporting and implementation of SDG 16+ and to distill key messages for the

thematic review of SDG 16, the

consultations made key policy

recommendations

www

identifying how inclusive planning, monitoring and reporting can be leveraged and advocating for how the progress on SDG 16+ enables progress across the 2030 Agenda.<sup>22</sup>

SDG 16 will be reviewed at the

2021 HLPF

www

under the thematic focus “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, that promotes the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: Building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.”<sup>23</sup>

Acknowledging the cyclical nature of the VNR – pre-VNR, VNR and post-VNR – this resource will emphasize how the reporting process can be best used to advance SDG 16 implementation through multi-stakeholder processes and with national and local-level impact.

22 2019 HLPF review of SDG implementation [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23672BN\\_SDG16\\_LV.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23672BN_SDG16_LV.pdf)

23 SDG Knowledge Hub by IISD (2020). *HLPF 2021 to Focus on Nine SDGs Linked to Pandemic Recovery*. <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/hlpf-2021-to-focus-on-nine-sdgs-linked-to-pandemic-recovery/>

47

countries

submitting  
VNRs

7

reporting for a  
second time

46 of 47  
countries

reporting  
noted  
**involvement**  
of the private  
sector

## VNR Trends<sup>24</sup>

Even during a global pandemic,

47 countries signed up

www

to present a

VNR in 2020

– the same number as those which presented in 2019. Out of 47, 20 were second-time presenters and one country reported for a third time.<sup>25</sup> In 2019 and 2020, a cap was made at 47 VNRs despite more interest. Moreover, it is important to note that, for 2021, this cap has been lowered due organizational limitations.

As mentioned, in 2019, 47 countries submitted VNRs, with seven of those reporting for a second time. Participation of youth was more readily reported in 2019 than in prior years and 46 of 47 countries reporting noted involvement of the private sector (compared to just half of those reporting in 2017). Most VNRs noted the challenges posed by data availability or quality to achieving the SDGs, with no country able to support analysis of all SDG 16 indicators with data. As evidenced by

the Global SDG

Indicators

database

www

and

White & Case

VNR analysis

www

while over 85 percent of countries that submitted 2019 VNRs reported on at least one SDG 16 indicator, comprehensive reporting on SDG 16 lags behind that of other SDGs.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> This section to be updated in due course with greater analysis of the 2020 VNRs. Global Alliance (2019). *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion*.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations. High-Level Political Forum 2020 (HLPF 2020). Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. United Nations. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020>.

<sup>26</sup> UN Statistics. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> & White & Case (2019). Voluntary National Review (VNR) Aggregated Chart – 2019 Review: SDG16+ Focus. <https://www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2020-01/UN%20VNR%20CHART%202019%20-%20All%20Country%20Reports%20White-Case%20.pdf>

As of HLPF 2020, 205 VNRs have

been presented from

168 countries

www

33 countries have been presented

twice and two countries (Togo and Benin)

have presented 3 times

www

<sup>27</sup> This is a marked increase from the first HLPF in 2016, when 22 countries decided to undertake the VNR.

Going forward,

SDG 16 reporting

guidelines by the

Global Alliance

www

with greater emphasis on inclusion, National Human Rights Institutions and civil society, provide important additional support and guidance in using the VNR for strengthened SDG 16 implementation.<sup>28</sup> UN Women has also recently produced

a guidance note

www

to support gender-responsive VNRs.<sup>29</sup>

In parallel, civil society has increased support to VNRs, including by<sup>30</sup>

developing spotlight reports

and analyzing these vis-à-vis

government reviews

www

Multi-stakeholder reporting processes are being strengthened through dedicated awareness-raising on committing to a whole-of-society approach to reporting.

## Overarching Challenges and Opportunities for Support

The below offers a brief snapshot of some of the overarching challenges and opportunities for support facing the SDG 16 community. All have been impacted by COVID-19.

### The Voluntary Nature of the 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda is a political declaration. It is not legally binding for member states.<sup>31</sup>

There are no defined consequences

if countries fail to make serious efforts

to meet the SDGs or their targets

www

However, despite its voluntary nature, the 2030 Agenda is a political commitment and carries a sense of obligation at national and global levels. By making such ambitious commitments to deliver on a wide range of sustainable development issues at the international level, governments have, in essence, declared themselves accountable to the peoples to whom these commitments have been made.

### Ensuring Meaningful Participation through a Leave No One Behind Lens

The 2030 Agenda pledges to leave no one behind (LNOB) and that Member States will endeavor to reach the furthest behind first. With its emphasis on inclusive and accountable governance, access to justice, upholding human rights and promoting non-discrimination and sustained peace, SDG 16 is key to ensuring that the most vulnerable and marginalized are engaged as actors

27 Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. Voluntary National Reviews Database.

28 Global Alliance (2020). *A Guide to Report on SDG 16 in Voluntary National Reviews*.

<https://www.sdg16hub.org/content/global-alliance-guide-report-sdg16-voluntary-national-reviews>

29 UN Women (2020). Guidance Note: *PREPARATIONS FOR GENDERRESPONSIVE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS FOR UN WOMEN COUNTRY AND REGIONAL OFFICES*. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/guidance-note-on-preparations-for-gender-responsive-voluntary-national-reviews-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5109>

30 TAP Network 2030 and GIZ (2020). *SDG16 in VNRs and Spotlight Reports: Reporting on Progress, Reflecting on Inclusive Accountability Measures and Recommendations for going ahead*.

[https://tapnetwork2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/GIZ\\_TAP\\_2020\\_SDG-16-in-VNRs-and-Spotlight-Reports\\_Final-Version.pdf](https://tapnetwork2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/GIZ_TAP_2020_SDG-16-in-VNRs-and-Spotlight-Reports_Final-Version.pdf)

31 TAP Network (2019). *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, p. 6.

<https://sdgaccountability.org/sdg-accountability-handbook/>

and beneficiaries of the 2030 Agenda in line with the principle to LNOB.<sup>32</sup> Through the lens of SDG 16 there is an opportunity to further link the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with international human rights standards and principles as they are mutually inclusive and complementary.

While some governments are creating an enabling and safe environment for a diversity of voices, transparency and accountability, others are restricting them – a distinction that has only been further sharpened during a global pandemic. To date, around

100 countries up to COVID-19

www

have called “states of emergency” in response to COVID-19,<sup>33</sup>

with many exploiting this health crisis to

clamp down on fundamental freedoms

around expression, assembly and civic space

www

The global decline in civic space

for people to organize, participate,

communicate and express their views

www

for people to organize, participate, communicate and express their views at local and national levels threatens SDG progress and accountability generally, and particularly so for SDG 16.<sup>34</sup> This compels more robust, diverse and inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement in VNR and post-VNR processes, targeting the most marginalized and vulnerable communities.



## Challenging Political Landscapes and Electoral Cycles

2019 saw a wave

of protests

www

with people from all corners of the globe rising up and demanding a new social contract.<sup>35</sup> In 2020, this up-swing in mass, and often organic, political mobilization



CIVICUS Monitor

32 For more on links between SDG 16 and Leave No One Behind, please see the [2019 Global Alliance Report on SDG 16+](#) and a 2018 UNDP Discussion Paper on “What Does It Mean to Leave No One Behind?”.

33 COVID-19 Civic Freedom Tracker. ICNL. <https://www.icnl.org/covid19tracker/?location=> Gross, O. (2020). Emergency Powers in the Time of Coronavirus...and Beyond. Just Security. <https://www.justsecurity.org/70029/emergency-powers-in-the-time-of-coronaand-beyond/>

34 IDEA International (2019). The Global State of Democracy 2019 Report: Addressing the Ills, Reviving the Promise. Chapter 1: The global democracy landscape, p. 18. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/chapters/the-global-state-of-democracy-2019-CH1.pdf>

35 Wright, R. & Gessen, M. (2019). The Story of 2019: Protests in Every Corner of the Globe. The New Yorker. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-story-of-2019-protests-in-every-corner-of-the-globe>



and protest has been followed by an extraordinary movement for racial justice and an end to systemic abuse, initiated in the US with global reverberations. Set against a global pandemic, these clarion calls for meaningful change in the fight against exclusion, corruption, impunity and injustice highlight the profoundly challenging nature of political landscapes in many contexts as well as the relevance of SDG 16 universally.

Further, changes in government administrations and electoral cycles can diminish ownership of the SDGs or shift priorities. To this end, internal political battles over mandates and funds, with officials seeking to protect or promote their agency's interests, may further threaten implementation of policy commitments as related to the SDGs and SDG 16, including as linked to national development plans, national strategies, sector reforms and the like.

#### Data<sup>36</sup>

SDG 16 is considered one of the  
most difficult SDGs  
to monitor

Collecting, disaggregating and monitoring data as related to SDG 16 continues to be challenging due to administrative, political and capacity issues – National Statistical Offices, for example,

have not historically  
focused

on SDG 16 related issues. Further, while complementary 'non-official' data exists, it is not often used.<sup>37</sup>

#### As highlighted by the 2020 SDGs Report

timely, high-quality, open and disaggregated data is key to understanding, managing and mitigating the effects of COVID-19, and to building responses that support countries to get back on track to achieving the SDGs.<sup>38</sup>

#### Global Pandemics and Unforeseen Crises

71 million will be pushed back  
into extreme poverty  
in 2020

the first increase in global poverty since 1998.<sup>39</sup> As of October 2020, over a million people have died due to COVID-19, with almost all countries affected. Gender-based violence has exponentially increased and there is serious concern that progress on gender equality will be pushed back.<sup>40</sup> Countries affected by conflict and fragility are more prone to its adverse impact, and some regimes are taking advantage of the pandemic to crack down on media freedoms, politicians and human rights activists.

Investments are needed more than ever to foster trust and rebuild the social contract, at the heart of SDG 16, to both deal with this current emergency and recovery phase and to be better prepared for the next pandemic, in whatever form it comes.

In leveraging the VNR for strengthened implementation, greater investment in SDG 16 across actors and sectors is critical, including in capacity-building, policy guidance, data and analytics, technology for scale, and partnerships. (Details embedded in subsequent sections.)

36 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), International IDEA & IDLO (2019). Conference in preparation for HLPF2019 – SDG16 Conference: Peace, Justice Inclusive Societies, p. 2.

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23814SDG\\_16\\_MAIN\\_SUMMARY\\_SDG\\_Conference\\_Rome\\_May2019.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23814SDG_16_MAIN_SUMMARY_SDG_Conference_Rome_May2019.pdf)

37 UNDESA, International IDEA & IDLO (2019). Conference in preparation for HLPF2019 – SDG16 Conference: Peace, Justice Inclusive Societies. p. 3.

38 UN DESA (2020). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020*, p. 4.

39 UN DESA (2020): News: *UN report finds COVID-19 is reversing decades of progress on poverty, healthcare and education*

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/sustainable/sustainable-development-goals-report-2020.html>

40 As highlighted by UN Women, "[across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls. Not only should women's and girls' voices, needs and priorities be prioritized in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, but their experiences during the pandemic must also guide the future implementation of the 2030 Agenda.](#)"



## Guiding Principles for the Mainstreaming SDG16 Resource

This guidance has been developed in line with the following guiding principles:

- Leave No One Behind
- Human rights-based and grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Inclusive, participatory and transparent
- Nationally led, multi-stakeholder and evidence-based
- The universality of the 2030 Agenda, and the SDGs as integrated and interlinked

As we move forward in this UN 75th Anniversary year and

Decade of Action

www

this guidance resource will serve as a tool to maximize the potential of the VNR process to ensure progress towards realizing SDG 16 as an outcome and an enabler of the larger 2030 Agenda.<sup>41</sup>

### Key Resources:

- [The Highest Aspiration. A Call to Action for Human Rights](#), United Nations (2020)
- [Guide to Report on SDG16 in Voluntary National Reviews](#), Global Alliance (2020)
- [Enabling The Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion](#), Global Alliance (2019)
- [Amplified Commitments and Partnerships for Accelerated Action: Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG 16+](#), endorsed by 130 Civil Society Organizations (2019)
- [White & Case Review of the 2019 Voluntary National Reports](#)
- [2020 VNR Handbook](#), UN DESA
- [Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), United Nations (2015)

41 United Nations. Decade of Action – United Nations Sustainable Development. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/>



# PART 1

## MAINSTREAMING AND ACCELERATING SDG 16 IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH THE VNR



# 1. INTEGRATING VNR FINDINGS INTO NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ARCHITECTURE

## What Is It?

In examining the integration of VNR findings into national government architecture, this section will discuss: 1) national SDG coordination mechanisms and how they have strengthened institutions; 2) national budgets and how they can be aligned with the SDGs through transparent and inclusive processes; and 3) how SDG 16-specific VNR recommendations have been deliberated and advanced through line ministries and government departments. In so doing, it looks at national and subnational implementation with a view to SDG 16 principles and targets and its linkages to national development plans, action plans, strategic plans and sector strategies.<sup>42</sup>

Integration, through a whole of government and a whole-of-society approach, is central to the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs. As highlighted by

Global Alliance's 2019  
SDG 16+ Report

www

SDG 16 (as all other SDGs) requires countries to strengthen context-specific, SDG mechanisms to coordinate, collect data, plan, monitor efforts and support the delivery of outcomes.<sup>43</sup> Some countries establish such mechanisms within existing institutions or ministries; others create new ones.

UNDP's flagship support for

Integrated National  
Financing  
Frameworks

www

(INFFs) is designed to help policymakers map the landscape for financing sustainable development and to lay out a strategy to increase and make the most effective use of investment for sustainable development and the achievement of their national development priorities and the SDGs across all sources of finance. In partnership with UN Agencies, the IMF and the EU, UNDP is leading technical support to develop INFFs in 58 countries.

In some instances, efforts to link national budgets with the SDGs and specific SDG outcomes started soon after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, drawing from lessons from the MDGs and tracking public expenditures in support of sectoral objectives in both developing and developed countries, as relevant. That being said, in general,

the integration of SDGs  
into actual national  
budget processes

www

has thus far been limited.<sup>44</sup>

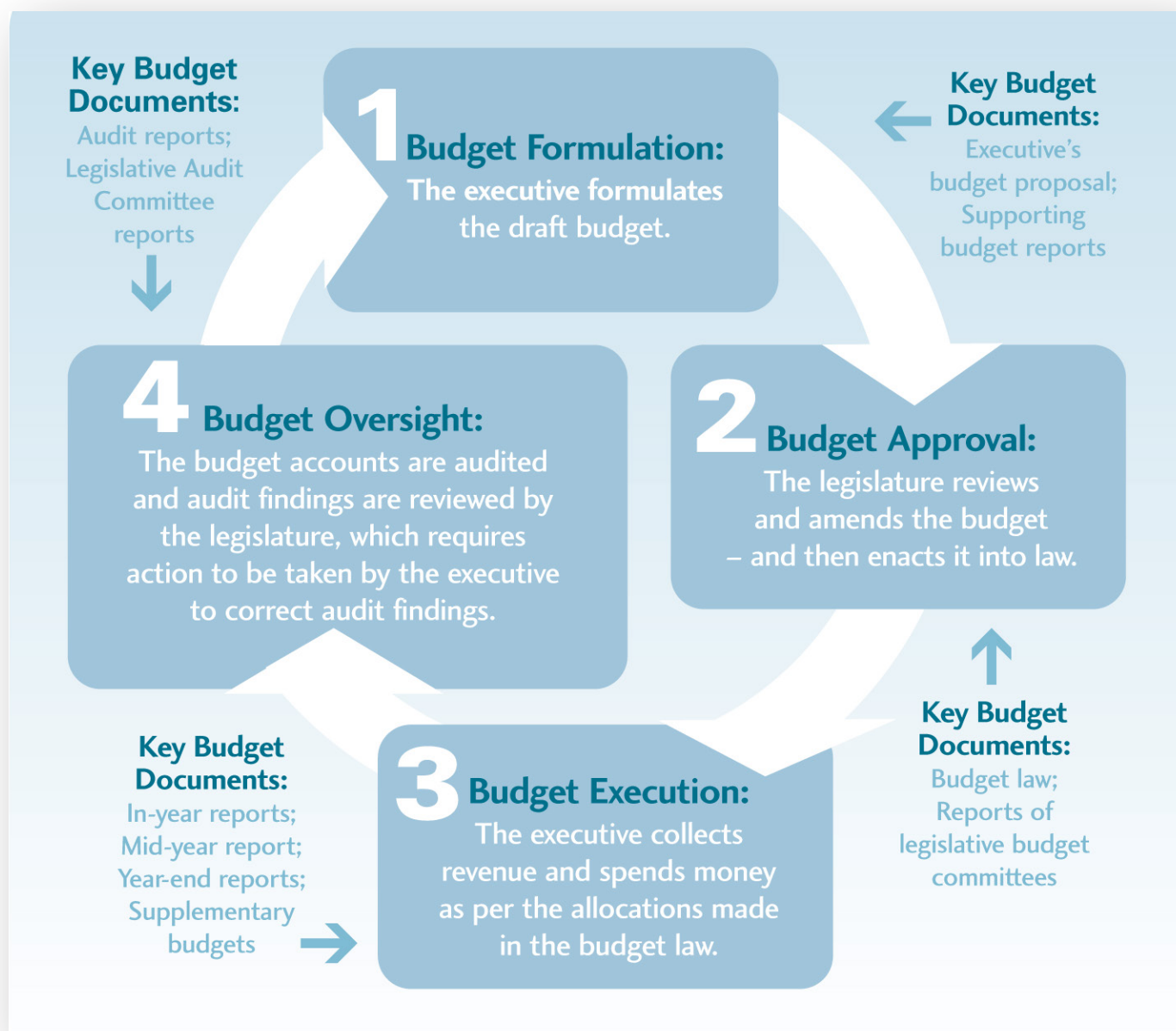
While there can be significant variance in how governments integrate and take forward VNR findings, the case studies and guidance below reflect how SDG coordination mechanisms and budgets can strengthen SDG 16 advancement. They also highlight specific actions taken by governments and partners to implement SDG 16-related policies and programming related to and following from a VNR.

42 Various UN Sustainable Development Group approaches and tools, such as "MAPS" (**M**ainstreaming, **A**cceleration, **P**olicy **S**upport) and "RIA" (**R**apid **I**ntegrated **A**ssessment), are designed to help mainstream the SDGs into national and subnational planning, including as related to reporting.

43 Global Alliance (2019). *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion*, p. 50.

44 UN DESA (2019). World Public Sector Report: Sustainable Development Goal 16: Focus on Public Institutions, p. xv.

<https://publicadministration.un.org/Portals/1/Images/WorldPublicSector/World%20Public%20Sector%20Report%202019.pdf>



## Why Is It Important?

### Coordination structures bring together government institutions



bring together government institutions and incorporate the SDGs into integrated policies and corresponding budget lines, with actions attributable to the responsible ministries, departments and agencies.<sup>45</sup> As such, coordinating bodies or structures provide an opportunity for collaboration, dialogue and knowledge-sharing

across institutions and sectors, policy cycles and levels of government (e.g., regional or local governments). Further, when coordination is designed with clear roles and responsibilities, ministries and government departments are better held to account in translating the VNR into political action, policy or programming. This, in and of itself, is SDG 16 in practice.

Coordinating structures increasingly include civil society, national human rights institutions and other stakeholders.

<sup>45</sup> UN DESA: Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (2018). Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/22008UNPAN99132.pdf>

## National Mechanisms

### for Review and

### Follow-Up

www

(NMRFs) are an example of a key coordination body, specifically a national public structure that is mandated to coordinate and prepare reports for and to engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms.<sup>46</sup>

While

## increased stakeholder participation

www

may, at times, slow processes, experience shows that inclusive structures enhance accountability, trust and, ultimately, performance.<sup>47</sup> When a VNR is part of a nationally owned, inclusive and participatory process, effectively integrating VNR findings into national architecture through transparent and multi-stakeholder processes strengthens more responsive and more accountable institutions (SDG 16.6).

In terms of budgets, even

## the most well-intentioned public policy

### has little impact unless it is matched

### with sufficient public resources

www

<sup>48</sup> National budgets are governments' most powerful economic tool to meet the SDGs and the needs of its people, including those most at risk of being left behind. In most countries, the<sup>49</sup>

## budget process includes four stages

### budget formulation, approval,

### execution and oversight

www

Different actors, including legislators, auditors, civil society organizations, citizens, the media and donors, play different roles in determining budget decisions, implementation and outcomes. Transparency is also key in budgeting processes. As emphasized by the

## Inter-Agency Task Force on

### Financing for Development

### in 2017

www

“stronger implementation of transparency and public participation in the budgeting process can improve the effectiveness of public finance”.<sup>50</sup> Budgets do feature in some VNRs but ideally should feature prominently to transparently describe how they are prioritizing budgets for the 2030 Agenda, to fund to various SDG initiatives as well as how they are working across the ministries to maximize the impact of public resources. Specifically, countries can

## highlight budget amounts

### that are linked to

### the policies

www

listed in their VNRs.<sup>51</sup>

When advancing VNR findings and recommendations for strengthened SDG 16 implementation, whether related to peace, justice or inclusion, such action should be integrated as explicitly as possible with existing national planning and priorities. This also holds true for related frameworks or multi-stakeholder dialogue processes, such as the

## International Dialogue

### on Peacebuilding

### and Statebuilding

www

<sup>46</sup> OHCHR (2016): *National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up. A practical guide to effective state engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms*. [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR\\_PUB\\_16\\_1\\_NMRF\\_PracticalGuide.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR_PUB_16_1_NMRF_PracticalGuide.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Cázarez-Grageda, K. (2018). *The Whole of Society Approach: Levels of engagement and meaningful participation of different stakeholders in the review process of the 2030 Agenda*, p. 8. Partners for Review and GIZ.

<sup>48</sup> TAP Network (2019). *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, p. 19. <https://sdgaccountability.org/sdg-accountability-handbook/>

<sup>49</sup> TAP Network (2019). *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> UN Interagency Task Force on Financing for Development (2017). Report: *Financing for Development: Progress and Prospects*, p. 2. [https://www.un.org/pga/71/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2017/06/Report\\_IATF-2017-min.pdf](https://www.un.org/pga/71/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2017/06/Report_IATF-2017-min.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (2020) Assessment of ASEAN Countries' Concrete SDG Implementation Efforts: Policies and Budgets Reported in Their 2016-2020 Voluntary National Reviews. <https://www.iges.or.jp/en/pub/asean-sdg-vnrs/en>



or the<sup>52</sup>

## Open Government Partnership



To this end, government leadership and clearer attention should be placed on connecting national SDG reports, VNRs, human rights reporting, the data that is derived from each and how they link to national development plans and policies. As highlighted by UNDP's<sup>53</sup>

## Voluntary National Reviews

### and National SDG Reports



#### Overview Report (draft)

while constituting two specific outputs, they (national SDGs reports and VNRs) should be seen a part of a larger and longer-term process leading towards the achievement of the SDGs.<sup>54</sup>

The integration of VNR findings into NDPs' priorities and policies specifically in the (mid-term or final) review of the national plans in a coordinated manner and from a human-rights-based approach, not only strengthens implementation but increases the potential for policy cohesion across sector pillars.

### How Can This Be Used?

More than

half of the 2019 VNR

countries



(47 in total) set up new institutional structures often through a multi-stakeholder SDG commission, council, working group or task force. These usually consisted of line ministries, national statistical commissions and other stakeholders such as civil society, academia, the private sector and local and regional governments.<sup>55</sup> A review of the

## 2018 VNRs



by Partners for Review shows that 31 of the 46 VNRs mentioned existing or new councils/committees to oversee SDG implementation.<sup>56</sup>

Coordinating bodies or structures vary in form and composition, but are often led or housed within a ministry or the executive office and at times include national statistical offices, NHRIs and other independent equality bodies, civil society, the private sector and other non-state actors. Coordinating bodies are often responsible for coordinating the development of national SDG implementation plans and/or integrating SDG implementation into existing plans. This may also entail

maintaining timeframes, defined

responsibilities for government



actors and institutions,

and transparent deliverables subject to regular reporting.<sup>57</sup>

An integrated approach between different national coordinating bodies, with clear roles and responsibilities,

52 International Dialogue on Peacebuilding & Statebuilding. Home Page. <https://www.pbsbdialogue.org/en/> and the Open Government Partnership. Home Page <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/>

53 UNDP (2017). Voluntary National Reviews and National SDG Reports: Overview report to guide their preparation.

54 The SDGs are often monitored and reviewed both through National SDGs Reports (NSDGR) and the VNR. The NSDGR is primarily intended for a country to guide its own implementation and monitoring. The VNR, rather, is part of the formal intergovernmental and international monitoring and peer learning process.

55 UN DESA (2019). HLPF 2019 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report, p. 18.

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/252302019\\_VNR\\_Synthesis\\_Report\\_DESA.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/252302019_VNR_Synthesis_Report_DESA.pdf)

Since the early 2000s, Germany, for example, had institutionalized mechanisms to coordinate government activity and engage with other stakeholders on sustainable development. After its 2016 VNR, however, it established an annual Sustainability Forum as an arena for multi-stakeholder dialogue organized by the Chancellery (Head of Government).

56 Global Alliance (2019). *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion*, p. 52.

57 TAP Network 2030. SDG Accountability Portal: Connecting with Designated Government SDG Bodies and Ministries.

<https://sdgaccountability.org/working-with-government-institutions/connecting-with-designated-government-sdg-bodies/>

including for the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-Up (NMRF) on human rights, for example,<sup>58</sup>

has been deemed a

good practice

www

(More on linkages with human rights mechanisms can be found in Chapters 9 and 12.) Interministerial and interagency mechanisms are often critical to integrated planning, budgeting and financing.

## The SDGs Council, Georgia: An Evolving Tool in Intergovernmental Coordination, Implementation and Multi-stakeholder Inclusion<sup>59</sup>

*In 2017 and after its 2016 VNR, Georgia created the SDGs Council to facilitate SDG implementation and monitoring. It is chaired by the Head of the Administration of the Government, co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and reports to the Prime Minister. In 2019, the SDGs Council was separated from the Public Administration Reform Council and was established as an independent entity, allowing for a stronger mandate and a more inclusive, data-driven approach to implementation and monitoring. The below briefly details the SDGs Council's evolution for stronger impact.*

*Since 2017, the Council has grown to include over 15 public institutions, including deputy ministers from all relevant line ministries, state agencies, mayors and elected co-chairs of thematic working groups from civil society. In addition, parliamentary committees, UN Agencies and other International Organizations (IOs) may be asked to participate, though without the right to vote.*

*The Council's coordination mechanism operates through a three-part structure: the Council itself, the Secretariat (the Policy Planning Unit within the Administration), and four Working Groups: Economic Development, Democratic Governance, Social Inclusion and Sustainable Energy and Environment Protection. In addition to changing the Council's composition, the 2019 mandate updated the Working Groups' operational methods to be more inclusive, with chairs or co-chairs having stronger advocacy and decision-making roles. Co-Chairs include civil society, the UN and public institutions. (Working Groups also include the private sector, academia and other IOs.)*

*Further, the Council now draws its data from the SDGs National Document (the Matrix) and the Electronic Monitoring System (EMS). The Matrix reflects global and Georgia-adjusted targets and indicators, baseline indicators, data sources, and the responsible entity. The SDGs Matrix also includes scorecards. Through EMS, launched in 2019, ministries are directly informed should they fall behind.*

*In terms of policy, the Council can now make recommendations to line ministries and others, with EMS providing a concrete monitoring instrument. Recommendations are often tied to the national Policy Development and Coordination System, with further links made to Georgia's Public Administration Reform efforts.*

*The updated SDGs Council played a crucial role in **Georgia's 2020 VNR**. The Secretariat acted within its new mandate to coordinate the process. Working Groups provided information and recommendations to the draft documents and, after several rounds of review, the Council, defined as a political decision-making body, adopted the final version of Georgia's 2020 VNR.*

58 SDG Knowledge Platform. HLPF 2020 VNR Lab Event: "Aligning reporting processes: Voluntary National Reviews and international human rights mechanisms". <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=20000&nr=7031&menu=2993>

The National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-Up (NMRF) on human rights can systematically collaborate with and contribute to national SDG implementation and reporting mechanisms or processes. They can also be included as members of coordinating bodies.

59 This case study is based on interviews with the Policy Planning Unit within the Administration of the Government of Georgia.

## The SDGs Council, Georgia: An Evolving Tool in Intergovernmental Coordination, Implementation and Multi-stakeholder Inclusion, cont.

**Take-aways and Recommendations:** A clear division of labor and mandates, with proper civil society engagement, ensured a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach to Georgia's 2020 VNR, focused on progress and accountability. Since 2017, an annual SDGs Council meeting has also allowed Council members to share in SDG implementation-related experiences. **Going forward**, it is important to establish wide-reaching communication mechanisms. To this end, the draft 2020 VNR was shared online and Georgians were encouraged to comment. As a result, the Secretariat received about 200 comments from 20+ stakeholders.

While not without structural and functional challenges, overall,

VNR preparation has increased  
government actors' awareness  
of the 2030 Agenda

helping to define roles across government in advancing the SDGs.<sup>60</sup> Multi-stakeholder dialogues further help to maintain policy continuity, particularly during changes in government.

In terms of budgets and SDG integration and alignment, according to the

2019 World Public Sector Report

national SDG budgeting can range from supplying basic information on SDG targets and related budget allocations to “fully-fledged SDG-based budget classification systems that can drive budget prioritization, decision-making, execution, monitoring, audit and accountability processes”.<sup>61</sup>

As highlighted in the World Public Sector Report, there is increasing awareness within the international community of the value of establishing “strong linkages between national budget processes and other key elements of the chain that links visions, strategies and plans, to public spending and development outcomes”. However, not all countries can be expected to adopt

ambitious SDG budgeting on a systemic basis in the medium or longer term, even if interested, given political, administrative and technical constraints. One key factor, however, comprises specific and tailored public finance management reforms, often linked to SDG 16, and how these can be used to support SDG implementation and monitoring overall. Currently, it is more likely that governments focus on specific SDGs when aligning their budgets, taking a more ad hoc rather than an Agenda-wide approach.

60 For more on how structural and functional aspects may promote or prevent coherent implementation and review, see report: Cazarez-Grageda, K. (2019). Partners for Review 2019 analysis on the Whole of Government Approach and 2030 Agenda National Coordination Structures. <https://www.partners-for-review.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Whole-of-Government-P4R-Discussion-paper-2019.pdf>

61 UN DESA (2019). World Public Sector Report: Sustainable Development Goal 16: Focus on Public Institutions, p. 95.

## Mexico: Aligning Budgets with the SDGs and SDG 16 for longer-term National Planning

As noted in the *2019 World Public Sector Report*, Mexico “stands out as having moved the farthest in terms of mapping the SDGs into its national planning and budgeting processes”.<sup>62</sup> Mexico’s efforts to integrate the SDGs into its national strategies and plans started in 2016, shortly after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. The *Ministry of Finance and Public Credit*, which oversees the development of national and sector plans, in partnership with *UNDP and the Office of the Presidency*, which is responsible for national SDG implementation, developed a methodology to monitor and evaluate the performance of the national budget in contributing to the SDGs.<sup>63</sup>

The first step was to **identify links between sectoral strategies and the SDGs’ 169 targets**. Based on these links, the Ministry of Finance then identified budget programmes related to each SDG target.

The analysis was reviewed and validated by line ministries. Initial results indicated the need for more disaggregated information to assess the specific contribution of each budget programme to the related SDG target(s), as different budget and sector programmes contribute to the different aspects of each target.

In 2017, the Ministry of Finance integrated the methodology into the 2018 Budget Statement of the Executive Budget Proposal. This brought in the IT systems for budget preparation, which included a module for linking budget programmes with SDG targets or sub-targets and tracking budget execution. Complementary fiscal transparency measures were also adopted, such as integrating a summary of the methodology into the Citizen Budget and publishing the results of this exercise in open data.

According to *Mexico’s 2018 VNR*, in the 2018 federal budget, 80.7 percent of Budgetary Programmes (BPs) were connected to the 2030 Agenda, while 156 of the 169 SDG indicators are connected to at least one BP.<sup>64</sup> The vast majority of these programmes are linked in some way to SDG 16.



62 UN DESA (2019). World Public Sector Report: Sustainable Development Goal 16: Focus on Public Institutions, p. 91.

63 Gobierno de Mexico: Hacienda The Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (MoF). Home Page. <https://www.gob.mx/shcp/en>

64 Voluntary National Review for HLPF On Sustainable Development: Basis For A Long-Term Sustainable Development Vision In Mexico 2018. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20122VOLUNTARY\\_NATIONAL\\_REPORT\\_060718.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20122VOLUNTARY_NATIONAL_REPORT_060718.pdf)



## Mexico: Aligning Budgets with the SDGs and SDG 16 for longer-term National Planning, cont.

**Take-Aways and Recommendations:** Several factors facilitated the budget reform process, including: an existing national budget programme structure with performance targets; standing coordination between planning and budgeting processes; existent monitoring and performance evaluation systems; and political will within the Ministry of Finance to develop methodology linking SDG targets with the budget.

Going forward, it will be important to thoroughly evaluate not just where, but how funds are spent, moving beyond a mapping exercise to analyzing – through monitoring, evaluation and analysis – the effectiveness of public policies and programming in reaching the SDGs. This is true for SDG 16 and indeed for all SDGs. The first step was to align Mexico's budget with the SDGs. The second will be to assess the effectiveness of funds spent to ensure that SDG priorities, including SDG 16 as an enabling SDG, are reached.

*\*This case study largely pulls from the 2018 World Public Sector Report, with updates provided by Mexico's 2030 Agenda Office within the Office of the President.*

As highlighted in the introduction,

205 VNRs have been presented  
by 168 countries   
since 2016

with the number of reporting countries increasing every year or remaining consistent.<sup>65</sup>

Such an increase across regions seems  
to highlight countries' commitment   
to the SDGs as well as their interest

in showcasing what has been achieved and lessons learned.<sup>66</sup> It may also point to the value of the VNR in mobilizing action and partnership towards priority issues, including the implementation of SDG targets or clusters of targets linked to NDPs and other complementary frameworks. To this end, the SDG 16+ framework provides a particularly useful entry point to enabling a fragility-sensitive approach to the VNRs and to accelerating SDG implementation.

<sup>65</sup> High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF 2020). Secretariat Background Note: Voluntary National Reviews at the 2020 High-level political forum on sustainable development, p. 1.

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26384HLPF\\_2020\\_Background\\_note.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26384HLPF_2020_Background_note.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> UN DESA (2019). HLPF 2019 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report, p. 2.

## Advancing SDG 16 through Post-VNR Action in Sierra Leone: A Directorate for Access to Justice

Access to Justice and Judicial Reform was central to [Sierra Leone's 2019 VNR](#).<sup>67</sup> Identified in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report as one of the primary causes for the civil war, the reform of a weak justice sector has since been a priority. For Sierra Leone, the VNR (having presented in 2019 and 2016) entails an integrated, multi-stakeholder process linked to national development planning, with additional links to the [African Union's Agenda 2063](#) and the [New Deal](#).<sup>68</sup> Its 2019 VNR was specifically tied to the Government of Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2019-2023.

Also integrated with the MTNDP and subsequently, the VNR is Sierra Leone's fourth edition of the Justice Sector Reform Strategy and Investment Plan. Serving all justice institutions, the Justice Sector Reform Strategy's ultimate aim is to make justice accessible across the country and to ensure that there is an effective communication strategy for justice programmes.

Therefore, and following from the VNR, the Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, as SDG 16 custodian, embarked on establishing a **Directorate on Access to Justice**. The Directorate is designed to connect formal and informal justice mechanisms under one umbrella entity as a means of more effectively and efficiently answering people's justice needs. For example, in the case of land disputes, the Directorate would help those in the provinces know where to take their judicial issues for recourse (formal or informal, such as alternative dispute resolution). To this end, the Directorate will be responsible for coordinating non-state actors, justices for the peace, and informal and customary law processes. In so doing, partnering and working with civil society will be critical.

The Directorate will also work with other justice sector institutions on implementation and monitoring of relevant SDG 16 targets. These include the Law Reform Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Legal Aid Board, the Human Rights Commission, the Sierra Leone Law School, the Registrar General's Office and the Justice Sector Coordination Office.<sup>69</sup>

Going forward, a justice needs survey is to be disseminated (virtually as much as possible) to better understand different populations' needs before setting up final infrastructure and a user-friendly platform for engagement. This will also be the platform for reporting on SDG 16. Amidst challenges of COVID-19, the Directorate is set to be staffed and fully operational by the end of 2020.

**Take-Aways and Recommendations:** There should be an SDG 16 sector Working Group that includes civil society, academics and other justice-related institutions, with an effective communication strategy. This would further support the organization and coordination of SDG 16 stakeholders for effective monitoring and reporting. This Working Group should be inclusive of CSOs working to close the gender gap in access to justice.

*\*This case study is based on interviews with the Justice Sector Coordination Office, Ministry of Justice, Sierra Leone.*

67 Government of Sierra Leone Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (2019). VNR report on SDGs in Sierra Leone. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23378Sierra\\_Leone\\_VNR\\_FINAL.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23378Sierra_Leone_VNR_FINAL.pdf)

68 African Union (2020). Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview> PBS Dialogue. Home Page. <https://www.pbsdialogue.org/en/>

69 The Justice Sector Coordination Office is working with UNDP to develop a new reporting and monitoring framework for SDG 16. Indicators and targets will be localized, relevant for all institutions required to report on SDG 16, including the police, for example. Data collection, monitoring and evaluation are to be done in partnership with Statistics Sierra Leone, in line with VNR recommendations for a more coordinated approach.

## Lesotho: Linking the VNR with National Reform Processes and SDG 16 Implementation

The 2019 VNR in Lesotho coincided with its National Dialogue and Reform Process, an effort to bring about transformation, long-term stability and sustainable peace against a backdrop of decades of political upheaval. **The strategic positioning of the reform process in achieving SDG 16, as captured in the VNR, was such that the VNR became an important additional policy tool in continuing the national dialogue process.** Supported by UNDP, the dialogue process led to national consensus on SDG 16-related reforms across a range of sectors. Key steps related to the VNR and longer-term SDG 16 implementation were as follows:

Step 1: Political commitment and national strategy – Leading up to the VNR and building on the regional intervention of South African Development Community and the Commonwealth, UNDP, with funding from the UN Peacebuilding Fund, galvanized political and social leadership among local and international actors, as well as development partners to formulate the roadmap that guided national dialogue and reforms process.

Step 2: Establishment of clear leadership, horizontal and vertical coordination mechanism – A National Dialogue Planning Committee coordinated an inclusive and participatory national consultation process. National Leaders Forums and Multi-stakeholder Dialogue Plenaries helped bring consensus on reforms and implementation options. **This content became a statement of policy intent in the VNR.**

Step 3: Coordinated thought leadership and policy articulation – A UN/Development Partners Technical Advisory Group was established to coordinate thought leadership and technical support by experts. This was predicated on distilling views from consultative dialogues into reform content and implementation options, which were presented to the Leaders Forums and Multi-stakeholder Plenaries. **This content became the policy proposal for SDG 16 embedded in the VNR.**

Step 4: The National Reforms Authority (the NRA, was created through the NRA Act) – This provides a legal and institutional framework for implementation of the agreed reforms that significantly contributes to attainment of SDG 16. The NRA Act guards against interference and **provides a long-term track for accelerating progress towards SDG 16 by ensuring successful implementation of SDG 16-related reforms.**

The National dialogue highlighted the value of linking the VNR to local realities and national development planning processes. These included: a legislative framework and legal mandate for reform implementation (NRA Act 2019); institutions to oversee implementation; allocation of resources and financing through the budget (Appropriation Bill 2019); and a comprehensive programme of support for coordinated reform implementation across development partners.

**Take-aways and Recommendations:** For the VNR to be an effective advocacy tool, there must be national consensus on key development issues and underlying challenges, with a well-defined roadmap to address those issues. To this end, VNR recommendations must be linked to national development strategies and policy priorities on follow-up on recommendations

In addition, horizontal, vertical and technical coordination is critical to inclusion, policy coherence and the formulation of policy proposals that become part of a VNR. In terms of data, national repositories of statistics should be supported to generate, process and manage SDG 16-specific data, including through related surveys, with academic and research institutions also engaged in national VNR monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

*\*This case study draws from insight and input from UNDP Lesotho.*



In taking VNR findings forward for strengthened SDG 16 implementation, a greater focus on capacity-building across actors (including in generating data), in addition to financing and technical expertise, is needed. As highlighted during the

## Ulaanbaatar Democracy

www

### Forum in 2019

“meeting the capacity challenge will be instrumental to meet the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda and for the effective implementation of SDG 16+. <sup>70</sup> Capacities should not only be built on policy coherence and integration, but also on inclusive and participatory SDG implementation and effective stakeholder engagement.”

### Key Resources:

- [Institutional and Coordination Mechanisms – Guidance Note on Facilitating Integration and Coherence for SDG Implementation](#), UNDP (2017);
- [Integrated National Financing Frameworks](#), UNDP (2019);
- [UNDP SDG Financing Sector Hub](#), (2020);
- [World Public Sector Report, SDG 16, Focus on Public Institutions](#), UN DESA (2019)
- [What happens after the VNR? Lessons Learned and Policy Recommendations from the VNR Process](#), Partners for Review (2019);
- [Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, The 47 countries that presented VNRs at the HLPF in 2019](#), UN DESA (2020);
- [National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up: A Practical Guide to Effective State Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms](#), OHCHR (2016);
- [National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up: A Study of State Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms](#), OHCHR (2016)
- [The whole of government approach: Initial lessons concerning national coordinating structures for the 2030 Agenda and how review can improve their operation](#), Partners for Review (2019);
- [The Whole of Society Approach: Levels of engagement and meaningful participation of different](#)

[stakeholders in the review process of the 2030 Agenda](#), Partners for Review (2018).

**Interviews:** Andrea Lara Guevara, Office of the President, Mexico; Gisele Fernandez, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico; Shahid Korjie, Ministry of Justice, Sierra Leone; Charles Makunja, UNDP, Lesotho; Giorgi Bobghishvili, Administration, Georgia; Natia Tsikaradze, Administration, Georgia; Joern Geisselmann, Partners for Review; Anthony Triolo, Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies.

70 UNDP (2019). Final Report: Ulaanbaatar Democracy Forum (UBDF) (2019).

[https://www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2019-03/2019%20UBDF%20rapporteurs%20final%20report\\_13%20March%202019.pdf](https://www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2019-03/2019%20UBDF%20rapporteurs%20final%20report_13%20March%202019.pdf)



## 2. THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT AND PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

### What Is It?

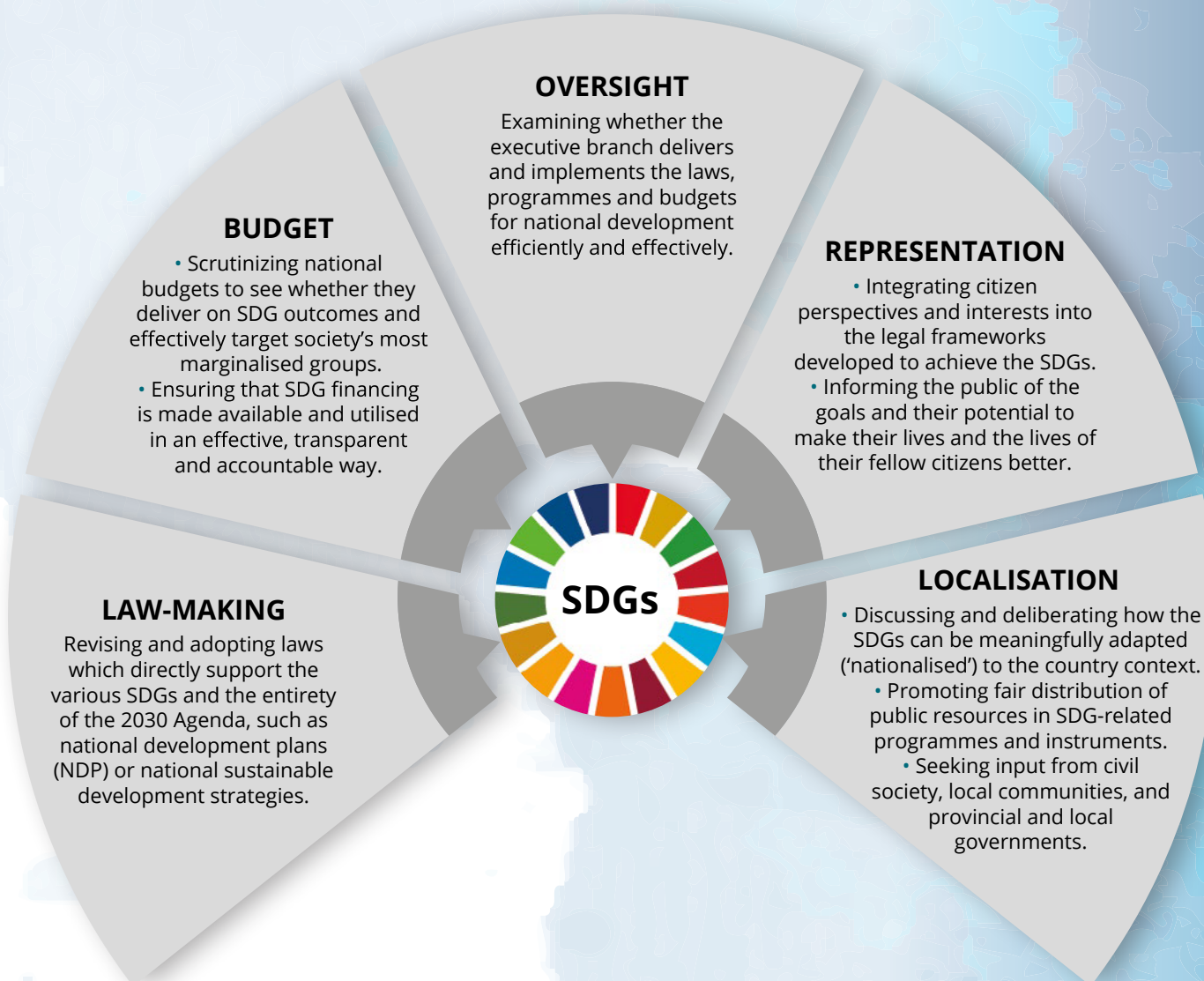
Parliaments have a constitutional responsibility to oversee how all of the SDGs are nationalized, implemented and supported by the government. However, at their core,

parliaments directly relate

to two SDG 16 targets

www

SDG 16.6 on developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels and SDG 16.7 on ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.<sup>71</sup> Composed of representatives from different geographical areas or constituencies,



71 Inter-Parliamentary Union & United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2016). Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Self-Assessment Toolkit, p. 7. <http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/sdg-toolkit-e.pdf>

## a modern parliament or legislature



tends to have

## the following fundamental functions:



oversight of government bodies, especially the executive branch; budgeting; lawmaking; and representing the interests of citizens.<sup>72</sup> In advancing the SDGs,

## SDG localization



can also be added to parliament's list of core functions.<sup>73</sup>

In performing these functions, parliaments and parliamentary committees may use a number of procedures including, but not limited to adopting legislation and amending laws; scrutinizing government, including ministers, ministries and civil servants through inquiries and hearings on matters of public interest; and gaining access to official documents and information.<sup>74</sup> Set within an SDG's context, this means,

## "If the goals are to be

## achieved in any given country



*parliament must play a significant and informed role. The laws needed to create the legal framework for the SDGs will have to be scrutinized and adopted by the parliament. The annual state budget that allocates funding for SDG implementation will need to be passed by the parliament. Parliament must also monitor the implementation and parliamentarians must represent their constituents to promote citizen participation in the implementation of the SDGs.*<sup>75</sup>

Well-functioning parliaments may then contribute to SDG 16.3 on promoting the rule of law, SDG 16.5 on reducing corruption and bribery, SDG 16.10 on public access to information, and various other SDGs. For example, in terms of SDG 3 on health, parliament can ensure that specific targets are included in a national development plan, with the required legislative, fiscal, representative and oversight action to support implementation.

The Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) is the only international network of parliamentarians focused on combating corruption. Its members represent more than fifty countries in all regions of the world. They are current or former legislators who collaborate on a nonpartisan basis. GOPAC explicitly recognizes the value of civil society partnership, committing to 'achieve accountability and transparency through effective anti-corruption mechanisms and inclusive participation and cooperation between parliamentarians, government and civil society.

Parliament's role in strengthening SDG 16 implementation at national and subnational levels through VNR and post-VNR processes is therefore twofold: as a reflection of its core functions (SDG 16.6 and SDG 16.7) and in how it advances SDG 16 specific recommendations stemming from the VNR. As captured by a 2019 study by Partners for Review and evidencing growing acknowledgement of their role, many of the 2019 VNRs reported on the role of parliament, through consultations, representation

72 TAP Network (2019). *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, p. 24.

<https://sdgaccountability.org/sdg-accountability-handbook/>

Partners for Review & Together 2030 (2018). *Engaging parliaments on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs: representation, accountability and implementation: A handbook for civil society*, p. 10.

<http://www.partners-for-review.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Engaging-parliaments-on-the-2030-Agenda-and-the-SDGs.pdf>

73 [Here](#), localization refers to how the SDGs are adapted to a country context, including in public resource distribution and in seeking input from civil society, local communities, and local and regional governments.

Partners for Review & Together 2030 (2018). *Engaging parliaments on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs*, p. 7.

74 TAP Network (2019). *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, p. 25.

75 GOPAC, UNDP, IDB (2019). *Parliament's Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals*, p. 10. <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Parliamentary%20Development/parliaments%20role%20in%20implementing%20the%20SDGs.pdf>

in SDG coordination mechanisms, as related to budget approval, awareness-raising and oversight.<sup>76</sup>

## Why Is It Important?

The 2030 Agenda recognizes parliaments' essential role through "their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and [...] in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments".<sup>77</sup> As representatives of their constituencies, parliamentarians have a responsibility and an opportunity to support people-centered policies, legislation and budgets. It is through this representational role that national ownership of the SDGs can be driven and ensured, further calling for their meaningful engagement in the VNR process – preparation, delivery and follow-up.

Further, while the executive branch often introduces laws and budgets and is responsible for their implementation, parliament is responsible for passing laws, reviewing fiscal plans and ultimately monitoring government implementation efforts.

To this end, oversight, in particular, is critical to assessing the impact and process of government action

However, this parliamentary function comes with challenges.<sup>78</sup> Issues around political space and party politics; access to information; a lack of human and financial resources; limited parliamentary powers in following up on recommendations to government once made; competing demands; and a lack of commitment on the part of some parliamentarians can hinder attempts at accountability.

Given the increasing complexity of governance

and SDG implementation/monitoring<sup>79</sup>, working relationships with other oversight bodies, such as Supreme Audit Institutions and Anti-Corruption Commissions, as well as civil society organizations, are critical to effective parliamentary oversight.

However, globally and as<sup>80</sup>

captured by the Inter-Parliamentary Union many parliaments remain unaware of the VNR

Further, within the relatively small percentage of parliaments that do know about the VNRs, it appears that most have not been meaningfully consulted: for example, through hearings or government-led consultations or through actual participation at HLPF. This presents two missed opportunities. Engaging parliament is not only a means by which SDG 16 can be put into practice, but it is also an empowering exercise for parliamentarians themselves.

Updated SDG 16 VNR Guidelines

provide a useful starting point in articulating what meaningful stakeholder engagement requires.<sup>81</sup>

76 It is also important to note that, while acknowledgement of the role of parliaments has increased, as has their engagement, not all forms of engagement or consultations are thorough or rigorous. P4R (2019). Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis, p. 5.

<https://www.partners-for-review.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/P4R-Analysis-VNRs-2019.pdf>

77 United Nations (2015). *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, #45.

78 Inter-Parliamentary Union (2017). *Global Parliamentary Report 2017—Parliamentary oversight: Parliament's power to hold government to account*, p. 24.

79 Among various other duties and responsibilities, for example, parliament should verify that the necessary data is collected, processed and shared and that the National Statistics Office has the resources and capacity to do so. Inter-Parliamentary Union (2017). *Global Parliamentary Report 2017—Parliamentary oversight: Parliament's power to hold government to account*, p. 24.

80 Inter-Parliamentary Union (2019). Institutionalization of the SDGs in the work of parliaments, p. 3.

[https://www.ipu.org/sites/default/files/documents/final\\_-\\_survey\\_analysis\\_updated\\_feb\\_14\\_2019\\_edited-e.pdf](https://www.ipu.org/sites/default/files/documents/final_-_survey_analysis_updated_feb_14_2019_edited-e.pdf)

81 Global Alliance (2020). A Guide to Report on SDG 16 in Voluntary National Reviews.

<https://www.sdg16hub.org/content/global-alliance-guide-report-sdg16-voluntary-national-reviews>



## How Can This Be Used?

An entirely government-driven VNR is at odds with transparent and accountable decision-making as epitomized in SDG 16 (in addition to being at odds with VNR guidance). Involving parliaments in the VNR process is one way by which a whole-of-society approach can be strengthened in practice. Ideally, HLPF delegations should include parliamentarians. Parliament's core functions — oversight, budgeting, lawmaking and representation — often overlap in practice. This section details how parliaments' core functions can and should be incorporated into VNR and post-VNR processes to advance SDG 16 — from preparation to review, monitoring and implementation.

### An analysis of the 2019 VNRs by Partners for Review

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highlights that parliamentarians are increasingly included in national SDG Councils, Committees or Working Groups in preparing for the VNR, as well as engaged through workshops, conferences and roundtables.<sup>82</sup> While parliamentary representation in such SDG institutional mechanisms is still somewhat limited, recognition of their oversight role is growing.

While different types of parliamentary committees can be used to exercise oversight,<sup>83</sup> committee oversight generally enables parliament either to assess whether policies, laws and programmes are effectively implemented — or, if not, to make recommendations. Committees allow parliamentarians to examine critical issues, including as related to the most vulnerable, while engaging a wide cross-section of stakeholders in their deliberations and debate. In terms of the VNR, this can translate into a parliamentary committee “reporting back” to parliament on the government's performance.

82 P4R (2019). Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development — a Comparative Analysis, p. 5.

83 For example, Parliamentary Committees are political and dependent on the interest of Members of Parliament to continue, though those connected to a government department are usually maintained, regardless of MP changes. “All Party Parliamentary Groups” do not have the same statutory basis as Committees, nor the same kind of scrutiny duties. However, they are less vulnerable and provide additional means to keep attention on the SDGs.



## UK: An Exercise in Oversight, Reporting Back to Parliament on the UK's First VNR

Following the UK's presentation of its first VNR at the 2019 HLPF, which focused in part on SDG 16, the International Development Committee (IDC) within the UK's House of Commons (one of the UK's two parliamentary houses) produced a report assessing the UK's performance, which was presented to Parliament and made available to the public. A few of the findings, as paraphrased,<sup>84</sup> include:

- A lack of stakeholder engagement and a rushed process, despite having had adequate time. This prevented stakeholders from meaningfully engaging in, or influencing, the final VNR.
- Engagement recommended by the UN – consultation with stakeholders like human rights institutions, trades unions; business and industry; civil society; parliamentarians and UK academia – was not only late but also ad hoc and superficial.
- The VNR itself was selective and partial, relying on cherry-picked data. It skirted discussion of some serious issues, for instance: food security, poverty trends and EU withdrawal.
- The implication is that the UK is not taking the SDGs seriously – as integral to, and coherent with, the government's overall agenda. This is also evident in making DFID the lead coordinating department, as opposed to the Cabinet Office, whose role is “supporting collective government, helping to ensure the effective development, coordination and implementation of policy”.

In acting upon the UK's commitment to the SDGs, the IDC recommended that overall responsibility for SDGs be given to the Cabinet Office and that the SDGs be built into cross-government planning, spending review and reporting processes, among other actions. In addition, the report recommended that a commitment be made to produce another VNR in 2022, through a more collaborative and consultative process and with more rigorous, data-driven and contextualized evaluation of the UK's performance against the SDG targets.

The **government responded in turn**, “partially agreeing” with most of the IDC's recommendations, and then either “disagreeing” or “agreeing” with a few, including around the need for stronger engagement.<sup>85</sup>

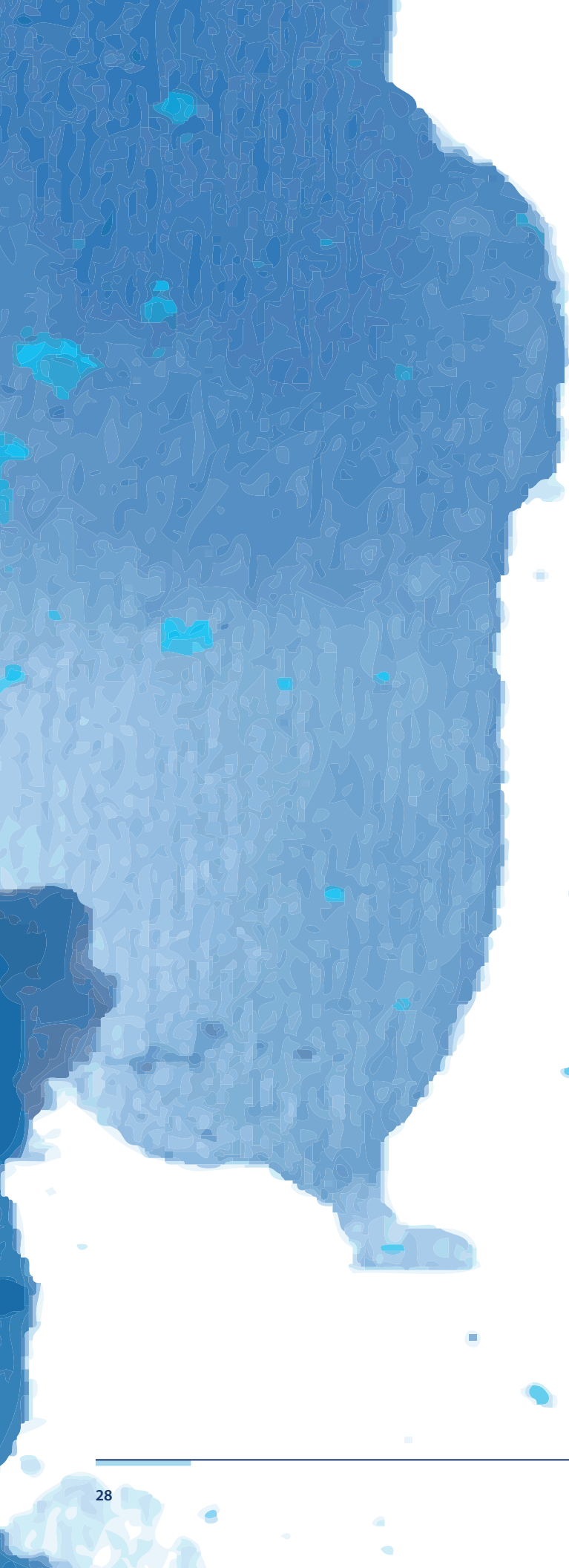
**Take-aways and Recommendations:** This case study highlights Parliament's oversight role and the importance of meaningful and institutionalized stakeholder engagement, early on and through substantive consultation, which had been lacking in this case, but which the UK **Government committed to improving** going forward.<sup>86</sup> As governments continue to grapple with COVID-19 response and recovery plans, including through an SDG framework applied domestically and internationally, parliamentary oversight and engagement are increasingly important in maintaining a transparency, accountable and inclusive process.

\* This case study draws from interviews with a member of the IDC and Bond, UK.

84 12th Report – UK progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Voluntary National Review Contents (2019). <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/1732/173208.htm>

85 UK's progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Voluntary National Review: Government Response to the Committee's Twelfth Report (2019). <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/2651/265102.htm>

86 UK's progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Voluntary National Review: Government Response to the Committee's Twelfth Report (2019).



As mentioned, parliaments also have a role in the budget approval processes, training, localization efforts and awareness-raising. Parliamentary functions on budget approval and representation indicate that, in order to ensure a VNR has national ownership and includes a discussion of public resourcing, good practice would be to refer a draft VNR to the relevant parliamentary committee and have hearings on the draft VNR. These hearings would also include submissions from civil society, with a report to government before finalization. The representation function should strive to ensure that under-represented groups from Members of Parliament constituencies are supported as part of the LNOB mandate.

To this end, the legitimacy of a parliament and its members derives from the fact that they are elected to represent the people of a country (or state or province). Failure to meaningfully engage on issues of public interest, such as the VNRs, can jeopardize that legitimacy. Local forums, public consultations, party consultations, civil society partnerships, social media, surveys, meetings and participatory budgeting (discussed in chapter 4) are means by which parliaments can engage with citizens following a VNR, thereby increasing citizen engagement on the SDGs and advancing SDG 16 in practice.

In terms of legislative authority, statutory lawmaking remains almost universally the preserve of Parliament, with potentially significant impact in advancing VNR recommendations as linked to SDG 16 and national development or strategic plans. While every legislature has its own procedures, in general, Parliament engages on three types of draft laws – government sponsored, parliament drafted or citizen-led – all of which can advance SDG-related reform.

## Timor-Leste: Translating VNR Priorities into Legislative Action through Parliament

*Timor-Leste's National Parliament is developing and implementing a legislative package on justice sector reform. In line with its **Strategic Development Plan** (2011-2030), Timor-Leste's **2019 VNR** prioritized, among other issues, strengthening the justice sector as a means of consolidating peace, enhancing accountability and promoting the rule of law. The reform will contribute to strengthening justice institutions to ensure access to effective and efficient justice and protection, particularly for women, children and vulnerable groups.*<sup>87</sup>

*With UNDP's support and through engagement of key actors within the justice sector, including the government, the Office of the President, justice institutions, civil society and development partners, this National Parliament legislation package aims to produce laws on: judiciary organization; programming of training for the justice sector; the statute of judicial magistrates; the statute of public prosecutors; amendments to the statute public defenders; as well as reviews of the criminal code and the criminal procedural code. The reform package is based on findings from the Legislative Reform Commission and the **Justice Sector Strategic Development Plan**.<sup>88</sup> The project is still being implemented. Five draft laws have been presented to National Parliament with two more to be delivered by the end of July 2020.*

**Take-Aways and Recommendations:** *The VNR allowed Parliament and the government to reassess the country's development patterns, reviewing the policy and institutional mechanisms aligned with the SDGs and building stakeholder engagement around them. It functioned as a kick-starter for mapping existing policies and their compatibility with the SDGs. Parliament is also planning on assessing its own readiness to oversee government commitments to SDG implementation and how it might assist in framing and implementing SDG policies.*

**The Timor-Leste National Parliament, with support from UNDP and UNOSSC, is developing a proposal to establish a g7+ Parliamentary Assembly that will consolidate the work of g7+ in promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG 16). The g7+ Parliamentary Assembly will play an important role in amplifying the voice of fragile countries in Agenda 2030. Will also strengthen the commitment to new aid effectiveness principles for country-owned and country-led engagement in fragile situations.**

*As such, the VNR proved a useful tool in identifying the areas that require additional implementation support, opening paths to partnerships at all levels, including with other countries. **Going forward**, more attention should be paid to comprehensive communication strategies on the VNR and VNR follow-up for all stakeholders and relevant institutions, as well as on building a national legal framework to make the inclusion of VNR recommendations in state planning mandatory and binding on state institutions.*

*\* This case study draws from interviews with UNDP, Timor-Leste.*

87 Given that Timor-Leste is a young democracy, with many institutions still framed under **UN Transitional Administration of East Timor-issued regulations**, this reform was deemed necessary to establish new and specialized courts, introduce permanent training for all justice professions and improve access to justice through an LNOB lens. *Timor-Leste's roadmap for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs*. (2019). <http://www.sustainablesids.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Timor-Leste-SDG-Roadmap.pdf>

88 Both documents propose to develop and implement a Legislative Package for Justice Sector Reform, based on sustainability and effectiveness of the justice policies and on the quality of service delivery by justice institutions. Council of Coordination for Justice (2010), *Justice Sector Strategic Plan for Timor-Leste 2011-2030*. [http://www.mj.gov.tl/files/JSSP\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.mj.gov.tl/files/JSSP_ENGLISH.pdf)



As a good practice, in advancing national ownership of the SDGs, parliaments should be supported in connecting their committee systems, structures and mandates to SDG-aligned national development priorities, with baselines and according to agreed-upon reporting mechanisms (to committees and then

plenary). Strengthening continuous reporting on SDG achievement, including through budget processes and involving relevant departments and ministries, would be instrumental in achieving a high quality and nationally-owned VNR.

## Fiji: SDG Integration and Parliamentary Committees

*Since 2016, the Fijian Parliament has undertaken a series of initiatives to promote and ensure progress on SDG implementation. Recent efforts have focused, in particular, on mainstreaming and integrating the SDGs into its work and the work of Parliamentary Committees as a means of exercising its executive oversight role in implementing the SDGs and legislative function.*<sup>89</sup>

*Building upon a 2017 self-assessment, Fiji's Parliament, along with partners, launched a guidance note in 2019 on integrating the SDGs across the work of Parliament Committees, addressing the alignment of committee systems, structures and mandates to SDG-linked national development priorities, with baselines and agreed reporting processes on progress.*<sup>90</sup> *Additional focus was placed on the use of SDG indicators in tracking progress towards SDG and NDP targets as Parliament and Parliamentary Committees scrutinize legislative bills, annual reports, sector performances, public expenditure and engage with the public.*

*While SDG 16 in particular suffers from a lack of baseline indicators as reflected in its National Development Plan,*<sup>91</sup> *the Committees have nonetheless been able to move forward in support of SDG 16, including working with Fiji's NHRI on addressing police brutality.*

*The Standing Committees primarily focused on SDG 16 are the Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense. In exercising their oversight role, these Committees review the Annual Reports of institutions or agencies that fall within their purview and then ask questions of those entities, with responses and follow-up actions carried out in return.*

*For example, based on its 2016, 2017 and 2018 Annual Reports, the Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights asked Fiji's Human Rights Commissions how the Commission has sought to advance SDG 16, including in following up on complaints and allegations of police brutality and misconduct. In return, the Commission highlighted its actions and the responses of relevant institutions, whether Fiji's Police, its Corrections Service or the Judiciary, to allegations and grievances noted.*

*While the work of Parliament on SDG integration and the VNR are separate, parallel processes, Fiji's 2019 VNR placed significant focus on the rule of law as an enabler of development, highlighting the underlying importance of SDG 16 to the work of the Committees and to the NDP, despite a lack of data.*

89 Parliament of the Republic of Fiji (2017). The Parliament of Fiji and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Self-Assessment (Rep.) [http://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SDGs-Self-Assessment-Report-Draft\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.parliament.gov.fj/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SDGs-Self-Assessment-Report-Draft_FINAL.pdf)

90 UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji (2019). Oversight of the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. <https://www.pacific.undp.org/content/pacific/en/home/library/eg/guidance-note-fiji-parliament-standing-committee.html>

91 Fiji's 2017-2021 NDP only has 16.2 and 16.10 as targets listed under the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). As such, there are only a few SDG 16 baseline indicators included in Fiji's NDP. In addressing the data gap, discussions are underway on using proxy data in developing additional SDG 16-related indicators. However, having only proxy data may make it difficult to have line ministries agree on KPIs and the accompanying accountability implications.



## Fiji: SDG Integration and Parliamentary Committees, cont.

*Take-Aways and Recommendations: The lack of local baseline data and local targets reflected in Fiji's NDP for certain SDGs should not deter Parliament from working through its committees to push government ministries and departments to set targets and goals outside of the NDP. This would then allow Parliamentary Committees to monitor ministry and department progress in achieving those SDGs and targets through annual reports tabled by those ministries and departments to parliaments outside the NDP that the parliamentary committees can use to monitor progress.*

*In the absence of nationally-set baselines, targets and reliable data, Parliament should consider using the global targets (or regional targets, if existent for a particular SDG) as reference points in conducting government oversight.*

*\* This case study draws from interviews with UNDP, Fiji.*

Finally, parliaments need to assess both how best to mainstream the SDGs into their work: through one overarching committee or through multiple, issue-specific committees, such as those on justice and human rights. This can best be done within new or existing structures, through caucuses or parliamentary groups, etc.

### Key Resources:

- [Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis](#), Partners for Review, (2019);
- [2017 Global Parliamentary Report](#), UNDP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2017);
- [Engaging Parliaments on the 2030 Agenda](#), Together 2030 (2018);
- [Parliaments Role in Implementing the SDGs: a Parliamentary Handbook](#), UNDP, GOPAC, IDB (2017);
- [Institutionalization of the SDGs in the Work of Parliaments](#), Inter-Parliamentary Union, (2019);
- [Human Rights Handbook for Parliamentarians](#), OHCHR and Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016).

**Interviews:** Kit Dorey, Bond, UK; Bruno Lencastre, UNDP, Timor-Leste; Paddy Tornsey, Inter-Parliamentary Union; Alessandro Motter, Inter-Parliamentary Union; Charles Chauvel, Global Lead, Inclusive Processes and Institutions, UNDP; Nanise Saune-Qaloewai, UNDP, Fiji.

# 3. THE ROLE OF SUPREME AUDIT INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER OVERSIGHT BODIES

## What Is It?

Supreme Audit Institution (SAI)

is an independent, national

www

oversight entity

whose audit function or role is established by a country's constitution or supreme law-making body.<sup>92</sup> An important accountability actor, they are largely responsible for auditing a government's revenue and spending, helping to ensure transparency and accountability and the performance of government bodies and ministries in using public funds efficiently and effectively. While structures, mandates and reporting relationships of SAIs vary, they are central to strengthening and developing strong institutions.

In terms of

overall functions

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SAIs can undertake independent performance audits of a government's SDG implementation efforts; provide checks on a government's budget allocation and expenditures; ensure compliance of a government's programmes with existing laws and regulations; assess the readiness of a national government to implement the SDGs and ability to report on the SDGs, including the reliability of its data production; and work with parliaments, other oversight bodies, civil society and others in holding government to account.<sup>93</sup>

The main role of SAIs in Agenda 2030 implementation is that they are the lead institution that is charged with conducting performance audits of government preparedness for SDG implementation. The SAI audits tend to focus on three main questions: (i) To what extent has the government adapted Agenda 2030 to its national

context?; (ii) Has the government identified and secured resources for implementation?; and (iii) Has the government established a mechanism to monitor, follow up and review implementation?

Many SAIs also independently support parliaments in their oversight of government budgets and spending. Some play an even larger role in accountability – including with judicial authority – to ensure that government programmes are in compliance with laws and regulations. Others undertake performance assessments to determine the effectiveness of a government's activities. In contributing to holding governments to account, SAIs overlap with other stakeholders involved in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, such as parliamentarians and civil society organizations, supporting implementation of the SDGs, including SDG 16, through VNR and post-VNR processes.

One of the specific areas SAIs are involved in is the fight against corruption in the public sector. Through their audits of public expenditure and government accounts, SAIs ensure the proper use of public resources and help to create an enabling environment for good governance to advance sustainable development.

In addition to SAIs, other important oversight bodies include ombudsman institutions, anti-corruption bodies and financial oversight institutions, such as financial intelligence units.

## Why Is It Important?

The SAI role is a unique one – while some SAIs have inputted into VNRs, their role in the following up of the VNR remains unclear. There is a key opportunity for SAIs to include regular audits, not just once; these subsequent audits should see how recommendations and findings in the VNR have been reflected and integrated into government actions.

<sup>92</sup> SDG Accountability Portal. Utilizing Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs).

<https://sdgaccountability.org/working-on-oversight-for-accountability/utilizing-supreme-audit-institutions/>

<sup>93</sup> SDG Accountability Portal. Utilizing Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs).

As mentioned, SAIs play a strong role in fighting corruption. Estimates show that

bribery, theft and tax evasions,  
and other illicit financial flows cost  
developing countries US\$1.26 trillion

per year.<sup>94</sup> As much as US\$132 billion is lost to corruption every year throughout the European Union's member states, according to the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs. According to the 2019 Transparency International

Transparency International  
Corruption Perceptions Index

a majority of countries are showing little to no improvement in tackling corruption.<sup>95</sup>

Acting as a governance bottleneck to development, resources lost to corruption could otherwise be used to ensure equal access to basic services like education, health, clean water and sanitation, with dignity and without having to pay bribes. Additional consequences include the corrosion of the rule of law, the erosion of trust in government institutions, and the undermining of governments' ability to serve public interests.

In the context of COVID-19, corrupt practices range from how 'prepare, respond and recover' strategies are implemented and fraud involving the procurement of medical supplies, to limiting access to public health data and resources based on states of emergency and discrimination or corruption in healthcare service delivery.

Therefore, institutions and bodies that are established to combat corruption, increase accountability and promote transparency, such as SAIs, are fundamental not just for the realization of SDG 16, but for all SDGs.

## Botswana: Integrating Anti-Corruption into National Development Plans and Strategies<sup>96</sup>

*The 2030 Agenda coincided with the preparation of Botswana's key national and subnational frameworks (Vision 2036, National Development Plan 11, District Development Plan 8 and Urban Development Plan 4). Building upon Botswana's first national vision (1996-2016), the Government of Botswana reaffirmed its commitment to the full-scale implementation of the 2030 Agenda by mainstreaming the SDGs into national policies, sectoral plans and strategies.*

*Vision 2036 is underpinned by four pillars: Sustainable Economic Development Pillar; Human and Social Development Pillar; Sustainable Economic Development Pillar; and Governance, Peace and Security Pillar.<sup>97</sup> The Governance, Peace and Security Pillar, and, in particular, transparency and accountability, are viewed as prerequisites for progressive governance and building trust among the public, public institutions, the private sector and civic institutions, in fulfillment of Vision 2036.*

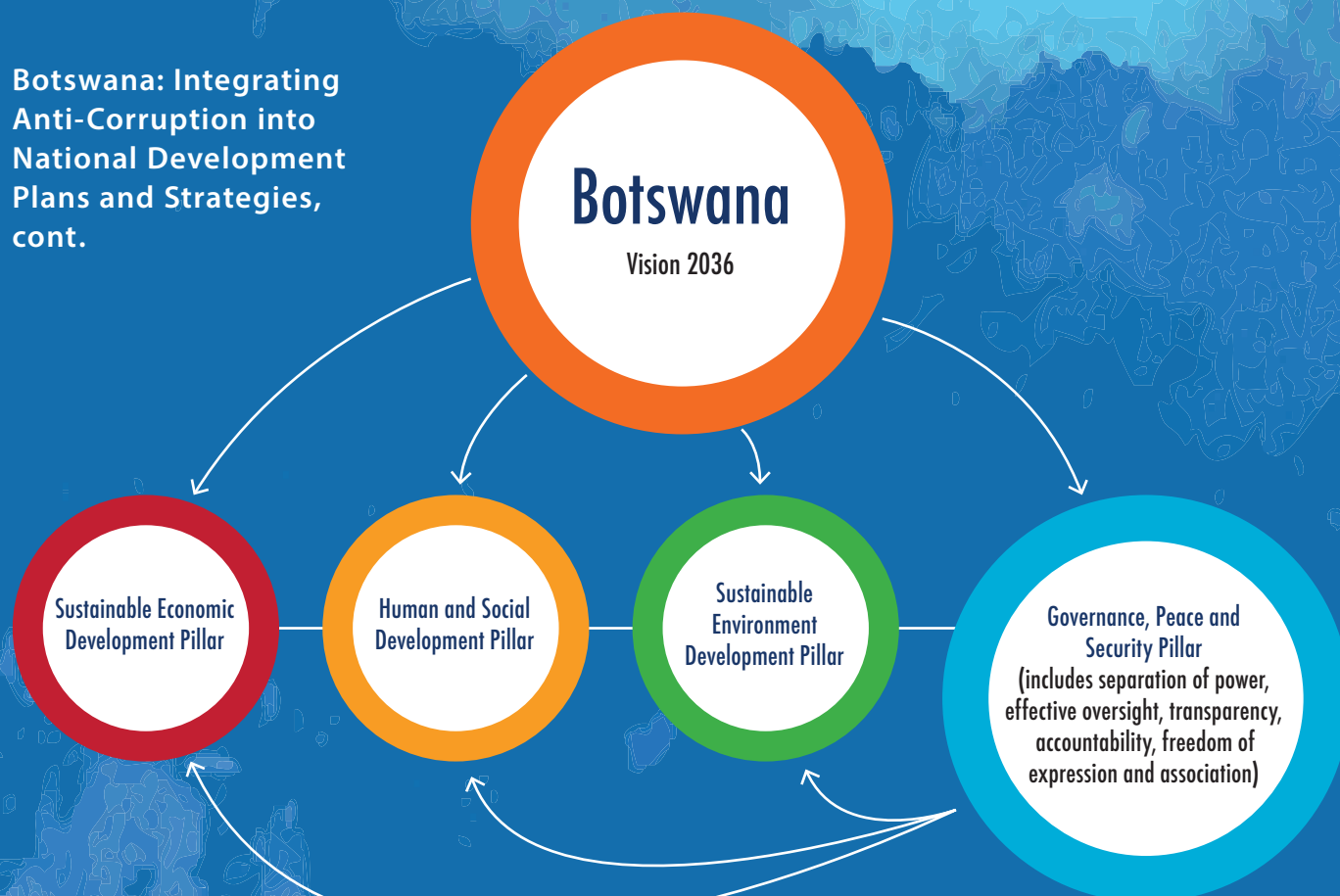
<sup>94</sup> UN Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>

<sup>95</sup> World Economic Forum (2019). *Corruption costs developing countries \$1.26 trillion every year – yet half of EMEA think it's acceptable*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/12/corruption-global-problem-statistics-cost/>

<sup>96</sup> This Case Study was provided by UNDP, Singapore.

<sup>97</sup> Botswana Vision 2036: Achieving Prosperity for All. Home page. <https://vision2036.org.bw/>

## Botswana: Integrating Anti-Corruption into National Development Plans and Strategies, cont.



Through audits and consistent with their mandates and priorities, SAIs can contribute to tracking and monitoring progress while also identifying opportunities for improvement. To this end, the active engagement of SAIs was explicitly recognized in the General Assembly's December 2014 resolution

**'Promoting and fostering the efficiency, accountability, effectiveness and transparency of public administration**

by strengthening supreme audit institutions'.<sup>98</sup> SAIs have the potential to go beyond their traditional oversight role and contribute evidence for more informed

policymaking in contributing to achieving the SDGs at the national level.

However, progress has been slow in measuring, monitoring and mainstreaming SDG 16 targets focused on effective and accountable institutions, corruption and transparency (16.4, 16.5, 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10).<sup>99</sup>

**This is largely due to four factors:**

- **Weak institutional capacity and political will** at the national level to implement anti-corruption targets of SDG 16;
- **Knowledge gaps** in terms of how to mainstream and integrate SDG 16 and anti-corruption targets

<sup>98</sup> UN General Assembly (2012). Res/66/209: Promoting the efficiency, accountability, effectiveness and transparency of public administration by strengthening supreme audit institutions. [https://www.intosai.org/fileadmin/downloads/documents/open\\_access/intosai\\_and\\_united\\_nations/66\\_209\\_2011/EN\\_un\\_resol\\_66\\_209.pdf](https://www.intosai.org/fileadmin/downloads/documents/open_access/intosai_and_united_nations/66_209_2011/EN_un_resol_66_209.pdf)

<sup>99</sup> UNDP. Anti-corruption (Webpage). <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democratic-governance-and-peacebuilding/responsive-and-accountable-institutions/anti-corruption/>



in national, sectoral and local development plans and processes;

- **Lack of methodologies and/or existing data;** and
- **Lack of effective national coordination and monitoring mechanisms that involve relevant stakeholders** (e.g., engagement of audit institutions, anti-corruption agencies, civil society, parliamentarians and others in the SDG-related coordination and monitoring processes).

As SDG plans are often the priority of finance and planning ministries, there tends to be little interaction with anti-corruption entities. In order to effectively integrate anti-corruption in the SDGs, national anti-corruption strategies should be a fundamental part of national sustainable development plans.<sup>100</sup> To this end, coordination between anti-corruption and development communities<sup>101</sup> is to be strengthened. Further, efforts should be made to dedicate more national resources to the prevention of corruption.<sup>102</sup>

### Oversight requires special frameworks, mechanisms and, often, highly technical knowledge

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Capacity development to further support representatives of SAIs and other oversight institutions is key to strengthening their role in delivering upon SDG 16 through VNR and post-VNR processes as linked to NDPs.

### How Can This Be Used?

Similarly to parliaments,

### Partners for Review analysis

www

noted increased reporting on SAIs in the 2019 VNRs, indicating their growing role in VNR processes and SDG implementation efforts.<sup>103</sup> A number of countries

described SAIs as a means of strengthening accountability of domestic SDG-related activities. In addition, auditing institutions were also mentioned in terms of assessing the SDG preparation, implementation and monitoring efforts.

Through VNR and post-VNR processes, SAIs directly contribute to implementation of the SDGs, and particularly of SDG 16, fostering more effective, inclusive and accountable government institutions.

<sup>100</sup> Relatedly, and as highlighted in the 2019 World Public Sector Report, UN DESA, "[several supreme audit institutions have conducted evaluations of anti-corruption strategies and instruments of public entities](#)".

<sup>101</sup> Within the anti-corruption community, this includes global anti-corruption actors, the Ministry of Justice and attorneys-general, anti-corruption agencies (i.e., audit institutions) and civil society working on anti-corruption. Within the development community, this includes budget and planning ministries, line ministries and civil society.

<sup>102</sup> UNDP. *Anti-corruption*. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democratic-governance-and-peacebuilding/responsive-and-accountable-institutions/anti-corruption/>

<sup>103</sup> P4R (2019). Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis, p. 5. <https://www.partners-for-review.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/P4R-Analysis-VNRs-2019.pdf>

## Chile: An Exercise in Exercising SAI Rights and Responsibilities, In-Country and In the Region <sup>104</sup>

While channels for engagement were originally limited, Chile's SAI, the Comptroller General's Office (CGR), was able to meaningfully participate in Chile's second VNR in 2019.<sup>105</sup> To this end, the CGR worked collaboratively across four parameters:

### 1. Assessing the government's readiness to implement, monitor and report on the SDGs

Between 2016 and 2019, the CGR carried out five audits to evaluate the government's preparedness. These audits focused on: institutionalization, strategy, coordination (intergovernmental and across stakeholders), monitoring, reporting and transparency, as well as on SDGs prioritized by the government (SDG 16 and SDG 7, along with SDG 5 and SDG 2.4).

Recommendations included improved interministerial coordination for national planning, with clearly defined responsibilities, organizational structure and information to feed into the VNR. They also focused on reducing implementation risks related to SDG 2.4, given a lack of evidence found in alignment, coordination and monitoring mechanisms for public policies related to this goal.

### 2. Auditing Government Programmes that Contribute to the SDGs

This included issuing guidelines and specific tools for auditee reports to consider how government programmes are aligned with, or contribute to, SDG implementation and compliance, framing assessments around SDG 16, and identifying the SDG(s) linked to that audit. To support this process, a virtual desktop was created for audited entities to access observations made and efforts to correct them. A compliance support system was also created by which the CGR works with auditees to improve internal processes.

### 3. Exemplifying Transparency and Accountability

The CGR voluntarily raised its standards in compliance to meet current, institutional transparency laws. It also created a transparency portal (which goes beyond legal requirements) where citizens are presented with details of the CGR's budget and how it was spent, including travel costs of officials and information about staffing (position, grade, salary, paid overtime).

### 4. Evaluating and Supporting SDG 16 Implementation

Led by CGR and UNDP Chile, the UNCAC Chile Anticorruption Alliance plays an important role in advancing SDG 16.<sup>106</sup> The Alliance, bringing together 28 institutions from the public, private and civil society sectors, works to implement UNCAC principles through four areas:

- a. Promotion of integrity: promoting codes of ethics in the public sector; articulating compliance measures for SMEs that supply the state; and an integrity programme for state companies;
- b. Training: trainings for the public sector and civil society with communication plans;
- c. Legislative initiatives: formulating regulatory reform proposals for UNCAC compliance; and
- d. Good practices: promoting compliance internally with UNCAC standards and rewarding public and private sector entities that have implemented related integrity initiatives.

<sup>104</sup> This case study draws from interviews with Chile's Comptroller General's Office.

<sup>105</sup> Initial requests to join the National Council for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda were sent, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 2016 for participation in Chile's 2017 VNR process.

<sup>106</sup> UNCAC Chile. Agenda Anticorrupción: Desafío y Seguimiento <http://www.alianzaanticorrupcion.cl/AnticorrupcionUNCAC/>

Despite challenges, progress has been made on global anti-corruption efforts over the past decade, thereby furthering SDG 16. This has been largely due to the nearly universal ratification of the UN Convention Against Corruption (187 states parties as of 6 February 2020) and the growing importance of governance and anticorruption in enhancing sustainable development by improving the capacity, efficiency and effectiveness of public institutions; strengthening coordination and monitoring mechanisms; and removing governance and corruption bottlenecks that impede progress in achieving development goals.

The implementation of the UNCAC as the only global, legally-binding anti-corruption instrument has provided an opportunity for countries to strengthen their institutional capacity to combat corruption and implement anti-corruption reforms, including, in certain contexts, as linked to VNRs and NDPs (examples to be highlighted in case studies). It covers five main areas: prevention; criminalization and law enforcement measures; international cooperation; asset recovery; and technical assistance and information exchange.

## South Korea: Citizen Participation in Strengthening Oversight<sup>107</sup>

*In South Korea, the Anti-corruption & Civil Right Commission (ACRC) established the E-Participation Portal ([www.epeople.go.kr](http://www.epeople.go.kr), available in 15 languages), a complaint hotline and whistle-blower mechanism through which citizens can report areas of suspected irregularities or corruption and can request close inspection. The Portal collects “reports on unjust handling of petitions by administrative agencies, complaints and particularly behaviors such as unjustly refusing receipt and handling of petitions on the grounds that they may be later pinpointed by audit, inspection or investigation.” It also receives “reports of corruption and fraud of public officials, including bribery, idleness, embezzlement and the misappropriation of public funds.” This mechanism has been contributing to the effective handling of public complaints and grievances, resulting the country's first rank in the E-Participation Index of the UN E-Government Survey 2020.*

## Key Resources:

- [Are Nations Prepared for Implementation of the 2030 Agenda?](#), INTOSAI Development Initiative (2020);
- [SDG Accountability Handbook](#), TAP Network (2019);
- [Supreme Audit Institutions and Good Governance](#), OECD (2016);
- [Partners for Review Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis](#), (2019);

- [Background Paper for the High-Level Session at the 18th International Anti-Corruption Conference \(IACC\) Anti-Corruption Contribution to Accelerate Progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), UNDP and UNODC (2018);
- [Auditing Sustainable Development Goals](#), INTOSAI Knowledge Sharing Committee.

**Interviews:** Silke Steiner, INTOSAI; Osvaldo Cristian Rudloff Pulgar, Comptroller General's Office, Chile; and Anga R. Timilsina, Global Lead, Anti-Corruption, UNDP.

<sup>107</sup> This Case Study comes directly from the [TAP Network's SDG Accountability Handbook](#). TAP Network (2019). SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society, p. 61. <https://sdgaccountability.org/sdg-accountability-handbook/>



# 4. LOCALIZING VNR FINDINGS THROUGH SUBNATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

## What Is It?

A foundational tenet of the 2030 Agenda, the promise to “leave no one behind”, highlights the importance of inclusion, engagement and impact from the ground up. As such, localizing the VNR through local level actors, structures and mechanisms presents an important opportunity, made even more evident as local institutions, actors and organizations are those most under threat, strained and critical to providing relief and a frontline response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Local and regional governments (LRGs), with strong, democratic and accountable institutions, are a precondition for achieving SDG 16. National governments themselves have stressed that they cannot tackle the 2030 Agenda alone and all SDGs have targets directly related to the responsibilities of local and regional governments. Localizing the VNR and, to that end, localizing SDG 16 require national, regional and local governments (multi-level collaborative governance) and a whole-of-society approach.

In addressing SDG 16 localization and the VNR, this chapter will look at the role and contribution of (LRGs) as well as the concept of SDG 16 localization more broadly, focusing on civil society leaders and adopting a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach from the community level up. Given SDG 16’s focus on effective institutions and inclusive decision-making, this chapter will also look at the mechanisms for strengthened intergovernmental coordination and integration as well as at other, more subject-specific SDG 16 targets and their advancement at subnational and local levels.<sup>108</sup>

Localizing VNR Findings through Subnational and Local Governments relates to: the specific roles and responsibilities of local and regional governments (LRGs) in a VNR process; how LRGs might support, take forward or feed into VNR processes, including through Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) or Voluntary State Reviews (VSRs); and how different levels of government may better collaborate for strengthened 2030 implementation, including as related to SDG 16 and as linked to NDPs, policies and strategies.<sup>109</sup> It should be noted that many LRGs are also acting on the SDGs independently from national government, through various policies, programming and citizen engagement.

Localizing SDG 16+ broadly speaks to contextualizing and grounding SDG 16 in local-level realities and structures, formal and informal. Focused on bottom-up engagement and prioritization, localization of SDG 16 is key to LNOB and is increasingly seen as critical to the Agenda’s overall success, though requiring more visibility and resources. Achieving 2030 Agenda commitments to peace, justice and inclusion depends on ownership, engagement and action by a range of actors, sectors and institutions at subnational levels and supporting locally led processes to advance SDG 16.

While perhaps differing in emphasis, the latter being more technical and the former more focused on the principles of inclusion and ownership, these two approaches are fundamentally interlinked and increasingly seen as one in the same, focused on local level realities, local leadership and continuous engagement across a host of actors at the local level.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>108</sup> As articulated in the *Towards the Localization of the SDGs* 2019 report by UCLG, “the fundamental contribution of local and regional governments lies in the daily task of ensuring access to quality public services for all, in building transparent and accountable local institutions, in making proactive measures to end violence and discriminatory policies, and to recover trust in public institutions”.

<sup>109</sup> Details on VLRs and VSRs can be found in this section’s case studies and through various resources, including the [online VLR Lab](#) and the annual [Local and Regional Governments Forum on the 2030 Agenda](#).

<sup>110</sup> Brookings Institution. Local Leadership on the Sustainable Development Goals (webpage). <https://www.brookings.edu/project/local-leadership-on-the-sustainable-development-goals/>

## Putting SDG16+ into practice

### 11 steps to promote peace, justice and inclusion



#### What is SDG16+?

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include SDG16, as well as a number of targets under other goals that are also critical for building peaceful, just and inclusive societies – particularly SDG5 on promoting gender equality and SDG10 on reducing

inequalities. The term 'SDG16+' is used to describe these commitments across the 2030 Agenda, and it provides a framework for comprehensive action on a range of peace-related issues.

For more see: [https://cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/peaceful\\_just\\_inclusive\\_targets\\_analysis\\_aug2016.pdf](https://cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/peaceful_just_inclusive_targets_analysis_aug2016.pdf)

#### Why this approach?

To achieve the 2030 Agenda commitments to peace, justice and inclusion depends on engagement, ownership and action on SDG16+ by a range of people and institutions at national and sub-national levels. There is no blue-print for this process, but – based on

Saferworld's experience of testing approaches with partners over several years – we have identified lessons on how to catalyse and support a locally-led process. These lessons are illustrated above.

For more see: <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/global-action-against-conflict/2030-agenda>

## Somaliland SDG 16+ Coalition: Localization Through a Whole-of-Society and Whole-of-Government Approach Led by Civil Society<sup>111</sup>

*"Our process was about the locals; it was about ownership; it brought many people together and their involvement was the key. It was about helping new plants grow in the soil that was already there, rather than bringing in new soil." Guleid Jama, Founder and Board Member, Human Rights Centre Somaliland*

*Through an extensive and consultative process, the Somaliland SDG 16+ Coalition has helped to support and drive SDG 16+ localization, generating buy-in across civil society and national and local government and using its 2019 baseline report to measure progress and maintain focus on reaching SDG 16+ targets.*

*While endorsing the 2030 Agenda and integrating the SDGs into its NDP, Somaliland has never presented a VNR largely due to its unrecognized status. Civil society decided to fill this gap and lead the process themselves, producing the 'Somaliland SDG16+ Civil Society Progress Report' in 2019.<sup>112</sup> Over two years (2017-2018), civil society carried out a detailed review of progress made in achieving SDG 16+ priority targets and related processes, holding workshops throughout Somaliland with 55 different CSOs representing women's groups, youth groups, those focusing on*

<sup>111</sup> This case study draws on interviews with the Somaliland SDG 16+ Coalition.

<sup>112</sup> Somaliland Civil Society SDG16+ Coalition (2019). Somaliland SDG16+ Progress Report. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24270Somaliland\\_SDG16\\_Progress\\_Report.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24270Somaliland_SDG16_Progress_Report.pdf)



## Somaliland SDG 16+ Coalition: Localization Through a Whole-of-Society and Whole-of-Government Approach Led by Civil Society, cont.

minority rights, disability groups and others. Efforts to identify and mobilize champions within the government were also prioritized, focusing on the Office of the Chief Justice of Somaliland, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of National Planning and Development – all critical for SDG 16+ implementation.

By the end of 2018, the Chief Justice, the Justice Minister, officials from the Ministry of Planning and the Attorney General's Office had made public statements about SDG 16+ or included it in their work plans.

The next step was to **translate SDG 16+ commitments into action**, using the 2019 baseline report to track and incentivize progress.<sup>113</sup> Reflective of the **report's recommendations**,<sup>114</sup> the following actions have been taken:

- The Ministry of Justice requested that all of its staff receive training on SDG 16+ and requested that copies of the 2019 report be sent to each civil servant within the ministry.
- The Ministry of Planning, with support from the Coalition, organized the first Somaliland SDG Summit. To take place yearly, a national SDG progress report is to be produced.<sup>115</sup>
- A National Technical Committee on Eradicating Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) led by the Ministry of Endowment and Regional Affairs was established.
- A National FGM policy was drafted in close collaboration with the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family (submitted to Cabinet for approval).
- Advocacy efforts to provide the Somaliland NSO with more technical and financial support.

The Somaliland SDG 16+ Coalition has also helped localize the 'Peace in Our Cities' campaign, working with the Mayor of Hargeisa to endorse the campaign and implement 16.1.<sup>116</sup> The Coalition has also reached out to other cities, Borama and Las Anod, to join and share in lessons learned.

**Take-Aways and Recommendations:** Civil society groups used the process of developing and following up on the 2019 baseline report to promote civil society inclusion in SDG 16+ efforts nationally and locally, with civil society evidence used with official data. The 2019 report has helped to ensure that commitments made to implementing SDG 16+ are kept and remain localized, that shortcomings are highlighted and that there is a way to measure future progress.

**"The main take-away is not to sit back and wait for the government to involve you in the process, but, as civil society, to take the extra step to lead and work with all stakeholders, including the government, to localize SDG 16+ and implement its commitments."**

**Abdijalil Tahir, Somaliland SDG 16+ Coalition**

113 Saferworld (2018). (Rep.) Building a peaceful, just and inclusive Somaliland: SDG16+ priorities for action.

<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1173-building-a-peaceful-just-and-inclusive-somaliland-sdg16-priorities-for-action>

114 Somaliland Civil Society SDG16+ Coalition (2019). Somaliland SDG16+ Progress Report, p. 27.

115 The Ministry is working on the 2020 Progress Report and the SDG16+ Coalition is working on an evaluation of progress made by all stakeholders against the 2019 report. Civil Society reports are to be produced every two years.

116 +Peace. Peace in our cities: Mobilizing to halve urban violence by 2030 (webpage). <https://pluspeace.org/peace-in-our-cities>



## Kyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan Measuring Local Progress on Access to Information (SDG 16.10.2) in Pakistan<sup>117</sup>

*The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan is another example in championing a local initiative in monitoring and reporting progress on SDG Indicator 16.10.2 on Public Access to Information (ATI), generating evidence on how the right to information could drag attention to corruption and exposed potholes in the system. Using a methodology developed together by local governments and civil society, the province's Right to Information Commission concluded in its assessment that the right to information had started to reverse the long-standing culture of secrecy in Pakistan, as well as forging a new relationship between government and the people based on trust-building through transparency and citizen engagement in public decision-making. This successful local initiative has inspired another province, the Punjab Province, to carry out the same voluntary monitoring and reporting on its progress on SDG Indicator 16.10.2, which could be well linked to the wider transparency and anti-corruption issues.*

As encapsulated by Local 2030

**"Localizing development is then a process to empower all local stakeholders, aimed at making development more responsive"** 

and therefore, relevant to local needs and aspirations. Development goals can be reached only if local actors fully participate, not only in the implementation, but also in the agenda-setting and monitoring."<sup>118</sup>

Finally, local authorities, while varying by context,

**include elected and appointed officials, civil servants** 

and service providers.<sup>119</sup> Elected officials include mayors, local councils, committees and boards. These officials manage and provide oversight for local development priorities. For example, mayors hold civil servants accountable and can help ensure that budgets are matched to community priorities (SDG targets 16.6, 16.7). Officials appointed by elected officials typically deliver on priorities defined by the current government. Actors and institutions at the local and regional

levels play a critical, 'frontline' role in emergencies and situations of insecurity, as we have seen with COVID-19. This is particularly the case when national structures are weak and a lack of trust in national government predominates.

### Why Is It important?

As highlighted by Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator,<sup>120</sup>

**"Local governments are critical in turning Agenda 2030 from a global vision into a local reality"** 

If SDG 16 is to be achieved, it is critical to meaningfully and coherently incorporate LRGs and other local non-state actors into VNR and post-VNR processes, aligning implementation at all levels of government and doing so through a LNOB lens.

The relevance of LRGs, as well as of local civil society and other non-state actors to SDG 16 implementation through VNR and post-VNR processes, is evident by their inherent functions as representatives of local communities. From the provision of public goods and the building of transparent and inclusive local institutions, to violence prevention and anti-discriminatory policies,

<sup>117</sup> This Case Study comes directly from the [UNESCO news briefing](#).

<sup>118</sup> Local 2030. Discover tools (webpage): *What is Localization*. <https://www.local2030.org/discover-tools>

<sup>119</sup> TAP Network (2019). SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society, p. 29.

<sup>120</sup> Steiner, A. (2017). Localizing the Implementation of the SDGs. UNDP. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/speeches/2017/localizing-the-implementation-of-the-sustainable-development-goals.html>

addressing inequalities in access to justice, protecting public access to information and maintaining civic space, local institutions and actors are central to translating national policies into local action in delivering SDG 16 and rebuilding trust between communities and authorities. To this end and as highlighted by United Cities and Local Governments,

**"a number of LRGs have explored participatory processes, multi-stakeholder partnerships and Open Government Policies"**

to improve satisfaction with – and trust in – public administration".<sup>121</sup>

However, while local authorities might be closest to communities in proximity, their ability to make decisions about local laws, resources and services that advance the SDGs often depends on a country's degree of

decentralization and the effectiveness of intergovernmental financial transfers. Furthermore, data suggests that<sup>122</sup>

**LRGs are key in terms of SDG financing and investment**



For example, from a sample of 18 of the 47 countries reporting in 2019, LRGs accounted for 16.5 percent of total global public spending and 17.5 percent of total global public revenue (with significant ranges within both figures) on average. Effective coordination among levels of government is fundamental for policy coherence and in assessing costs as related to NDPs at various levels.

**While there was a slight increase in localization efforts since 2018 as highlighted in a review of 2019 VNRs,**



room for improvement remains.<sup>123</sup> Beyond limits noted previously,

## Local Governance, Participatory Budgeting and Leaving No One or No Place Behind

Participatory budgeting is a decision-making process or mechanism by which citizens and community members determine how part of the public budget is spent. As such, and as argued by Yves Cabannes, participatory budgeting is a reflection of SDG 16.6 and SDG 16.7. Through participatory budgeting, citizens can prioritize spending on public resources and influence local policy, proving an innovative and powerful tool for inclusive and accountable governance. While its impact can range from symbolic gestures to structural change in local governance systems, participatory budgeting processes can make a difference in helping to ensure that no person and no place is left behind, from low-income housing areas in Paris, France and Penang, Indonesia to rural districts outside of municipal boundaries, as in Chengdu, China and Cuenca, Ecuador.

Starting with Brazil in 1989, more than 1,500 participatory budgets have been implemented globally, with growing implication for national development planning as governments increasingly link national and local/regional development processes. In Indonesia, for example, where the SDGs are integrated in national and subnational development planning, the "Village Law", enacted in 2014, has opened up the possibility for participatory budgeting in the country's 74,000+ villages.

The law guarantees that the central government provide a specific amount of funding to villages so that they can finance their own development based on local need and priorities.

121 United Cities & Local Governments (2019). Towards the Localization of the SDGs. Local Report to the 2019 HLPF, p. 9. [https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/towards\\_the\\_localization\\_of\\_the\\_sdgs\\_0.pdf](https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/towards_the_localization_of_the_sdgs_0.pdf)

122 United Cities & Local Governments (2019). Towards the Localization of the SDGs. Local Report to the 2019 HLPF, p. 101.

123 P4R (2019). Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis, p. 19. <https://www.partners-for-review.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/P4R-Analysis-VNRs-2019.pdf>

local authorities will have varying levels of

## local authorities will have varying levels of legal authority

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that may preclude them from working on certain SDG 16 issues (in terms of implementation, monitoring and reporting).<sup>124</sup> In addition, the challenges around resources, capacity and providing an enabling environment are significant. The need to strengthen capacity of local-level institutions as well as the need to address a decentralized approach in public sector are necessary to benefit from the positive differences existing at local levels.

### How Can This It Be Used?

Many of the approaches below are relevant to SDG 16 as well as to other SDGs in terms of strengthened implementation following from, or relating to, a VNR.

Some national SDG Committees or Working Groups include LRGs and other local actors in preparing for a VNR. Such communication and collaboration can be continued, post-VNR, as related to national development plans and priorities, sectoral strategies or local planning, for example. To this point, according to the <sup>125</sup>

## 2019 Localizing the

### SDG Report

www

(Note that these figures are for all SDGs, not just SDG 16.) LRG participation in reporting and follow-up mechanisms is essential to expand their involvement in the localization process and to accelerate implementation.

In addition, a number of LRGs are integrating the SDGs into local plans and strategies, involving local stakeholders in institutional and coordination mechanisms, awareness-raising activities, local data collection and monitoring. Reflective of NDPs or strategies, rapid

integrated assessments may help in developing local plans and strategies.<sup>126</sup> To this end, Guatemala has developed a methodological guide for helping municipalities formulate their local development plans as aligned with the NDP.

Relatedly, the OECD has developed a

## the SDG targets and indicators

### in regions and cities, including

www

### for SDG16 framework to localize

In order to strengthen local-level reporting and enhanced localization efforts, LRGs need to be empowered to ensure more effective monitoring practices at subnational levels.<sup>127</sup> This includes strengthening SDG indicators and SDG monitoring and reporting systems at the local level by filling identified knowledge gaps to influence the design of better-informed policies. On the flip side, national governments are increasingly encouraged to integrate localization into NDPs, as seen in the VNR process.

42  
percent

of countries reporting in 2019  
**consulted LRGs** in the VNR  
preparation process

33  
percent

were involved in  
**national coordination**  
mechanisms

<sup>124</sup> Global Alliance (2019). *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion*, p. 62.

<https://www.sdg16hub.org/content/global-alliance-enabling-implementation-2030-agenda-through-sdg-16-anchoring-peace-justice>

<sup>125</sup> P4R (2019). Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis, p. 9.

<sup>126</sup> Given that there are usually local government planning processes in place that link to NDPs (with assessments), it can often be a matter of using existent methodologies and policies and examining how they align with SDGs, SDG targets and the integrated nature of the SDGs.

<sup>127</sup> OECD (2019). A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals, p. 4. <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/cities/SDGs-policy-highlights.pdf>



VNR findings can also be directly applied to local and regional governance structures, including through a<sup>128</sup>

## a transference of authority and decision-making

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For example, Benin is reorganizing its governance structures to make sure decisions are taken and authorities are held accountable at the local level (SDG 16.6). Eight ministries (out of 22) have developed decentralization

and deconcentrating plans to transfer competences to communities. Further, a Local Governance Index has been designed to annually assess the quality of governance in Benin's 77 municipalities. For example, local and regional authorities are obliged to organize 'accountability sessions' in every community. In 2020, Benin presented its third VNR.

An increasing number of cities and LRGs are also conducting their own Voluntary Local or State Reviews (VLR or VSR) modeled on the VNR.

### Oaxaca: Voluntary State Review, Civil Society Inclusion and Rebuilding Trust<sup>129</sup>

*Oaxaca, one of Mexico's 32 federal states, presented its first **Voluntary State Review (VSR)** at the 2020 UN General Assembly, reporting on state activities related to 2030 Agenda implementation.<sup>130</sup> In revising its State Development Plan (2016-2022) to align with Mexico's National Development Plan (2019-2024), the Government of Oaxaca sought to create an integrated, multi-level strategy that relates to national and regional planning in achieving the SDGs.<sup>131</sup> The State Plan is to have three local indicators specific to SDG 16 for future reporting. Further, in linking governance levels, Oaxaca prepared, in collaboration with GIZ, a guide for its municipalities to align local plans with the SDGs. In addition, the state government selected 10 local governments to work closely with GIZ to develop legal and planning tools for reaching the SDGs through their sustainable development plans guidelines.*

*Recognizing a historical lack of trust in multi-stakeholder activities, the Government of Oaxaca embraced the 2030 Agenda and prioritized multi-stakeholder engagement, inclusion and transparency in developing its VSR and next steps. The VSR's principle operating body is the State Council for the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda, charged with integrating the SDGs into state policy and monitoring implementation with office or department attribution. In terms of engagement, the State Council has three Working Committees that include civil society, academia and government institutions, with civil society acting as chair. These Committees feed into the VSR and cover social inclusion (where SDG 16 lies), economic growth and environment sustainability. In addition, civil society also takes part in the Council's 'ordinary sessions'.*

*In furthering inclusion, the VSR has been translated into native languages, with the purpose of being socialized among various groups through partners, including different actors from the governor's cabinet as well as state TV and radio. In strengthening citizen awareness and transparency, Oaxaca also publishes online how public resources are spent and who the beneficiaries of social programs are.<sup>132</sup>*

**Take-aways and Recommendations:** *The principal recommendation is to include civil society and other actors in drafting and designing the VSR, as well as implementation through national and local policy – for example, through multi-stakeholder partnerships and participatory budgeting. Civil society may be better equipped to understand people's needs at the local level, particularly the most vulnerable, and therefore better positioned to identify actions to be prioritized. Furthermore, VSRs should be strengthened and promoted at HLPF, given the importance of localization and subnational action in realizing the 2030 Agenda. Finally, VSR-generated data should be considered for the VNR (accompanied by additional standardization efforts) to better track SDG progress at local levels.*

128 OECD (2019). A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals, p. 4.

129 This case study draws from interviews with the Government of Oaxaca, Mexico.

130 Government of Oaxaca (2019). Voluntary Subnational Report. <https://www.iges.or.jp/en/vlr/oaxaca>

131 A 2018 change in Mexico's national government provided Oaxaca with the opportunity to re-evaluate, re-structure and re-strategize its state development plan to be more aligned with Mexico's revised NDP and the SDGs.

132 Government of Oaxaca (2019). Voluntary Subnational Report. <https://www.iges.or.jp/en/vlr/oaxaca>

Finally, other initiatives that work on raising the level of ambition and scaling local action on SDG 16+, such as the

Peace in Our Cities Campaign



<sup>133</sup> (focused on SDG 16.1), are working directly with mayors, city leaders and local peacebuilding organizations to halve urban violence levels by 2030 and link these efforts, in certain contexts, to VLRs and/or national development priorities.

## New York City and the Voluntary Local Review<sup>134</sup>

*New York City created the concept of the Voluntary Local Review in 2018 and has submitted two Voluntary Local Reviews (2018 and 2019). Modeled after the VNR, the VLR is an opportunity to reflect on a city's successes, areas for improvement and how to best address challenges, including as related to SDG 16. For New York City, producing a VLR strengthened intergovernmental coordination at the local level for SDG 16 and all SDGs. Lessons learned from the 2018 VLR were incorporated into the OneNYC strategy meetings that set the policy priorities for NYC every four years. The OneNYC 2050 strategy now includes a commitment to submit a VLR to the UN every year.*<sup>135</sup>

*The VLR also allowed New York City to highlight partnerships that strengthen the implementation of SDG 16. For example, the Mayor's Office to Prevent Gun Violence (16.1) serves as a coordinating agency, linking City initiatives, community-based nonprofit organizations and everyday New Yorkers to partner in creating healthy, vibrant communities and addressing the causes and traumas of gun violence in New York City. In addressing issues related to corruption (16.4), the Department of Investigations within law enforcement was consulted. In unpacking links to SDG 16.3 and SDG 5.2, 2019 site visits informing the NYC VLR included a tour of the Manhattan Family Justice Center hosted by the NYC Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence. These engagements were critical to the VLR, which is a process of engagement as much as it is a product.*

*At the SDGs Summit in September 2019, New York and 22 other cities signed the Voluntary Local Review Declaration, highlighting local governments' commitment to the SDGs and to producing VLRs. Further, at the 2020 HLPF, NYC's Commissioner for International Affairs highlighted that VLRs will be increasingly critical to the COVID-19 recovery process.*<sup>136</sup>

<sup>133</sup> +Peace. Peace in our cities: Mobilizing to halve urban violence by 2030 (webpage). <https://pluspeace.org/peace-in-our-cities> The Peace in Our Cities initiative seeks to galvanize a movement of people, mayors and city governments to halve urban violence by 2030 by amplifying the scale of urban violence and the promise of evidence-based solutions to save lives and heal communities; accompanying city leaders, community and civil society partners through peer exchanges to realize ambitious targets for violence reduction; and advancing evidence-based policy solutions and peacebuilding approaches to reducing violence in urban contexts. It is facilitated by +Peace, Impact: Peace, and the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just & Inclusive Societies.

<sup>134</sup> This case study draws from interviews with a former member of the New York City Mayor's Office for International Affairs who created the concept of the VLR and oversaw the process for New York City.

<sup>135</sup> One NYC 2050 (webpage). <http://onenyc.cityofnewyork.us/>

<sup>136</sup> NYC Mayor's Office for International Relations. Voluntary Local Review Declaration: NYC and World Cities Unite to Join Voluntary Local Review Declaration. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/international/programs/voluntary-local-review-declaration.page>



## Resources:

- [The contribution of participatory budgeting to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals: Lessons for Policy in Commonwealth Countries](#), Yves Cabannes, University College London (2019);
- [Reporting for the Future: Final Report Ready for Review](#), Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (2019);
- [Towards the Localization of the SDGs: Local and Regional Governments' Report to the 2019 HLPE](#), United Cities and Local Governments, 2019;
- [A Time to Invest](#), Saferworld (2019);
- [What is Localization](#), Local 2030 site;
- [Learning Module 1: Localizing the SDGs/Introduction, The Trainers Guide](#), Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UN Habitat, UCLG, Diputació Barcelona, and UNDP, 2017.

**Interviews:** Jose Cristian Morales Marquez, Oaxaca Municipality, Mexico; Yves Cabannes, University of London; Alexandra Hiniker, formerly with the NYC Mayor's Office, now with Carnegie Mellon University; Ismail Farjar, Somaliland SDG 16+ Coalition; Peter Van Sluijs, Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding; Bojan Francuz, Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies.

# 5. ENSURING MEANINGFUL CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT AND A 'LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND' APPROACH

## What Is It?

Meaningful and systematic civil society inclusion in VNR and post-VNR processes, as linked to national planning, policies and frameworks, is critical to realizing SDG 16 at all levels and the larger 2030 Agenda, and to manifesting a LNOB approach.<sup>137</sup> However, from grassroots to global, civil society organizations are diverse in their missions, mandates and level at which they primarily operate. While different tracks and mechanisms exist by which civil society can engage, inclusion often takes the form of consultation, dialogue and/or partnership (depending on the degree and quality of engagement). This is true for VNR development and validation, as well as monitoring and post-VNR implementation.

In terms of VNR preparation and through consultations, civil society positions may be included in a country's VNR under specific SDGs listings, as was the case for

### Finland's 2020 VNR

In addition, states can also adopt an 'open drafting process' where parts of the official VNR can be delegated to various stakeholders to write without government editing.<sup>138</sup>

Importantly, consultations held in preparation for the VNR, including through national SDG Committees or Working Groups, can also be used as an

### entry point for continued engagement

and dialogue following formal VNR presentation.<sup>139</sup> This includes when VNR and human rights reporting processes are connected. Indeed, if civil society or marginalized groups are engaged throughout VNR preparation and follow-up, as well as human rights reporting cycles, accountability towards implementation may be strengthened. Further, and in ensuring meaningful civil society inclusion in post-VNR processes, points of entry through related multistakeholder dialogue processes – such as the

### International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS)

– offer valuable opportunities to both link the VNR to national development planning, sector strategies and implementation and to enhance coordination among government, civil society and other stakeholders.<sup>140</sup>

Civil society engagement can also take the form of 'Spotlight Reports' and related follow-up.<sup>141</sup> Spotlight Reports, as generated by civil society and, at times, in partnership with NHRIs, academia and other stakeholders, help to ensure an independent and robust assessment of progress. They can challenge, complement or question member state reports, promote government accountability, provide a global platform for local civil society voices and set the stage for follow-up action,

<sup>137</sup> To this end, the [Ulaanbaatar Declaration on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies](#) calls for strengthening civil society involvement in realizing the SDGs, particularly at the grassroots and local levels.

<sup>138</sup> Publications of the Prime Minister's Office (2020). Voluntary National Review 2020 Finland: Report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. [http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162268/VNK\\_2020\\_8\\_Voluntary\\_National\\_Review\\_Finland.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y](http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162268/VNK_2020_8_Voluntary_National_Review_Finland.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y)

<sup>139</sup> Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) (2019). Reporting for the Future: Final Report Ready for Review 2019. [https://www.cspps.org/files/2020-02/R4R%20Official%20ENG%20FV\\_0.pdf](https://www.cspps.org/files/2020-02/R4R%20Official%20ENG%20FV_0.pdf)

<sup>140</sup> International Dialogue on Peacebuilding & Statebuilding IDPS. Home Page. <https://www.pbsbdialogue.org/en/> IDPS is a tripartite forum for political dialogue that brings together countries affected by conflict and fragility, development actors/donors active in the FCV-domain, and civil society (coordinated through the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding).

<sup>141</sup> TAP Network 2030. Share your SDG16 "Spotlight" Reports (webpage). <https://tapnetwork2030.org/sdg16reporting/>



often with or alongside government partners.<sup>142</sup> They are particularly important in contexts where civil society would otherwise have little or no opportunity to engage in VNR processes. Spotlight reports can be included as a supplementary addendum to a country's official VNR or can be presented separately through HLPF events and side-events.

According to a

### 2020 study by the TAP Network and GIZ, SDG 16 reporting generally differs between VNRs and Spotlight Reports

<sup>143</sup> While Spotlight Reports provided more in-depth reporting on SDG 16 and its targets, this could be because they often focus specifically on SDG 16 (as opposed to SDG 16 within a cluster of SDGs). VNRs, however, gave more detail on specific mainstreaming efforts, including legislative measures, adopted policies and institutional structures. Strategic approaches to achieving SDG 16 and its interlinkages across the SDGs, was limited in both.

### Why Is It Important?

As highlighted in the

### 2030 Agenda's preamble

the scale and ambition of the agenda are such that they can be achieved only through partners and partnerships, with civil society being key among them.<sup>144</sup> The

### 2019 Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG 16+

calling for amplified commitments and partnerships for accelerated action, reinforces the importance of this engagement.<sup>145</sup>

Meaningful and diverse civil society participation in VNR and post-VNR processes not only reflects inclusive and effective governance and decision-making, but also helps to ensure that SDG 16-related provisions within a VNR are taken forward. The degree and quality of inclusion in VNR and post-VNR processes matter. They should not be tokenistic, but rather reflective of a true multi-stakeholder process, embedded in human rights. Further, leveraging and empowering civil society and their proximity to local communities and grassroots groups further bolsters government responsiveness to various segments of society, ensuring that a greater diversity of voices is heard in keeping with a LNOB approach.<sup>146</sup>

### LNOB is core to the 2030 Agenda and must be the starting point for all strategies, policies, funding and implementation

While most countries acknowledge LNOB and its importance, few indicate adequate strategies to implement it. As specific to indigenous groups and as highlighted by the

### 2019 Indigenous People's Major Group Statement on SDG 16

"While many of the VNRs acknowledge 'marginalized groups' as those left behind, most States do not provide mechanisms for their meaningful participation. There are also no specific plans, targets and budgets to address the specific condition of indigenous peoples." The need to urgently address this gap has only been heightened by the ongoing pandemic.<sup>147</sup>

142 Numerous resources provide guidance in producing CSO reports, including the [TAP Network](#) and [Action for Sustainable Development](#).

143 Countries selected for this study had to have both a VNR and Spotlight report prepared for the 2019 HLPF. GIZ and TAP Network 2030 (2019). SDG16 in VNRs and Spotlight Reports, p. 14.

[https://tapnetwork2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/GIZ\\_TAP\\_2020\\_SDG-16-in-VNRs-and-Spotlight-Reports\\_Final-Version.pdf](https://tapnetwork2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/GIZ_TAP_2020_SDG-16-in-VNRs-and-Spotlight-Reports_Final-Version.pdf)

144 United Nations (2015). Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, preamble.

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication>

145 TAP Network 2030 & Partners (2019). Amplified Commitments and Partnerships for Accelerated Action: Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG 16+. <https://tapnetwork2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Rome-Civil-Society-Declaration-on-SDG16-FINAL.pdf>

146 TAP Network 2030 & Partners (2019). Amplified Commitments and Partnerships for Accelerated Action: Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG 16+.

147 Indigenous Peoples Major Group for Sustainable Development (2020). Document. APFSD2020: Agenda 3 STATEMENT OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONSTITUENCY ON THE SESSION: 'Linking National, Regional, and Global Dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'.

## Civil society plays a key role in identifying who is left behind



as well as in filling data gaps, providing relevant programming, and advocating for groups not otherwise seen or heard.<sup>148, 149, 150</sup>

Whether in delivering basic services to vulnerable populations, maintaining focus on cohesion and peace in times of crisis, as resources run scarce and misinformation runs rampant, or in tracking government procurement during a pandemic when opportunities for corruption are high, the role of civil society in ensuring a more just, equitable and safe world, through the VNRs and otherwise, is critical.

### How Can This Be Used?

Civil society engagement can take many shapes and forms, including representation in national SDG councils

and committees, CSO-specific platforms, consultations, hearings, workshops, forums and national dialogues, including through online channels and social media-based tools. In addition, civil society can contribute to SDG 16 data collection and monitoring (see chapter 10 for more on data).

One such example was the way in which civil society in Indonesia, Mongolia, Pakistan and South Africa worked with Information Commissions and UNESCO in the preparation of the 2019 VNRs with regards to SDG 16.10.2.

## The Open Government Partnership



is another example where government and civil society work together to create ambitious action plans and use these as a basis to promote strong accountability between member governments and citizens.<sup>151</sup>

### SDGs Kenya Forum: A Lesson in Awareness Raising, Stakeholder Engagement and Strategic Adaptation<sup>152</sup>

*The Government of Kenya recognizes that stakeholders' engagement and public participation are integral elements in developing, designing and implementing policies and development strategies that benefit all Kenyans and have included diverse stakeholders to advocate, implement and report on the sustainable development agenda through the Inter-Agency Technical Working Group (IATWG) on the SDGs. The IATWG comprises all key umbrella institution representatives in the country. CSO engagement and SDGs coordination within IATWG is spearheaded by the Kenya SDGs Forum, which is the co-convener together with KEPSA and the State Department for Planning's SDGs Coordination Directorate of the Group.*

*As the actor responsible for mobilizing, gathering and organizing all civil society input, the SDGs Kenya Forum is critical to supporting the Government of Kenya's whole-of-society VNR approach. Input provided by the Forum is integrated into the final VNR and separately annexed to ensure that CSO voices are clearly represented. (Kenya first presented in 2017, and has now again in 2020.) In addition to its VNR civil-society-convening role, the SDGs Kenya*

<https://www.indigenouspeoples-sdg.org/index.php/english/all-resources/ipmg-position-papers-and-publications/ipmg-statements-and-interventions>

148 OECD (2018). Development Cooperation Report 2019. Chapter 6: Putting the last first? Civil society's role in leaving no one behind.

<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/dcr-2018-11-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/dcr-2018-11-en>

149 According to the [fourth edition \(2019\) of the Canadian Council for International Council's independent VNR assessment](#), data to leave no one behind remains a challenge, particularly as disaggregated by gender, age and disability. In 2019, all countries except one provided information on efforts related to at least one vulnerable group compared to 89 percent in 2018 and 73 percent in 2017. Yet, the extent to which leaving no one behind efforts matched with policy or programmatic changes is unclear.

150 For more on Leaving No One Behind and the VNRs, please see [UN DESA's Community for Development Policy](#).

151 [Open Government Partnership](#)

152 This case study draws from interviews with the SDGs Kenya Forum.

## SDGs Kenya Forum: A Lesson in Awareness Raising, Stakeholder Engagement and Strategic Adaptation, cont.

*Forum's also organizes national and multi-stakeholder biennial reports for local consumption, designed to continuously track Kenya's SDG progress. The first of these was produced in 2019 led by the National Treasury and State Planning-SDGs Unit.*

*Both the VNR and the biennial reports revealed information gaps among civil society organizations as related to SDG 16, despite its relevance to their work. In response, the Forum began to organize CSOs through 'Goal Groups' aligned to SDG targets and indicators. These groups provided a more structured and effective means of engagement for CSOs either working on SDG 16 or interested in so doing.*

*Under the aegis of the SDGs Forum, ARTICLE 19, as SDG 16 lead, then held three workshops for government, media and civil society working within the scope of SDG 16 targets. This was instrumental in bridging stakeholder gaps, leveraging sector experience and expertise and aligning organizational mandates for better monitoring and accelerating action.*

*Owing to a diversified stakeholder base, this new SDG 16 Goal Group was able to further strategize on the structure of engagement of state (through the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management within the Ministry of Interior) and non-state actors working on SDG 16. This resulted in the formation of four working groups: Violence and Conflict Prevention, Gender-Based Violence and Non-Discrimination, Rights and Freedoms, and Corruption and Illicit Financial Flows.*

*Notwithstanding the challenges of a new convening strategy amid the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 VNR civil society engagement saw a significant increase in SDG 16 inputs from more than 17 organizations, with even more engagement during the validation process. This was significantly higher than the 2017 VNR process or the biennial progress report engagement.*

**Take-Aways and Recommendations:** *VNR recommendations need proper financing and budget allocations. Most fall outside of Kenya's budget and are therefore not acted upon. Others fall outside endorsed laws and thus bottleneck intervention. Reporting guidelines should ask countries to articulate post-VNR processes at country level, including as linked to human rights mechanisms, noting challenges and measures taken to scale best practices, and providing lessons learned for improved implementation.*

Yet, there are often issues of trust among governments, civil society, the private sector and the wider public. To this end, it is essential that government and authorities provide meaningful, participatory and open channels for dialogue and engagement on SDG 16+ implementation.

Identifying SDG champions at  
national, subnational and  
local levels



is key to building trust and promoting civil society engagement and multi-stakeholder partnerships.<sup>153</sup>

153 Global Alliance (2019). *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion*, p. 66.  
<https://www.sdg16hub.org/content/global-alliance-enabling-implementation-2030-agenda-through-sdg-16-anchoring-peace-justice>

In strengthening civil society engagement in SDG 16 VNR and post-VNR processes,<sup>154</sup>

there are a few specific

approaches and good

practices to highlight

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Where possible, follow-up should be tied to national development plans, action plans, dialogues and/or sector strategies, with a focus on aligning SDG 16-related government programmes and projects with those implemented by civil society. This can help mainstream implementation, consolidate the multi-stakeholder processes often behind such policies and programming, and better measure progress. The below provides a listing of good practices in terms of civil society engagement in both VNR and post-VNR processes.<sup>155</sup>

### **Awareness-Raising, Capacity-Building and Mobilization within Civil Society**

- Engage, organize and mobilize as early as possible, sharing best practices among civil society organizations in engaging with state actors.
- [Build capacity](#) of civil society to improve and increase participation, from mapping national and local contexts to assessing progress across sectors and identifying civil society comparative advantage in supporting implementation as a diverse sector.<sup>156</sup>

### **Plug into Existing Processes with Government and Other Stakeholders, including NDPs, National Strategies and National Action Plans**

- Use VNR consultations and workshops as a strategic entry point for continuous dialogue and coordination around next steps taken through NDPs, strategies, public policy, programming and budgeting processes.

- Maximize other already open and functioning dialogue channels for VNR follow-up on SDG 16 and related recommendations through coordinated action, policies and strategies.

### **Maintain Communication Lines, Strategize and Publicize**

- Strengthen communication feedback loops and network-building among civil society and others for a coordinated approach. This will help drive alignment with SDG 16 and related targets for strategic impact, while broadening the pool of stakeholders through a network approach.
- Raise awareness of successful initiatives and best practices among government institutions and include local/national donor delegations as stakeholders in the post-VNR process.
- Disseminate the VNR at national and subnational levels, ideally in local/national languages.
- Issue a press release, public statement or hold a press conference about your country's VNR and how to take it forward.
- Ensure transparency over the VNR and how it works, proactively issuing [clear information](#) on timelines, procedures and objectives, as well as information on the officials and institutions involved and where to go with questions.<sup>157</sup> Information should be available in a manner appropriate for local conditions and based on the needs of those discriminated against.
- Hold post-VNR workshops to continue dialogue processes, if possible. (More of post-VNR, public awareness-raising processes and workshops can be found in chapter 8.)

### **Data**

- Focus on addressing data collection and disaggregation, gaps, monitoring and spotlight reporting on SDG 16 (see chapter 10 for more details on data).

<sup>154</sup> Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) (2019). Reporting for the Future: Final Report Ready for Review 2019, p. 53.

<sup>155</sup> [Funds should also be made available to facilitate meaningful and equal participation in international forums](#), such as HLPF.

<sup>156</sup> TAP Network 2030, Asia Development Alliance, and FORUS (2020). Empowering Civil Society for National Reporting and Action on SDG16. <https://cspps.org/files/2020-01/Empowering-Civil-Society-for-National-Reporting-and-Action-on-SDG16.pdf>

<sup>157</sup> UN OHCHR (2017). Guidelines on the right to participate in public affairs.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/DraftGuidelinesRighttoParticipationPublicAffairs.aspx>



## Complementary Dialogue Processes and the Need to Localize: Civil Society in CAR<sup>158</sup>

*The Central African Republic (CAR) faced significant challenges in presenting its 2019 VNR. In 2018 and following six years of civil war, the National Peace Recovery and Consolidation Plan (RCPCA), a formal peace agreement, was signed. However, armed rebel groups still controlled about 70 percent of the country, posing immense security challenges. Despite such obstacles, CAR and its partners moved forward with the VNR, aligned with the RCPCA and its NDP, also in anticipation of elections in December 2020.<sup>159</sup>*

*The **National Coalition of Civil Society Organizations for the New Deal**, (CNOSC) a coalition of 30+ organizations supported by CSPPS, was the main civil society partner involved in CAR's VNR, working closely with the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Cooperation.<sup>160</sup> Adopting an inclusive approach, CNOSC built upon its pre-existing relationship with the government, including as related to its involvement in local and national dialogue processes around the RCPCA, to effectively engage in VNR/post-VNR efforts.*

*In preparing for the VNR, little ownership of the 2030 Agenda was observed locally. Further, a national gender profile showed women as severely underrepresented in political, economic and administrative decision-making. Despite a law on gender, women make up only 6.5 percent of National Assembly deputies and 17.6 percent of members of government. Inequalities are more pronounced for rural women. As such, the VNR proposed 29 recommendations, including on girls' education, rebalancing the gender parity index as related to the law on parity, and on awareness-raising, ownership and capacity-building.*

*In response, the CNOSC established a series of supportive actions aimed at recommendations focused on SDG 16 and SDG 5, awareness-raising and ownership of the 2030 Agenda, and building synergy and collaboration around implementation, particularly at the local level. Not exhaustive, these included:*

- *Documenting the VNR preparation processes (key messages and lessons learned);*
- *Producing a short film on the process for national television and awareness-raising campaigns;*
- *Supporting CSO collaboration in post-VNR processes and national development planning;*
- *An awareness-raising campaign and capacity-building project to improve participation of women as trained candidates in the presidential and legislative elections (December 2020); and*
- *A sensitization campaign focused on civil society and other stakeholders at the local level to catalyze implementation and action.<sup>161</sup>*

**Take-Aways and Recommendations:** *Civil society's technical and operational capacities, including in manipulating quantitative tools and methodologies, should be strengthened to promote ownership of achievements and perspectives and increase community engagement. Financial support for CSOs locally is crucial to implementation. Improved statistical data for future reporting should also be considered.*

*Finally, the collaboration between CNOSC, the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Cooperation and partners maintained through the VNR should continue in support of the peace and development targets in the NDP. Inclusive planning, monitoring and evaluation processes are critical to effective action, particularly in FCAS.*

158 This case study draws on interviews with CNOSC.

159 In 2018, a National Committee was also established to nationalize 2030 targets and indicators.

160 Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) (2019). Reporting for the Future: Final Report Ready for Review 2019, p. 17.

161 Much of the above has been stalled due to a lack of funding/redistribution of funding related to COVID-19, social distancing and stay-at-home orders. The pandemic has fueled social divisions, with growing distrust between the population and the government.

In addition to the practices mentioned above, the TAP Network's

## Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit



(to be updated in late 2020) and its

## SDG Accountability Handbook



provide civil society with specific guidance on how to best engage with governments and other local, regional or international stakeholders on VNR and post-VNR processes and through a Leave No One Behind approach.<sup>162</sup>

## Leaving No One Behind: Meaningful Youth Engagement in the VNRs to Advance SDG 16<sup>163</sup>

## Youth engagement in the 2030 Agenda



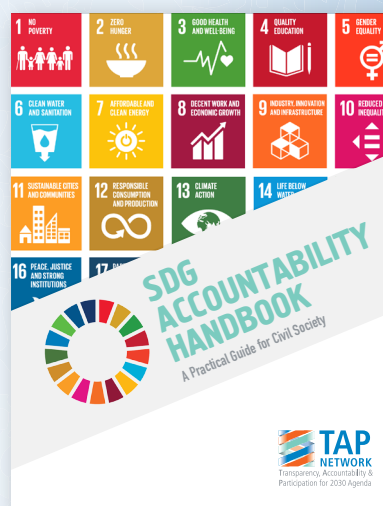
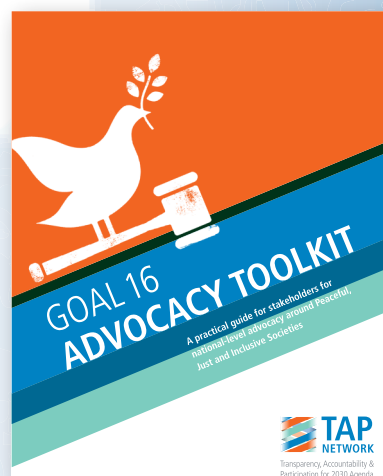
is a democratic, demographic and human rights imperative. It is critical to meeting the ambition of the SDGs and to doing justice to the role of young people as change agents.<sup>164</sup> SDG 16 represents

## a key opportunity



a key opportunity to advance youth empowerment by opening up decision-making processes, guaranteeing fundamental freedoms and ensuring accountability.<sup>165</sup> Yet, meaningful channels of engagement that respect

## young people's diversity



## Systems of exclusion



young people's diversity remain wanting.<sup>166</sup> and

## discrimination



in civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights are some of the barriers youth face.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>162</sup> TAP Network 2030 (2016). Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit. <https://tapnetwork2030.org/goal-16-advocacy-toolkit/>  
TAP Network 2030 (2019). SDG Accountability Handbook. <https://sdgaccountability.org/>

<sup>163</sup> The UN defines 'youth' as people between 15 and 24 years of age for statistical purposes. However, various definitions of youth are used by UN entities, Member States and organizations and this resource considers these definitions without prejudice. Given definitional complexity, this resource uses 'youth' and 'young people' interchangeably.

<sup>164</sup> Youth 4 Peace. Guiding Principles for Supporting Young People as Critical Agents of Change in the 2030 Agenda (webpage). <https://www.youth4peace.info/GuidingPrinciples/Youth2030>

<sup>165</sup> Youth 4 Peace (2019). Rome Youth Call-to-Action: Promoting and Supporting Youth Inclusive and Youth-Led SDG16 Implementation, Monitoring and Accountability. <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2019-06/Rome%20Youth%20Call%20to%20action%20-%20designed%20version.pdf>

<sup>166</sup> Youth 4 Peace and UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (2019). Guiding Principles For Supporting Young People as Critical Agents of Change in the 2030 Agenda. <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2017-11/2017.07.26%20-%20Guiding%20Principles%20-%20Youth%20Engagement%20in%202030%20Agenda%20Implementation%20-%20IANYD%20Final.pdf>

<sup>167</sup> Youth, Peace & Security and UNFPA (2018). The Missing Peace. <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-10/youth-web-english.pdf>  
UN OHCHR (2018). Youth and Human Rights Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1640929?ln=en>

# YOUTH2030

WORKING WITH AND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

VNRs could help transcend such barriers by promoting youth participation in national and local planning, budgeting and decision-making processes, and in HLPF delegations.<sup>168</sup> Far from exhaustive, a brief listing of formal spaces and means of engagement is below.

Governments and partners should engage national youth structures, pacts and charters to ensure that young people are supported as stakeholders in VNR design, implementation and accountability processes.

## National Youth Councils (NYCs)

if perceived as legitimate and representative, can strengthen youth participation and connect young people with decision makers.<sup>169</sup> To this end,

## four 2019 VNR countries

## highlighted discussions

## with NYCs

four 2019 VNR countries highlighted discussions with NYCs as part of their inclusive approach to the VNR.<sup>170</sup> Engagement could also link to national youth policies, NDPs and related frameworks.

Accountability to young people and their coalitions in highlighting the impact of their input is important in ensuring their engagement in VNR processes.<sup>171</sup> In preparing for the VNR, youth may be consulted through national SDG consultations and workshops. For example, and under the theme of Leave No One Behind,

## a national youth SDGs consultation

was held in Tanzania in 2019, focusing on youth's participation in SDG implementation, including with an emphasis on SDG 16.<sup>172</sup> Inputs were featured in Tanzania's 2019 VNR and in a CSO spotlight report.

Strengthening youth-led regional platforms, such as

## the African Youth SDGs Summit

present an opportunity to capture and support the work of young people in advancing the SDGs and their role in VNR processes.<sup>173</sup> Similarly, the European Youth Forum started mapping SDG-related activities of NYCs to create an overview of how youth organizations are engaging in 2030 implementation.

Data partnerships between national statistical systems, youth organizations, civil society, LRGs, international organizations and others provide another channel.<sup>174</sup>

## Many SDG 16 indicators

## lack age-disaggregated

## data

168 Specific recommendations from young people for more inclusive, national follow-up, review and accountability processes with sufficient time for engagement can be found in the 2020 *Believe in Better* report by ActionAid.

169 The Danish Youth Council (2019). Meaningful youth participation towards 2030 and beyond. [https://en.duf.dk/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Editor/documents/DUF\\_materialer/DUF\\_Publikationer/DUF\\_2019\\_Meaningful\\_Youth\\_Participation\\_Towards\\_2030\\_and\\_Beyond.pdf](https://en.duf.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/Editor/documents/DUF_materialer/DUF_Publikationer/DUF_2019_Meaningful_Youth_Participation_Towards_2030_and_Beyond.pdf)

170 Kindornay, S. and Gendron, R. (2020). *Progressing National SDG Implementation: An independent assessment of the voluntary national review reports submitted to the UN HLPF in 2019*. Ottawa: Canadian council for International Cooperation. <https://ccic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/01-Highlights-ENG.pdf>

For more on youth engagement in VNRs, through National Youth Councils and including as related to the UN Youth Delegate Programme, please see the Annex.

171 ActionAid's 2020 *Believe in Better* report, and based on examples from Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

172 Tanzania, M. (2019). *Leave NO youth behind: The National SDGs Youth consultation workshop to inform the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the United Republic of Tanzania*. <https://medium.com/@mulikatanzania/leave-no-youth-behind-the-national-sdgs-youth-consultation-workshop-to-inform-the-voluntary-720193524d3d>

173 African Youth SDGs Summit (webpage). <https://youthsdgssummit.org/>

174 UNDP Global Alliance (2019). *Global Alliance Report Shares Three Key Findings on SDG16+*. SDG Knowledge Hub by IISD. <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/global-alliance-report-shares-three-key-findings-on-sdg-16/>



which risks not disclosing information on the 1.85 billion young people globally, one out of four of whom is affected by violence or armed conflict.<sup>175</sup> To this end, youth-driven data collection and perception-based studies should be recognized and incorporated into VNRs, as well as

### youth-inclusive governance indicators

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covering, in particular, 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10.<sup>176</sup>

Youth organizations, movements, networks and initiatives should be provided with adequate and predictable financial resources to advance their work as related to VNR engagement and SDG 16.

For more on youth-sensitive VNRs, please see

### Youth-Sensitive VNRs

www

For more on how young people can get involved in their country's VNR, see

### You Involvement in your country's VNR

www

## Key Resources/Civil Society:

- [SDG Accountability Handbook](#), TAP Network (2019);
- [The Whole of Society Approach](#), Partners for Review (2018);
- [SDGs in VNRs and Spotlight Reports](#), TAP and GIZ (2019);
- [Reporting for the Future: Final Report Ready for Review](#), Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (2019);
- [Empowering Civil Society for National Action and Reporting on SDG 16](#), TAP Network, Forus and Asia Development Alliance and other civil society partners (2019);
- [The Development Cooperation Report – Joining Forces to Leave No One Behind](#), OECD (2018).

**Interviews:** Peter van Sluijs, CSPPS; Florence Syveuo, Kenya SDGs Forum; Eloi Kouzoundji, CNOSC, CAR; Martin Tskounkeu, ADIN, Cameroon.

## Key Resources/Youth:

- [Rome Youth Call to Action](#), UNDP 16X16 Initiative (2019);
- [Guiding Principles for Supporting Young People as Critical Agents of Change in the 2030 Agenda](#), Restless Development, UNDP and the UN Inter-agency Network on Youth Development (2017);
- [Believe in Better](#), ActionAid (2020);
- [Youth Power: Powering the Voluntary National Reviews](#), Restless Development (2018);
- [The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security](#), Graeme Simpson (Independent Lead Author), PBSO and UNFPA (2018);
- [Youth and Human Rights: report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), (2018).

**Interview:** Maria Stage, UNDP.

<sup>175</sup> Global Alliance (2019). *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion*, p. 55.

<sup>176</sup> UNDP (2016). Critical agents of change in the 2030 Agenda.

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/critical-agents-of-change-in-the-2030-agenda.html>



# 6. TOWARDS MEANINGFUL PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

## What Is It?

Active engagement by the private sector in the VNR process is markedly and understandably less compared to that of civil society organizations and other stakeholders. However, the degree of private sector mentions in the VNR, for example,

as noted for the 2019 VNRs

reflects a growing acknowledgement of private sector contributions to the SDGs and to sustainable business, including as related to SDG 16.<sup>177</sup> Given the more nascent stage of private sector engagement, this chapter will address business engagement with the SDGs and VNRs broadly, before taking a closer look at SDG 16. At the outset, it is important to note that not all private sector engagements are comparable and that the private sector includes informal economies, small and medium enterprises and large multinational or transnational corporations.

According to the UN Global Compact, the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative, about

81 percent of its business participants report taking some type of action around the 2030 Agenda

However, only 20 percent report taking action on SDG16 specifically.<sup>178</sup> In taking action, there are four broad tracks that the private sector can take to advance the SDGs. These include

aligning core business to the SDGs

(i.e., values, strategies, operations, policies and relationships)

philanthropy and funding; advocacy and public policy; and collective action or public-private partnerships.<sup>179</sup>

In preparing for and following from the VNR specifically Partners for Review's 2019 VNR analysis highlighted

three overarching areas for private sector

contribution: awareness-raising, implementation and partnership

three overarching areas of private sector contribution: awareness-raising, implementation and partnership.<sup>180</sup> Specific channels of engagement then include national SDG Council through working groups; technical committees on 'SDG Business Councils'; workshops or consultations; public-private partnerships, including as related to financial support for SDG-related projects; and/or support in data collection.

While there are examples of active private sector engagement around the VNRs, such engagement is often a 'hard sell'. This is partly due to 1) a reticence among businesses to engage in seemingly formal and bureaucratic, Member-State driven processes; 2) perceptions of skepticism on the part of some governments and UN entities about business engagement on SDG 16; and 3) questions from private sector about whether or not a VNR is the most useful way for businesses to support

177 P4R (2019). Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis, p. 31. The SDG Business Forum was established in 2016. Its 2020 iteration is focused on generating a compendium of SDG Acceleration Actors for the Decade of Action and Delivery as one of its outcomes.

178 TAP Network & UNDP (2020). Detailed Event Summary: 'Strengthening Post-VNR Best Practices on SDG 16', 10 March 2020. [https://www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2020-03/Detailed%20webinar%20Summary\\_TAP%20Network%20and%20UNDP%20-%20Strengthening%20Post-VNR%20Best%20Practices%20on%20SDG16\\_0.pdf](https://www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2020-03/Detailed%20webinar%20Summary_TAP%20Network%20and%20UNDP%20-%20Strengthening%20Post-VNR%20Best%20Practices%20on%20SDG16_0.pdf)

179 UN Global Compact (2018). Global Compact Local Networks: Accelerating National SDG Implementation. <https://www.globalcompactturkiye.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/GCLNs-Accelerating-National-SDG-Implementation-.pdf>

180 P4R (2019). Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis, p. 31.

the advancement of the SDGs and SDG 16. Typically, businesses will want to engage if there is a commercial or strategic imperative to do so, including through a purpose-driven leadership angle as then manifested through external output or internal operations. Further, there may also be concerns around ethics or perceptions of collusion that could arise should businesses come together around a VNR process, making their engagement more challenging to navigate.

However, and notwithstanding the challenges above, interest in terms of how the private sector might better support, advance and gap-fill to advance the SDGs and SDG 16 is increasing on the part of businesses and governments. The clearer the link between VNRs and the advancement and implementation of national development plans and strategies, the more likely businesses will be to systematically engage.

Therefore, the question is not just how best businesses should engage with government and civil society to support SDG 16 and the SDGs, but also how to report on such engagement, including through corporate reporting.

### Why Is It Important?

As we continue to wade through COVID-19, the case for SDG 16 and its application through policy, programming and organizational prioritization is being made that much more clearly, at all levels of governance and across stakeholders. This is no less true for the business community.

Given SDG 16's broad themes of good governance and transparency; effective institutions, anchored in human rights; and

leadership as driven by purpose

and ethics

www

the relevance of SDG 16, at least for many within the private sector community, is far from lost.<sup>181</sup> As we witness further drops in trust in public institutions and corporations, business leaders have embraced the centrality of SDG 16 as a means of building resilience and course-correcting to address this trust deficit.

However, many businesses are still to be convinced to support SDG 16, through the VNR process or otherwise. A lack of private sector cooperation or support to advance SDG 16 makes it all the more difficult to realize, with the opportunity cost of private sector inaction arguably too abstract or too vast to quantify. This may also be applicable in ensuring responsible business practices when lobbying governments to make critical improvements to public institutions, laws and systems that will allow businesses and communities to flourish.

In advancing a whole-of-society approach, a greater focus on private sector engagement as mutually beneficial – from anti-corruption to labour rights, inclusive decision-making, and business decisions that enable more peaceful societies – is important to realizing SDG 16 and all SDGs. Responsible businesses want to operate and serve in communities where there are institutions, laws and systems that protect their rights and the rights of the individuals they employ and serve. At the same time, they recognize the need for their own values, strategies, policies and relationships to support them in respecting people, planet and prosperity.

More effectively translating the VNR to responsible businesses (as a process and opportunity linked to national development planning and priorities) would not only help bring in these perspectives for a strengthened a whole-of-society approach, but would also further support SDG 16 implementation.

### How Can This Be Used?

At national and local levels, the private sector is increasingly consulted by governments on VNR processes, directly and indirectly, as part of a larger whole-of-society approach. To this end, and as mentioned, private sector engagement can take the form of national SDG Committees or Working Groups. Further and increasingly, such consultations and engagement can carry beyond the VNR itself into follow-up action. To this end, Mexico is looking at how it can better integrate the private sector, among other stakeholders, in what it aims to be its third VNR in 2021. Specifically, Mexico is hoping to better capture, support and partner on the contributions and actions of the private sector in supporting the SDGs and SDG 16 through a systematic approach and beyond the VNR.

181 Ventura, L (2020). Corruption can have no place in our COVID-19 recovery. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/corruption-no-place-covid-coronavirus-recovery/>

## The UN Global Compact Local Networks

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(GCLNs) often support VNR and post-VNR processes in country, bridging the gap among the UN, governments and businesses by providing an alternative, multi-stakeholder space for engagement.<sup>182</sup> Stakeholders involved

in local networks include businesses, governments and civil society, as well as the home country embassies of local businesses, as relevant, chambers of commerce and related associations, and the UN through the Resident Coordinator's Office.

### The Global Compact Network South Africa, Incentivizing Positive Private Sector Participation

*The Global Compact Network South Africa (GCNSA) has as its principle focus private sector contributions to the SDGs, as aligned to the country's National Development Plan (NDP) and underpinned by the application of UNGC's Ten Principles.<sup>183</sup> In 2018, South Africa's Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, through the National Planning Commission, asked GCNSA to be its private sector institutional partner and to support the coordination of the private sector's contribution to the NDP and SDG process. Findings from this collaboration then fed into South Africa's VNR.<sup>184</sup>*

*While the VNR process was viewed by many GCNSA businesses as an opportunity to build an ongoing platform to unify private sector action around the 2030 Agenda, South Africa's NDP, the African Union's Agenda 2063 and other public sector plans, companies interviewed largely saw the delivery of SDG 16 and its targets as outside their sphere of responsibility. However, many agreed with SDG 16 in principle, as most companies want a South Africa free of corruption and with strong institutions and a trusted economy. Further, the financial services industry saw strong interest in SDG 16, given its interest in the economic credibility of South Africa. Those within the electricity, gas and water sectors owned their responsibility for strong governance, speaking to the need for "for strong and accountable institutional leadership".<sup>185</sup> And FinTech and ICT companies saw their role in SDG 16 as translated through access to connectivity, information and financial inclusion through new marketplaces and educational tools, especially for those who have historically been the poorest, most disadvantaged and farthest left behind.*

*Going forward, it was suggested that the government develop mechanisms to recognize and incentivize positive private sector participation in the 2030 Agenda, potentially via further alignment and integration with Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment and the NDP. As such, this also calls for increased focus in demonstrating how companies can support SDG 16, including through the VNR, as tangibly linked to national development planning and prioritization.*

182 UN Global Compact (2018). Global Compact Local Networks: Accelerating National SDG Implementation, p. 4.

183 UN Global Compact. Who we are: The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact (webpage). <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles#:~:text=The%20Ten%20Principles%20of%20the%20United%20Nations%20Global,Development%2C%20and%20the%20United%20Nations%20Convention%20Against%20Corruption.>

184 The private sector was one of five stakeholder groups engaged: the national government, provincial and local governments, parliament, civil society, private sector and academia, and the UN, AU, SADC and development partners. Global Compact Network South Africa (2019). *Private Sector Contribution to South Africa's 2019 Voluntary National Review on Sustainable Development Goals*. <https://globalcompactsa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GCNSA-VNR-July-Report-2019-20190711-digital-version.pdf>

185 Global Compact Network South Africa (2019). *Private Sector Contribution to South Africa's 2019 Voluntary National Review on Sustainable Development Goals*, p. 161.

In terms of the 2030 Agenda, GCLNs raise awareness and understanding about the SDGs among the businesses with which they work, communicate to the business community how progress is reviewed through the VNR process and provide the voices of sustainable business to government. As with other stakeholder groups, this is still a two-way learning process and GCLNs are continuing to learn how to do this most effectively. That being said, GCLNs often work to support VNR follow-up activities to ensure that the review serves as a milestone for enhanced policy dialogue coordination at the country level. This can also include raising the level of ambition of business action, by identifying specific actions, commitments and partnerships that are relevant to the country context, to address issues identified in the report and move the needle on the SDGs locally.

In terms of

implementation and partnerships,

the private sector may be consulted in terms of specific VNR follow-up action.<sup>186</sup> For example, as noted in its VNR and under the auspices of its National Human Rights Institution, Ghana is implementing a National

Ghana is implementing a National

Anti-Corruption Plan

Anti-Corruption Plan that aims to engage businesses in the fight against corruption, with the purpose of institutionalizing efficiency, transparency and accountability in public and private sectors.<sup>187</sup> Iceland's governmental SDG working group initiated a partnership agreement with the

Icelandic Centre for Corporate

Social Responsibility

which aimed to promote the SDGs among corporations.<sup>188</sup>

In terms of policy and advocacy, companies can also provide pro bono research for data generation for a country's VNR (please see the chapter focused on data) and for providing input about the VNRs and SDG 16 globally. For example,

White & Case LLP

worked with the Global Alliance in

analyzing the VNRs

(2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019), highlighting the prevalence and specificity of SDG 16-related interventions and commitments.<sup>189</sup> Finally, there is also an increasing push for companies to implement and report on SDG 16 themselves, a global effort pioneered and supported by the Global Compact's Action Platform on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

186 P4R (2019). Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis, p. 16.

187 Government of Ghana (2019). *Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 27. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23420Ghanas\\_VNR\\_report\\_Final.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23420Ghanas_VNR_report_Final.pdf)

188 Government of Iceland Prime Minister's Office (2019). *Iceland's Implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Voluntary National Review*, p. 17. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23408VNR\\_Iceland\\_2019\\_web\\_final.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23408VNR_Iceland_2019_web_final.pdf)

189 White & Case LLP (2020). Homepage (webpage). <https://www.whitecase.com/>. Oslo Governance Centre (2019). Global Alliance, "White & Case Review of the 2019 Voluntary National Reports (VNRs)", Summary report. <https://www.sdg16hub.org/content/global-alliance-white-case-review-2019-voluntary-national-reports-vnrs-summary-report>



## Action Platform on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: More Action, Less Platform<sup>190</sup>

Launched in 2018, the UNGC Action Platform for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions aims to develop and promote global business standards in understanding, implementing and reporting on businesses' engagement in these areas. The Action Platform will run through 2021.<sup>191</sup> It will result in, among other things, the development of the **'Understand, Implement and Report' Framework** (expected release in 2021), which aims to highlight the importance of SDG 16 to corporate DNA, including through the values, strategies, policies, operations and relationships of a business and through supporting institutions, laws and systems.<sup>192</sup> In short, the SDG 16 Action Platform seeks to translate SDG 16 for the business community and then reflect back their interest and commitment. With a focus on 'more action, less platform', this includes a unifying narrative and strengthened commitments, providing concrete ways for business to know how they contribute and engage to advance SDG 16 particularly with respect to anti-corruption, human rights, peace and rule of law.

Amidst this global pandemic, the Action Platform community, which comprises businesses, GCLNs and other strategic partners, believes that SDG 16 is more important than ever and that businesses should amplify the need to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, combat corruption and illicit financial flows, uphold the rule of law, and foster peace and security. (A forthcoming Business Leadership Statement on this issue is expected September 2020.)

### Key Resources:

- United in the Business of a Better World. A Statement from Business Leaders for Renewed Global Cooperation, the UN Global Compact;
- The Action Platform for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, the UN Global Compact;
- Edelman Trust Barometer;
- The Role of the Private Sector in Supporting Reporting on SDG 16, One Earth Future, AIM2Flourish, Concordia, Global Alliance, The International Peace Institute, UNDP, and the SDG Fund (2018);
- Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis; Partners for Review (2019);
- Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into Corporate Reporting: A Practical Guide; Global Reporting Initiative and the UN Global Compact (2018);
- 10 Principles of the UN Global Compact;

- Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; OHCHR (2011)

**Interviews:** Michelle Breslauer, UN Global Compact, Christina Koulias, UN Global Compact, Felipe Morgado, UN Global Compact, Terry Jennings, LexisNexis.

<sup>190</sup> This case study draws on interviews with the UN Global Compact.

<sup>191</sup> UNGC (2020). Action Platform: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions (webpage). <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action-platforms/justice>

<sup>192</sup> UNGC (2019). Action Platform for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (Concept Note). [https://d306pr3pise04h.cloudfront.net/docs/publications%2FActionPlatform\\_Flyer.pdf](https://d306pr3pise04h.cloudfront.net/docs/publications%2FActionPlatform_Flyer.pdf)

# 7. ENGAGING ACADEMIA AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS, THE MEDIA, POLITICAL PARTIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

## What Is It?

Most 2019 VNRs referenced some sort of<sup>193</sup>

engagement by

academia

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In some cases, academics and research institutions were engaged through multi-stakeholder consultations, such as through the SDG National Committees or Council. In other instances, academia was involved in the actual preparation of the report, providing, for example, robust analytical reports and research in supporting the development of the VNR report's statistical annex, on SDG 16 or other SDGs.

Academia has also been involved in awareness-raising and in promoting sustainability centres, entering partnerships with government partners to create academic centres or research portfolios focused on the SDGs. Such partnerships often offer more long-term, systemic engagement for strengthened SDG and SDG 16 implementation. To this end, Pakistan reported on the establishment of 'SDG Centres of Excellence' that aim to spearhead research on different SDGs. Overall, the role of academia and research institutions in the VNR process is technical and advisory in nature.

Similarly to academia, members of the

media and journalists have been

engaged in VNR preparation

www

and validation

(again through National SDG Committees/Councils or Working Groups).<sup>194</sup> Following from the VNR, media has also been engaged more broadly in disseminating the VNR and its key findings, thereby raising awareness and driving accountability. The main role of media is to inform without fear or favour.<sup>195</sup> As such, media has an inherent role to play in accountability, awareness and access to information, thereby linked directly to SDG 16 and its related targets. Where media freedom, independence and pluralism are threatened, media then cannot perform this role or perform it fully.

## Why Is This Important

On the part of **academia and research institutions**, analysis, critical thinking, assessment of complex data, and problem-solving are important parts of the academic skillset and of universities' wider role. Furthermore, and has been stated before in terms of other stakeholder groups, these processes of monitoring and review should be<sup>196</sup>

"open, inclusive, participatory

and transparent"

www

In terms of **media**, and as highlighted by UNDP and UNESCO,

at its most fundamental, a free,

independent and pluralist media sector

is a prerequisite to functioning democracies

www

193 P4R (2019). Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis, p. 30. <https://www.partners-for-review.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/P4R-Analysis-VNRs-2019.pdf>

194 P4R (2019). Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis, p. 31.

195 While explicitly political media exists, formal and informal, media's primary role is information dissemination.

196 UN General Assembly (2015). RES/70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

[https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_70\\_1\\_E.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf)

# COVID-19 Tracker

and the creation of more peaceful, just and inclusive societies.<sup>197</sup> However, and according to

## UNESCO's 2020 World

### Trends report

www

in the World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development series, while "[i]ndependent media play an essential role in societies [...] journalism is under increased threat as a result of public and private sector influence that endangers editorial independence."<sup>198, 199</sup> To this end, ARTICLE 19's 2018-2019

## Global Expression Report

www

notes that freedom of expression is at its lowest point in a decade internationally, jeopardizing media's role in supporting SDG 16 and the larger 2030 Agenda.<sup>200</sup>

## Such restrictions and threats to freedom of expression and access to reliable and independent journalism

www

are often then compounded<sup>201</sup> during times of crisis.

Both generally and for the media, the right to information plays an important role in open and inclusive societies. Within this context, a

## 'COVID-19 Tracker'

www

created by the Centre for Law and Democracy, keeps track of legal measures taken by countries to temporarily alter or suspend right-to-information obligations due to COVID-19.<sup>202</sup> Again, while media are an important user group of the right to information, they are only one such user group.

The right to information is critical for accountability for the 2030 Agenda, not just SDG 16. Public access to reliable, credible, user-friendly and free data and information is key to holding governments to account, to evaluating public officials in implementing and monitoring the SDGs, and to facilitating effective participation. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests should provide citizens with the right to access public information relevant to the SDGs. As we reflect upon the

## fundamental role of media

www

to SDG 16 and in upholding FOIAs, additional thought should be given to the various multiplier effects of

197 UNDP and UNESCO (2019). Entry points for media development to support peaceful just and inclusive societies and Agenda 2030 – a background discussion note, p. 2. <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Global%20Policy%20Centres/OGC/UNDP%20UNESCO%20Entry%20points%20for%20media%20development%20to%20support%20peaceful%20just%20and%20inclusive%20societies%20and%20Agenda%202030.pdf>

198 UNESCO's 2020 World Trends report in Freedom of Expression and Media Development specifically finds that the greatest menace to editorial independence in a growing number of countries across the world is media capture, a form of media control that is achieved through systematic steps by governments and interest groups.

199 Dragomir, M. (2020). Reporting facts: free from fear or favour: preview of In Focus report on World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development. UNESCO Digital Library. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373572>

200 Article 19 (2019). The Global Expression Report (2018-19) (webpage). <https://www.article19.org/resources/global-expression-report-2018-19-global-freedom-of-expression-at-a-ten-year-low/>

201 Global Forum For Media Development (2020). Joint Emergency Appeal for Journalism and Media Support. <https://gfmd.info/emergency-appeal-for-journalism-and-media-support-2/>

202 RTI and Centre for Law and Democracy (2020). Database: COVID-19 Tracker. <https://www.rti-rating.org/covid-19-tracker/>

media development for the realization of SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda more broadly.

**While 127 countries have adopted right to information or freedom of information laws, with at least 27 having adopted relevant guarantees**

since 2014, significant challenges persist in terms of implementation.<sup>203</sup>

It is equally important to consult all political parties. This type of engagement can help with longer-term sustained policies despite political changes. Raising public awareness through educational institutions, the media and political parties, is crucial to sustaining positive change in national priorities and plans.<sup>204</sup>

### How Can This Be Used?

As mentioned, for academia and media channels of engagement and consultation should include national SDG Councils and Committees, as well as technical working groups focused on SDG 16 and other SDGs. This engagement can then translate directly into national development planning. For example, and as highlighted by

**UNDESA's 2019 VNR Synthesis Report**

Ghana's medium-term national development policy framework (2018-2021) was prepared mainly through the engagement of cross-sectoral planning groups comprising representatives of the public sector, private sector, civil society, academia, journalists, think-tanks, faith-based organizations and other groups.<sup>205</sup>

Other means of engagement include surveys, workshops or other events, particularly for academia and political parties/parliaments. According to the 2019 VNR, 12 countries had representatives from academia in the national SDG council or in (permanent) technical or advisory groups, while 24 countries included members of academia in surveys, consultations, workshops and/

or other events. Academic centres may provide for more systematic engagement in post-VNR processes and implementation, lending themselves to more regular contributions to NDPs in terms of research, analysis, monitoring, etc.

In terms of awareness-building of political parties, El Salvador and Guatemala set up a Technical and Planning Secretariat directly in the Office of the President in 2018 to ensure broader consultation processes. As a result, these countries have highlighted that their VNRs have evolved from government strategies to national strategies.<sup>206</sup>

203 United Nations (2020) The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020, p. 21. UN Stats. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2020.pdf>

204 Partners for Review (2019). [Documentation paper on a Side Event during the Third meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development](#)

205 UN DESA (2019). HLPF 2019 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report, p. 30. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/252302019\\_VNR\\_Synthesis\\_Report\\_DESA.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/252302019_VNR_Synthesis_Report_DESA.pdf)

206 Partners for Review (2019). [Documentation paper on a Side Event during the Third meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development](#)



## South African SDG Hub: Partnering on the VNR and SDG Country Reports<sup>207</sup>

The **South African SDG Hub** is a think tank at the University of Pretoria designed to connect South African policy-makers with the most relevant South African research related to the SDGs.<sup>208</sup> In 2018, the Hub released a report on the challenges and opportunities related to SDG implementation in country. One of the topics covered was SDG 16. In 2019, the Hub released a report on alignment between the SDGs, the African Union's Agenda 2063 and South Africa's National Development Plan and again included analysis of the role of SDG 16. In 2019, the Hub played a leading role in drafting South Africa's first extensive SDG Country Report, which in turn fed into South Africa's VNR. It continues in its partnership with the Presidency of South Africa today, supporting policy development and analysis around national priority issues. In supporting one of **South Africa's 2019 VNR Main Messages**, focused on ensuring that South African citizens have access to government information, the Hub created and supports an online portal of open-access peer-review articles, tagged by SDG.<sup>209</sup> Going forward, it will continue to make this platform more user-friendly and aims to invite researchers from South Africa's 26 public universities to draft briefing notes and articles related to the SDGs.

Going forward, additional attention may be directed to

### increasing partnerships

#### among universities



and research institutions, south-north/north-south as well as south-south, in terms of sharing research and expertise and capacity-building.<sup>210</sup>

In addition to the channels of engagement mentioned above, media can also be instrumental in disseminating VNRs and highlighting, through reporting, failures or a lag on the part of government in acting on recommendations. Media can report on where SDG commitments are or are not being met, including in terms of legislation and policy related to media freedoms and access to information. This again speaks to the role of media in accountability and awareness in advancing implementation, as well as the need for media protection. International actors can help promote this by supporting media freedom and development, including encouraging national media actors to engage with such processes.

To this end, several VNR reports expressed a need for strong communication and awareness-raising efforts around the VNR, with media as a critical actor in such efforts at national, regional and global levels. Additional capacity-building efforts for media actors may prove critical, not just in information dissemination about a VNR as linked to a country's NDP and SDG 16, but also about the 2030 Agenda at global, regional, national and local levels.

### While 30 of the 47 countries providing



#### a VNR in 2019 have adopted legal frameworks on access to information or the right to information,

more can be done to make these effective.<sup>211</sup> Media engagement, at local and national levels, is key to following up on the implementation of such frameworks and to ensuring that access to information then further supports the responsiveness and quality of public services.

207 This case study draws from interviews with the South African SDG Hub.

208 South African SDG Hub (webpage). University of Pretoria. <http://sasdgghub.up.ac.za/>

209 Government of South Africa (2019). South Africa Voluntary National Review 2019, p. 100.

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23402RSA\\_Voluntary\\_National\\_Review\\_Report\\_The\\_Final\\_24\\_July\\_2019.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23402RSA_Voluntary_National_Review_Report_The_Final_24_July_2019.pdf)

210 Long G. (2017). Universities, Academics and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Global Policy.

<https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/13/12/2017/universities-academics-and-2030-agenda-sustainable-development>

211 UNESCO (2019). Powering sustainable development with access to information: highlights from the 2019 UNESCO monitoring and reporting of SDG indicator 16.10.2. UNESCO Digital Library. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369160>



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### Key Resources:

- [Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis](#), Partners for Review (2019);
- [Entry points for media development to support peaceful just and inclusive societies and Agenda 2030 – a background discussion note](#), UNESCO and UNDP (2019);
- [The Global Expression Report 2018-2019, ARTICLE 19 \(2019\): Joint Emergency Appeal for Journalism and Media Support](#), Global Forum for Media Development (2020);
- [COVID-19 Tracker](#), the Centre for Law and Democracy (2020);
- [Powering sustainable development with access to information: highlights from the 2019 UNESCO monitoring and reporting of SDG indicator 16.10.2](#), UNESCO (2019).

**Interviews:** Ivana Bjelic Vucinic, GFMD; Willem Fourrie, SDGs Hub, South Africa; Toby Mendel, Centre for Law and Democracy; Sylvia Sefakor Senu, UNDP Ghana.

The 30 countries with access to information laws were: Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Chile, Côte D'Ivoire, Croatia, Fiji, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Iceland, Indonesia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Philippines, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Turkey, UK, Tanzania and Vanuatu.

# 8. PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS, PRESENTING THE VNR TO THE PUBLIC AND STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

## What Does It Mean?

As highlighted in the SDGs Accountability Handbook,

awareness-raising

is a process



that seeks to inform and educate people about a topic or issue with the intention of influencing their attitudes, behaviours and beliefs towards the achievement of a defined purpose or goal.<sup>212</sup> It can mobilize the power of public opinion in support of an issue and thereby influence the political will of decision makers. There are multiple awareness-raising strategies, methods and tools that can be used to convey and spread messages and to gather the support necessary to influence public opinion across communities and perspectives.

In increasing public awareness of a VNR, and thereby strengthening government accountability to its findings, it is important to ensure as broad and inclusive of an audience as possible. This means paying attention to the language(s) used, the authenticity and manner by which key messages from the VNR are promoted and communication channels.

## Why Is It Important?

Awareness-raising and dissemination of information about the VNR are critical to creating an enabling environment for accountability and to promoting participatory and inclusive processes for follow-up and review. Awareness-raising can also build local and national ownership of SDG 16-related issues and the larger 2030

Agenda. For example, awareness-raising can be used to promote an understanding of existing laws and rights in relation to the VNRs, including as connected to national development and local plans and priorities, as well as provide opportunities to participate in public consultations. Given SDG 16's particular focus on access to public information and inclusive, participatory decision-making, presenting a VNR to the public is a means to advance SDG 16 as well as the larger 2030 Agenda.

To this end, increasing awareness and ensuring dialogue with communities on progress, in terms of SDG 16 or the

Media and civil society have a key role

in making the language around SDG 16

and related issues accessible to public



SDGs, are fundamental to localization and ownership, and in ensuring that information on implementation is available to all.<sup>213</sup> All people – including marginalized and vulnerable groups – should be aware of the commitments that their governments have made under the 2030 Agenda and how they can meaningfully engage in VNR and SDG implementation and accountability processes.

## How Can This Be Used?

Following a VNR, a range of activities,

projects and programmes



212 TAP Network (2019). *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, p. 80. <https://sdgaccountability.org/sdg-accountability-handbook/>

213 Global Alliance (2019). *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion*, p. 48. <https://www.sdg16hub.org/content/global-alliance-enabling-implementation-2030-agenda-through-sdg-16-anchoring-peace-justice>

have been pursued to raise awareness and publicize key findings.<sup>214</sup> However many examples are singular or ad hoc initiatives, such as SDG-themed workshops and conferences. Other efforts include social media campaigns,

platforms and websites as well as SDG training programmes targeting, in some cases, specific stakeholder groups, such as parliament, the private sector, young people and children.

## Guatemala: Post-VNR Workshops Amidst Political Change

*After Guatemala's 2019 VNR, the government conducted a series of post-VNR workshops with different stakeholders.<sup>215</sup> The government also worked to generate data that was missing from the VNR, with a particular focus on disaggregated data to ensure that no one is left behind. The government also embedded the lessons learned from the VNR into the four-year national development strategy – translating long-term goals for the 2030 Agenda into short-term milestones. These priorities were then signed off by government representatives from all levels and across sectors, which the collaboration on the VNR helped make possible.*

While there are examples of mainstreaming efforts in terms of communication strategies, taskforces or advocacy teams, they are fewer and farther between. One example is that of Serbia's VNR, which highlighted plans to conduct a comprehensive public awareness-raising campaign,<sup>216</sup>

specifically on key findings  
and to help publicize and raise  
the visibility of the 2030 Agenda

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Presenting VNRs to the public and raising awareness of their findings are means to drive inclusion and accountability. They are also means of connecting individuals and communities with development plans and larger policy priorities, as related to SDG 16 and the larger 2030 Agenda. In supporting such processes, a<sup>217</sup>

few actions, suggestions and points  
to keep in mind are:

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- Awareness-raising campaigns tend to be more successful when conducted by a network or coalition, particularly if partners can bridge national and subnational levels.
- Know your target audiences and their interests. Select, relevant messages from the VNR should be clearly and authentically articulated, along with opportunities for follow-up.
- Schedule awareness-raising events around other major events to leverage publicity – such as leaders' summits and UN days with specific reference to SDG 16 to increase the reach and impact of their message.
- Ensure wide dissemination of the VNRs. For example, countries and other stakeholders should consider presenting the VNR and conducting awareness-raising in various municipalities and locales, in addition to more nationally oriented communication.
- Consider sharing the VNR and lessons learned at the regional level.
- Simplify the VNR and key findings for public consumption.

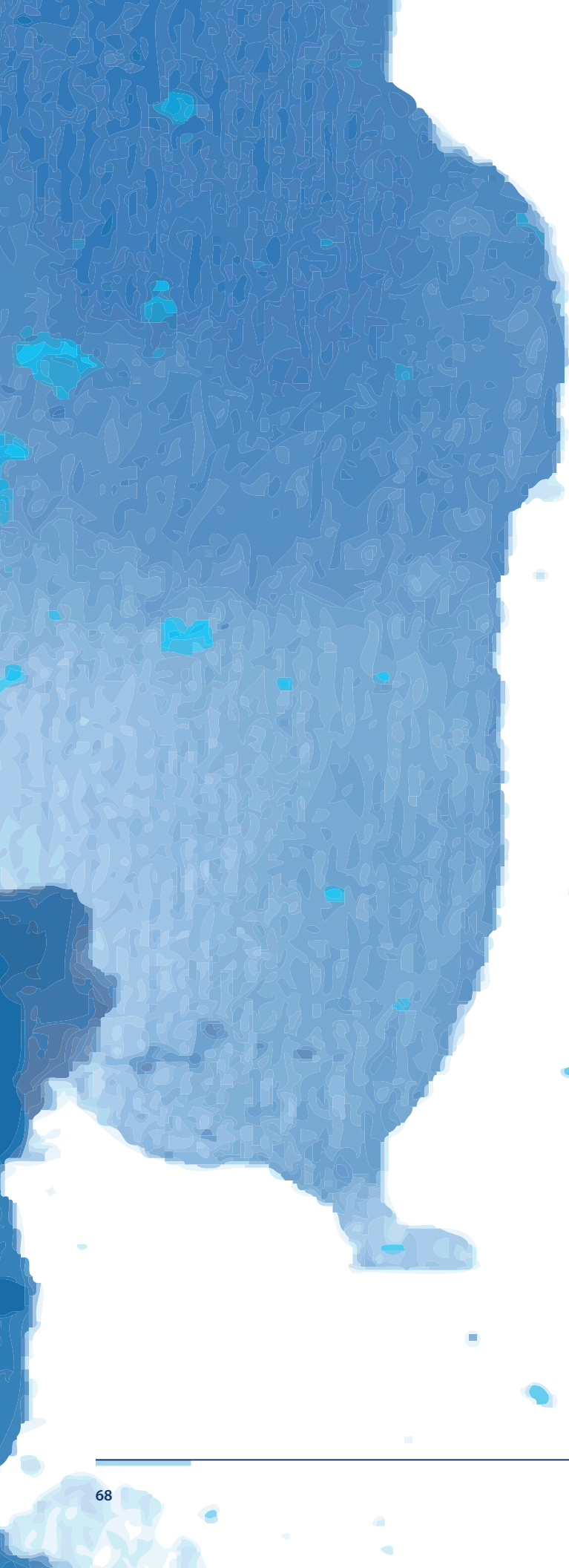
214 Partners for Review (2019). *Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis*, p. 30. <https://www.partners-for-review.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/P4R-Analysis-VNRs-2019.pdf>

215 Secretaría de Planificación y Programación de la Presidencia (SEGEPLAN) (2019). *Revisión Nacional Voluntaria 2019: El Camino Hacia El Desarrollo Sostenible*. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25008REVISIN\\_NACIONAL\\_COMPLETA.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25008REVISIN_NACIONAL_COMPLETA.pdf)

216 Partners for Review (2019). *Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis*, p. 32

217 United Nations Department Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) (2019). *Handbook for the Preparation of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) 2019 Edition*, p. 17. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20872VNR\\_hanbook\\_2019\\_Edition\\_v2.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20872VNR_hanbook_2019_Edition_v2.pdf)





The most effective means of raising awareness and presenting the VNR may come in the form of holding large events, conferences, workshops, debates and briefings; producing and disseminating reports, studies and publications; making written or oral submissions to parliamentary committees and other public oversight bodies; working with the media; holding public meetings and events; convening conferences and workshops; and creating and contributing to educational materials.

Information may be disseminated through a range of different means or tools such as radio, including community radio, as a powerful means to spread information and raise awareness, especially in poor and rural areas; television, video, film and documentaries; the internet, social media, and online forums; mobile phones and SMS campaigns; newspapers, newsletters, leaflets and posters; and the arts.

#### Key Resources:

- [SDGs Accountability Handbook](#), TAP Network (2019);
- [Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis](#), Partners for Review (2019);
- [2020 Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews](#), DESA (2019);
- [Strengthening Post-VNR Best Practices on SDG16: an online webinar](#), TAP network and UNDP (2020); Guatemala's 2019 VNR.

**Interview:** Margarita Cano, SEGEPLAN, Guatemala.

# 9. NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG 16



## What Is It?

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) are independent state institutions established by law to promote and protect human rights and to hold governments into account for their human rights obligations.<sup>218</sup> Among other tasks, NHRIs undertake systematic analysis of the human rights situation in their countries, issue reports and recommendations and advise governments and parliament on human rights compliance. Some NHRIs also have a mandate to handle complaints from citizens, facilitating access to justice, redress and remedy.

As of November 2019, there were 80 NHRIs across the globe in fully compliance with the Paris Principles,<sup>219</sup> i.e., in accordance with the international minimum standards for effective, credible, and independent NHRIs. Those are known as “A-status NHRIs”. In addition, 34 NHRIs are partially compliant with these standards (B-status).<sup>220</sup> The existence of an independent NHRI in compliance with the Paris Principles is an indicator for strong institutions under SDG 16.a, but the current pace of establishment of A-status NHRIs is significantly slow and, if not accelerated, countries will not achieve this target before 2067.<sup>221</sup>

## Why Is It Important?

NHRIs are crucial elements of the institutional architecture necessary for the realization of the 2030 Agenda. Acknowledging that more than 90 percent of the SDG targets are related to international human rights norms and standards,<sup>222</sup> NHRIs and its networks have stepped up and leveraged their role to support SDG implementation, monitoring and review. NHRIs are guided by the Merida Declaration,<sup>223</sup> which is agreed under the auspices of the

### Global Alliance of NHRIs

(GANHRI)

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in 2015 and elaborates the role of NHRIs in implementing the 2030 Agenda. As a follow-up, the Network of African NHRIs (NANHRI) adopted in<sup>224</sup>

### 2017 the Kigali Declaration

and Plan of Action

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to guide NHRIs in the region in their engagement with the 2030 Agenda and the African Agenda 2063.<sup>225</sup> More recently NHRIs in Europe are responding to COVID-19 –

<sup>218</sup> Learn more about [NHRIs](#).

<sup>219</sup> UN General Assembly (1993). [A/RES/48/134](#), Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (The Paris Principles) (1993). <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/b38121/pdf/>

<sup>220</sup> GANHRI (2019). [Chart of the Status of Accreditation](#). [https://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/GANHRIAccreditation/Documents/Status%20Accreditation%20-%20Chart%20\(%2027%20November%202019\).pdf](https://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/GANHRIAccreditation/Documents/Status%20Accreditation%20-%20Chart%20(%2027%20November%202019).pdf)

<sup>221</sup> Danish Institute for Human Rights (2019). [National Human Rights Institutions: Accelerators, Guarantors and Indicators of Sustainable Development](#), pp. 5-6.

<sup>222</sup> According to study from the Danish Institute for Human Rights (2018). [Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Lessons Learned and Next Steps](#). p. 4. The links between each SDG target and the human rights instrument can be easily identified using a free online tool developed by the Danish Institute for Human Rights, ‘The Human Rights Guide to the SDGs’, available at <http://sdg.humanrights.dk>

<sup>223</sup> [The Mérida Declaration: The Role of National Human Rights Institutions in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) (2015).

<sup>224</sup> [Kigali Declaration and Plan of Action on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Agenda 2063 and the role of National Human Rights Institutions](#) (2017).

<sup>225</sup> [Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.](#), African Union (2013).

UNESCO listed that 36 NHRIs

in the region made recommendations

related to the pandemic



with regards to access/right to information, access for persons with disabilities and multilingualism.

### How Can This Be Used?

NHRIs have contributed to national, regional and global SDG review processes by, for example, convening stakeholders and facilitating dialogue, providing data on human rights-related indicators and supporting the direct implementation of certain SDG targets related to their

mandates. NHRIs have also fostered a human-rights-based approach to the monitoring and implementation of the SDGs as a means to leave no one behind, using data and information from the human rights systems<sup>226</sup> to guide the development of national indicators, policies and programmes.<sup>227</sup> For example, the NHRIs of Palestine, Kenya and Uganda have established Memoranda of Understanding<sup>228</sup> (MoU) with National Statistics Offices in their countries to collaborate on a human-rights-based approach to data collection and data disaggregation, including on issues related to access to justice, violence, fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as for the identification of vulnerable population groups to expand on national census.

## The Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights: Promoting a Human-Rights-Based Approach to SDG Implementation and Monitoring

*As a follow-up to its first VNR presented in 2018, the Palestinian Government established National SDG Teams composed by representatives from different stakeholders groups. Each SDG Team coordinates with relevant actors in the field to, for example, conduct monitoring and reporting, provide recommendations and policy proposals and prepare interventions to promote the implementation of its respective Goal. It is a unique process, designed to pull together the capacities and expertise of all relevant actors in the country.*

*The Palestinian NHRI, namely the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR),<sup>229</sup> engages in the national SDG processes promoting a human rights-based approach to the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda. Among other things, the ICHR has developed a criterion to define marginalized areas in the country from a human rights perspective, contributing to the identification of groups that are being left behind. ICHR is also an active contributor to the National SDG Teams and engages as a permanent member of the National Team for SDG 16<sup>230</sup> (peace, justice and strong institutions), led by the Ministry of Justice, since its launch in July 2018. In addition, ICHR is an observer in the Teams for Goals 1 (no poverty), 3 (good health and well-being), 8 (decent work) and 10 (reduced inequalities).*

226 For an overview of the international human rights system see [link](#). In addition, for the regional overview see “[A Rough Guide to the Regional Human Rights Systems](#)”, Universal Rights Group.

227 [National human rights institutions as a driving force for sustainable development: good practices for SDG programing and monitoring](#), Danish Institute for Human Rights (2019).

228 The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is promoting MoU between NHRIs and NSOs as part of its effort to promote a human-rights-based approach to data collection. Implementation has also been supported by the Danish Institute for Human Rights with capacity-building and trainings.

229 Learn more about the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights: <https://ichr.ps/en/1>

230 See Terms of Reference of the SDG 16 Team: <https://www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2019-09/SDG%2016%20National%20Team%20Terms%20of%20Reference.pdf>

## The Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights: Promoting a Human-Rights-Based Approach to SDG Implementation and Monitoring, cont.

*The SDG 16 team is formed by the Ministry of Justice, as well as the Ministries of Finance, Women's Affairs, Social Development, Interior and Local Government; the police; eight human rights institutions including the NHRI; civil society organizations; academia; the General Personnel Council (civil servants); the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics; one media representative; and oversight bodies such as transparency, accountability and anti-corruption institutions. After reviewing the data collection capacities of its members, the Team agreed on compiling data and information for 75 indicators in total (including global and national indicators) to provide for a comprehensive review of the SDG 16 targets. Based on the data provided by its members, the SDG 16 Team will prepare a report to the Prime Minister's Office to assist in the preparation of future VNRs and provide evidence for policymaking to advance SDG 16 implementation in the country.*

*As a member of the SDG 16 Team and due to its unique mandate to monitor the human rights situation in the country, the ICHR is able to contribute data for 25 of the agreed indicators that are relevant to monitor SDG 16. Those include issues related to violence, access to justice and human rights defenders. The ICHR is also engaged in a MoU with the Palestinian Central Bureau for Statistics in which the institutions cooperate on, among other things, conducting a survey to monitor fundamental rights and freedoms, relevant for SDG 16.10.*

NHRIs have also been a leading voice for increased inclusion, participation and accountability for the SDG follow-up and review processes. They are leveraging experiences from the UN human rights monitoring bodies such as the Universal Periodic Review and Treaty Bodies and proposing structural changes that would benefit from increased coordination between national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up on human rights obligations (NMRFs) and national SDG coordination mechanisms.<sup>231</sup>

NHRIs continued engagement post-VNR is crucial to ensure that countries uphold the human rights principles of equality, non-discrimination, transparency, participation and accountability in the SDG follow-up processes. In fact, there is optimism that countries are increasingly recognizing NHRIs' role and systematically including them in official SDG coordinating structures.

## The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice of Ghana: An Accountability Actor

*The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ or the Commission) is the Ghanaian NHRI. CHRAJ is a member of the multi-sectoral SDGs Implementation Coordination Committee (ICC) of Ghana, which comprises representatives of key ministries, public agencies and civil society organizations. The mandate of the ICC includes strengthening cross-sectoral coordination and multi-stakeholder partnerships in SDG implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. For the preparation of Ghana 2019 VNR, the CHRAJ was formally requested by the SDG coordinating secretariat to provide information on its activities contributing to the SDGs, including on Goal 16. The Commission was also part of the Ghana official delegation to the HLPF that year.*

<sup>231</sup> Feiring, Birgitte and König-Reis, Saionara. [Leveraging Human Rights Mechanisms to Improve SDG Follow-up and Review, Making the HLPF More Inclusive](#), no.2 2020, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (2020).



## The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice of Ghana: An Accountability Actor, cont.

*In the follow-up to the VNR, the CHRAJ is playing a central role in improving accountability in the country, particularly in its capacity as the coordinating body for the National Anti-Corruption Plan. In this role, the Commission is convening a number of thematic international and national dialogues with relevance to advance issues related to SDG 16, such as promoting the relevance of linking human rights in anti-corruption efforts to, for example, strengthen institutions, ensure rule of law and access to justice, and design adequate policies for asset recovery and return.*

*Among other initiatives, the CHRAJ organized a national Conference on Anti-Corruption and Transparency, which gathered high-level officials (including Ghana's Vice-President), key representatives from the governance and justice sectors, civil society, the UN and the private sector. Participants reviewed existing policies and strategies and agreed on measures to strengthen institutions involved in fighting corruption and ensuring transparency and accountability.*

*Further, in January 2020, the Commission organized a national forum involving key accountability institutions including the offices of the Attorney-General, Auditor-General and Special Prosecutor, as well as the Economic and Organized Crime Office, Narcotics Control Board, Police Service and others. The forum was meant to strengthen inter-institutional collaboration and information-sharing and led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among these actors to fulfil this purpose.*

*Finally, on a project funded by the World Bank and expected to start in the second half of 2020, the CHRAJ was selected as one of 16 public sector institutions to promote good governance and access to a redress or remedy through internal complaint or grievance handling mechanism within the public services. The CHRAJ, in exercising its constitutional mandate as Ghana's Ombudsman, will provide capacity-training for public officials on Client Service Charters and effective complaint handling to strengthen public services in contribution to the government's public sector reform strategy.*

**Interview:** Saionara König-Reis, Danish Institute for Human Rights.

### Key Resources:

- [National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up: a practical guide to effective state engagement with international human rights mechanisms](#), OHCHR, 2016;
- [SDG Toolbox for NHRIs](#), GANHRI: 2020;
- [A Human Rights Based Approach to Data – Leaving no one behind in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), OHCHR: 2018;
- [National Human Rights Institutions as Accelerators, Guarantors and Indicators of Sustainable Development](#), DIHR: 2019;
- [National human rights institutions as a driving force for sustainable development](#), DIHR: 2019
- [Applying a HRBA to Poverty Reduction and Measurement](#), ENNHRI: 2019;
- [Contributions of the national human rights institutions to the 2030 agenda](#) (Argentina, Costa Rica and Mexico), DIHR: 2019;
- [African National Human Rights Institutions and Sustainable Development](#), DIHR: 2019;
- [National Human Rights Institutions: Engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), GANHRI: 2018;
- [Leveraging Human Rights Mechanisms to Improve SDG Follow-up and Review](#), Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation: 2020;
- [Integrated review and reporting on SDGs and Human Rights](#), DIHR: 2019.

# 10. DATA AND STATISTICS THROUGH OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL SOURCES

## What Is It?

At its best, statistics are used to track, monitor and inform policy making and implementation in a transparent, participatory and accountable manner. However, major challenges continue to face the SDG 16 data community, affecting not just coverage but also the quality of data available for SDG 16 targets and their impact on the rest of the 2030 Agenda. The following section briefly outlines challenges and solutions proposed.

The inclusion of SDG 16 in the indicator framework of the 2030 Agenda constituted a major milestone in the evolution of governance statistics. It reinforced worldwide attention on this area of statistics and is likely to be a major driver of demand for such data over the coming years. However, official statistics on those topics covered by SDG 16 are less developed compared to other sectors, e.g., poverty, health and education. SDG 16 therefore presents a unique opportunity for countries to invest in official statistics. Countries need to overcome resistance in the production and use of official statistics on 'sensitive' topics and those that are perceived to be difficult to measure and to continue to fortify the independence of National Statistics Offices (NSOs).

As captured in the

### SDG 16 Data Initiative's 2019 Global Report

significant data gaps remain in the official SDG 16 indicators due to methodological issues, limited resources, and the capacity of national statistical offices (NSOs) to collect data.<sup>232</sup> Second, many

### conceptual gaps needed to be overcome within the official SDG 16 indicators themselves

and there has been recent progress – an indicator on civil justice was adopted in March 2020 (16.3.3) and all Tier-3 indicators have been reclassified as Tier-2. Despite these breakthroughs – challenges persist.<sup>233</sup> Finally, the very nature of what SDG 16 tries to measure is often politically sensitive. For example, while some countries are more open to highlighting internal challenges with regards to corruption, this is not the norm.

To address the first two challenges,

### the SDG 16 Data Initiative

among others, has proposed broadening global and national monitoring of SDG 16 to include non-official data sources alongside official data sources.<sup>234</sup> It specifically recommends: expanding the number of civil society data producers and other non-official data producers – especially those representing local and marginalized voices; adding indicators that more accurately reflect target objectives; and increasing acceptance by Member States, NSOs and UN custodian agencies of the role and place of civil society non-official methodologies and data in monitoring processes.

An important delineation to make at the outset is to differentiate between data and statistics. When data production is increasing exponentially, this demonstrates that the raw information from surveys, administrative records, social media, internet, satellite imaging, etc. is increasing. However, these are not statistics and cannot necessarily be transformed into statistics.

To address the critical gaps in official statistics for measuring SDG 16, the

### Praia Group's Handbook on Governance Statistics

<sup>232</sup> The SDG16 Data Initiative 2019 Global Report. (2019), p. 4. <https://www.sdg16.org/blog/2019/07/08/the-third-annual-global-report.html>

<sup>233</sup> Tier-3 indicators are without internationally agreed methodology, whereas Tier-2 indicators have an agreed methodology but with less than 50 percent of countries reporting data for them.

<sup>234</sup> SDG16 Data Initiative. Home page. Retrieved 4 August 2020, from <http://www.sdg16.org/>

highlights the benefits of strengthening collaboration between NSOs and other entities inside and outside government, while reiterating the centrality of NSOs as the coordinating node of national statistical systems.<sup>235</sup> This includes better integration of often-underutilized administrative data systems across government institutions – electoral management bodies, public service commissions, ministries of public administration, parliamentary and ministerial secretariats, judicial service commissions, ministries of justice, health and education institutions, and NHRIs. This also entails an exploration of unofficial data sources to complement more traditional ones. As understood by the Praia Group, unofficial data producers include civil society, academia, representatives of groups at risk of discrimination and unofficial sources like crowdsourcing and ‘big data’, among others. The essence here is to differentiate official and unofficial data producers – more than the data itself, it is necessary that CSOs and other data producers be considered part of the National Statistical System.

Analysis of the VNRs makes clear that the lack of reliable and disaggregated statistics is one of SDG 16’s top challenges for all countries. Further, set against a global pandemic backdrop, traditional data collection, such as in-person household surveys, will be increasingly untenable. Moving forward, this calls for greater collaboration and coordination amongst all SDG 16 data actors.

## Why Is It Important?

Evidence shows that monitoring and reporting are critical to driving action and demonstrates significant data gaps in measuring progress on SDG 16 and therefore in VNR and post-VNR processes for strengthened implementation. Therefore, greater investment in data sources, especially to the NSOs, as well as greater collaboration across data producers, such as civil society, is critical to measuring progress and driving implementation. In so doing, privacy questions must also always be addressed.

**NSOs may face challenges  
across several fronts:**



resource constraints for production of quality data in line with the fundamental principles for official statistics, dissemination of statistics and the coordination of SDG 16-related data within the national statistical system.<sup>236</sup>

Notwithstanding their own challenges, non-official data sources can help to fill methodological and conceptual gaps by supplementing decreasing budgets to incorporate knowledge coming from new statistical applications, by offering an informed advisory support in a diverse group of domains and by reaching hard-to-access population groups – all while reducing the capacity strain on NSOs and encouraging their autonomy. To this end, civil society is key to supporting and complementing government efforts to collect, monitor and report on data for SDG 16, in part due to their engagement with relevant national and local actors. Similarly, NHRIs, for example, may be well-positioned in

**data collection and data disaggregation**

**in terms of non-discriminatory law and  
policies, as well as human rights violations,**

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given their relative proximity to and interaction with relevant communities and individuals.<sup>237</sup> Such data can then support the design and implementation of people-centred, national and local development policies, strategies and plans, as linked to VNRs or VLRs (for more on VLRs, see chapter 4).

Ultimately, greater coherence, communication and collaboration are required among NSOs, UN custodian agencies, NHRIs, civil society and others. In a world increasingly dominated by data (rigorous and weak) and struggling with a global pandemic, this type of collaboration is even more important to ensure that no one is left behind. As highlighted by

**2019 Institute of Economics  
and Peace SDG 16+  
Progress Report**



<sup>235</sup> To this end, NSOs are increasingly becoming the custodians for online platforms that track SDG progress at national levels (see case study). The Praia Group. (2020). Handbook on Governance Statistics, p. 22. International Institute for Sustainable Development. [http://ine.cv/praiagroup/hand\\_book/](http://ine.cv/praiagroup/hand_book/)

<sup>236</sup> UNDESA, International IDEA, & IDLO (2019). Conference in preparation for HLPF2019 - SDG16 Conference: Peace, Justice Inclusive Societies, p. 5. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23814SDG\\_16\\_MAIN\\_SUMMARY\\_SDG\\_Conference\\_Rome\\_May2019.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23814SDG_16_MAIN_SUMMARY_SDG_Conference_Rome_May2019.pdf)

<sup>237</sup> Global Alliance (2019). *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion*, p. 78. <https://www.sdg16hub.org/content/global-alliance-enabling-implementation-2030-agenda-through-sdg-16-anchoring-peace-justice>

collecting data on SDG16 is particularly important in countries that are at risk of falling into conflict.<sup>238</sup>

## How Can This Be Used?

In collecting data, NSOs and others  
often draw data  
from surveys

(including household surveys, business surveys and population surveys) as well as censuses, administrative records, expert assessments and, increasingly, 'big data', often using multiple sources to assess progress on an indicator.<sup>239</sup> In more remote or conflict-affected areas, new technologies, such as satellite data and imagery, may be well-equipped to address a lack of data. In terms of indicators,

perception and experience-based  
indicators

are key to accurately measuring progress, to mainstreaming gender and to leaving no one, including youth and refugees, behind.<sup>240</sup>

Many countries have plan to  
to improve data collection

through National Statistical Development Strategies. Across sectors and stakeholders,

innovative, multi-stakeholder approaches

are being advanced to bring different data sources together, as led by governments, civil society, the UN, international organizations and others.<sup>241</sup> Particularly from a LNOB perspective, initiatives such as the

## Leave No One Behind Project

focus on community-driven data to fill knowledge gaps at the local level in SDG monitoring and better understand drivers of vulnerability and marginalization.<sup>242</sup> The examples and case studies below, from indicator identification and methodological standards to bridging gaps in data sources and civil society spotlight reports, highlight various approaches taken to strengthen data for SDG 16.

In the absence of a single set of agreed definitions and categories for the information required for the

SDG 16.1.2 indicator,  
the OHCHR,

the custodian agency for this indicator (in addition to 16.10.1, 16.A.1 and 10.3.1/16.b.1) held consultations and coordination events with institutions working on conflict-related issues to harmonize and build upon existing standards and methodologies and to integrate available data into a single collection that serves the purposes of this indicator.<sup>243</sup> This process has involved a range of stakeholders, including NSOs, as part of the work of the Praia City Group on Governance Statistics and the Global Alliance of NHRIs.

Separately, and as highlighted earlier, civil society Spotlight Reports or parallel reporting offer an important means of addressing what many see as weaknesses in the official monitoring framework – the multi-dimensional nature of targets, data availability and the perceived credibility (or lack of credibility) of data generated by government agencies.

238 Institute for Economics & Peace (2019). SDG 16+ Progress Report 2019: A Comprehensive Global Audit Of Progress On Available SDG 16 Indicators, p. 3. <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/03/SDG16Progress-Report-2019-web.pdf>

239 Institute for Economics & Peace (2019). SDG 16+ Progress Report 2019: A Comprehensive Global Audit Of Progress On Available SDG 16 Indicators, p. 4. The Praia Group. (2020). Handbook on Governance Statistics, p. 94.

240 UNDESA, International IDEA, & IDLO (2019). Conference in preparation for HLPF2019 – SDG 16 Conference: Peace, Justice Inclusive Societies, p. 12.

241 Institute for Economics & Peace (2019). SDG 16+ Progress Report 2019: A Comprehensive Global Audit Of Progress On Available SDG 16 Indicators, p. 42. The Praia Group. (2020). Handbook on Governance Statistics, p. 72.

242 The Leave No One Behind Project was launched as a partnership of 12 international civil society organizations in 2017.

243 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights. Technical Guidance Note on SDG Indicator 16.1.2 Number of conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause, p. 3. [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIIndicators/SDG\\_Indicator\\_16\\_1\\_2\\_Guidance\\_Note.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIIndicators/SDG_Indicator_16_1_2_Guidance_Note.pdf)



## SDG Corruption Monitoring Dashboards: the Rwandan Experience of Mainstreaming SDG 16

Starting in 2018, Transparency International (TI) Rwanda began to support national efforts to produce the country's 2019 VNR. From the beginning, TI Rwanda was keen to emphasize the linkages between corruption and the SDGs and so produced [a scoping study](#) on the effect of corruption on national efforts to meet SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 13.<sup>244</sup>

While corruption is relatively high on the national agenda, key SDG implementers in line ministries are not sufficiently sensitized to the risks that corruption poses to the country's targets under the 2030 Agenda. To address this issue, TI developed a comprehensive approach intended to: (1) produce evidence that corruption hinders progress towards national development goals; (2) identify innovative mechanisms to mitigate corruption risks in SDG implementation; and (3) track the effectiveness of these measures over time jointly with SDG implementers.

The approach involves producing a one-page 'dashboard' that combines official and non-official data sources for each SDG relevant to TI Rwanda's work. By consolidating various scattered datasets into one coherent framework, the dashboard provides a highly actionable roadmap to reduce corruption vulnerabilities in SDG implementation. The approach involves a three-step process intended to bring together the various data and expertise used by individual programmes into a single dashboard tailored to individual SDGs.

First, an initial corruption risk assessment is conducted in collaboration with sectoral experts to identify and prioritize the main risks at each stage of the SDG sectoral value chain, from the policymaking level to the point of service delivery. Once risks have been mapped for each SDG of interest, the second step is to launch consultations with government, businesspeople and affected communities to match each prioritized corruption risk to corresponding anti-corruption safeguards designed to mitigate that risk. The final stage involves producing a monitoring framework that pairs each anti-corruption safeguard identified to a combination of different indicators that consciously draw on a range of data sources to provide a holistic appraisal of the effectiveness of anti-corruption mechanisms in place.

Synthesizing this information into the dashboard's monitoring framework allows SDG implementers to track whether their programmes are becoming more or less vulnerable to corruption, based on an overarching conceptual model that is sensitive to local context. While the tool is in the early stages of implementation, it is already clear that it lends itself to evidence-based advocacy, as it provides an at-a-glance understanding of the corruption risks that can undermine progress towards individual SDGs.

That each dashboard's framework draws on different data providers, including government sources and third-party assessments as well as data produced by the organization itself, is a strength of the tool, as it allows for the verification, comparison and triangulation of the official narrative as told in the VNR. As such, it is clear that the country's VNR is simply a first step in the process and that the official indicator set agreed upon by the IAEG must be complemented with more locally meaningful data to ensure transparency, accountability and participation in the 2030 Agenda.

**Take-aways and Recommendations:** TI Rwanda believes that the tool could be further developed into a multi-partner project by which different organizations input different data, building on the monitoring processes of each. Ultimately, the tool could be transferred to impartial government agencies, such as NSOs, to institutionalize the monitoring of governance issues in SDG implementation. Another possibility involves modifying the dashboard to turn it into a tool for community action to help citizens hold local leaders accountable in reporting corruption incidences.

244 Transparency International Rwanda. (2019). Corruption Effects on The Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. [https://tirwanda.org/IMG/pdf/sdg\\_and\\_corruption\\_report\\_pdf.pdf](https://tirwanda.org/IMG/pdf/sdg_and_corruption_report_pdf.pdf)

## SDG Corruption Monitoring Dashboards: the Rwandan Experience of Mainstreaming SDG 16, cont.

*A key lesson has been the pivotal importance of outreach; early communication is needed to ensure that relevant stakeholders feel addressed and know that the tool is holding them to account for their performance on specific SDGs. So far, TI Rwanda has combined desk research with online expert surveys, followed up by workshops to assess the severity of risks identified. Hosting small multi-stakeholder workshops with experts from government, the private sector and civil society during the process of developing each SDG dashboard was beneficial. The reason for this is that involving partners at an early stage helped to nurture ownership and buy-in from government and non-government representatives, which also facilitates subsequent access to the data needed to monitor progress.*

*\* An Example of a Country Score Card is included in the Appendix.*

*\* This case study was provided by Transparency International Rwanda.*

In The Netherlands, the

Dutch National Statistics Office

www

(CBS), starting with only 30 percent coverage of the SDG indicators in 2016, embarked on an extensive process of consultation with 30 different data-producing organizations, many coming from civil society with a record of independence and being responsible with data protection.<sup>245</sup> This consultation led to supplementary data that met a set of criteria and guaranteed compliance with standards of data produced by CBS. The result of this process was a rise to 51 percent in coverage of the SDG indicators.

<sup>245</sup> Dutch National Statistics Office: Praia Group Handbook. [https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/handbook\\_governance\\_statistics.pdf](https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/handbook_governance_statistics.pdf)

## Office for National Statistics (ONS), UK: User-Friendly Portals and Inter-governmental Data Focal Points

*The role of ONS is to provide UK data for the global SDG indicators; it is in this way that ONS supports the UK Government and non-government actions in their work implementing the SDGs. In line with the ethos of transparency and 'accountable and inclusive institutions', ONS UK publishes all of its SDG data on an open-source, reusable, customizable and user-friendly [website](https://sdgdata.gov.uk/) developed specifically for this purpose.<sup>246</sup> This sets a baseline for future reports, allowing us to see what progress has been made.*

*In supporting and streamlining the data collection process during the VNR process, ONS UK provided templates to other government departments to complete when compiling tables and charts to make quality assurance easier. ONS UK based these in part on the methodology requirements in the UN Statistics handbook on SDG indicators. Further, 'check-in' meetings (similar to 'office hours') were set for designated times and online chat functions were available for data focal points across government to ask questions. Overall, ONS UK worked with a number of stakeholders to promote the VNR and to recruit case studies and engage in the VNR process and produced a strongly data-led VNR.*

*Following publication, ONS UK worked with the lead policy team on VNR follow-up and review. This involved internal 'wash-up' meetings with statistical contacts and external ones with stakeholder groups. ONS UK continues to use the network of contacts built during the process to identify new data sources.<sup>247</sup>*

**Take-Aways and Recommendations:** *Processes give all those involved in the preparation of the VNR the support they need. Quality review is also key and, for follow-up, it is important to maintain a clear audit trail and to maintain the relationships/networks established for future action. The VNR provides a baseline so that future reports can focus on progress made since the first. **Going forward**, guidelines on how to prepare a second VNR as a follow-up, rather than as a second, stand-alone report, would make it easier to more meaningfully measure progress over time. Further, more and better disaggregated data would enable policymakers and non-governmental decision makers to make better-informed decisions for a sustainable future.*

*\* This case study draws from interviews with ONS, UK.*

246 UK data for the Sustainable Development Goals. (n.d.). 17 goals to transform our world. <https://sdgdata.gov.uk/>

247 Department for International Development. (2019). Follow-up on the UK's Voluntary National Review process and next steps. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-voluntary-national-review-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-lessons-learnt-and-next-steps>



## Transparency International SDG 16 Spotlight Reporting: Tracking Global Progress Towards Anti-Corruption Targets

In 2017, Transparency International (TI) developed a common methodology to enable civil society organizations to track their countries' progress towards four SDG 16 targets especially relevant for anti-corruption: 16.4 on illicit financial flows, 16.5 on corruption and bribery, 16.6 on accountable and transparent institutions and 16.10 on access to information and fundamental freedoms.<sup>248</sup> Since then, over 45 of TI's national chapters have used the tool to produce spotlight reports that provide independent appraisals of their governments' anti-corruption efforts, which are essential to improve implementation of the 2030 Agenda across all SDGs.<sup>249</sup>

Recognizing the lack of available data for the IAEG-SDG indicators, TI's methodology intentionally deviates from the official indicator set, drawing on a wider range of alternative data sources to scrutinize the often-uncritical assessments of national progress presented in VNRs. Going beyond the narrow understanding of corruption captured by the official global indicators, TI's spotlight reports provide a more holistic assessment of the underlying conditions and drivers of corruption at national level.

The overall aim has been to produce evidence to supplement the official government reports submitted as part of the VNR process. Looking at the quality of national legislative and institutional anti-corruption frameworks and their actual implementation, the tool is designed to enable chapters and other national stakeholders to develop actionable recommendations across a range of relevant policy areas, from anti-money laundering to whistleblowing. In this way, the approach seeks to embed cyclical VNR reporting into a longer process of iterative reform, generating data that can feed into governmental SDG reporting processes in each country.

An **independent impact assessment** of the tool conducted in 2019 revealed that, among other outcomes, TI's spotlight reports influenced anti-corruption action taken by governments in Greece and Sri Lanka; informed anti-corruption action taken by international organizations in Togo; enabled TI to establish new partnerships with government agencies in Uganda; and led to a better understanding of national anti-corruption frameworks in Hungary.<sup>250</sup> At national level, there has also been some on-the-ground coordination between TI chapters and other CSOs around VNRs and spotlight reporting.

For these spotlight reports to realize their true potential, however, VNR processes need to give due regard to civil society's attempt to incorporate a wider range of indicators and data sources than those agreed upon by the **IAEG-SDGs**.<sup>251</sup> Civil society's efforts to provide a baseline assessment that can be used as a benchmark to monitor progress towards the 2030 targets should be welcomed by all governments genuinely committed to enhancing peace, justice and strong institutions.

**Take-Aways and Recommendations:** In many countries, the tool provided a valuable opportunity for civil society organizations to demonstrate their value as providers of actionable data that can help remedy vulnerabilities in a country's anti-corruption framework. Framing the assessment as a contribution to national-level SDG implementation enabled them to engage government through internationally recognized channels, particularly if findings were used to complement VNR reports.

248 The research instrument, in the form of a questionnaire and accompany methodology, can be found [here](https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/product/corruption-and-the-sustainable-development-goals-parallel-reporting-tool-for-16-4-16-5-16-6-and-16-10). Transparency International. (2018). Corruption and the Sustainable Development Goals: Parallel Reporting Tool for 16.4, 16.5, 16.6 and 16.10. <https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/product/corruption-and-the-sustainable-development-goals-parallel-reporting-tool-for-16-4-16-5-16-6-and-16-10>.

249 A selection of narrative reports can be found [here](https://www.transparency.org/publications).

250 Laberge, M. (2019). Review of Transparency International's SDG 16 Parallel Reporting Tool Transparency International. [https://www.transparency.org/files/content/ouraccountability/Review - TI SDG 16 Parallel Reporting Tool - FINAL 29 July.pdf](https://www.transparency.org/files/content/ouraccountability/Review_-_TI_SDG_16_Parallel_Reporting_Tool_-_FINAL_29_July.pdf)

251 UN Stats. IAEG-SDGs: Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, Mandate and Membership. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>



## Transparency International SDG 16 Spotlight Reporting: Tracking Global Progress Towards Anti-Corruption Targets

*While the bulk of the indicators can be answered through desk research, interviews proved useful in verifying findings and gleaning additional insights from public officials, elected representatives, civil society and private sector firms. Moreover, establishing a working rapport with interviewees in government provided TI chapters with 'entry points' to key institutions when it came to the dissemination of findings and advocating for the adoption of policy recommendations. However, given that the primary purpose of Spotlight Reports is to scrutinize government performance, there remains a need for distance and researchers have to be somewhat sceptical of their interlocutors' assertions. Freedom-of-information requests have proven important in filling gaps where insufficient data is publicly available, not least as they can provide information about implementation and enforcement of anti-corruption measures, with unsatisfactory responses often constituting a finding in their own right.*

*\* An example of a Country Score Card is included in the Appendix.*

*\* This case study was provided by Transparency International.*

Finally, collaboration with the private sector is also an area of increasing interest in terms of data collection and monitoring. While this has less been the case for SDG 16 as opposed to other SDGs, the private sector can also be a useful data source in strengthening VNR and post-VNR processes.

### Key Resources:

- [SDG 16 Data Initiative](#), 2019 Global Report;
- [Praia Group's Handbook on Governance Statistics \(2020\); Handbook for the Preparation of the VNR, the 2020 Edition](#), UN DESA (2019);
- [SDG 16+ Progress Report 2019](#), Institute for Economics and Peace;
- [Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), OHCHR;
- [Corruption and the Sustainable Development Goals: Parallel Reporting Tool for 16.4, 16.5, 16.6 and 16.10](#), Transparency International (2018);
- [Human Rights Indicators Table, Updated with the SDGs Indicators](#), OHCHR

**Interviews:** Joanne Evans, ONS, UK; Matthew Jenkins and Jessica Ebrard, Transparency International; Massimo Tomassoli, International IDEA; Fredy Rodriguez, CEPEI; Sarah Long, World Justice Project.

# 11. THE ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES, INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN SUPPORTING SDG 16 AND THE VNRS

## What Is It?

Four years following the Adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the

### Secretary-General's 2019 SDGs

#### Progress Report

called for renewed efforts to realize SDG 16, noting that “advances in ending violence, promoting the rule of law, strengthening institutions and increasing access to justice are uneven and continue to deprive millions of their security, rights and opportunities and undermine the delivery of public services and broader economic development”.<sup>252</sup> In his

### 2020 SDG Progress Report

he stressed the impact of COVID-19 on SDG 16, noting that the pandemic could lead to “an increase in social unrest and violence that would greatly undermine our ability to meet the targets of SDG 16”.<sup>253</sup> At this year’s 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN, and amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, the UN-SG convened world leaders in a virtual format (“the SDG moment”)<sup>254</sup> to seek action and solutions for a world in crisis. A statement made by the SDG 16 community (representing a group of Member States, civil society organizations, international organizations

and global partnerships working to implement SDG 16+) stressed the urgency in making SDG 16 the foundation for reset and recovery efforts and for more ambition in building resilient societies and institutions going forward.

These SG Reports – and, indeed, the

### SDG Moment

### Decade of Action

<sup>255</sup> and

### Decade of Accountability

<sup>256</sup> – are rallying calls for more collaborative and innovative action, political mobilization and investment. Political and financial investments are critical to accelerating progress on SDG 16, and development agencies, international financial institutions (IFIs) and international organizations (IOs) are fundamental to this acceleration. While their roles in supporting SDG 16 through NDPs and VNR processes differ, relevant to all three is the need for<sup>257</sup>

<sup>252</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNDESA) (2019). Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019 Special Edition (Rep.), p. 27. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24978Report\\_of\\_the\\_SG\\_on\\_SDG\\_Progress\\_2019.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24978Report_of_the_SG_on_SDG_Progress_2019.pdf)

<sup>253</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNDESA) (2020). Report of the Secretary-General on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, p. 20. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26158Final\\_SG\\_SDG\\_Progress\\_Report\\_14052020.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26158Final_SG_SDG_Progress_Report_14052020.pdf)

<sup>254</sup> Convened by the UN Secretary-General, the first SDG Moment of the Decade of Action was held in September 2020 to set out a vision for a Decade of Action and recovering better from COVID-19. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sdg-moment/>

<sup>255</sup> United Nations Sustainable Development Group. (2020). UNSDG | Decade of Action. Retrieved 4 August 2020, from <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/decade-action>

<sup>256</sup> The TAP Network 2030. (2020). SDG Accountability Portal: About the Campaign for a Decade of Accountability for the SDGs. <https://sdgaccountability.org/decade/>

<sup>257</sup> Global Alliance (2019). Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion, p. 48. <https://www.sdg16hub.org/content/global-alliance-enabling-implementation-2030-agenda-through-sdg-16-anchoring-peace-justice>

## political support, technical expertise and support and financing

www

However, even before COVID-19, Official Development Assistance (ODA) was declining; most donors do not, and have not, lived up to their pledge of directing 0.7 percent of GDP to ODA. With only a decade left, this calls for international actors to step up and better coordinate their support for SDG 16 implementation – as an enabler for Agenda 2030 as a whole and as an important foundation for COVID-19 recovery). In helping to guide such support, SDG 16-related recommendations and findings noted within a country's VNR, as linked to NDPs and as reflective of meaningful stakeholder engagement, provide a blueprint.

### Why Is This Important?

## According to the 2020 Financing for Sustainable Development Report

www

even before the outbreak of COVID-19, one in five countries was likely to see per capita incomes stagnate or decline in 2020. Now, billions more are likely to be affected as governments struggle to cope with the pandemic. According to the 2018 OECD States of Fragility report, by 2030,

## more than 80 percent of the world's poorest could be living in fragile contexts

www

unless more concerted action takes place<sup>258</sup>.

Enhanced international cooperation is needed to ensure that sufficient means of implementation exist and are well-targeted to provide countries the opportunity to

achieve the SDGs and to address the short- and long-term effects of COVID-19. Investments in SDG 16, with its focus on governance, service delivery and an improved social contract, provide a relevant conduit to do so.

As highlighted by the Secretary-General's 2019 report,<sup>259</sup>

## "the required level of sustainable development financing and other means of implementation are not yet available"

www

Galvanizing and further spurring international actors to support SDG 16 through post-VNR processes are important, not just for SDG 16, but for all SDGs, given proven returns on investment.

In line with the Secretary-General's<sup>260</sup>

## prioritization of prevention

www

and according to the joint UN-World Bank<sup>261</sup>

## Pathways for Peace

www

preventing violent conflict saves lives and money—up to US\$70 billion per year on average. According to the<sup>262</sup>

## Taskforce on Justice

www

every dollar invested in justice is likely to return at least US\$16 in benefits from reduced conflict risk. In low-income countries, it would cost US\$20 per year to provide a person with access to basic justice services. In middle-income countries, it would cost US \$64 per person and in high-income countries US \$190.

However, fragile and low-income countries often see<sup>263</sup>

## domestic resources drained by illicit outflows

www

258 OECD (2018). States of Fragility Report. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/states-of-fragility-2018\\_9789264302075-en;jsession-id=7sbjxh3PzDBu0dKI7Koaygq.ip-10-240-5-4](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/states-of-fragility-2018_9789264302075-en;jsession-id=7sbjxh3PzDBu0dKI7Koaygq.ip-10-240-5-4)

259 UNDESA (2019). Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019 Special Edition (Rep.), p. i.

260 United Nations. Priorities: Prevention Secretary-General. Retrieved August 04, 2020, from <https://www.un.org/sg/en/priorities/prevention.shtml>

261 United Nations; World Bank. (2018) Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict, p. 3.

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO

262 Pathfinders. Task Force on Justice. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.sdg16.plus/task-force-on-justice>

263 Signé L., Sow M., & Madden M. (2020). Illicit financial flows in Africa Drivers, destinations, and policy options [Policy Brief], p. 3. Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings Institute. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Illicit-financial-flows-in-Africa.pdf>



## A Brief Breakdown – Development Agencies, IFIs, the UN and other IOs

*Within development agencies, approaches to supporting SDG 16 and VNR/post-VNR follow-up vary. The Republic of Korea's International Cooperation Agency, for example, has mainstreamed SDG 16 into its ODA.<sup>1</sup> Germany, while more broadly focused on the 2030 Agenda, is specifically supporting peer-learning on monitoring and review processes in partner countries (VNRs). Though not exhaustive, others that are particularly engaged include the U.K., Switzerland, Sweden, and the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> Development agencies also generally have more flexibility in supporting civil society actors, albeit larger outfits, as compared to IFIs. Finally, while key, development agencies do face limitations in terms of policy mandates, accountability towards taxpayers and public opinion.<sup>3</sup>*

*IFIs, such as the World Bank or the African or Asian Development Banks, often provide significant financial backing to member states which can support SDG 16 implementation, even if not targeted for SDG 16 but rather as related to prevention and forced displacement, for example. As such, IFIs, broadly, often have the ear of finance ministers, which relates to national budgets, NDPs and often VNRs. IFIs have also recently increased their funding for issues related to SDG 16. For example, the World Bank<sup>4</sup> has significantly increased its support for fragile and conflict-affected countries and in 2018, the International Monetary Fund's Executive Board approved a new framework for enhanced on governance, including as related to governance vulnerabilities, such as corruption.<sup>5</sup>*

*The UN is critical to mobilizing action on SDG16<sup>6</sup> and to responding to country demand for support at HQ and country levels. UN Development System reforms have focused on strengthening the UN at country level, incentivizing accountable leadership, partnerships and improved financing.<sup>7</sup> Related to NDPs and VNRs, UN Resident Coordinators at the country level are tasked with coordinating UN operational activities (including on SDG16) and preparing UN Sustainable Development Coordination Frameworks. UNSDCFs are based on national development priorities and feature partnerships with the government and other stakeholders. UN custodian agencies for SDG 16 indicators include: UNODC, WHO, DESA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNCTAD, UNODA, OECD and UNSD, with UN Women and UNFPA acting as partner agencies.<sup>8</sup>*

*Other IOs with direct SDG 16 relevance, such as the OECD<sup>9</sup> or IDLO, support their member states in achieving the SDGs and have also developed various tools and analysis to measure and strengthen progress towards the 2030 Agenda.<sup>10</sup>*

1 — Korea International Cooperation Agency (2018). *KOICA Briefing Paper: Achieving SDG16: The Implementation Strategy of KOICA*.

2 — Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. *A Sustainable Path to the Future: The 2030 Implementation Initiative*. [http://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type\\_of\\_publication/information\\_flyer/information\\_brochures/Materilie355\\_sustainable\\_path.pdf](http://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type_of_publication/information_flyer/information_brochures/Materilie355_sustainable_path.pdf)

3 — Andersson, D. (2019). *A Profile of the SDG16+ Community: An Independent Study*. Retrieved from the SDG16 Hub. <https://www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2020-03/A%20Profile%20of%20the%20SDG16%2B%20Community%2C%20Final%20Draft%2012-21-19.pdf>

4 — World Bank (2020). *Conflict and Fragility*. <https://ida.worldbank.org/theme/conflict-and-fragility>

5 — International Monetary Fund (IMF). (2018). *IMF Executive Board Approves New Framework for Enhanced Engagement on Governance* [Press release]. <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/04/21/pr18142-imf-board-approves-new-framework-for-enhanced-engagement-on-governance>

6 — Andersson, D. (2019). *A Profile of the SDG16+ Community: An Independent Study*. Retrieved from the SDG16 Hub.

7 — United Nations. (2020). *Development Reform | United to Reform*. <https://reform.un.org/content/development-reform>

8 — United Nations Statistics (2020). *Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators as of 17 April 2020*. [https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/Tier%20Classification%20of%20SDG%20Indicators\\_17%20April%202020\\_web.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/Tier%20Classification%20of%20SDG%20Indicators_17%20April%202020_web.pdf)

9 — Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). *Who We Are*. <https://www.oecd.org/about/>

10 — International Development Law Organization. *About IDLO*. <https://www.idlo.int/about-idlo/about-idlo>



As highlighted by the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda (2019-2021), illicit financial flows have<sup>264</sup>

**seriously negative consequences**

on financing and progress, highlighting the need to

**prevent receipt, assist in repatriating,**

**prosecute illicit flows and enhance**

**sustainable financing strategies and investments**

at regional and country levels.<sup>265</sup>

Relatedly, ODA plays an important role in complementing national efforts to mobilize domestic public and private resources, particularly in the least-developed and most-vulnerable countries. To this end, least-developed country graduates have repeatedly voiced concern on the impact of declining ODA on their development paths. However, as highlighted by the 2018 OECD States of Fragility Report,

**"ODA is still too concentrated in**

**a handful of places and is not**

**always well-aligned to the unique**

and multi-dimensional needs of fragile contexts".<sup>266</sup> Further complicating matters, the World Bank has estimated that from<sup>267</sup>

**20 percent to 40 percent of ODA**

**is lost to high levels of corruption**

**every year**

Responding to global crises with devastating consequences, such as COVID-19, is important and needed. However, at the same time, it is important to continue supporting – in a predictable manner – building peace, providing justice and strengthening institutions in protecting the most vulnerable and marginalized. Not mutually exclusive,

**new aid packages are looking to halt the**

**pandemic, protect the vulnerable from its**

**economic effects and bolster healthcare systems**

while maintaining focus on the most essential ingredients to preserving social fabric, inclusion and bettering the social contract.<sup>268</sup>

To this end, there are partnerships that address the global pandemic and SDG 16 in crisis-affected situations. For example, UNDP and the Islamic Development Bank developed a joint COVID-19 response plan, which includes socio-economic impact assessments and recovery initiatives in Yemen, Iraq and Syria, where the compound effects of violence, instability and a global economic downturn are bringing fragile economies to a standstill and devastating people's ability to provide for their basic needs.<sup>269</sup>

In this current context, slinking and integrating post-VNR activities with COVID-19 socio economic recovery

264 UN: Africa Renewal (2020). Challenges: The Global Dilemma of Illicit Financial Flows: Time for Collective Action. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/global-dilemma-illicit-financial-flows-time-collective-action>

265 United Nations (2019). United Nations Secretary-General's Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 2019-2021, p. 6. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/UN-SG-Roadmap-Financing-the-SDGs-July-2019.pdf>

266 OECD (2018). States of Fragility 2018, p. 7.

267 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) (2019). United Nations World Public Sector Report 2019 Sustainable Development Goal 16: Focus on public institutions, p. xiii. <https://publicadministration.un.org/publications/content/PDFs/World%20Public%20Sector%20Report2019.pdf>

268 Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) (2020). GPPAC calls for an inclusive, people-centred peacebuilding response to the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.gppac.net/news/gppac-calls-inclusive-people-centered-peacebuilding-response-covid-19-pandemic>

269 Islamic Development Bank (Isdb) (2020). Press Release: UNDP, UNOPS, UNICEF, Islamic Development Bank and the Government of Cameroon join forces to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.isdb.org/news/undp-unops-unicef-islamic-development-bank-and-the-government-of-cameroon-join-forces-to-fight-the-covid-19-pandemic>

plans and policies, provides an important avenue for longer-term impact.<sup>270</sup>

In an analysis undertaken by UN DESA of the VNRs presented at the 2020 HLPF, several VNRs underlined a point also made by the UN Secretary-General, namely, that, if they had been more advanced in SDG implementation, the impact of COVID-19 might have been less severe.<sup>271</sup> This reinforces the critical importance of SDG 16 investments especially in strengthening responsive and effective governance systems before the COVID crisis and the opportunity for SDG 16 prioritization in the recovery plans that are being developed.

### How Can This Be Used?

The below offers a brief snapshot of the different approaches used by development partners in their support to SDG implementation in regards to conflict-sensitive technical assistance, alignment with national priorities, multi-donor funding schemes and inclusive reporting.

#### The 2030 Agenda re-focused UN and other donors on the importance

##### of technical assistance

(policy support, capacity development and country accompaniment), including for SDG 16 implementation.<sup>272</sup> Especially challenging areas where technical assistance is sought include conflict-sensitive policies and programmes, supporting human-rights-based approaches, participatory planning and accountability mechanisms and monitoring. Much of this assistance is provided by multilateral (including regional) and bilateral institutions and from global and regional civil society. UN country programmes are particularly geared toward 2030 Agenda outcomes, with many of them focused on SDG 16+ targets. Relatedly,

#### the UN Joint SDG Fund

is an interagency, pooled mechanism for strategic financing and integrated policy support, targeting programmes that work across the SDGs as a means of accelerating progress.<sup>273</sup>

However, as noted in the<sup>274</sup>

#### 2019 SDGs Progress report and similar

##### to the principles laid out in the

##### Aid Effectiveness Agenda

development partners have room to improve in better focusing on the priorities of partner countries. “Bilateral development partners’ respect for country policies declined from 64% in 2016 to 57% in 2018. Some 76% of new development projects and programmes aligned their objectives to those defined in the country strategies and/or plans in 2018. However, only 52% of result indicators for these interventions were drawn from country-owned result frameworks and only 44 per cent of result indicators were monitored using data and statistics from government monitoring systems.”

#### According to the 2018 States of Fragility report

mutual accountability frameworks can ensure that all actors are working towards coherent results on nationally defined priorities.<sup>275</sup> Supporting countries in their post-VNR processes may help to refocus efforts and place attention where it needs to be.

#### International organizations and other providers of technical assistance

270 The UN Framework for the Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 brings the UN specialized agencies and funds and programs together around an agreed set of priorities and mechanisms to support countries with a consolidated UN national response and recovery plan that complements national recovery planning. <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-framework-immediate-socio-economic-response-covid-19>

271 UN/DESA Policy Brief #85: Impact of COVID-19: perspective from Voluntary National Reviews <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-des-a-policy-brief-85-impact-of-covid-19-perspective-from-voluntary-national-reviews/>

272 Global Alliance (2019). *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion*, p. 48.

273 United Nations Development Programme (2017). Joint SDG Fund. Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office Gateway. <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/IPS00>

274 UNDESA (2019). Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019 Special Edition (Rep.), p. 23.

275 OECD (2018). States of Fragility 2018, p. 18.

need to provide support that is grounded in local realities, sequenced, coordinated with other donors and domestic programmes, financed sustainably and do no harm.<sup>276</sup> International and regional actors should support cross-country learning and exchange, accompanying countries in piloting approaches and taking these to scale.

Further, there is no standardized, global approach to mapping ODA to the SDGs or their respective targets that allows for comparable monitoring of financial contributions. The OECD developed approaches to mapping financial contributions to the SDGs<sup>277</sup>

**Financing Lab**

www

and to fragile states<sup>278</sup>

**States of Fragility report**

www

Both approaches use donor-generated data from the OECD Development Assistance Committee Creditor Reporting System on donors' ODA distribution across sectors. However, spending patterns are not strategically informing discussion on how financing actually relates to achieving certain SDGs and targets.

Such information would have significant steering potential, particularly for SDG 16 as an enabler of all other SDGs, improving alignment and prioritization of support as reflected in NDPs and VNRs.

In terms of IFIs, the

**World Bank Group's recently launched**

**Fragility, Conflict and Violence**

www

**Strategy**

(2020-2025) aims to enhance its effectiveness in supporting countries in addressing the drivers and impacts of FCV and strengthen their resilience, especially for the most vulnerable populations.<sup>279</sup> To this end, the WBG is



significantly scaling up the volume and types of financial support it provides for addressing Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV) in low- and middle-income countries. Often, this translates into support for SDG 16.

More innovative funding schemes across stakeholders, such as the<sup>280</sup>

**OGP Multi-Donor Trust Fund**

www

**the EU and the UN's Spotlight Initiative**

www

and the<sup>281</sup>

**UN's Peacebuilding Fund**

www

276 OECD (2018). States of Fragility 2018, p. 18.

277 OECD. The SDG Financing Lab. <https://sdg-financing-lab.oecd.org/?country=Belgium&distribution=providers&sdg=10>

278 OECD (2018). States of Fragility 2018, p. 65.

279 The World Bank (2020). Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020–2025, p. 2. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/844591582815510521/world-bank-group-strategy-for-fragility-conflict-and-violence-2020-2025>

280 Open Government Partnership. OGP Multi-Donor Trust Fund. <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/ogp-multi-donor-trust-fund/>

281 United Nations. United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/fund>

offer catalytic and targeted support. However, earmarking, a lack of flexibility and significant administrative barriers to entry, particularly for civil society, often hinder their full impact.

To this end, civil society actors are highlighting the need for similar, SDG 16 specific funding mechanisms to encourage grassroots ownership and mobilization of SDG 16+ through flexible, non-earmarked funding. There is a clear need to better support civil society and grassroots approaches in their implementation of SDG 16 and their engagement with the VNR.

In moving forward, a country's VNR, as linked to NDPs and COVID recovery priorities, and based on inclusive, multi-stakeholder processes, offers clear direction in how to best support SDG 16 implementation at national and subnational levels. This direction, as determined by partner country priorities, should be heeded. Civil society and local actors should be prioritized and

local donor delegations should see  
themselves as fully vested and  
full-fledged stakeholders

www

in the VNR process.<sup>282</sup> And, finally, as noted in

the Profile of the SDG 16+ Community

www

an Independent Study, particular attention should be paid to addressing short-term financing, earmarking and politicized commitments.<sup>283</sup>

### Key Resources:

- [Pathways for Peace](#), UN-World Bank Report (2018);
- Financing for Sustainable Development Report, [Interagency Taskforce on Financing for Development](#) (2020);
- [The SDG Financing Lab](#), OECD;
- [The World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020–2025](#);
- [The UN's Secretary-General's Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda, 2019-2021](#) (2019).

**Interviews:** Neil Gandhi, DFID, UK and Anna-Maria Heisig, GIZ, Germany.

<sup>282</sup> Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) (2020). Reporting for the Future: Final Report Ready for Review 2019. <https://www.cspps.org/publications/reporting-future-final-report-ready-review-2019>

<sup>283</sup> Andersson, D. (2019). A Profile of the SDG16+ Community: An Independent Study. Retrieved from the SDG16 Hub. <https://www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2020-03/A%20Profile%20of%20the%20SDG16%2B%20Community%2C%20Final%20Draft%202012-21-19.pdf>



# 12. ALIGNING VNRS WITH OTHER REPORTING AND REVIEW MECHANISMS

## What Is It?

SDG 16 and the SDGs encompass just one framework that governments, civil society organizations and others have signed onto that support, directly or indirectly, peace, justice, inclusion and strong institutions. Aligning the VNR with related reporting and review mechanisms and frameworks not only allows for greater policy coherence, coordination and impact, but may also broaden the number of stakeholders engaged and make better use of data generated by National Statistical Offices and other data sources.

Far from exhaustive, examples of such initiatives and review mechanisms include the Open Government Partnership (national action plans); the Universal Period Review (UPR); UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures; the UN Convention Against Corruption; and others. Regional organizations also have a role to play in supporting SDG 16 at national levels and how data and input generated for the VNR might be used in support of related conventions and treaties backed by regional organizations and vice versa.

## Why Is It important?

Synchronizing relevant frameworks for strengthened SDG 16 impact and reporting provides a useful and tangible opportunity to scale impact, mainstream implementation and make efficient use of resources, human or otherwise, already being utilized. Reporting can often seem burdensome to governments and other stakeholders. By aligning the VNR with other reporting mechanisms, or by mapping when the VNR and other reporting opportunities take place and the data required for each, governments and other stakeholders can optimize these processes for better data, policy coherence and multi-stakeholder engagement.

As noted in the UN DESA's

2020 VNR Handbook



existing national platforms and processes, such as the UPR and other international treaties, can contribute to VNR production and analysis.<sup>284</sup> However, and particularly given the complementarity between the

complementarity between the UPR and the VNR



more can be done in operationalizing these links through post-VNR processes for stronger SDG 16 implementation.<sup>285</sup> The pledge to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first represents a commitment to the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination

## How Can This Be Used?

The below section offers potential tools and opportunities for more coordinated and impactful reporting and improved policy coherence.

The Danish Institute for Human Rights



(DIHR) identified more than 90 percent of the 169 SDG targets as directly linked to human rights instruments and labour standards.<sup>286</sup> In identifying overlap, DIHR's SDG-Human Rights Data Explorer allows users to explore the links between human rights and the SDGs. Users can explore recommendations in relation to all 17 SDGs and 169 targets to help identify priority areas for national SDG action plans, measures to tackle discrimination and exclusion, and vulnerable groups that may require additional support.

<sup>284</sup> United Nations Department Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) (2019). *Handbook for the Preparation of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) 2019 Edition*, p. 15. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20872VNR\\_hanbook\\_2019\\_Edition\\_v2.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20872VNR_hanbook_2019_Edition_v2.pdf)

<sup>285</sup> High-Level Political Forum 2020: Aligning reporting processes: Voluntary National Reviews and international human rights mechanisms. VNR Lab 13 July 2020. Retrieved from [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26254Concept\\_Note\\_VNR11.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26254Concept_Note_VNR11.pdf)

<sup>286</sup> Human Rights Data Explorer. <https://sdgdata.humanrights.dk/>.

The database uses an algorithm to automatically identify links between the SDG targets and over 150,000 recommendations and observations from international human rights mechanisms, including the UPR, UN Treaty Bodies and the Special Procedures under the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). The database identifies 30,519 recommendations related to SDG 16, including 15,582 from the UPR, 2,595 from special procedures and 12,342 from treaty bodies.

Similarly, some states have started linking SDG and human rights reporting and implementation processes through national online databases (such as the<sup>287, 288</sup>

National Recommendations  
Tracking Database

Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI)  
or the<sup>289</sup>  
Simore+

from an inter-American regional perspective) that track the implementation of human rights obligations and the SDGs, to further strengthen accountability, reduce reporting burdens and advance the implementation of SDG16. (Links between SDG 16 and NHRIs can be found in chapter 9.)

## The Open Government Partnership

has found that a number of commitments made under OGP national action plans relate to SDG 16 targets and means of implementation.<sup>290</sup> Every two years, OGP members are required to submit concrete commitments every that are co-created between government reformers and civil society organizations. Every year, an independent assessment of progress is conducted by OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism. These reports are public and provide a learning and accountability tool that ensures progress is tracked. OGP Action Plans are effective in getting time-bound, independently monitored commitments from governments on policy reform towards many SDG 16 related issues, for governments and civil society.

### Canada: Translating SDG 16 Commitments Through OGP and the Access to Justice Secretariat

*Justice Canada<sup>291</sup> has reiterated and reinforced its interest and commitment to SDG 16 through various means and mechanisms, as evidenced by its 2018 VNR, as a member of the Taskforce on Justice, and as a member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP). In 2019 and under Canadian leadership while Canada was co-Chair of the OGP, the OGP Coalition on Justice was announced. By linking its commitments to justice, through both SDG 16 and the OGP, Justice Canada has been able to support justice-related policy change= domestically and internationally.*

*In the fall of 2019, the Access to Justice Secretariat within Justice Canada was established to drive greater coherence, enable and enrich partnerships within the government and with civil society and increase policy work on access to justice issues. For example, the Access to Justice Secretariat participates in a Government of Canada*

287 UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) (2020). Video: National Recommendations Tracking Database. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0likHkHUXuU>

288 UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) [Universal Human Rights Index](#) (UHRI)

289 Organization of American States (OAS)/Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR): About Inter-American SIMORE. <https://www.oas.org/ext/en/human-rights/simore/About-SIMORE>

290 Powell, J. (2020). Implementing SDG 16+ Through the Open Government Partnership. Open Government Partnership. <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/stories/implementing-sdg16-through-the-open-government-partnership/>

291 Government of Canada, D. (2020, July 03). Home Page – Department of Justice. Retrieved 3 August 2020, from <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/>

## Canada: Translating SDG 16 Commitments Through OGP and the Access to Justice Secretariat, cont.

*interdepartmental taskforce, which seeks to share information and engage with equity-seeking communities to ensure the federal response to COVID-19 is adapted where possible to the needs of these communities.*

*Recognizing that access to justice and open government are mutually supportive, Justice Canada has proposed that an Open Justice commitment be included in Canada's upcoming National Action Plan on Open Government (NAP). The key principles of open justice – transparency, accountability, innovation and partnership – are embedded throughout the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDG 16 specifically urges us to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. The NAP process brings with it a particularly useful engagement factor, a multi-stakeholder forum and an independent review mechanism that engages civil society. The OGP has been useful for alignment, particularly in terms of the Joint Declaration on Open Government for the Implementation of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and concrete resources to advance justice policy work.<sup>292</sup>*

*Given its commitment to access to justice, internationally and domestically, Justice Canada has been able to effectively bridge foreign and domestically focused justice work. While this new engagement strategy through the OGP NAP process has not yet been fully put in place due to delays related to COVID-19, it may inform how OGP NAP reporting can be more effectively applied to future VNRs.*

*\* This case study draws from interviews with Open Government, Justice Canada, Government of Canada.*

Regional organizations also offer an opportunity to align SDG 16-related reporting for more coherent and impactful policymaking and stakeholder engagement. For example, regional organizations, such as the

Council of Europe,



can support SDG 16 advancement and reporting, through such conventions, by highlighting the overlap in subject matter and data used by governments, members or otherwise, in following up on these conventions.<sup>293</sup>

<sup>292</sup> Joint Declaration on Open Government for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015). [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/OGP\\_declaration.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/OGP_declaration.pdf)

<sup>293</sup> Council of Europe. 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. Council of Europe Contribution to the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/un-agenda-2030/goal-16>.

## Council of Europe: Regional Organizations, VNR Processes and SDG 16

*Rather than creating new activities, programs or projects, the Council of Europe (CoE) has framed and labelled its on-going work in SDG terms. As a regional organization of 47 member states founded on the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, its reporting mechanisms and subject matter provide an opportunity for member states that are reporting on SDG 16 to pull from Council of Europe data and vice-versa. For example, and though not exhaustive, the following is a listing of conventions as related to SDG 16: the European Convention on Human Rights, the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data Framework, and the **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**.<sup>294</sup> (Conventions are legally binding treaties, if ratified, though with varying degrees of follow-up depending on the context).*

*To this end, and in reporting progress in adherence to a convention, the Council of Europe may then offer concrete recommendations through their advisory committees to one of its member state.*

*The CoE has created a website that provides key information for each SDG. Member States can use this information to illustrate that their participation in the CoE also contributes to national implementation of the relevant SDG and this can be referred to in the VNRs. While Member States themselves are primarily responsible for implementing the SDGs, the CoE, as an international organization, is there to assist and help facilitate the process.*

*\* This case study draws from interviews with the Directorate of External Relations within the Council of Europe.*

Similarly, UN conventions, such as the

### UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)

www

as well as historic anniversaries, such as

### Beijing +25

www

offer additional opportunities to leverage data and reporting mechanisms for more coherent and coordinated policy and programming across institutions.<sup>295</sup> Many of these processes, from the UPR to the UNCAC, will continue beyond the 2030, so engaging and linking with these processes will be important for sustainability.

### Key Resources:

- [How to Use the Open Government Partnership to Advance Access to Justice and Open Justice](#) (2019);

- [Council of Europe Contribution to the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals; SDGs and Cooperation Activities](#), Council of Europe;
- [Democracy and Peacebuilding in the Framework of SDG 16](#), International IDEA (2020);
- [National Human Rights Institutions as a Driving Force for Sustainable Development](#), DIHR;
- [NMRFs – A key State structure for effective reporting, coordination and implementation of human rights recommendations](#), Universal Rights Group, Geneva (2016);
- Forthcoming guidance for UNCTS on UPRs (OHCHR)

**Interviews:** Catherine McKinnon, Justice Canada; Max Gilbert, Council of Europe, Armend Bekaj, International IDEA.

<sup>294</sup> Council of Europe. B Country-specific monitoring of the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/country-specific-monitoring>

<sup>295</sup> UN Office of Drugs and Crime. (2003). United Nations Convention against Corruption. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption/uncac.html> CSW64 / Beijing+25 (2020): Commission on the Status of Women. (n.d.). Retrieved 3 August 2020, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020>





# 13. DESIGNING THE VNR FOR POST-VNR IMPLEMENTATION AND INSTITUTIONALIZING REPORTING STRUCTURES

PRODUCED BY JOERN GEISSELMANN, PARTNERS FOR REVIEW

## What Is It and Why Is It Important?

Reviewing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda should not be regarded as an end in itself, but a means to improve and accelerate implementation. If designed and conducted effectively, a VNR can be an engine for action and transformation.

During the VNR, countries take stock of progress and shortcomings in the implementation of the Goals and targets. They assess the synergies achieved between different SDGs and consider potential and actual trade-offs. This process needs to be designed in a way that facilitates the systematic identification of lessons learnt, good practices and policy recommendations. While some aspects of SDG 16 may be politically sensitive, countries should assess their progress and explore existing challenges and possible solutions during each VNR (as is the case with all other Goals, independent of the fact whether a Goal is being thematically reviewed at the HLPF during a particular year).

After the VNR, effective follow-up is critical to ensure that the implementation process moves forward. Governments and all other concerned stakeholders need to act upon the lessons learnt, good practices and policy recommendations identified during the review. Naturally, this process is cyclical and dynamic. Countries are constantly implementing, assessing and readjusting their policies to achieve the SDGs.

At the outset of its first VNR or sometimes even immediately after adopting the 2030 Agenda, countries typically set up reporting structures to ensure the smooth coordination of the review process and the meaningful engagement of non-state actors. Institutionalizing these structures helps sustain the momentum created by the VNR and supports post-VNR implementation on SDG 16 and the other Goals.

## How Can This Be Used?

As explained, the VNR should not only review past implementation, but also aim to arrive at policy conclusions and agree on the next steps necessary to move the post-VNR implementation forward. When determining the VNR process, these objectives need to be taken into account.

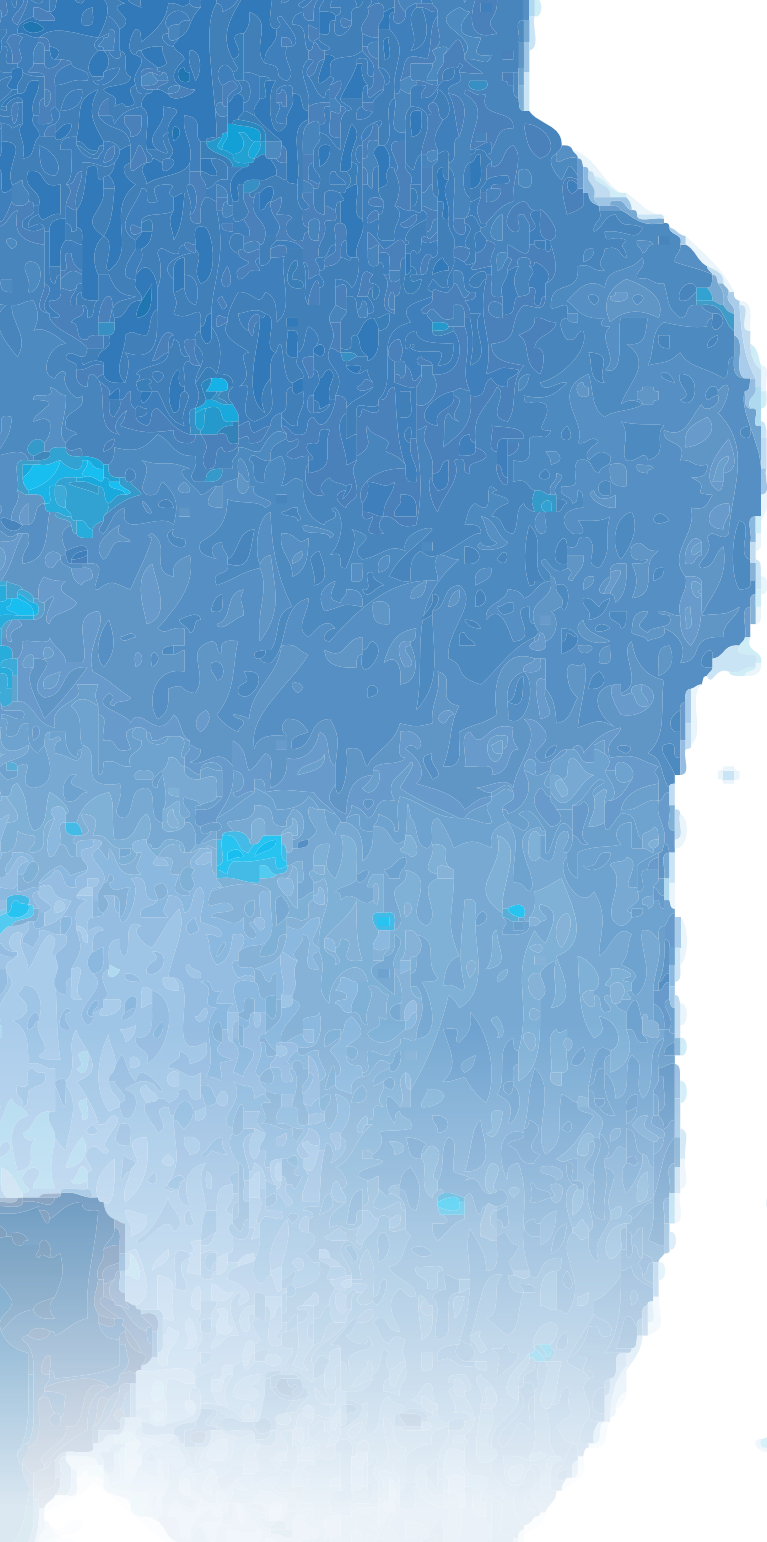
Achieving them requires not only time and resources (e.g., for stakeholder consultation, policy evaluations, background research), but, above all, effective horizontal and vertical coordination and meaningful engagement of non-state actors, so that multiple perspectives are considered in the development of recommendations and next steps.

In addition, establishing broad and inclusive reporting structures increases the likelihood of sustained post-VNR implementation, because state and non-state actors have higher ownership and joint implementation by multiple stakeholders and across sectors is more likely. SDG action on the ground also increases when subnational actors have already been involved in the review.

One country decided to put a focus on a locally particularly pressing sustainable development issue and to review it in a systematic and integrated manner. It conducted a systems analysis of drivers, bottlenecks and impacts, developed short- and long-term actions to tackle this issue and dedicated one chapter to the results in the VNR report. A similar approach could also be adopted for an issue related to SDG 16 and one its targets.

When designing the VNR process, immediate next steps need to be identified as well, such as reporting back to parliament and/or the media about the VNR presentation at the HLPF or organizing roundtables to further discuss the recommendations that have emerged from





the VNR process. Furthermore, issues related to budget allocation and SDG data need be addressed not only during the VNR, but also subsequently. Actions that are not necessarily directly related to the VNR, but that can also drive post-VNR implementation, should also be considered, e.g., conducting a peer review or a performance audit.

The institutional mechanisms established at the outset or before a VNR should be institutionalized and continued after the VNR. More and more countries report that their mechanisms were further improved after the VNR. A number of countries have started reviewing the SDGs in years when they do not conduct a VNR and, in some instances, report their results to parliament. Others have decided to hold annual stakeholder forums to discuss implementation progress.

### Designing and Conducting the VNR During the COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 has affected the conduction of the 2020 VNRs and will likely do so again for 2021 countries. It is also hampering post-VNR implementation efforts. The restrictions enforced in most countries in response to the pandemic have created obstacles to broad and inclusive consultations within government at all levels and with non-state actors. Virtual consultations and online surveys are very useful tools in this context, but depend on digital infrastructure and technology, which is not equally available everywhere. Data collection has also become much more difficult, which is of particular concern for SDG 16 because of the already large data gaps under normal circumstances.

In some countries, the pandemic is being used as grounds for governments to enact emergency measures and extend their control. For instance, where access-to-information laws can help empower citizens and hold dutybearers accountable in times of crisis, restrictions on access to official information and delays in responding to public requests for information

have been rercoded in some countries



<sup>296</sup> In these cases, it is even more important that citizens and institutions such as the parliament and media organizations hold them accountable and demand that civic space be restored during recovery.

At the same time, COVID-19 demonstrates the interconnectedness of the SDGs, as the impacts of the health crisis are closely related to, for example, human rights and inequality. It also reinforces the relevance of the 2030 Agenda, because progress on the SDGs will not only reduce the negative impacts of COVID-19, but also increase resilience to future shocks.

296 RTI and Centre for Law and Democracy (2020). Database: COVID-19 Tracker. <https://www.rti-rating.org/covid-19-tracker/>

## Lessons Learned from Repeated VNRs in Colombia

*Colombia has so far presented two VNRs: one in 2016 and one in 2018. The most important step after the 2016 VNR was for the government to initiate a multi-stakeholder process to develop the national SDG implementation strategy. This took more than one year of workshops to raise awareness and build capacity and of consultations and technical discussions with line ministries, local and regional governments and non-state actors.*

*A key motivation for Colombia to present a second VNR after only two years was to share its experience of the strategy process. Besides documenting central government action and achievements, the government also highlighted the contributions of other actors. While not all of these are labelled as SDG initiatives, they significantly contribute to sustainable development. This meant approaching stakeholders in a different way, stipulating new types of cooperation with and among them, and appreciating all contributions.*

*With civil society, a mapping exercise with umbrella organizations provided an overview of who is doing what in the country. Public surveys, open for anyone to register projects, complemented the process and helped identify relevant initiatives. A series of regional workshops involved documenting what CSOs are doing and how. With the private sector, a pilot project to design indicators based on the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards – developed with the support of the UNDP country office and the GRI, regional partners and sectoral associations – helped measure businesses' contributions to the SDGs.*

*As a result, the 2018 VNR contains five stories about different stakeholders' contributions to the SDGs. An important element in working with all those stakeholders was the web portal that Colombia developed with support from the Swedish Government and that became a key communication tool in the process.*

*The participatory strategy development and the 2018 VNR broadened public awareness and strengthened local processes. This also helped carry the vision and spirit of the 2030 Agenda through the transition after the 2018 presidential elections. The broad commitment fostered continuity and the SDGs provided a transcending element for the 2018–2022 National Development Plan.*

## Resources:

- [SDG review as an engine for action: Promising practices from around the world](#), Partners for Review (2020);
- [Multi-stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation: A review of Voluntary National Review Reports \(2016-2019\)](#), UN DESA (2020);
- [Progressing National SDG Implementation: An independent assessment of the voluntary national review reports submitted to the United Nations High-level Political Forum in 2019](#), Canadian Council for International Co-operation (2020);
- [Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis](#), Partners for Review (2019);
- [What happens after the VNR? Lessons Learned and Policy Recommendations from the VNR Process](#), Partners for Review (2019);
- [The whole of government approach: Initial lessons concerning national coordinating structures for the 2030 Agenda and how review can improve their operation](#), Partners for Review (2019);
- [Second Generation Voluntary National Reviews: Renewing the commitment](#), Cepei (2019).





## PART 3

### ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBER STATES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO ENGAGE IN SDG 16

# 14. LOOKING FORWARD: THE DECADE OF ACTION AND THE DECADE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

## Participating in Member State-Led and other Global Initiatives for SDG 16+

The initiatives below represent the key global initiatives working on SDG 16. From a Member State-led perspective, this includes the Global Alliance, the Pathfinders and the 16+ Forum. From civil society, this includes the TAP Network and CSPPS and, from a private sector lens, the UN Global Compact.

### The Global Alliance for Reporting

#### Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies:



The Global Alliance is a coordinating platform for UN Member States, private sector, civil society and international entities to work together to promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Co-facilitated by UNDP, UNESCO, UNODC and UNHCR, and liaising with partners across the UN System, the Global Alliance brings UN Member States the assistance they need to report meaningfully on progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies — and its links to the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>297</sup>

### The Pathfinders for Peaceful,

#### Just and Inclusive Societies:



The Pathfinders are a group of 36 UN Member States, international organizations, global partnerships, civil society and the private sector. They work to accelerate action on the SDG targets for peace, justice and inclusion. In September 2017, the Pathfinders launched the

Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. Following the first SDG Summit in September 2019, the Pathfinders continue to act as a platform for action. They aim to demonstrate measurable change against the SDG 16+ targets in Pathfinder countries by the second summit in 2023 by working on three objectives: national delivery, international delivery and three grand challenges (promoting justice for all, halving global violence and tackling exclusion and inequality).<sup>298</sup>

### 16+ Forum:



A partnership and a platform, the 16+ Forum is comprised of 12 Member States, the G7+ and the

### World Federation of United

#### Nations Associations



World Federation of United Nations Associations as its Secretariat. The 16+ Forum organizes the Annual Showcase, an annual global gathering of policymakers, practitioners and thought-leaders focused on the policy and practice of advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG 16+). The 2017 inaugural Showcase was held in Georgia, followed by Sierra Leone in 2018 and Timor-Leste in 2019, with an Outcome Document published after each capturing best practices shared. The 2020 Showcase is to be held in Costa Rica (possibly postponed to early 2021 due to COVID-19). In addition to the Showcase, the 16+ Forum organizes side-events throughout the year, particularly around HLPF and UNGA.<sup>299</sup>

<sup>297</sup> The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (About Webpage).

<https://www.sdg16hub.org/landing-page/sdg-16-global-alliance>

<sup>298</sup> Pathfinders. About Us (Webpage). <https://www.sdg16.plus/about-us>.

<sup>299</sup> 16+ Forum. Homepage (Webpage). <https://wfuna.org/sixteenplusforum>

## The Transparency, Accountability and

### Participation Network for

www

#### the 2030 Agenda:

The TAP Network is a broad international coalition of 400+ civil society organizations working together to advance SDG 16+ and to help enhance accountability for the 2030 Agenda. The TAP Network includes hundreds of civil society organizations operating in every region of the world, with TAP's work evolving to not only coordinate collective global advocacy on behalf of its members, but also to provide indirect or direct support to its members to advance SDG 16+ and SDG accountability in their own contexts. TAP's membership includes local and grassroots groups, national, regional and thematic CSO networks, and international NGOs and independent think tanks.<sup>300</sup>

## The Civil Society Platform

### for Peacebuilding and

www

#### Statebuilding:

CSPPS is a global network of civil society organizations supporting peacebuilding efforts in fragile and conflict-affected settings and supporting localization of SDG 16+ in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

## The UN Global Compact:

www

Aligned with the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact and the UN Sustainable Development Goals – particularly SDG 16 – the

## Action Platform for Peace, Justice

### and Strong Institutions

www

("Action Platform") aims to develop and promote global business standards in understanding, implementing and reporting on businesses' engagement in these areas.<sup>301</sup>

## Engaging in All Opportunities at the HLPF and SDGs Summit

The High-level Political Forum, the SDGs Summit (which takes place every four years with the next being in 2023) and the UN General Assembly<sup>302</sup> provide important opportunities for the SDG 16 community to come together to demonstrate progress achieved, shine a light on where progress is needed and further galvanize political will and energy, at all levels, to advance more peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

In addition to the VNRs and Spotlight Reports, these global forums provide platforms for Member States, civil society organizations and others to further commit to achieving SDG 16 and to demonstrate what translating such commitments into action looks like across various contexts. While significant efforts have been made at all levels to realize the vision of SDG 16 and the larger 2030 Agenda, the global community is behind schedule and, in fact, risks backsliding. Maintaining focus on SDG 16, as an enabler of the entire 2030 Agenda, is critical to all attempts to stay on track. To this end, and as the world struggles with COVID-19, global SDG 16+ partners issued a statement on HLPF 2020,

## Act Now for SDG 16+

www

### – Peace, Justice, Inclusion and Strong

#### Institutions in a Pandemic

in support of SDG 16+ as key to building back better from the global pandemic and to realizing the entire 2030 Agenda.<sup>303</sup>

In 2019, Member States pledged in their Political Declaration on the SDG Summit to make the last decade of the 2030 Agenda a

## Decade of Action

www

To do this, countries committed to the following 10 principles: leaving no one behind; mobilizing adequate and well-directed financing; enhancing national implementation; strengthening institutions for more integrated

300 The TAP Network 2030. About (Webpage). <https://tapnetwork2030.org/about/>

301 UN Global Compact. Action Platform for Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions (webpage).

302 The first [SDG Moment](#) is to take place at the 2020 General Assembly. Envisaged as an annual event, the SDG Moment is to highlight inspiring SDG action.

303 SDG 16+ Global Community Partners (2020). Act Now for SDG16+: Peace, Justice, Inclusion and Strong Institutions in a Pandemic. [https://530cfd94-d934-468b-a1c7-c67a84734064.filesusr.com/ugd/6c192f\\_f93d75d7d34643d1a1528cae6ca88778.pdf](https://530cfd94-d934-468b-a1c7-c67a84734064.filesusr.com/ugd/6c192f_f93d75d7d34643d1a1528cae6ca88778.pdf)



solutions; bolstering local action to accelerate implementation; building resilience; solving challenges through international cooperation and enhancing the global partnership; harnessing science, technology and innovation; investing in data; and strengthening the HLPF.<sup>304</sup>

A civil society-led

campaign for a Decade of

Accountability for the SDGs



aims to help guarantee that meaningful follow-up and review on accelerated actions and delivery occur — through monitoring progress, highlighting gaps, preventing backsliding and safeguarding civic space. Moreover, civil society's involvement in leading monitoring and accountability processes over the next 10 years will help to ensure that implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs is open, inclusive, participatory and transparent — principles that are the heart and foundation of this global sustainable development framework.<sup>305</sup>

In addition, regional forums, such as the

Regional Forums for Sustainable

Development



present a yet untapped setting to come together as an SDG 16.<sup>306</sup>

The HLPF and SDG Summit provide an opportunity to follow up on these commitments and incentivize additional positive change. The thematic focus of

ECOSOC and HLPF in 2021



will be 'Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, that promotes the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: Building an inclusive and effective path for the

achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.' HLPF 2021 will focus on nine SDGs, including SDG 16.<sup>307</sup> This represents an opportunity to maintain focus on SDG 16, as its realization strengthens the realization of all goals, especially in the response to the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Sharing Lessons Learned and Best Practices at Global and Regional Forums, as Well as Online Platforms and Dedicated Hubs

Beyond HLPF and SDG Summits, opportunities to come together and share lessons learned, particularly through online platforms, should be seized and expanded. is a one-stop platform for knowledge and exchange on

The SDG 16 Hub



peace, justice and inclusive societies, designed to provide an interactive space to foster knowledge sharing and learning on Goal 16.<sup>308</sup> More recently, a page has been added to the Hub to showcase available

'COVID-19 and SDG 16'



resources and knowledge products related to SDG 16 and COVID-19, making it easier for SDG 16 practitioners and others to navigate useful content from various organizations, initiatives and news outlets.<sup>309</sup>

Such opportunities also include the Annual Showcase as well as annual global events (including now in virtual form) such as the<sup>310</sup>

World Bank's Fragility Forum



304 United Nations. Decade of Action (Webpage). <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/>

305 TAP Network 2030 & Partners (2020). Campaign for a Decade of Accountability for the SDGs (Webpage). <https://sdgaccountability.org/decade/>

306 Regional Commissions. United Nations Regional Commissions New York Office (webpage). <http://www.regionalcommissions.org/regional-forums-on-sustainable-development/>

307 SDG Knowledge Hub by IISD (2020). HLPF 2021 to Focus on Nine SDGs Linked to Pandemic Recovery. <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/hlpf-2021-to-focus-on-nine-sdgs-linked-to-pandemic-recovery/>

308 SDG 16 Hub. Home page. <https://www.sdg16hub.org/>

309 SDG 16 Hub. COVID-19 and SDG 16 (Webpage). <https://www.sdg16hub.org/covid-19-and-sdg-16>

310 The World Bank (2020). Events: The Fragility Forum (2020) (Webpage). <https://www.worldbank.org/en/events/2020/03/02/fragility-forum-2020>



the Commission on the Status of Women

and<sup>311, 312</sup>

RightsCon

www

www

As the world continues to grapple with COVID-19, online platforms and dedicated hubs offer a critical space for continued engagement and partnership.

## Working Together to Advance SDG 16 in the Decade of Action

In his preliminary<sup>313</sup>

2020 SDGs Progress Report

www

the UN Secretary-General asserted that “what began as a health crisis has quickly become the worst human and economic crisis of our lifetimes. [...] [T]he COVID-19 pandemic is potentially leading to an increase in social unrest and violence that would greatly undermine our ability to meet the targets of SDG 16.”

It is against this backdrop that the call for determined solidarity in our collective efforts to realize a more just, peace and inclusive world must be heard. The Decade of Action, the Decade of Accountability and other campaigns, such as the<sup>314</sup>

Voices of SDG 16+ campaign

www

offer powerful tools to raise visibility about SDG 16’s catalytic potential to improve peoples’ lives and galvanize change. As we mark the 75th Anniversary of the UN and ring in the last decade of the 2030 Agenda, it is absolutely imperative that commitments be transformed into actions and that pledges be transformed into tangible support. The challenges and opportunities that lie ahead require a surge in multilateralism and call

on all stakeholders to be champion in the fight for a world that is<sup>315</sup>

free from fear and violence

and where no one

is left behind

www

## Key Resources:

- [Decade of Accountability site;](#)
- [Decade of Action site;](#)
- [Voices of SDG 16+ Campaign site;](#)
- [Act Now for SDG 16+- Peace, Justice, Inclusion and Strong Institutions in a Pandemic](#), Statement by the SDG 16+ Community during HLPF 2020.

311 UN Women. Commission on the Status of Women (Webpage). <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

312 RightsCon. RightsCon Online 2020 (webpage). <https://www.rightscon.org/>

313 UN DESA (2020). Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General. [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26158Final\\_SG\\_SDG\\_Progress\\_Report\\_14052020.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26158Final_SG_SDG_Progress_Report_14052020.pdf)

314 Voices of SDG 16+ (2020). Voices of SDG16+: Stories for Global Action (Webpage). <https://voicesofsdg16plus.org/>

315 UN (2015). A/RES/70/1 – Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>



# ANNEXES



Target

**16.1**

Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

**16.1.1**

Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age

**16.1.2**

Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause

**16.1.3**

Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months

**16.1.4**

Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live



Target

**16.2**

End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

**16.2.1**

Proportion of children aged 1-17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month

**16.2.2**

Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation

**16.2.3**

Proportion of young women and men aged 18-29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18



Target

**16.3**

Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

**16.3.1**

Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms

**16.3.2**

Unsented detainees as a proportion of overall prison population



Target

**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

**16.4.1**

Total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows (in current United States dollars)

**16.4.2**

Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments



Target

**16.5**

Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

**16.5.1**

Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months

**16.5.2**

Proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 months



Target

**16.6**

Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

**16.6.1**

Primary government expenditures as a proportion of original approved budget, by sector (or by budget codes or similar)

**16.6.2**

Proportion of the population satisfied with their last experience of public services



Target

**16.7**

Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

**16.7.1**

Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distributions

**16.7.2**

Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group



Target

**16.8**

Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

**16.8.1**

Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations



Target

**16.9**

By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration

**16.9.1**

Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age



Target

**16.10**

Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

**16.10.1**

Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months

**16.10.2**

Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information





#### Target

### 16.a

Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

#### 16.a.1

Existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles



#### Target

### 16.b

Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

#### 16.b.1

Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law



