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. 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.

To this end, increasing awareness and ensuring dialogue with communities on progress, in terms of SDG 16 or the Agenda, and in ensuring that information on implementation is available to all.

How Can This Be Used?
Following a VNR, a range of activities, projects and programmes can be used.

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.

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have been pursued to raise awareness and publicize key findings. 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. 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.

specifically on key findings
and to help publicize and raise
the visibility of the 2030 Agenda

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

few actions, suggestions and points
to keep in mind are:

- 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.
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.

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