

Multi-stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation: A review of Voluntary National Review Reports (2016-2019)



DESA

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The views and recommendations presented in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of those consulted in its development, UN DESA or CCIC.

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Executive Summary

As United Nations Member States gear up for a decade of action and delivery on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, starting in 2020, multi-stakeholder engagement and durable partnerships with diverse stakeholders will be key to realizing progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensuring that no one is left behind. Governments at all levels, citizens, parliaments, academia, civil society, the private sector, trade unions, youth and others can accelerate transformative actions through individual and collaborative efforts on sustainable development.

This report provides a review of the current status of multi-stakeholder engagement in the 2030 Agenda implementation based on an assessment of the 158 Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports submitted to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) between 2016-2019. The report does not seek to validate the experiences of countries and other stakeholders as presented in VNR reports but rather makes use of the growing body of information from reporting to the HLPF to tease trends, experiences and lessons learned.

Overall, countries tend to report on stakeholder engagement in five key ways:

1. engagement through **coordination and governance structures** that support 2030 Agenda implementation;
2. **awareness-raising**;
3. through the **development of national priorities** for implementation;
4. consultations and **engagement on VNRs**; and
5. engagement through **partnerships** with non-state actors.

Countries are taking diverse approaches to inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower the public through their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. **Around 75% of countries reporting to the HLPF from 2016-19 noted inclusion of non-state actors in governance mechanisms**, a figure that is largely consistent across reporting years. This includes high-level coordination or governance mechanisms, technical committees or working groups and explicit commitments to engage with non-state actors through, for example, advisory bodies.

With respect to raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda, the review shows similar results with **most VNR reports over 2016-2019 (80%) highlighting activities to inform the public and diverse stakeholders**. Diverse approaches are emerging, including through media, social media, conferences, school programs, websites, translation of the 2030 Agenda into local languages and creative endeavors such as art installations and festivals.

The **bulk of VNR reports over 2016-2019 provided information on multi-stakeholder engagement to nationalize the 2030 Agenda** and generate ownership with nearly 80% of VNR reports including this information. Most Member States emphasize **public meetings, consultation meetings and workshops** with 103 VNR reports noting in-person meetings to generate ownership overall. Countries also reported other means to nationalize the 2030 Agenda, albeit to a more limited extent, including youth councils, stakeholder fora, engagement with local and regional governments and by working in partnership with non-state actors. **Efforts to nationalize the 2030 Agenda are often coupled with awareness raising activities**.

Countries are **most likely to refer to activities with and by civil society, the private sector, local governments, and academia in their VNR reports** with a more limited number pointing to parliamentarians, youth and volunteers. The review found that the most common activities reported include efforts to empower non-state actors such as through the creation of policies that underpin an enabling environment for partnership or capacity

development programs for non-state actors, as well as direct partnerships to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and/or carry out consultations (as part of nationalization or VNR processes). **VNR reports show a growth in focus on the enabling environment** from two reports in 2016, six in 2017, eight in 2018 and nine in 2019.

Reporting on multi-stakeholder engagement to leave no one behind is limited. Member States tend to provide information on who is at risk of being left behind and programs and initiatives to address their concerns, rather than specific efforts to leave no one behind from the perspective of multi-stakeholder engagement. The review revealed 28 examples from 27 countries of stakeholder engagement explicitly tied to leaving no one behind, with consultation efforts as the primary focus (captured by 15 of the identified activities). In terms of trends over time, **2019 saw the most examples with nine countries reporting stakeholder engagement to leave no one behind versus six each in 2016, 2017 and 2018.**

Finally, the review found that reporting on how countries will monitor and follow-up on their progress at the national level is not consistently presented across and within reporting years. In terms of how countries report at the national level, **mentions of progress reports peaked in 2017 (70%) and have seen a decline over 2018 (57%) and 2019 (32%).** However, 2019 saw an increase in the number of countries noting web portals and dashboards to monitor progress at 26%, in contrast to 13% and 14% in 2018 and 2017 respectively. Only ten examples of Member States referring to parliamentary discussions on the 2030 Agenda as part of national reporting processes were identified over the four-year period. **With respect to VNRs, the review showed a recovery of the trend in terms of countries making use of online and/or in-person methods of consultation,** up from 17 countries (77%) in 2016 to 27 (63%) in 2017, 26 (57%) in 2018 and 47 (70%) in 2019. Finally, another positive trend is the uptake in Member States indicating non-state actors participating in the actual drafting of VNR reports, which reached 53% in 2019, up from 28% in 2018 and lower levels in previous years.

Based on these findings and the review of member experiences, 10 lessons in multi-stakeholder engagement from VNR reports were identified to inform Member State efforts.

10 Lessons in Multi-Stakeholder Engagement for the 2030 Agenda

1. Plan to engage.

Transparent, coordinated, participatory and inclusive approaches to multi-stakeholder engagement are underpinned by policies and frameworks as part of an enabling environment. Some Member States have developed communication plans, stakeholder engagement plans, or partnership strategies to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda, establish guidelines for when and how consultations will occur and support collaboration and partners, respectively.

2. Include non-state actors in institutional arrangements for 2030 Agenda implementation.

Whole-of-society approaches are bolstered by inclusive, participatory institutional arrangements that oversee and coordinate implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Direct inclusion of non-state actors as members of high-level or working level councils or technical committees, or through mandated, regular engagement with advisory groups are examples of iterative, transparent, and formal processes for multi-stakeholder engagement.

3. Create inclusive multi-stakeholder spaces for ongoing dialogue, collaboration and partnership.

Outside institutional arrangements, formal and informal spaces that bring together diverse stakeholders offer an opportunity for greater participation and inclusion in implementation. A good practice would include the creation

of online and in-person fora that promote regular engagement between diverse stakeholders, opportunities for collective problem-solving and collaboration and the sharing of knowledge, lessons learned and successful approaches.

4. Make awareness-raising ongoing and do it in partnership with others.

Awareness-raising is an ongoing aspect of the 2030 Agenda that goes beyond initial consultations on national priorities or during VNRs. It contributes to generating shared national ownership over the 2030 Agenda and provides an initial starting point for informing collective action. Working with non-state actors multiplies the reach of awareness-raising efforts, often leading to innovative and creative approaches and opportunities to harness the expertise of different stakeholders that know how to reach diverse stakeholder groups, including communities at risk of being left behind.

5. Continue to consult on priorities and report on progress to citizens according to agreed timetables.

One approach is recognizing that consultation and engagement are not one-off activities but rather part of an iterative process in a whole-of-society approach to implementation. Transparent reporting on progress according to a regular schedule and in forums that engage citizens and their representatives, including parliament, contributes to awareness-raising, presents opportunities to address emerging challenges and informs future priorities.

6. Empower citizens to participate in the 2030 Agenda implementation through capacity development, direct support and inclusive partnerships.

Whole-of-society approaches to the 2030 Agenda implementation are not automatic. Working across sectors can require new skills and investments to dedicate the necessary time and resources towards partnership. Some countries are providing support to non-state actors to build their capacities for engagement on the 2030 Agenda, establishing funding mechanisms to empower their actions and engagement through direct partnerships.

7. Engage with diverse groups while respecting representative stakeholder bodies.

Many sectors have been mobilized to contribute to the 2030 Agenda. Multi-stakeholder and sector-specific coalitions are emerging with civil society organizations, local and regional governments, academia and the private sector, among others, at the forefront of such efforts. Working with and through existing representative sector organizations is an effective way to reach diverse stakeholders and maximize the reach of engagement efforts.

8. Take targeted steps to leave no one behind in stakeholder engagement.

Engagement with historically marginalized groups is critical to informing local and national priorities and empowering those most at risk of being left behind to actively participate in the 2030 Agenda implementation. Making efforts to engage with communities left behind an explicit part of approaches to engagement and partnership is good practice. This means identifying barriers to participation and putting in place solutions that empower all members of society to participate in the 2030 Agenda implementation.

9. Recognize the expertise of others.

The most effective methods to engage with diverse groups are not always apparent. Non-state actors often have the expertise to reach particular groups or communities. One promising strategy is working with representative organizations to inform priorities, strategies and approaches for multi-stakeholder engagement. For example, some Member States have struck consultative groups or asked for advice from non-state actors on how to best reach the furthest behind or engage young people.

10. Report on your experience and the experiences of others that contribute to the 2030 Agenda implementation as part of a whole-of-society approach.

The United Nations Secretary General’s Common Reporting Guidelines and the Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews outline how Member States can report on stakeholder engagement and carry out inclusive VNRs¹. Providing details on the why, who, what, when, where and how of stakeholder engagement provides a basis for identifying trends and good practice. In this context, information on the quality of multi-stakeholder engagement, challenges and lessons learned is important for improving multi-stakeholder engagement and informing future approaches.



Photo: UNDP

¹ More information: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is grounded in an understanding that addressing the world's most pressing challenges requires engagement, collaboration and partnerships with all stakeholders in society, including citizens, local, regional and national governments, parliamentarians, academics, civil society, the private sector and others. Following three years of significant national, regional and thematic consultations and engagement, in 2015, United Nations Member States agreed to revitalize global partnerships through multi-stakeholder engagement as a key means to realize the ambitions in *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.² The importance of multi-stakeholder engagement for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is referred throughout the intergovernmental document as well as included in targets under a range of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably through specific reference in two targets under SDG 17 on global partnership for the goals.

In September 2019, Member States adopted a political declaration in support of accelerating efforts on the 2030 Agenda. *Gearing up for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*³ recognizes the need to create “durable partnerships between governments at all levels, and with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia and youth.” The political declaration encourages all stakeholders to accelerate action and efforts to strengthen institutions for responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making processes.

In addition to serving as one of the foundational principles for the 2030 Agenda, effective, inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement contributes to raising public awareness, ensuring shared ownership over implementation and more effective decision making. When groups affected by decisions have an opportunity to shape agendas, governments can ensure their efforts reflect the needs and interests of diverse groups with higher likelihood of success. The commitment to leave no one behind requires appropriate consultation, engagement and partnerships with vulnerable communities to ensure that the needs and priorities of those furthest behind are reflected in policies and initiatives to support the 2030 Agenda implementation. Moreover, effective engagement at national, regional and global levels enables collaboration to address sustainable development challenges, promotes shared accountability for implementation and provides opportunities for joint learning and exchange of good practice.

Five years into the 2030 Agenda implementation, this report examines the status of multi-stakeholder engagement in its implementation. Rooted in an analysis of Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports submitted to the United Nations High-level political forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the report is based on direct reviews of VNR reports for 2017, 2018 and 2019. Supplementary materials were used to identify trends from 2016 VNR reports, including the findings from the first Progressing National SDGs Implementation report that assessed the 16 English VNR reports submitted to the HLPF in 2016. In addition, the report is informed by analysis and documentation prepared by the United Nations on institutional arrangements for the 2030 Agenda implementation, annual summaries of VNR reports, and 2018 and 2019 Progressing National SDGs Implementation reports.⁴

² United Nations. 2015. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A/RES/70/1. Available at https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

³ United Nations. 2019. Political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly. A/HLPF/2019/L.1. Available at <https://undocs.org/en/A/HLPF/2019/L.1>

⁴ See Annex 1 for a full description of the methodology and resources used.

This report does not seek to validate the experiences and information presented in VNR reports. A key limitation of the study is that it relies solely on government reporting through the HLPF. It does not examine stakeholder reports and it was outside the scope of this analysis to validate information through web-based searches or interviews with key stakeholders. As such, this report does not include an assessment of the quality of multi-stakeholder engagement in countries, though it does highlight elements of what appear to be emerging lessons learned in this area. Rather, the report uses information in VNR reports to identify trends in terms of approaches and practices to multi-stakeholder engagement, highlight experiences from Member States and provide recommendations on how to strengthen meaningful stakeholder engagement in the implementation, follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda at national level, as well as on VNR reports. The report aims to inform Member State approaches based on the global body of information and experiences provided through VNR reports.

Following the introduction, the report is organized around five chapters:

- **The first chapter** provides additional context for the report though a focus on the quality of multi-stakeholder engagement.
- **The second** examines reporting on multi-stakeholder engagement in VNR reports while
- **The third chapter** presents common mechanisms for multi-stakeholder engagement in the 2030 Agenda implementation.
- **The fourth chapter** makes up the bulk of the report and analyzes multi-stakeholder engagement in various aspects of the 2030 Agenda implementation, including awareness-raising, national ownership and decision making, institutional arrangements, partnerships, efforts to leave no one behind and follow-up and review.
- **The fifth and final chapter** concludes with recommendations to strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement going forward.

Lessons learned in multi-stakeholder engagement are highlighted throughout this report in the main text, as well as through the country experiences showcased. Efforts were made to select examples from VNR reports that demonstrate not only a range of experiences but also highlight aspects of good practice for ensuring quality multi-stakeholder engagement.

Box 1. Who are the stakeholders?

In this report, stakeholders are understood as actors that are outside national governments and governing political parties. These include citizens, civil society and non-governmental organizations, development partners, private sector stakeholders, local governments, trade unions, parliamentarians and academics, among others.

Quality of multi-stakeholder engagement

Concerns are growing over closing civic space around the world and insecurity faced by human rights defenders and environmentalists.⁵As noted, it is beyond the scope of this report to validate or assess the quality of multi-stakeholder engagement given that the assessment is rooted in information provided through VNR reports. Nevertheless, the context for and the quality of multi-stakeholder engagement underpins opportunities for whole-of-society approaches to 2030 Agenda implementation. The 2030 Agenda includes commitments that provide the basis for ensuring high-quality multi-stakeholder engagement, regardless of the specific approaches adopted by Member States. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes human rights, inclusivity, participation and informed decision-making.

Respect for human rights, participation and inclusion are critical aspects of a robust civic space and provide a basis for guiding multi-stakeholder engagement. In this context, quality multi-stakeholder engagement is timely, open and inclusive, transparent, informed, and iterative. These principles aim to ensure meaningful, inclusive, sincere and purposeful whole-of-society approaches to the 2030 Agenda implementation.⁶

While the forms of engagement Member States pursue vary depending on context, priorities and the goals of multi-stakeholder engagement, when multi-stakeholder engagement is **timely**, stakeholders are given sufficient time frames for their engagement that are well established and communicated in advance of actual engagement opportunities.

Open and inclusive engagement means providing all people and groups with opportunities to participate. Extra efforts are often needed to ensure the presence and participation of people and groups that are most often left behind. Some concrete ways Member States supported open and inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement include providing information in local languages and making use of a range of methods for engagement, including both offline and online options. Civil society organizations note that inclusivity can be bolstered by working with representative organizations for non-state actors, such as civil society platforms and business associations.

Transparent multi-stakeholder engagement occurs when information on engagement processes and plans is clear, widely communicated and published in a timely fashion. This includes information and documentation that enlightens engagement processes and feedback to participants during the follow-up to the engagement process.

Informed multi-stakeholder engagement requires that participants are informed about the purpose of engagement, how their inputs will be used and the overall expected outcomes. Documentation should be provided ahead of all interactions with ample time, clear deadlines and appropriate tools to provide feedback. There should also be follow-up reports and documentation on how inputs have been considered.

Finally, **iterative** multi-stakeholder engagement means ensuring that engagement opportunities are not singular processes or events but rather continuous processes where multiple opportunities for ongoing engagement exist for different stakeholders. Dialogue and collaboration should be multi-faceted and engagement mechanisms institutionalized to provide long-term dialogue for continuous input from non-state actors. Embedding

⁵See, for example, <https://monitor.civicus.org/> and Brechenmacher, S. and Carothers, T. 2019. *Defending Civic Space: Is the International Community Stuck?* Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁶ These principles have been adapted from *A Code for Good Practice on Policy Dialogue* and were first presented in Kindornay, S. 2019. *Progressing National SDGs Implementation*. Third Edition. Ottawa: CCIC. Available at <https://ccic.ca/third-edition-of-progressing-national-sdgs-implementation/>. The original Code of Conduct is available at: http://www.vsi-isbc.org/eng/policy/pdf/codes_policy.pdf.

engagement mechanisms within institutions and as part of regular practices is essential to ensure their longevity through changes in governments.

Reviews of VNR reports and inputs from non-state actors suggest that there are emerging standard and good practices for ensuring quality multi-stakeholder engagement.⁷ Good practices that support quality multi-stakeholder engagement include activities that bring together government and non-state actors to jointly deliver on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, such as through governing institutions and the co-creation of resources (including VNR reports). Developing strategies for communication and engagement are also emerging as effective ways to set clear expectations with non-state actors and align efforts for public engagement. Other strategies include widely publicizing engagement opportunities according to clear timetables and in local languages. Ensuring inclusivity can mean providing engagement opportunities in more remote locations, working with and through non-state actors' representative bodies and taking special efforts to ensure accessibility for groups often left behind, such as persons with disabilities, youth and women.

Country experiences

Planning for effective engagement in Mauritius (2019)

Mauritius developed a Stakeholder Engagement Plan as well as an SDG Communications Strategy to ensure inclusiveness and multi-stakeholder participation in the VNR process. To support these efforts, the country sent out an SDG questionnaire with specific questions and rigorous criteria to gather information. This constituted a solid basis for the development of each SDG chapter in the VNR report.

Working with non-state actor representative bodies to develop an inclusive VNR in Chile (2019)

Chile's VNR engaged non-state actors through two main strategies. First, Chile promoted the engagement through established networks representing civil society and the private sector. Also, the government issued an open invitation through a web portal for submissions by non-governmental actors for inclusion in the VNR report. More than 80 initiatives were received from civil society and over 76 actions by private sector stakeholders. The VNR also included participatory workshops geared at identifying priorities and actions for implementation. The 2019 VNR report includes a sub-heading on non-state actor contributions under each chapter, showcasing efforts by civil society, the private sector, academia, local government, youth and volunteers.

Partnership to ensure iterative engagement in Cameroon (2019)

Civil society organizations that are part of Cameroon's National Strategic Group for the SDGs and Development Effectiveness have been implementing a program to ensure African CSOs are key actors in the implementation, review and follow-up of the SDGs. Tools have also been developed for SDG implementation that promote effective multi-stakeholder engagement, including the Civil Society Engagement Charter for the SDGs, a monitoring and accountability framework, and common working and collaboration platforms.

⁷ See, e.g., the Good Practice in 2030 Agenda Implementation Series produced by the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation and Canadian Council for International Cooperation which includes a series of policy briefs outlining good practice on multi-stakeholder engagement, awareness raising, partnership, and follow-up and review, among other areas of 2030 Agenda implementation. Available at <https://ccic.ca/2030agenda/global-efforts-to-implement-the-2030-agenda/>.

Reporting on multi-stakeholder engagement in Voluntary National Review Reports

To date, 147 countries have submitted VNR reports to the HLPF. In 2016, 22 countries reported, followed by 43 in 2017, 46 in 2018, and 47 in 2019. Twelve countries have presented two reports while one – Togo – has presented three (**Table 1**). The bulk of reporting countries provided full VNR reports.⁸

The United Nations Secretary-General provides guidance to Member States in terms of the structure and form of VNR reports. The *Voluntary Common Reporting Guidelines*⁹ set out suggested contents and structure for VNR reports. In addition to these guidelines, UN DESA has created a Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews, updated every year¹⁰ to provide additional guidance to governments, including on inclusive multi-stakeholder review processes.

The voluntary guidelines refer to the inclusion of thematic chapters that capture elements of multi-stakeholder engagement. Member States are requested to provide information on stakeholder engagement with chapters on the methodology and process for the review, creating ownership of the SDGs, institutional mechanisms and the means of implementation. In this respect, VNR reports tend to provide information on a range of methods of multi-stakeholder engagement in the 2030 Agenda implementation. Figures for reporting on stakeholder engagement for specific elements of the 2030 Agenda implementation are presented in the thematic analysis below.

Country	Year			
	2016	2017	2018	2019
Azerbaijan		X		X
Benin		X	X	
Chile		X		X
Colombia	X		X	
Egypt	X		X	
Guatemala		X		X
Indonesia		X		X
Mexico	X		X	
Philippines	X			X
Sierra Leone	X			X
Switzerland	X		X	
Togo	X	X	X	
Turkey	X			X

Country Experience

Details on stakeholder engagement in Vanuatu's VNR Report (2019)

Vanuatu's VNR report provides a detailed discussion of efforts to nationalize the 2030 Agenda. The report describes the government institutions that coordinated analysis and drafting of the country's national plan. The drafting team was instructed to ensure the plan reflected the priorities of all people, including children, youth, women as well as marginalized and excluded groups. Stakeholder engagement included a five-day public Forum in 2014 held at the Chief's Nakamal in Port Vila, where representatives from civil society shared priorities for the next 15 years. The forum was open to the public, with an average 75-100 people participating each day. The forum was aired live on radio and television. Inputs from the forum were translated into a feedback matrix that was used to inform drafting of the plan. In 2016, a consultation draft was prepared and underwent further review. Following the translation of the policies into Bislama, hundreds of people met in their communities during six months of provincial consultations in 15 locations throughout Vanuatu's six provinces. The consultations were often in the form of a one-day community meeting with presentations by the drafting team in the language of the village when possible. Further consultations with the representative bodies of civil society, youth, women, people with disabilities, Christian organizations, and Chiefs also occurred in 2015 and 2016.

⁸ Countries only providing main messages included China and Samoa (2016), Kiribati (2018) and Nauru (2019).

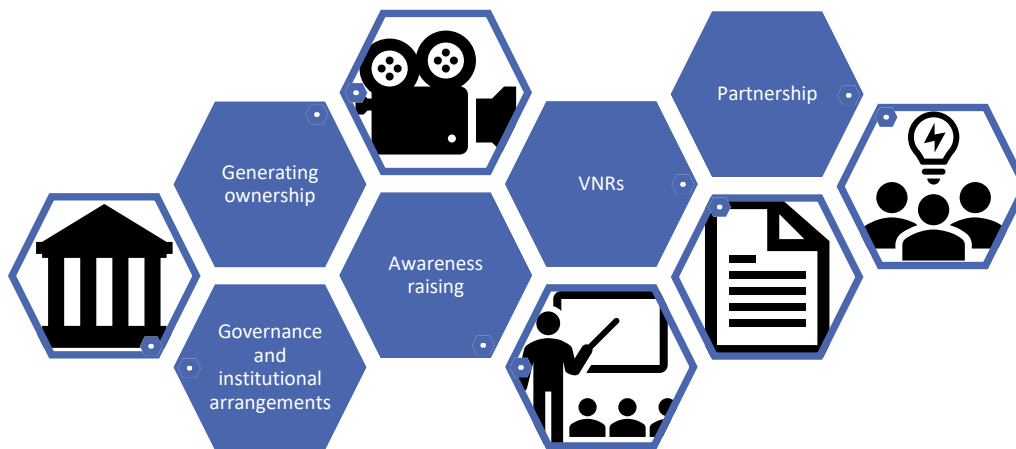
⁹ The latest guidelines are available here: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17346Updated_Voluntary_Guidelines.pdf

¹⁰ UN DESA. 2019. Handbook for the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews. The 2020 Edition. Available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25245Handbook_2020_EN.pdf

Overall, Member States tend to report on stakeholder engagement in five key ways:

1. engagement through **coordination and governance structures** that support the 2030 Agenda implementation;
2. **awareness-raising**;
3. through the **development of national priorities** for implementation;
4. consultations and **engagement on VNRs**; and
5. engagement through **partnerships** with non-state actors.

Figure 1. How countries report on stakeholder engagement in VNR reports



At the same time, reporting against the **Secretary-General’s voluntary guidelines** is not consistent, and the level of detail provided by Member States in VNR reports varies considerably. This can present challenges for understanding the overall picture of multi-stakeholder engagement on the 2030 Agenda and identifying good practices (**Box 2**). A significant gap in reporting on multi-stakeholder engagement pertains to information on formalized processes and mechanisms for widespread and regular engagement with non-state actors outside governance mechanisms and ad hoc consultations, though some examples exist as noted below.

Finally, it is worth noting that a limited number of Member States have explicitly reported on **good practices, challenges and lessons learned** vis-à-vis multi-stakeholder engagement in VNR reports.¹¹ Concerning good practices, only a handful of countries note efforts related to multi-stakeholder engagement. For instance, in 2018, Latvia highlighted its open and participatory process for achieving consensus as a best practice while Poland highlighted its approach to partnership. Indonesia’s 2017 report noted the country’s approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda involved all stakeholders in the planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting phases.

With respect to **challenges**, 12 countries highlighted different challenges related to multi-stakeholder participation such as coordination, awareness and mobilization of non-state actors in 2017.¹² In 2018, fewer countries reported

¹¹ Data available only for 2017, 2018 and 2019 for reporting in these areas.

¹² Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica (articulated as a next step), Cyprus, Guatemala, Kenya, the Netherlands (all countries in the Kingdom), Qatar, and Togo.

these challenges with five¹³ noting issues related to stakeholder engagement and two¹⁴ referring to public awareness. A larger number of countries reported challenges related to multi-stakeholder engagement in 2019. Several countries included broadening stakeholder engagement as part of their next steps in the 2030 Agenda implementation, while two¹⁵ referred to challenges related to insufficient participation of non-state actors or awareness of the SDGs.

Box 2. Reporting on multi-stakeholder engagement in VNR reports: Opportunities for improvement and good practice

Various reviews of VNR reports¹⁶ (including this one) highlight areas where Member States can improve reporting on multi-stakeholder engagement in terms of the availability and quality of information provided.

***Follow existing guidance.**

As a first step, report on stakeholder engagement on all aspects of the 2030 Agenda implementation. Consider recommendations in the United Nations Secretary General's Common Reporting Guidelines and the Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews as these documents cover the main aspects of multi-stakeholder engagement.

***Provide details on the why, who, what, when, where and how of stakeholder engagement.**

The level of detail on how Member States engage stakeholders in national consultation processes, through institutional mechanisms and in follow-up and review processes, is not consistently provided including in terms of who was consulted, how and when. For example, some VNR reports broadly note that national priorities were selected in consultation with a range of stakeholders, while others provide details on the total number of individuals consulted with full descriptions of the methods used and when engagement occurred.

***Report on the quality of multi-stakeholder engagement.**

Reporting on efforts to ensure high-quality multi-stakeholder engagement provides a basis for identifying good practices and lessons for ensuring inclusive and participatory action across 2030 Agenda implementation efforts. This includes referring to efforts to ensure multi-stakeholder engagement is inclusive, supports leaving no one behind, transparent, timely, informed and iterative.

***Report on challenges, lessons learned and good practices in multi-stakeholder engagement.**

States are being encouraged to ensure and improve multi-stakeholder engagement in the 2030 Agenda implementation. As the basis for exchange and mutual learning on the 2030 Agenda implementation, VNR reports can provide insight for effective strategies, approaches and good practices.

In terms of **lessons learned**, VNR reports from 2017 and 2018 pointed to multi-stakeholder engagement. In 2017, the most frequently cited lessons learned related to establishing strong partnerships and collaboration with non-state actors as well as awareness raising for some countries.¹⁷ In 2018, a more limited set of countries emphasized engagement with all stakeholders¹⁸ as key for successful 2030 Agenda implementation while one country, Mali, highlighted consultation to ensure broad-based ownership.

¹³ Albania, Armenia, Guinea, Kiribati, and Sri Lanka.

¹⁴ Bhutan and Paraguay.

¹⁵ Israel and Pakistan.

¹⁶ See for example: Oosterhof, P. 2019. *Partners for Review. Voluntary National Reviews submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development – a Comparative Analysis*. Bonn: GIZ. <http://www.partners-for-review.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/P4R-Analysis-VNRs-2019.pdf>; Kindornay, S. 2019. *Progressing National SDGs implementation*. Third Edition. Ottawa: CCIC. <https://ccic.ca/third-edition-of-progressing-national-sdgs-implementation/>

¹⁷ Afghanistan, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Qatar, Togo, and Zimbabwe.

¹⁸ Albania, Bhutan, Romania, the State of Palestine, and Vietnam.

Understanding the goals of multi-stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP²)¹⁹ Spectrum of Public Participation²⁰ provides a useful framework for examining multi-stakeholder engagement in the 2030 Agenda implementation. The spectrum sets out different public participation goals moving towards more significant influence on decision making.

The spectrum includes five goals for public engagement – **inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower**. The goals presented in distinct categories do not represent a ranking. While moving along the spectrum reflects greater public participation in decision making, the spectrum does not make a value judgement regarding the goals themselves. In some cases, informing the public is the primary goal of public engagement, while in other instances, empowerment may be the goal. In this sense, all goals for public engagement are considered necessary with respect to multi-stakeholder engagement.








Photo: UN DESA

¹⁹ See <https://www.iap2.org/mpage/Home>

²⁰ Available at https://cdn.vjaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf

This report is grounded in an analysis of multi-stakeholder engagement activities, vis-à-vis the goals of engagement as described in the Spectrum of Public Participation. The spectrum serves as a powerful tool for understanding the goals of multi-stakeholder engagement in the 2030 Agenda implementation and the various approaches and activities of Member States. **Table 2** provides an overview of the spectrum, including the summary description developed by IAP² for each goal, a corresponding list of activities identified from VNR reports and the aspects of the 2030 Agenda implementation where the goals of public engagement are most present.

Table 2. Activities reported in VNR reports according to the Spectrum of Public Participation					
Goal	 Inform	 Consult	 Involve	 Collaborate	 Empower
Description	Provide public with balanced information to help them understand a problem and/or a solution	Obtain feedback from the public on analysis, alternatives or a decision	Work directly with the public to hear the concerns of the public	Partner with the public throughout the process and develop alternatives and to identify the preferred solution	Place the final decision in the hands of the public
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication strategies • Conferences • Contests or festivals • General references to awareness-raising • Media • Websites • Official speeches • Parliamentary discussions • Partnerships to raise awareness • School programs • Social media • Translation to local languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation meetings • Public comments online • Public meetings • Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Engagement by governance mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-state actors included in governance mechanisms (high level/working level) • Other forms of participatory decision-making • Drafting VNR reports • Stakeholder forums • Electronic forums • Engagement with academia • Co-creation of SDG related resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity development initiatives • Citizen councils • Efforts to create an enabling environment • Funding mechanisms
Aspect of Implementation	<p>Awareness-raising</p> <p>Partnerships</p> <p>Follow-up and review</p>	<p>Nationalization</p> <p>Localization</p> <p>Follow-up and review</p>	<p>Institutional arrangements</p> <p>Nationalization</p> <p>Follow-up and review</p>	<p>Institutional arrangements</p> <p>Partnership</p>	<p>Partnership</p> <p>Localization</p>
Source: Activity and description directly from IAP ² Spectrum. Activities concerning the 2030 Agenda implementation identified from VNR reports.					

A key challenge in analyzing multi-stakeholder engagement according to the Spectrum of Public Participation is that Member States do not always clearly articulate their goals or provide details on the activities carried out. For example, it was sometimes difficult to categorize meetings carried out by countries owing to lack of information on their specific purpose and structure. Box 3 provides an overview of the approach used by the research team to categorize in person multi-stakeholder engagement activities according to the spectrum.

Box 3. Understanding in-person engagement under the Spectrum of Public Participation

VNR reports show that governments carry out a range of public meetings and online and in-person activities with different purposes. To ensure clarity in the analysis, in-person meetings were categorized according to their purpose and the nature of engagement in the categories of inform, consult, involve and collaborate.

Activities under **inform** include those in which the government provides one-way information on the 2030 Agenda. With regards to meetings, the term “conference” was used to capture meetings that indicated their primary purpose was to inform the public with no mention of opportunities for feedback or consultation.

Activities under **consult** required stakeholders to provide input to government but did not involve them further in shaping policy or the direction of the conversations. The bulk of meetings referred to in VNR reports primarily refer to consultation with stakeholders or receiving inputs, and as such, were categorized under this goal. Though Member States use any number of names to refer to what this report calls consultation meetings, such as workshops, seminars, conferences, focus group discussions and consultations, what these meetings have in common is the goal of soliciting feedback.

Activities under **involve** were interpreted to have a deeper level of engagement. Not only could stakeholders express an opinion, they had the opportunity to shape and steer the direction of 2030 Agenda related policies and programs with government, or were involved in mutual learning and exchange, such as through training. The report uses the term “workshop” to refer to these types of activities. Examples in which governing institutions for the 2030 Agenda implementation engage outside advisory bodies were also included in this category.

To be classified as **collaborate**, the VNR report had to indicate that an activity had a deeper level of engagement in which stakeholders partnered with governments to guide the 2030 Agenda implementation, such as through direct participation in institutional arrangements, or co-developed and implemented an activity. Non-state actor engagement in governing mechanisms at any level is an example of collaboration, as well as the creation of a stakeholder forum or co-drafting VNR reports with non-state actors.

Finally, for **empower**, stakeholders had to be engaged with the aim of empowering them to deepen their own commitments and contributions, including through direct support or the creation of spaces for and by non-state actors to contribute, such as youth councils. Policies to support an enabling environment for non-state actor contributions and capacity development initiatives were similarly considered to have the goals of empowering non-state actors.

When the activities of all 142 countries²¹ that have reported to the HLPF are mapped against the Spectrum of Public Participation, it shows that most countries are carrying out at least one activity aimed at informing (80%), consulting (87%) and collaborating (84%) with non-state actors (**Figure 2**). VNR reports reveal less of an emphasis on activities that have the goal of involving (20%) or empowering non-state actors (35%).

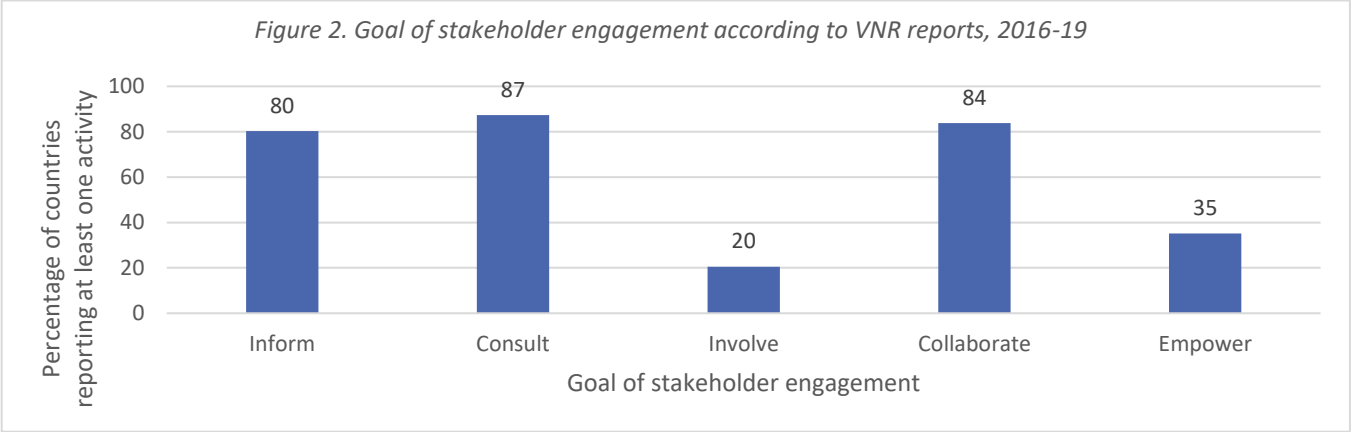
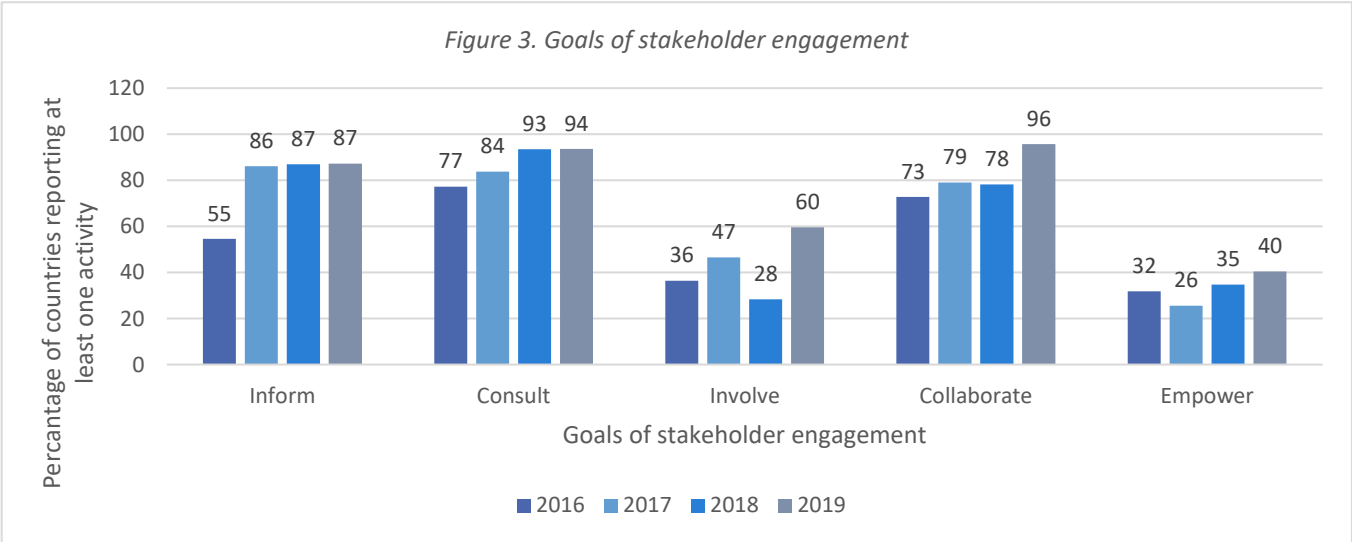
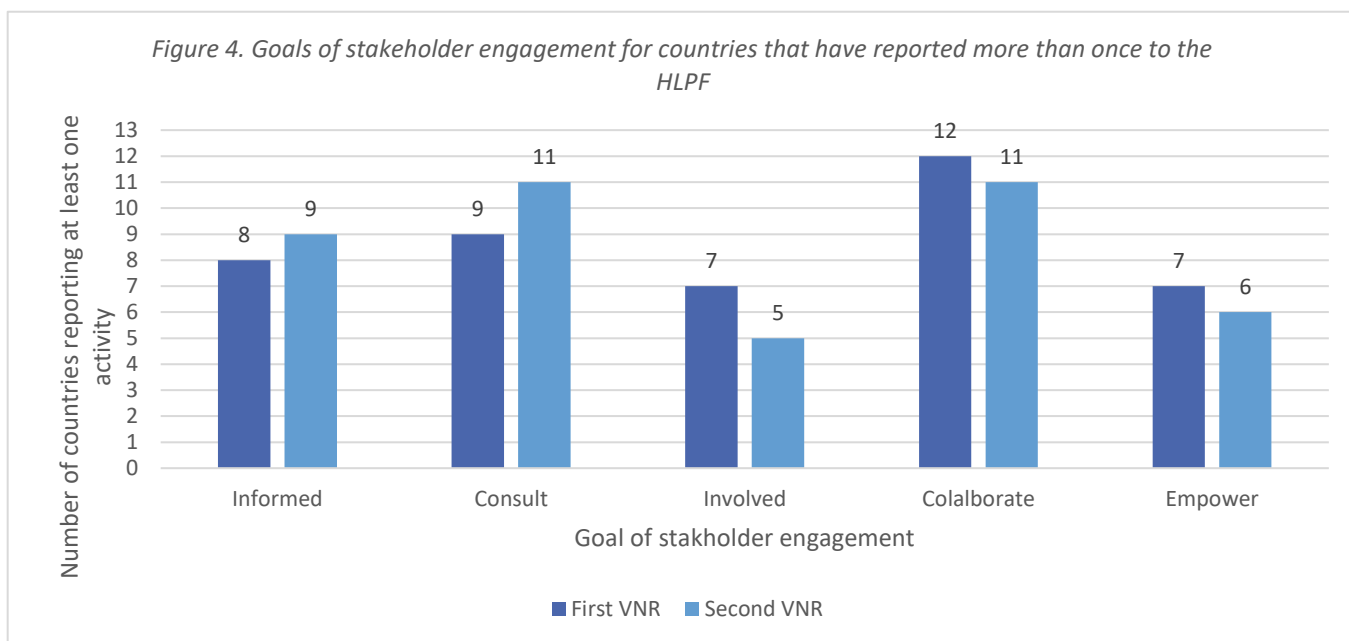


Figure 3 presents trends by year. Reporting by Member States suggests a steady increase in efforts to consult with non-state actors and a consistent approach to efforts to inform the public on the 2030 Agenda with other goals of public engagement increasing that move towards more pro-active engagement. For example, 40% noted efforts to empower non-state actors as part of their engagement activities in 2019, an increase over previous years. Efforts to collaborate with non-state actors appeared to have been steady from 2016-2018 but also saw a rise in 2019, as was the case for activities that seek to involve the public.



²¹ Countries included if they reported on any of the goals in at least one of their VNR reports to the HLPF.

Figure 4 provides trends for the thirteen countries²² that reported more than once to the HLPF over 2016-19.²³ Overall, it does not show significant changes in terms of the number of countries reporting at least one activity against the spectrum. It is worth noting, however, that while many second time reporters in 2019 highlighted expanded stakeholder engagement activities overall (Oosterhof, 2019), countries do not always present information on stakeholder engagement if it was presented in their first VNR. For example, Colombia presented information on governance mechanisms and partnerships in its 2016 VNR report with more limited references to these dimensions in its 2018 VNR report.



²² Azerbaijan, Benin, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, Guatemala, Indonesia, Mexico, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkey, and Uruguay.

²³ Given that Togo is the only country to have reported three times, figures are only presented for first and second VNR reports.

Stakeholder engagement in the process of 2030 Agenda implementation

The sections that follow present progress on multi-stakeholder engagement across aspects of the 2030 Agenda implementation. Each sub-section provides an overview of the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement, VNR reporting trends, analysis of activities according to the Spectrum of Public Participation, emerging good practices and examples of country experiences.

Country experience

Recognizing the value of stakeholder engagement in Guyana (2019)

Guyana's VNR report highlights the overall value of stakeholder engagement in implementing the 2030 Agenda. The report notes that engagement begins at the inception of policy debates and design. The country makes use of special-purpose committees, working groups and other fora as part of its approach. The VNR report showcased the use of fixed-term committees, engagement with municipalities, the use of public forum, and engagement with development partners and umbrella organizations that represent the private sector, civil society, youth, Indigenous peoples and direct partnerships.

Institutional arrangements for the 2030 Agenda implementation

Governing and institutional arrangements for the 2030 Agenda implementation are key entry points for multi-stakeholder engagement in implementation. The primary responsibilities for governing bodies tend to include overseeing and driving nationalization of the 2030 Agenda, policy alignment, coordination, implementation and follow-up and review. While the form and function of such mechanisms varies across countries, inclusion of non-state actors in governance and working-level activities serves as a formal recognition of a whole-of-society approach to the 2030 Agenda implementation and provides avenues for structured, institutionalized and therefore iterative approaches to engagement. Moreover, inclusion of non-state actors in such mechanisms can facilitate policy coherence, coordination and collaboration between different levels of government and with non-state actors. A 2017 review by the United Nations Development Programme showed that participatory coordination mechanisms tend to promote greater ownership over efforts to realize sustainable development, which supports implementation.²⁴

Country experience

Benin's inclusive Steering Committee for 2030 Agenda implementation (2018)

Headed by the minister of state for planning and development and reporting to the president, Benin's Steering Committee includes representatives from government, technical and financial partners, civil society, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the National Employers' Council, the Council of Private Investors of Benin, trade unions, the National Association of Municipalities of Benin, the Women's Federations, the Associations of Disabled Persons and the Youth Parliament. It meets three times per year and is responsible for resource mobilization and overall guidance and oversight.

²⁴ United Nations Development Programme. 2017. *Institutional and coordination mechanisms. Guidance Note on Facilitating Integration and Coherence for SDG Implementation*. New York: United Nations.

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2478Institutional_Coordination_Mechanisms_GuidanceNote.pdf

How Member States report

Overall, VNR reports typically provide information on governance arrangements. In 2019, all countries reporting provided information on institutional arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Information on institutional arrangements for the 2030 Agenda implementation is also available for all countries reporting from 2016 to 2018 from VNR reports, as well as the additional efforts carried out by UN DESA to produce compendiums on institutional arrangements. Information is not always consistently presented on multi-stakeholder engagement in institutional arrangements. For example, in 2018, around 70% (32 of 46) of VNR reports provided this information while 86% (37 of 43) did so in 2017. In 2019, information was available for 70% of countries (33 of 47).

Figure 5. Percentage of countries reporting on non-state actor engagement in institutional arrangements, 2017-2019



- 2017 = 86% (37 of 43)
- 2018 = 70% (32 of 46)
- 2019 = 70% (33 of 47)

Engagement according to the Spectrum of Public Participation

Under the engagement spectrum, participation in institutional arrangements typically falls into two goals for stakeholder engagement – involve and collaborate. Examples in VNR reports where governance mechanisms and institutional arrangements for the 2030 Agenda implementation refer to engagement with non-state actors but not formal inclusion were listed as “involve.” Instances in which non-state actors participate as part of high-level commissions, councils or similar structures or participate in technical committees or working groups were listed as “collaborate.” Where VNR reports point to engagement with non-state actors through institutional arrangements, they typically point to civil society, the private sector, public officials, and to a lesser extent, academia, parliamentarians and local government officials.

Figure 6. Main ways governments include non-state actors in institutional arrangements according to the Spectrum of Public Participation



Involve

- Engagement by governance mechanism with advisory bodies or other dialogue mechanisms



Collaborate

- High-level institutional arrangements
- Working-level institutional arrangements
- Stakeholder forum



Empower

- Citizen councils

Most countries reporting to the HLPF from 2016-19 have included non-state actors in governance mechanisms with the aim of collaboration or involvement (**Figure 7**). In 2016, 15 countries (68%)²⁵ referred to inclusion of non-state actors, four of which used multiple approaches (for example, inclusion in high-level as well as working-level arrangements). In 2017, 30²⁶ countries (70%) followed a similar approach, 15 of which used more than one avenue for inclusion. In 2018, 33²⁷ countries (72%) involved or collaborated with non-state actors in governance mechanisms, nine of which employed more than one approach. Finally, in 2019, 33 countries (70%)²⁸ highlighted inclusion in governance mechanisms, 32²⁹ of which directly included non-state actors in institutional arrangements. Guatemala, Ghana, Indonesia, Rwanda, and Tonga included non-state actors in high-level and working-level arrangements.

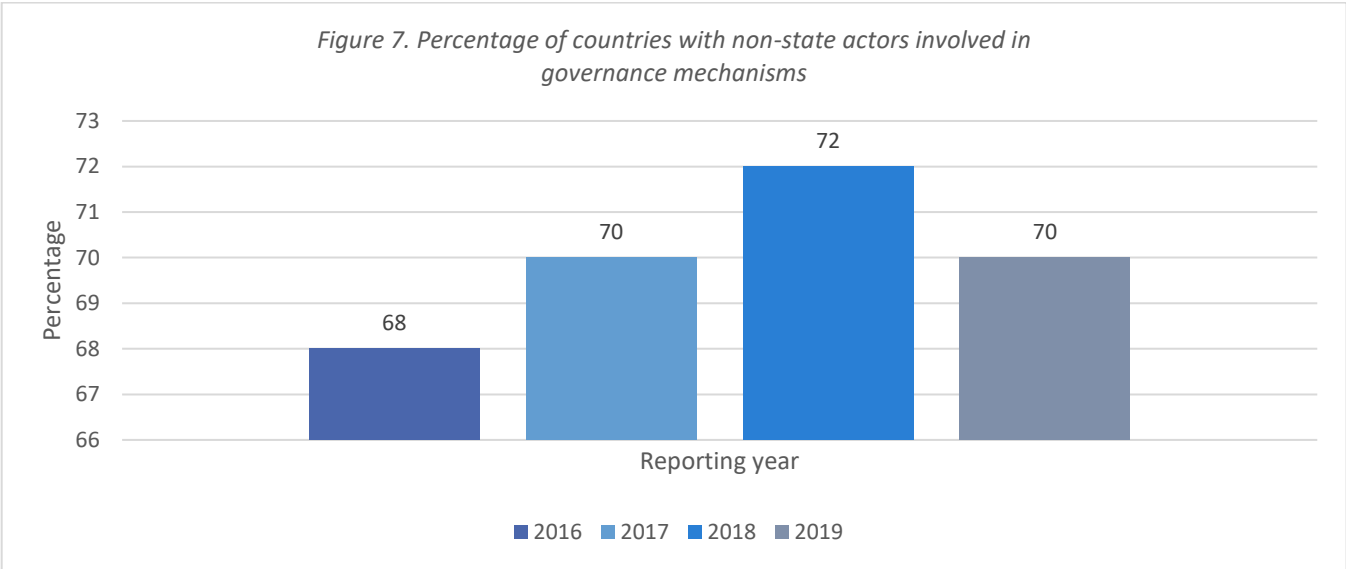


Figure 8 presents trend data in terms of reporting on non-state actor engagement in 2030 Agenda governance mechanisms as a percentage of reporting countries. It shows that roughly one-third of countries report on the inclusion of non-state actors in either high-level and/or working-level institutional arrangements. VNR reports for 2019 show an increase in the number of countries reporting engagement through working-level institutional arrangements and a significant decline in engagement by government mechanisms, which may indicate that there is movement towards more formal inclusion of non-state actors in institutional arrangements.

²⁵ Colombia, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, Philippines, Samoa, South Korea and Togo.

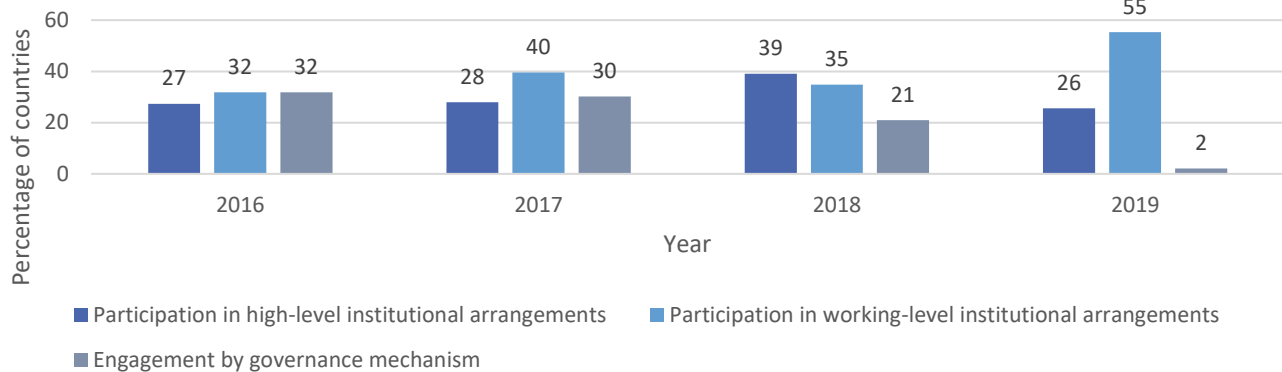
²⁶ Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Netherlands, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Qatar, Sweden, Thailand, Togo and Zimbabwe.

²⁷ Albania, Armenia, Australia, Bahamas, Benin, Cabo Verde, Canada, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Greece, Hungary, Jamaica, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Mali, Mexico, Namibia, Niger, Paraguay, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, State of Palestine, Switzerland, Togo United Arab Emirates, and Uruguay.

²⁸ Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lesotho, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Serbia, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Vanuatu.

²⁹ All the countries listed in the previous footnote, with the exception of Tonga.

Figure 8. Inclusion of non-state actors in institutional arrangements



Country experiences

Inclusive participation in high-level and working-level institutional arrangements in Thailand (2017)

The National Committee for Sustainable Development is chaired by the prime minister in Thailand. Responsible for policy formulation on the SDGs and monitoring implementation, the committee includes 37 members. Sixteen members are from government institutions, three are from academia, and two each from civil society and the private sector. It also includes four independent experts on sustainable development. Sub-committees focus on planning, coordination, monitoring, awareness-raising and developing an information system to support sustainable development and include a larger number of stakeholders.

Local institutional arrangements in Paraguay (2018)

To support 2030 Agenda implementation, Paraguay established 244 district and 17 provincial multi-stakeholder councils. The councils provide an opportunity for non-state actors to influence local development processes, including through participatory processes to develop local development plans.

Inclusion to leave no one behind in Saint Lucia (2019)

Saint Lucia's multi-sectoral committee that oversees the 2030 Agenda implementation was deliberately structured to ensure inclusion of all stakeholders to leave no one behind. Co-chaired by the Ministries responsible for Sustainable Development and Economic Development, it is comprised of representatives from the private sector, academia, youth, and civil society. It is also mandatory for the committee to engage with faith-based and community-based organizations, persons with disabilities, women's groups and the public.

Member States engage with non-state actors that are not formally part of institutional arrangements in several ways. For example, Germany has formal dialogue mechanisms with federal states, while Guatemala has a system of National Development Councils that support dialogue between governments at all levels. Luxembourg has committed to engage the representative body for civil society (Conseil Supérieur pour un Développement Durable) in the 2030 Agenda implementation. Belgium, Qatar and Sri Lanka also refer to engagement with advisory bodies. Nigeria's Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President has established a Civil Society Organizations Advisory Group.

Outside these types of engagements with and in formal institutional arrangements, the review identified the use of stakeholder forums and citizen councils as a means for partnership and engagement on the 2030 Agenda by non-state actors. These institutionalized forms of stakeholder engagement are discussed below in the sections on partnership and nationalization, respectively.

The review of countries that reported more than once to the HLPF does not indicate major changes in terms of stakeholder engagement in institutional arrangements. This may reflect the limited time between reporting cycles.

Lessons learned

The review of VNR reports highlights emerging good practices concerning the inclusion of non-state actors in institutional arrangements for the 2030 Agenda implementation. The inclusion of non-state actors in formal governance arrangements is an example of good practice in the 2030 Agenda implementation that promotes transparency among stakeholders, inclusivity and an iterative form of multi-stakeholder engagement. Formal inclusion of a range of non-state actors – including civil society, the private sector, government officials, parliamentarians, local governments, trade unions, youth and historically marginalized groups – is a meaningful way to ensure a whole-of-society approach to implementation that is inclusive, coherent and coordinated. Strategies to ensure broad participation are emerging, with countries including non-state actors at different levels of coordination and implementation, such as at the highest levels of government, in working groups or technical committees and at the local level.

Awareness-raising

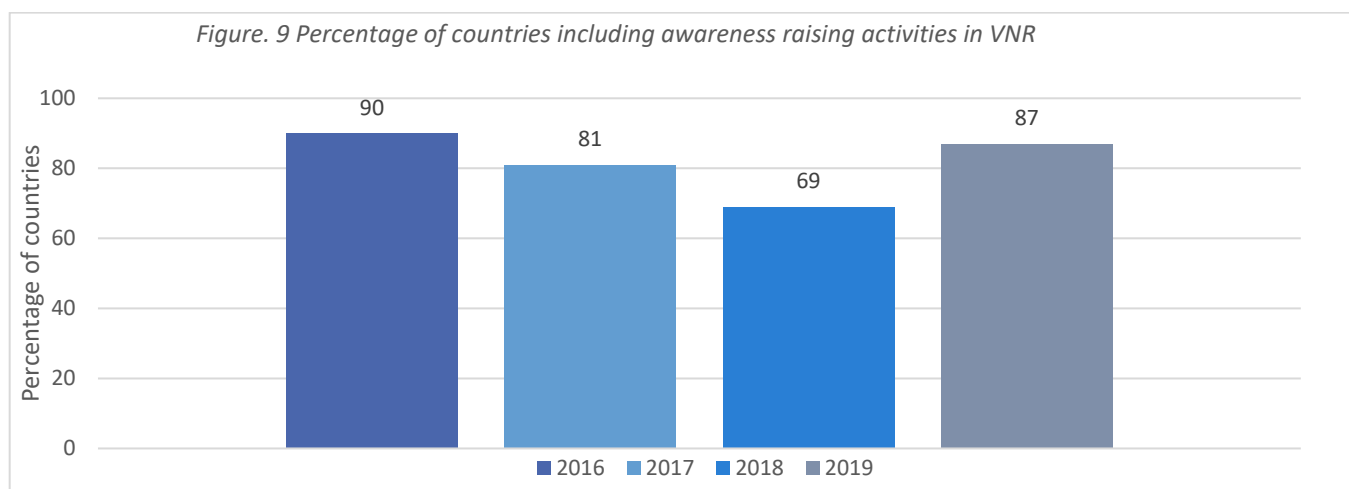
Awareness-raising serves as a first step in engaging stakeholders in the 2030 Agenda implementation. It provides the basis for informing citizens of commitments, generating broad-based ownership over the goals, and supporting localization of implementation. Awareness-raising can contribute to mobilizing public support and efforts towards sustainable development. While an important initial step, awareness-raising is an ongoing element of the 2030 Agenda implementation and part of an iterative approach to stakeholder engagement.



Photo: UNDP Benin

How member states report

The review of VNR reports shows that most countries provide information on awareness-raising in their reports (**Figure 9**). A review of the 16 English VNR reports in 2016 found that 11 (or just over 69%) referred to awareness-raising activities.³⁰ In 2017, over 90% of VNR reports (39 of 43) referred to awareness-raising activities (either by the government or non-state actors). A lower proportion of VNR reports in 2018 referred to awareness-raising activities (83% or 38 of 46) while in 2019, information on awareness raising activities was only available for 41 of the 47 reporting countries (87%).



Country experiences

Diverse approaches to awareness raising in Lithuania (2018)

Lithuania prioritized awareness-raising in its implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNR report points to the organization of documentary film festivals, photography exhibitions, interactive events, 'brain fights' and discussions. The country has also disseminated information on television, radio shows and social media. To raise awareness of the country's global contributions, development cooperation projects have been presented to the public as cartoons. Advertisements on the 2030 Agenda have been aired on televisions and in cinemas, as well as showcased on public transport. Information campaigns have also been organized at schools. These efforts have involved civil society, educational and academic institutions and the private sector. Finally, the country made use of its annual development cooperation conference to also raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda.

Empowering non-state actors to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda (2019)

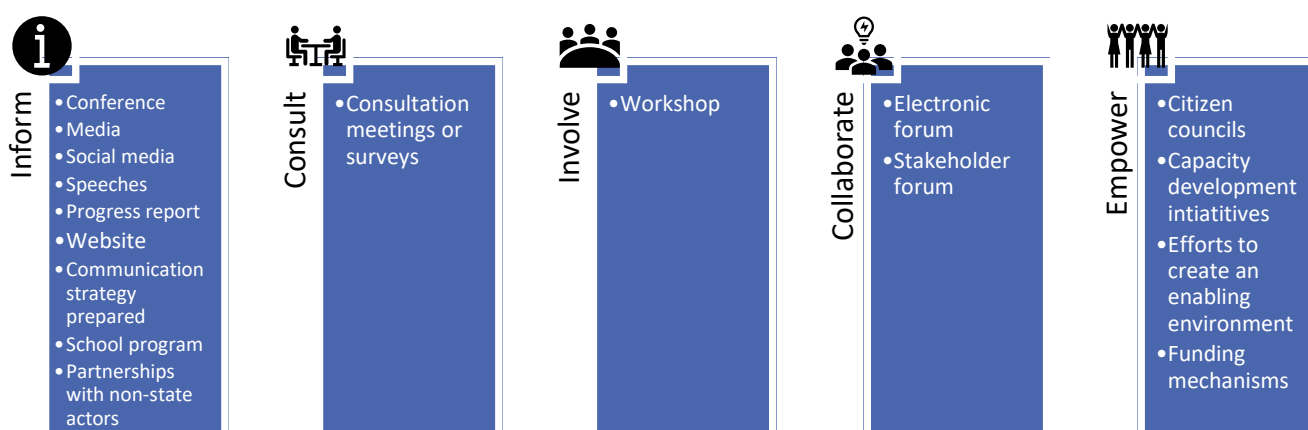
Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Maldives, Mauritius and Mexico showcased capacity development initiatives that raised awareness of the 2030 Agenda. Bosnia and Herzegovina's "Imagine2030" has raised awareness of the 2030 Agenda and is now working to empower citizens' to hold governments accountable and demand action on their priorities. Mauritius developed a Young Mauritians Plan for the Planet Booklet that was rolled out in schools to empower young people to develop solutions to sustainable development challenges for implementation by the government.

³⁰ Cutter, A. 2016. *Progressing national SDGs implementation: Experiences and recommendations from 2016*. London: Bond.

Engagement according to the Spectrum of Public Participation

VNR reports tend to showcase a range of ad hoc activities about awareness-raising across the goals of the Spectrum of Public Participation. Indeed, Member States noted efforts related to awareness-raising for activities that aim to inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower non-state actors. This is because Member States raise awareness not only through the provision of information on the 2030 Agenda through a variety of mediums but also through consultation processes, collaborative efforts with non-state actors and initiatives that aim to empower others to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda.

Figure 10. Main ways governments raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda according to the Spectrum of Public Participation



Unsurprisingly, the bulk of awareness-raising activities come in the form of efforts to inform the public. The review revealed 150 activities under the goal of inform from 2016-19 versus 27 under consult, 21 under involve, 10 under collaboration, and 17 under empower (**Figure 11**).

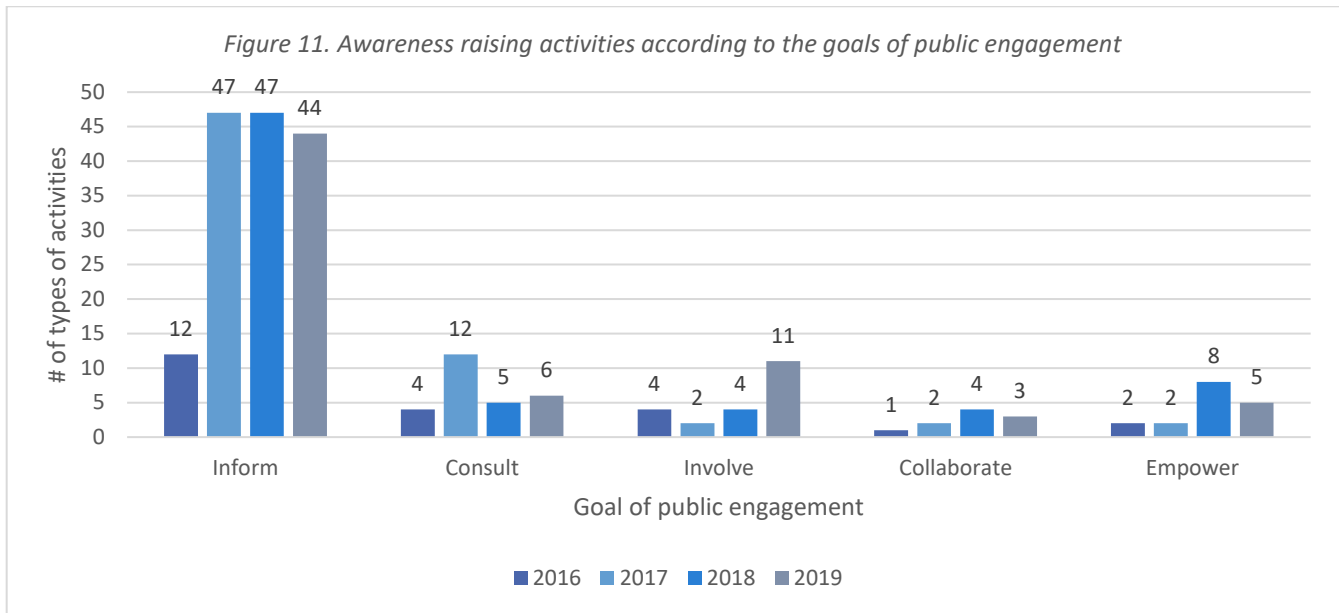
Under inform, nine countries³¹ are responsible for the 12 activities reported by Member States in 2016. In 2017, 47 activities were reported by 28 countries³² with several countries – Benin, Brazil, Cyprus, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Maldives, the Netherlands, and Zimbabwe -showcasing more than one activity to raise awareness. For 2018, 47 individual activities were identified for 27 countries.³³ While most countries pointed to one or two examples of awareness-raising to inform the public, Lithuania served as a clear outlier presenting five types of activities. In 2019, 31 countries³⁴ were responsible for the 44 activities identified (with Iceland and Tunisia reporting on two types of activities each).

³¹ Egypt, Estonia, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, Philippines, Sierra Leone, South Korea, and Uganda.

³² Afghanistan, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Denmark Ethiopia, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Monaco, Netherlands, Netherlands-Aruba, Netherlands Sint Maarten, Nigeria, Thailand, and Zimbabwe.

³³ Andorra, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bhutan, Cabo Verde, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Jamaica, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Mali, Mexico, Namibia, Niger, Paraguay, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, and Vietnam.

³⁴ Algeria, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Eswatini, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Iceland, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Mauritania, Mauritius, Pakistan, Palau, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and United Kingdom.



The most commonly cited activities over the four years include conferences³⁵ (26) and school programs³⁶ (20), followed by general references to awareness-raising activities and campaigns³⁷ (29) and websites³⁸ (14). Fourteen countries³⁹ reported developing or existing plans to develop communication strategies over 2017-2019. Social media was referred to by 11 VNR reports over the four years.⁴⁰ Finally, over the course of the four years, twelve countries⁴¹ referred to media and eight⁴² noted translating the 2030 Agenda into local languages.

³⁵ Algeria (2019), Argentina (2017), Azerbaijan (2019), Benin (2017), Botswana (2017), Chile (2017), Côte d'Ivoire (2019), Estonia (2016), Greece (2018), Honduras (2017), Iceland (2019), Japan (2017), Kenya (2017), Kuwait (2019), Lesotho (2019), Malaysia (2017), Mauritius (2019), Nigeria (2019), Pakistan (2019), Paraguay (2018), Romania (2018), Saint Lucia (2019), Tanzania (2019), Togo (2017), Uganda (2016), and United Arab Emirates (2018).

³⁶ Andorra (2018), Azerbaijan (2017), Bahrain (2018), Brazil (2017), Croatia (2019), Cyprus (2017), Denmark (2017), Dominican Republic (2018), Ireland (2018), Japan (2017), Laos (2018), Latvia (2018), Liechtenstein (2019), Lithuania (2018), Netherlands - St. Maarten (2017), Norway (2016), Paraguay (2018), Saudi Arabia (2018), and South Korea (2016).

³⁷ Afghanistan (2017), Bhutan (2018), Botswana (2017), Cambodia (2019), Cyprus (2017), Ethiopia (2017), India (2017), Israel (2019), Liechtenstein (2019), Mauritania (2019), Mauritius (2019), Monaco (2017), Niger (2018), Nigeria (2017), Pakistan (2019), Palau (2019), Philippines (2019), Saint Lucia (2019), Sri Lanka (2018), Serbia (2019), Sierra Leone (2019), South Africa (2019), Sudan (2018), Tonga (2019), Tunisia (2019), Turkey (2019), Turkmenistan (2019), Viet Nam (2018), and the United Kingdom (2019).

³⁸ Azerbaijan (2019), Australia (2018), Bahrain (2018), Belgium (2017), Ghana (2019), Egypt (2018), Guatemala (2019), Ireland (2018), Latvia (2018), Luxembourg (2017), Netherlands (2017), Netherlands - Aruba (2017), Netherlands - St. Maarten (2017), Philippines (2019), Tunisia (2019), and Uruguay (2018).

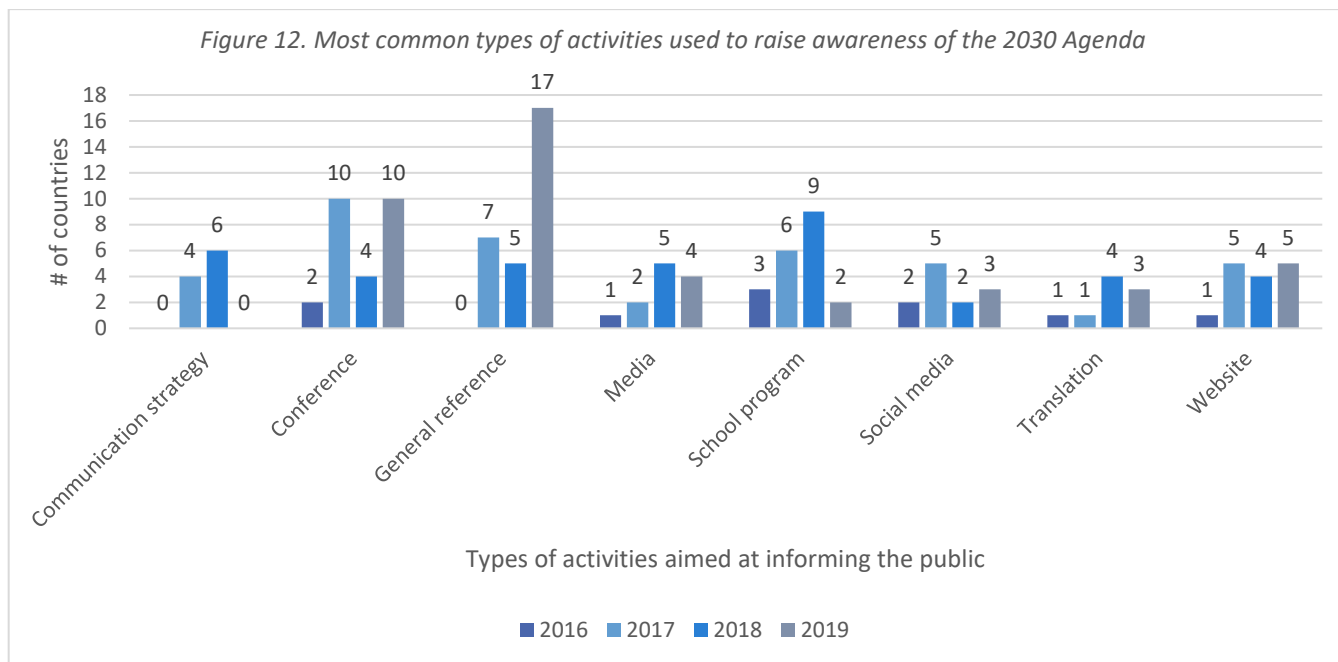
³⁹ Bahamas (2018), Benin (2017), Dominican Republic (2018), Eswatini (2019), Guatemala (2019), Indonesia (2017), Ireland (2018), Mauritius (2019), Mexico (2018), Netherlands (St. Maarten) (2017), Niger (2017), Spain (2018), Tanzania (2019), and Zimbabwe (2017).

⁴⁰ Egypt (2016), Iceland (2019), Jamaica (2018), Jordan (2017), Kenya (2017), Lithuania (2018), Maldives (2017), Montenegro (2016), Netherlands (Aruba, 2017), Nigeria (2017) and Serbia (2019).

⁴¹ Andorra (2018), Ghana (2019), Chile (2019), Iceland (2019), Jamaica (2018), Lesotho (2019), Lithuania (2018), Maldives (2017), Namibia (2018), Uganda (2016), and Zimbabwe (2017).

⁴² Bangladesh (2017), Eswatini (2019), Ghana (2019), Hungary (2018), Mali (2018), Mexico (2016), Namibia (2018), and Senegal (2018).

Figure 12⁴³ provides a breakdown of the most common types of activities under inform, by year.



Several other types of activities were identified through the research. India (2016) noted **parliamentary discussions** to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda among parliamentarians. Mexico (2016) and Sierra Leone (2016) also referred to the use of **official speeches** in the same year. Three countries reported partnerships to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda in 2017 – Brazil, Costa Rica and Kenya – while Ireland and Singapore noted similar approaches in 2018. These types of activities included examples in which Member States invited participation by non-state actors to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda. For instance, Ireland identified “SDG Champions” with high public profiles to raise awareness of the goals. In Kenya (2017), civil society organizations partnered with the government to undertake **community outreach programmes**. Finally, three countries reported using **contests or festivals** to raise awareness in 2017 (Cyprus, Malaysia, and Thailand), while four countries did the same in 2018 (Jamaica, Lithuania, Mexico and Uruguay). Mexico reported on the installation of public art exhibits to showcase progress about the 17 SDGs while Malaysia highlighted plans for roadshows. Thailand used speech and essay writing contests to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda among youth.

Significantly fewer activities were identified under the other goals of public engagement. Nevertheless, the results show that countries also make use of **consultation and workshop opportunities to further raise awareness** of the 2030 Agenda. Surveys were used in 2016 by Mexico and Montenegro to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda. Thailand used public meetings for this purpose in 2017 when it also consulted stakeholders under the VNR. Nineteen countries noted that consultations – either in identifying national priorities or as part of the VNR process – contributed to awareness-raising.⁴⁴ Throughout all reporting years, for the eleven countries⁴⁵ that pointed to awareness-raising through strategies to involve the public, nine instances occurred through workshops as part of processes to identify national priorities or carry out the VNR. Egypt (2016) and Togo (2017) pointed to the use of mechanisms that engage non-state actors in institutional arrangements for implementation as a means for awareness-raising. For example, the Egyptian Sustainable Development Forum that operates under the Ministry

⁴³ General reference means the VNR indicated the country undertook awareness raising activities but did not specify which activities.

⁴⁴ One in 2016, seven in 2017, four in 2018 and seven in 2019.

⁴⁵ Algeria, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Guinea, Mongolia, Laos, Lebanon, Montenegro, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

of Social Solidarity facilitates dialogue with stakeholders and allows for open communication between the government and a range of other stakeholders including local authorities, parliamentarians and politicians, universities and research centers, civil society, the private sector, media, trade unions, and other sectors of society. According to the 2016 report, this mechanism was used as one means to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda.

Country experiences

Egypt uses a mobile application to reach youth

In Egypt, a mobile application “Sharek” (participate) was created to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and allow citizens, particularly youth, to participate in the review of the country’s Strategy for Sustainable Development.

Adopting varied approaches to awareness raising in Jamaica

Jamaica reached out to stakeholders on the 2030 Agenda through billboards, community outreach programs and radio interviews. Consultations also helped to raise awareness, including 42 sector-specific consultations and sub-national consultations with farmers, fisherfolk, persons with disabilities and local government authorities in both urban and rural settings.

Efforts to raise awareness in Nepal

Nepal translated the 2030 Agenda into local languages as part of awareness-raising efforts. The country also developed a website dedicated to the 2030 Agenda.

Under **collaborate**, Member States pointed to examples of **electronic and in-person stakeholder forum** to raise awareness as well as engagement with academic institutions. Singapore noted that collaboration in drafting the VNR by non-state actors raised awareness of the 2030 Agenda. Finally, concerning efforts to empower the public that raise awareness, Member States pointed to capacity development initiatives (5)⁴⁶ and efforts to create an enabling environment⁴⁷ (6). The Philippines (2016) noted the use of youth initiatives and Turkmenistan (2019) reported on the use of youth councils. Croatia (2019) and the Czech Republic (2017) reported the use of funding mechanisms (2). For example, Mauritius (2019), Sri Lanka (2018) and the United Arab Emirates (2018) pointed to the creation of stakeholder engagement plans that worked to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and promote an enabling environment for non-state actors’ contributions to the 2030 Agenda. Poland and Slovakia pointed to specific partnership initiatives that aimed to empower non-state actors and citizens as part of awareness-raising efforts.

With respect to countries that have reported to the HLPF more than once, the review found that they tended to provide more information on awareness-raising in their first report than the second. Turkey was the only country for which awareness-raising activities were not identified in its first or second report. Whereas collectively the remaining countries presented 22 activities in their first report, this number dropped down to eleven activities identified from second reports. Azerbaijan, Egypt, and Sierra Leone presented awareness-raising activities in their first reports⁴⁸ but not in their second. Guatemala and Switzerland provided no information on awareness-raising in their first reports but included references to a website and consultations, respectively, in their second. The remaining countries included information in both reports; however, a greater number of types of activities tended to be reported in first reports over second.

⁴⁶ Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019), Egypt (2016), Greece (2018), Latvia (2018), Maldives (2017), Mauritius (2019), Mexico (2018)

⁴⁷ Jamaica (2018), Mauritius (2019), Poland (2018), Slovakia (2018), Sri Lanka (2018), and United Arab Emirates (2018).

⁴⁸ Azerbaijan noted school programs. Egypt highlighted a website, social media, engagement by governance mechanisms and capacity development that contributed to awareness raising. Sierra Leone pointed to official speeches and workshops.

Lessons learned

Member States continue to use a range of activities to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda. These experiences showcase strategies and approaches. First, the creation of a communication and engagement strategy to continue to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda throughout implementation is one way to provide transparent direction to state and non-state actors and support timely, informed and interactive approaches to awareness-raising. Second, Member States are making use of technology, partnerships and culturally appropriate methods to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda among diverse audiences. Social media, school programs and youth competitions tend to reach younger audiences. Raising awareness in public spaces through art installations or advertisements in traditional media and on public transit work to reach the general public. Efforts to raise awareness in more remote locations are also emerging, such as initiatives that socialize communities outside major cities. Finally, partnering with non-state actors is helpful for awareness-raising, respecting that civil society organizations, educational institutions and others can offer significant expertise concerning effective public engagement.



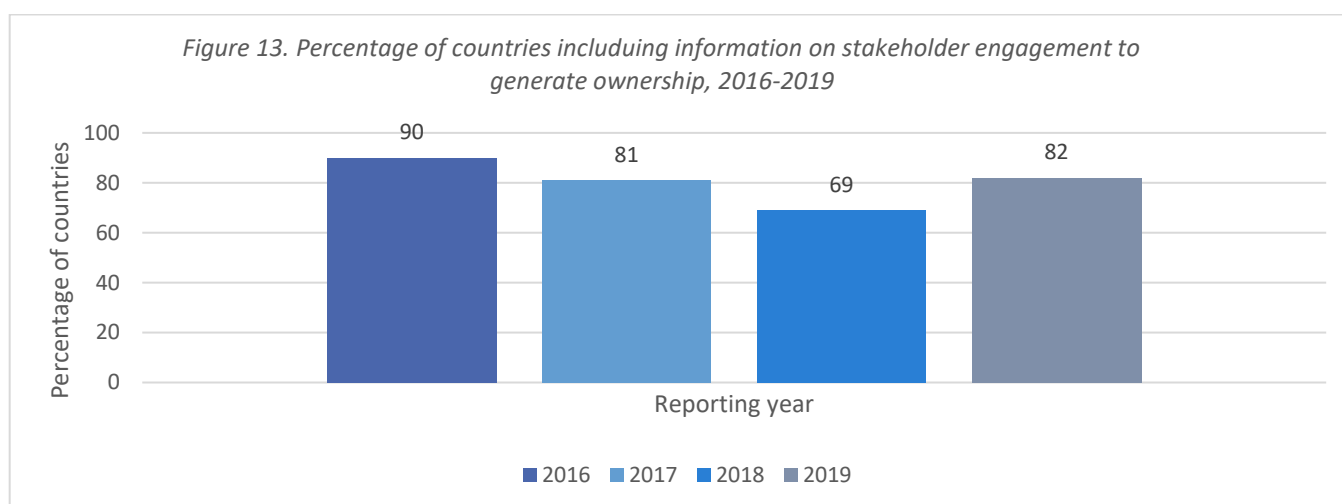
Photo: UNDP Cambodia/Kelsea Clingeleffer

Generating national ownership

National ownership refers to the process by which countries internalize the 2030 Agenda at national and local levels. In practical terms, it is about identifying national priorities that support sustainable development and integrating the 2030 Agenda into policies, strategies and programs. It also includes defining the national targets and indicators that accompany selected priorities. For most countries, the concrete manifestation of national ownership comes in the form of the creation of a national 2030 Agenda implementation plan and/or the integration of the framework into national and sectoral policies. Generating national ownership also creates opportunities for new partnerships and engagement with diverse segments of society, particularly historically marginalized communities, to build momentum towards reaching the goals.

How Member States Report

Member States are asked to include information on how they create national ownership in their VNR reports. In terms of stakeholder engagement, this includes information on how stakeholders are involved in identifying priorities and selecting targets and indicators towards their progress. Efforts from national and local governments as well as others in localizing the 2030 Agenda at sub-national levels is also part of generating ownership. Over 2016-19, 115 out of 142 (80%) reporting Member States included information on stakeholder engagement in the process of generating ownership (**Figure 13**). In 2016, 20 out of 22 (90%) reporting states indicated information on stakeholder engagement while 35 out of 43 (81%) did so in 2017. In 2018, 32 out of 46 (69%) and in 2019, 39 out of 47 (82%) reporting states included this information in their VNR reports.



Engagement according to the spectrum of Public Participation

A significant portion of stakeholder engagement in the nationalization process falls under efforts to consult on priorities. While some Member States used surveys⁴⁹ and online public comments as part of their nationalization process, most Member States emphasize public meetings, consultation meetings and workshops. In 2016, 17⁵⁰ out of 22 (77%) reporting states indicated the use of in person meetings to generate national ownership. This figure was 27⁵¹ out of 43 (62%) in 2017, 26⁵² out of 46 (57%) in 2018 and 33⁵³ out of 47 (70%) in 2019.

⁴⁹ Andorra, Argentina, Bahrain, Bhutan, Cameroon, Cyprus, Finland, Liechtenstein, Mali, Mexico, Montenegro, Nauru and Netherlands- Aruba reported using surveys as part of their strategy to nationalize the 2030 Agenda.

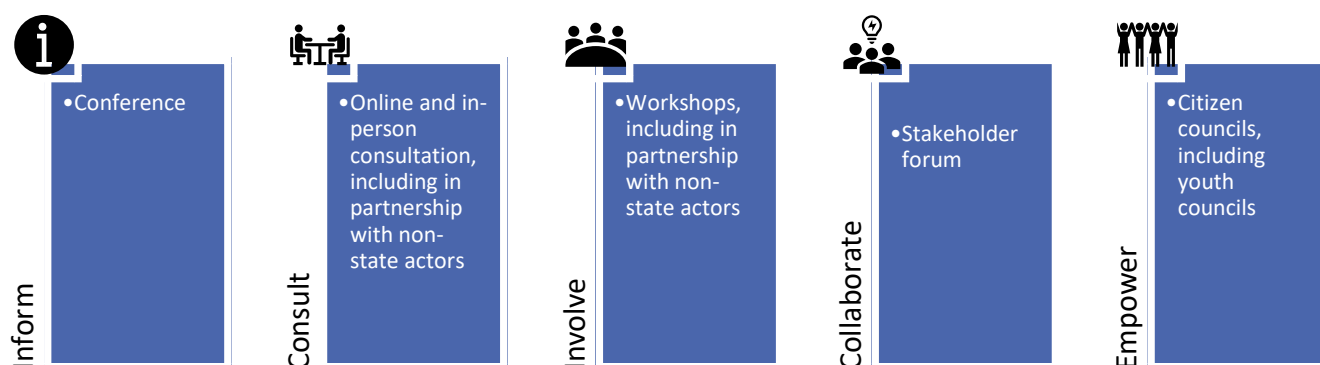
⁵⁰ Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Norway, Philippines, Samoa, Sierra Leone, South Korea, Switzerland, Togo, Uganda, Venezuela.

⁵¹ Afghanistan, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Benin, Botswana, Chile, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Guatemala, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Nigeria, Peru, Portugal, Qatar, Slovenia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe.

⁵² Armenia, Cabo Verde, Canada (planned), Dominican Republic, Egypt, Guinea, Hungary, Ireland, Jamaica, Latvia, Lebanon, Mali, Mexico, Namibia, Paraguay, Qatar, Romania, Senegal, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, State of Palestine, Sudan, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, and Uruguay.

⁵³ Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Eswatini, Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, Iceland, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Mauritius, Mongolia, Nauru, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom and Vanuatu.

Figure 14. Main ways governments engage stakeholders to generate ownership over the 2030 Agenda according to the Spectrum of Public Participation



A common theme in this context is coupling such meetings with efforts to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and as part of follow-up and review processes of either national policies or the VNRs. For example, Armenia (2018) used the meetings as a way of incorporating the SDGs into the Armenia Development Strategy. Algeria (2019) organized a workshop to raise awareness on the high-level objectives on sustainable development. The workshop provided participants the opportunity to brainstorm on what to do, how to do it, and to evaluate public policies. Croatia (2019) engaged in a national strategic framework that included over 300 institutions. Through this process, Croatia drafted its VNR report.

Since 2015, Fiji undertook over 800 public forums including two rounds of public consultations on where the government’s focus should be. One of the goals of the consultations was to prepare the government’s budget. Guatemala organized 144 workshops throughout the country to provide different segments of Guatemalan society the opportunity to analyze and prioritize the SDGs. In Iraq (2019), meetings were used to solicit information, update the Iraq Vision 2030 strategy and provide input for Iraq’s VNR report. Saint Lucia (2019) created Labs which acted as idea incubators and facilitated discussions involving 134 organizations. The information generated in those meetings informed Saint Lucia’s Medium-Term Development Strategy. Botswana, Mali and Tonga used meetings to help partners localize the 2030 Agenda (Box 4).

Box 4. Stakeholders engagement to localize the 2030 Agenda

Localization refers to how the 2030 Agenda is manifested at the local level and includes engagement with local governments and other actors at the sub-national level. VNR reports suggest that local governments typically receive support and guidance from the national government to help mobilize resources and ensure policy coherence. VNR reports point to several approaches in this regard. Benin (2018), Colombia (2016), Côte d’Ivoire (2019), Egypt (2016), Guatemala (2019), Latvia (2018), Morocco (2016) and Niger (2018) provided capacity building opportunities for local governments with the goal of empowering them to contribute to the 2030 Agenda implementation. In Niger, the national ministry in charge of the SDGs will propose a guide for the planning and monitoring specifically intended for local governments. Mexico (2016) aims to have all levels of government adopt an SDG perspective in all their plans. The Office of the President is developing a strategy to help local governments integrate the SDGs into their policies. Spain (2018) and Togo (2016) organized workshops to disseminate information on the SDGs. Finally, for the past 20 years in South Korea (2016), Local Councils for Sustainable Development have used a model of public sector-civil society partnership. These councils are now supporting the 2030 Agenda implementation.

As noted below, some countries also used stakeholder engagement to nationalize the 2030 Agenda as part of efforts to **leave no one behind**. For example, in the case of Timor-Leste (2019), civil society organizations helped the government identify which groups were at risk of being left behind while in Costa Rica efforts were carried out to explicitly seek members from the LGBTIQ, elderly and afro-descendants to help draft the VNR report.

Face-to-face meetings were often conducted in partnership with non-state actors. For example, Chile (2019) partnered with the United Nations to create a vigorous methodology and content for discussion at the workshop. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire (2019), the government partnered with a private sector group to promote corporate social responsibility. The President of Ghana hosted a Breakfast Meeting with representatives from business, civil society, academia, the media and think tanks. Participants defined collective actions to accelerate the implementation of SDGs and identified ways of developing 'quick wins.' Kazakhstan partnered with UNDP to hold a series of workshops to assess the extent of SDG integration into national programs and strategic documents.

Youth councils are emerging as a mechanism for some countries that both empower youth and help in generating national ownership. Indeed, youth councils are emerging more generally as a part of 2030 Agenda implementation with Croatia (2019), Finland (2016), Guyana (2019), Iceland (2019), Madagascar (2016), Nauru (2019), the Netherlands (Curaçao) (2017), Rwanda (2019), Sierra Leone (2019), Tonga (2019), United Arab Emirates (2018), Vanuatu (2019) and Zimbabwe (2017) indicating the creation of youth councils or similar structures. In addition to these efforts, the review showed the use of stakeholder fora to generate national ownership. Chile (2019), Denmark (2017), Germany (2016), Hungary (2018), Ireland (2018), Nepal (2017), the Netherlands (Curaçao) (2017), Nigeria (2017), Sri Lanka (2018) and Uruguay (2018) noted this approach. These tend to focus on creating national ownership and providing feedback on existing initiatives. In Hungary (2018), the National Council for Sustainable Development was set up by the Hungarian parliament. The council has about 30 members representing national stakeholders, political parties, the private sector, CSOs and church organizations. It serves as a mechanism for shared discussions on the 2030 Agenda.

Country experience

Iceland's Youth Council (2019)

Twelve representatives aged 13-18 from around Iceland make up the youth council. The purpose of the Council is to inform participants and discuss the SDGs. Another purpose of the Council is to generate information and share it on social media. The Council meets six times a year with one annual meeting with the government. The Council provides information to government on the SDGs and provides advice on how to implement the goals.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's consultation tool (2019)

Bosnia and Herzegovina developed an SDG Consultation Tool to promote awareness, dialogue, partnerships and teamwork on pressing matters for the society. The tool allows for the collection of qualitative data through the exploration of positive and negative associations of citizens of history and the present. The tool helps participants articulate the future they wish to see, identify threats and opportunities that need to be addressed and identify the types of structures that need to be in place for the desired future to take shape. Overall, the tool helps to identify solutions and ideas, and set target priorities for the SDGs.

Palau's efforts to create a monitoring framework (2019)

Palau's held its first National SDG Consultation in 2016 in partnership with the UNDP. Participants at the meeting discussed how to localize the SDGs and informed the selection of national targets and indicators. In a second meeting held in 2017, participants generated a core list of targets and indicators that constitute the Palau National SDG Framework.

For repeat reporters, first VNRs indicated a tendency to consult and inform stakeholders. For example, Egypt created short films about their sustainable development and Benin organized a conference with more than 500 participants as part of nationalization processes. In their second VNRs, the most common category of engagement to nationalize the 2030 Agenda was collaborate with 5 out of 13 (38%) Member States providing information. Most repeat reporters did not expand on the type of engagement to nationalize the 2030 Agenda during their second report. In other words, if during their first VNRs, a Member State reported the engagement in an activity to inform and consult with non-state actors, they likely did not report the same during their second VNR. Only Chile and Mexico expanded the number of engagement categories in their second report. During Chile's first VNR, Chile engaged in activities in the involve and collaborate categories. During Chile's second VNR, Chile expanded their engagement as they included a website (inform), held a consultative workshop (consult) and organized a national stakeholder forum (collaborate). During Mexico's first report, Mexico engaged in activities that fell in the consult category. For their second report, Mexico expanded its engagement to include activities that were in the consult and inform categories of engagement. Repeat reporters participated in a range of activities along the spectrum.

Lessons learned

Experiences in national ownership reveal emerging approaches and strategies. One approach is to involve stakeholders across a broad geographic area of the country in consultation processes through open and inclusive approaches. The use of a variety of strategies to solicit feedback also supports inclusivity through in-person and online opportunities. Some countries have linked the nationalization process to ongoing initiatives that engage non-state actors on the 2030 Agenda, such as youth councils or stakeholder fora, recognizing that engagement on national priorities is an iterative process. Finally, a longer-term, formal approach is establishing regular, pre-determined opportunities for stakeholders to engage in the nationalization process.

Partnerships and collaboration

It is well recognized by Member States that realizing the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda will require efforts from all stakeholders. The integrated nature of the SDGs, efforts to leave no one behind and the need for innovative solutions to address complex challenges necessitates collaboration and cooperation across sectors. Partnerships with local communities and organizations that understand best how to address local sustainable development challenges and reach historically left behind populations are key. This means creating enabling environments in which citizens, civil society, the private sector, local governments, educational institutions, youth and many other diverse stakeholders are empowered to contribute to sustainable development. Coordination of non-state actor contributions also helps to avoid duplication of efforts and promote synergies.

How Member States report

The Secretary General's voluntary common reporting guides include reference to partnerships throughout and particularly under the section on means of implementation. Member States typically refer to the importance of partnership and showcase efforts to collaborate and engage through nationalization processes, follow-up and review (VNRs) and institutional arrangements. VNR reports tend to provide two kinds of information in relation to partnerships for the 2030 Agenda implementation. They showcase examples of efforts taken by the government in partnership with non-state actors as well as initiatives undertaken by non-state actors independent of collaboration with the government. For example, the country experiences below showcase examples of countries reporting on efforts by non-state actors taken independently of collaboration with the government. Efforts related to formal collaboration or partnership with the government have been categorized below according to the Spectrum of Public Participation.

Country experience

Reporting on contributions from civil society in Cameroon's VNR report (2019)

Cameroon's VNR report highlighted diverse examples of contributions from civil society. In addition to participation in consultations to nationalize the 2030 Agenda, civil society organizations translated the SDGs into local languages, facilitated educational programs for youth, and created a comic book on the SDGs. A civil society-led platform has been established and is contributing to capacity development. Civil society organizations have also produced their own report on the 2030 Agenda implementation.

Showcasing efforts by diverse stakeholders in VNR reports

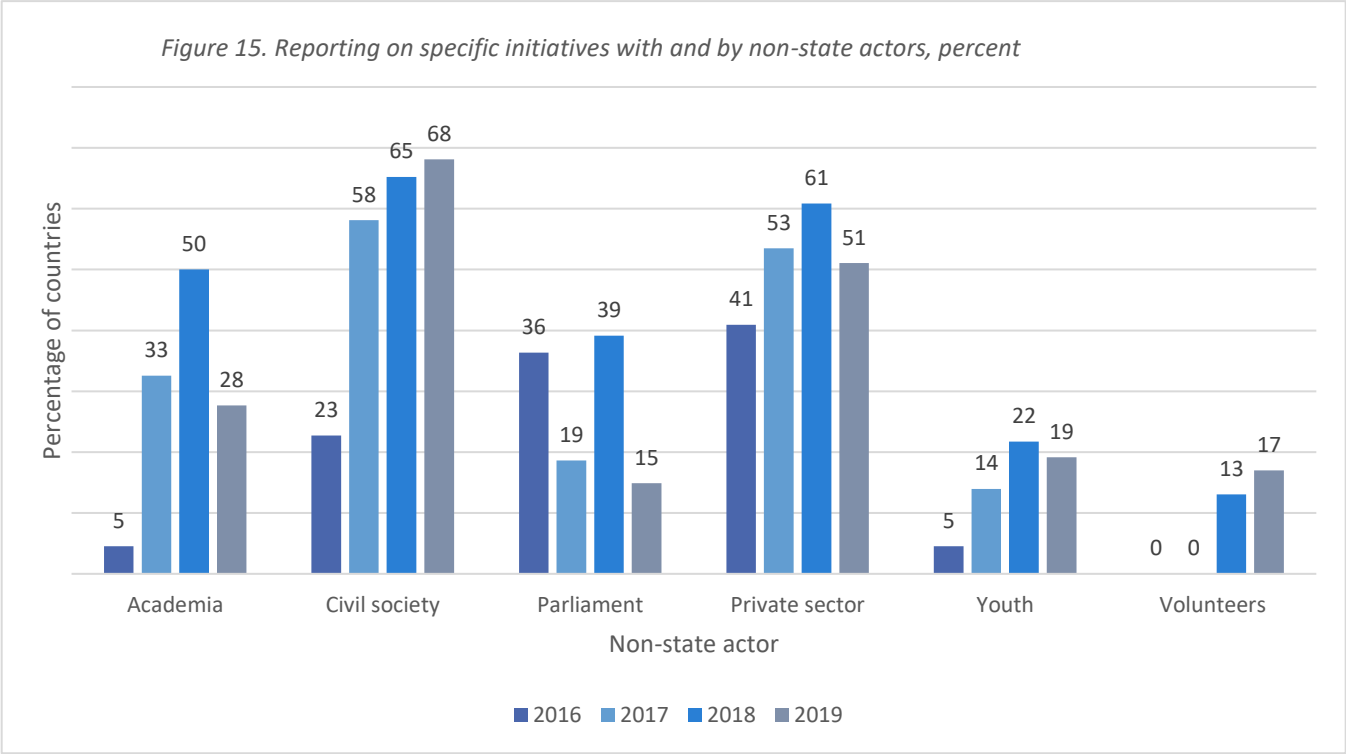
Member States take different approaches to showcasing the efforts of non-state actors in VNR reports. For example, Cameroon (2019), Denmark (2017), Slovakia (2018), and Spain (2018) included dedicated chapters or annexes provided by non-state actors in their VNR reports. Israel and Mauritania included annexes that detailed contributions from non-state actors and participation by civil society in the VNR process, respectively. Other countries incorporated examples from non-state actors throughout their reports. Canada's (2018) VNR included vignettes provided by non-state actors, while Chile's 2019 report included sub-headings under each goal. Numerous other countries have adopted similar approaches to showcasing the contributions of non-state actors in their VNR reports.



Photo: UNDP/Freya Morales

Successive reviews of VNR reports have shown that outside of consultations and institutional arrangements, Member States are most likely to showcase specific partnerships with and/or efforts by civil society, the private sector and academia (Figure 15).⁵⁴ Reporting on the roles of most actors declined in 2019 following increases in previous years. In 2018, VNR reports began to include efforts by volunteers. References to the role of youth also increased from 2016-18. Box 5 showcases the types of activities undertaken by non-state actors outside collaboration with governments as showcased in VNR reports.

Figure 15. Reporting on specific initiatives with and by non-state actors, percent



⁵⁴ It was outside the scope of this report to review all VNR reports to provide trend data on local and regional governments. However, data from the review of 2017 and 2018 VNR reports under the *Progressing National SDGs Implementation* series suggests that most countries report on localization efforts. For 2017, the report found that 33 countries reported on localization while 30 did so in 2018.

Box 5. Non-state actors contribute to the 2030 Agenda implementation outside collaboration with the government

Member States showcase efforts by non-state actors to contribute across various aspects of the 2030 Agenda implementation, including awareness-raising, national consultations, partnerships, the formation of coalitions, implementation of specific projects and contributions to follow-up and review. Apart from participating in consultations and institutional arrangements, non-state actors are contributing to the 2030 Agenda implementation through a variety of efforts.

Academia

Academic institutions are most often cited as contributing expert analysis to inform the 2030 Agenda implementation efforts. In addition, some universities have incorporated the 2030 Agenda into curriculum and on-campus activities. Finally, in some countries, universities have established networks or centers of excellence to engage on the 2030 Agenda, such as through national chapters of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Civil society

VNR reports typically showcase specific partnerships and initiatives carried out by civil society organizations to realize the SDGs, mainly in the form of particular projects and awareness-raising activities. Also, VNR reports showcase civil society coalitions on the 2030 Agenda and efforts to develop guidance and tools in support of implementation. The role of civil society in promoting accountability for the 2030 Agenda implementation is also featured, though less often than specific partnerships and initiatives.

Local governments

VNR reports do not consistently report on the role of local governments. Nevertheless, those that do tend to point to how local governments are setting priorities, monitoring and evaluating their efforts against the 2030 Agenda, and on local projects and public engagement initiatives. In addition, some national governments are also working with local governments and their associations directly to raise awareness and build capacities for 2030 Agenda implementation⁵⁵.

Parliamentarians

VNR reports tend to highlight the role of parliaments in nationalizing the 2030 Agenda and follow-up and review processes, including through reporting to parliaments and the creation of parliamentary committees. A limited number of countries have also highlighted international engagement by parliamentarians.

Private sector

VNR reports tend to refer to the role of business associations and coalitions, such as the local United Nations Global Compact Local Networks, as key partners in implementation. Private sector stakeholders and their associations are taking steps to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and coordinate actions among the business community, implement specific projects, organize events and pursue company-specific commitments.

Volunteers

Member States highlight the contributions of volunteers to 2030 Agenda implementation, noting the roles of volunteer sending organizations and national organizations that promote volunteerism.

Youth

Reporting on youth in VNR reports tends to focus on the creation of youth councils and/or programs that specifically aim to support leadership by youth on the 2030 Agenda.

⁵⁵ Analysis of the engagement of local and regional governments in VNRs are regularly conducted by the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments: <https://www.global-taskforce.org/>

Engagement according to the Spectrum of Public Participation

As pointed out by Kindornay and Kocaata (2019), Member States can promote a whole-of-society approach to the 2030 Agenda implementation by supporting a partnership enabling environment through legislation, policies and government leadership, spaces for collaboration between stakeholders and via direct support such as capacity development initiatives, funding and participation in shared activities and initiatives.⁵⁶ Under the Spectrum of Public Participation, efforts to create an enabling environment are part of strategies to empower non-state actors to implement the 2030 Agenda. The creation of spaces for collaboration includes electronic and in-person stakeholder fora which are typically established with the goal of collaboration. In terms of direct support to non-state actors, capacity development initiatives and funding mechanisms are underpinned by the goal of empowerment. Member States carry out direct partnerships with non-state actors under all goals within the spectrum of public participation. This includes activities that aim to inform the public of the 2030 Agenda, including through websites, awareness-raising campaigns, partnerships with academic institutions, the co-creation of 2030 Agenda related resources, reporting on progress and consultations.

Figure 16. Main ways governments partner with stakeholders on the 2030 Agenda according to the Spectrum of Public Participation

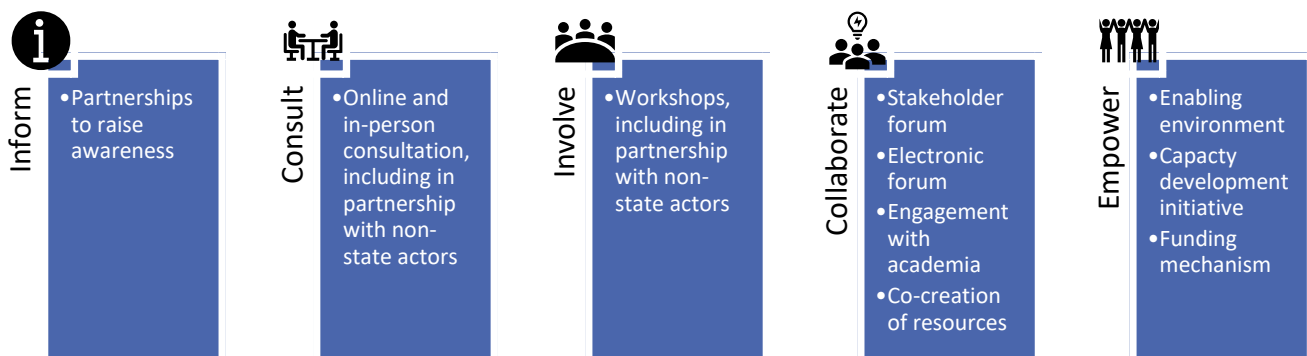
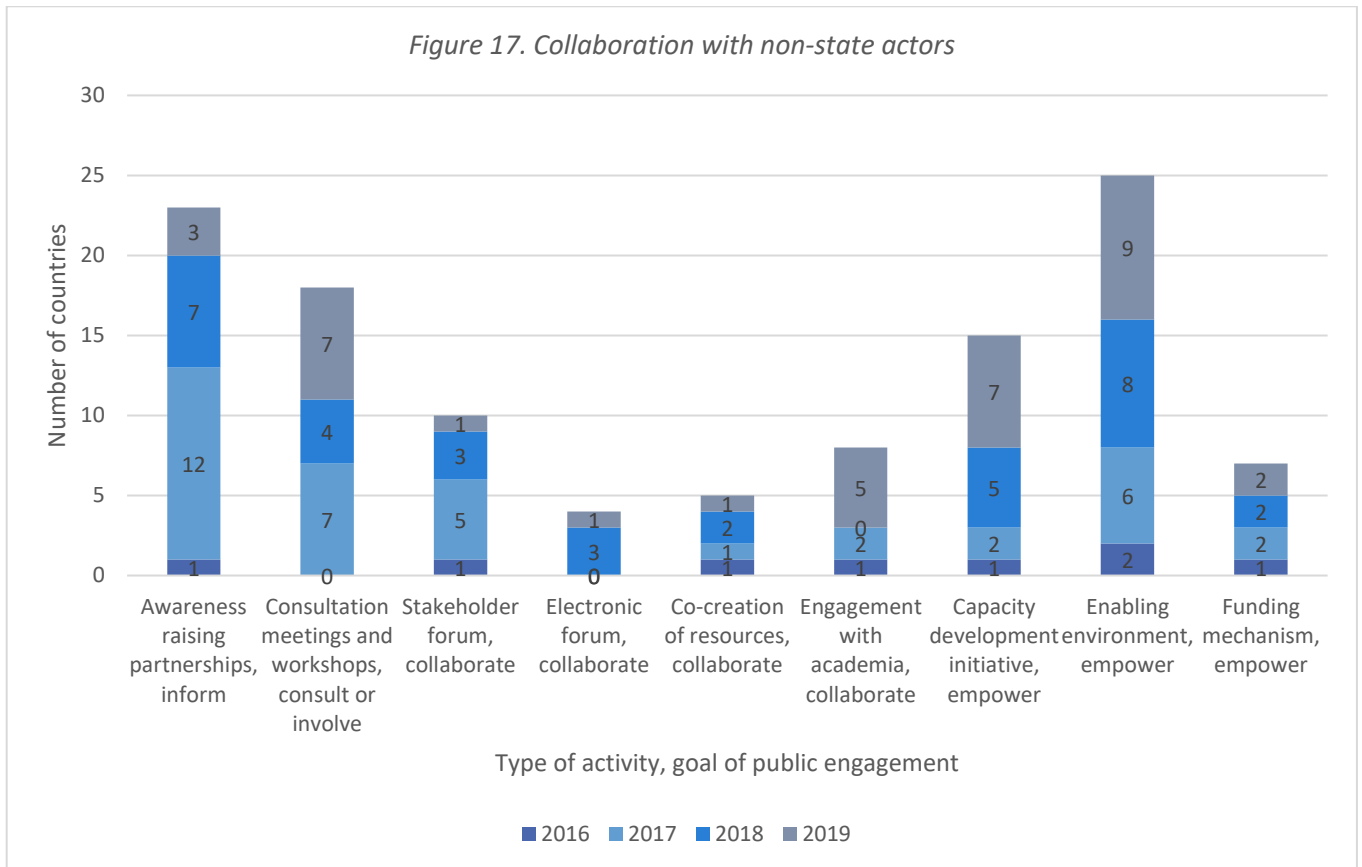


Figure 17 provides an overview of the most commonly cited forms of partnership in VNR reports according to activity type and goal of public engagement. It shows that most actions are in the areas of public engagement to inform, collaborate or empower.

⁵⁶ See Kindornay, S. and Kocaata, Z. 2019. *A whole-of-society approach: Partnerships to realize the 2030 Agenda*. Good Practice in 2030 Agenda Implementation Series. Vancouver and Ottawa: BCCIC and CCIC. <https://ccic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/International-Partnership.pdf>



Efforts by governments to empower non-state actors to contribute to the 2030 Agenda have seen a steady increase, particularly with respect to capacity development initiatives and promotion of an enabling environment. Member States such as Benin (2018), Bhutan (2018), Cameroon (2019), Canada (2018), Chile (2019), Germany (2016), Indonesia (2019 and 2017), Jamaica (2018), Lesotho (2019), Sri Lanka (2019) and many others have developed specific policy frameworks or approaches aimed at promoting an enabling environment for non-state actors such as civil society, the private sector and citizens more generally to engage in 2030 Agenda implementation.

With respect to creating spaces for collaboration to occur, 12 countries⁵⁷ over 2016-19 referred to the creation of electronic and/or in-person fora with the explicit purpose of promoting collaboration. For example, Iceland (2019) launched an information portal on the SDGs in 2019 that allows for non-state actors to share information on contributions to the SDGs, creating a public forum for information sharing. Mexico reported on the Sustainability Alliance in 2016, an institutionalized platform for exchange between the government and multinational firms aimed at integrating the 2030 Agenda into business models and the design of international co-operation projects. In 2018, the country highlighted the creation of a mobile application (Generación 2030) that serves as an electronic forum to bring together representatives from different sectors on the 2030 Agenda.

⁵⁷Denmark (2017), Iceland (2019), Ireland (2018), Japan (2017), Mexico (2018, 2016), Nepal (2017), Netherlands – Curaçao (2017), New Zealand (2019), Poland (2018), Spain (2018), Sri Lanka (2018), and Sweden (2017).

Country experience

Sri Lanka's efforts to establish an enabling environment (2018)

In addition to establishing a Consultative Committee on Sustainable Development with non-state actor's representation, Sri Lanka developed a Stakeholder Engagement Plan in line with the Spectrum of Public Participation. The plan's main objectives include consultation with stakeholders on the VNR, to raise awareness and to establish a platform for continuous stakeholder engagement. To achieve these objectives, the country carried out consultation objectives and created an online engagement platform. The country plans to develop a web portal to share information and consult an online network of multi-stakeholder reference groups.

Empowering civil society in the United Kingdom (2019)

The government of the United Kingdom published a Civil Society Strategy in 2018, setting a vision for how the government will work with and support civil society. The strategy encourages actions by individuals, civil society and the private sector to act towards sustainable development.

The review of VNR reports showed examples of direct support to and partnerships with non-state actors, notably in the form of capacity development initiatives (which saw a steady increase over reporting years), funding mechanisms and collaboration with academic institutions and others to generate resources in support to the 2030 Agenda implementation and consultation on national priorities and in VNRs. Examples of capacity development initiatives include specific programs to build capacities for youth (Azerbaijan [reported in 2017 and 2019], Cameroon, Mauritius, Mexico [2018]), as well as initiatives targeted towards public officials, local governments and other stakeholders, carried out in partnership with non-state actors. Croatia's VNR report (2019) provides two examples of funding mechanisms. Through the Swiss-Croatian Cooperation Programme, civil society organizations can access grants to support the capacities of children and young people to contribute to sustainable development and strengthen partnerships between schools, civil society and local communities. Funding has also been made available for partnerships between civil society organizations scientific institutions.

A limited number of states reported collaboration between governments and non-state actors in processes related to reporting on progress (outside drafting VNR reports, discussed below). Bahamas (2018), Belarus (2017), Belgium (2017), the Netherlands (2017) and the States of Palestine (2018) pointed to efforts to ensure that progress reporting serves as an opportunity for engagement with non-state actors, including showcasing their own contributions to sustainable development in some instances. Finally, Initiatives that were established to empower youth were also highlighted by Zimbabwe (2017) and Turkmenistan (2019). For example, Zimbabwe established a national youth taskforce, Youth4SDGs, to bring together 100 youth organizations working in 10 provinces of Zimbabwe to provide strategic direction for youth inclusion and participation in 2030 Agenda implementation.

Reporting on government efforts to promote or engage in partnerships for 2030 Agenda implementation increased for countries submitting a second report to the HLPF. Chile, Indonesia, Mexico, Sierra Leone, and Turkey presented more examples in this context in their second reports than in their first. Except for Mexico, these countries did not provide examples of how they partnered or supported partnerships in their first reports but did so in their second. Chile and Sierra Leone showcased partnerships in terms of consultations as well as efforts to create an enabling environment. Turkey highlighted a website that showcases best practices by diverse stakeholders (showcased below) and partnerships in consultation processes. Indonesia highlighted efforts to create an enabling environment through the creation of Guidelines for Multi-stakeholder Partnerships to implement the SDGs. In its first and second reports, Mexico presented examples of partnerships under examples of stakeholder engagement to inform, collaborate and empower. Azerbaijan shared its efforts to promote youth engagement on the 2030 Agenda in its 2017 and 2019 reports. Togo and the Philippines were the only countries to present less examples in

their second reports (with the Philippines presenting no examples and Togo presenting only one example, down from two from its first report).

Lessons learned

The presentation of trends and experiences in partnerships showcase emerging trends. Taking steps to create an enabling environment for partnership and collaboration through the establishment of policy frameworks is an important basis for partnership. Moreover, these frameworks can support good quality engagement by providing direction to government and non-state actors, setting out clear expectations regarding when and how partnership and engagement will occur and ensuring transparency in approaches. Such policies also provide an opportunity to articulate how partnerships will support efforts to leave no one behind and engage with historically marginalized groups.

Member States are also supporting the creation of spaces for collaboration. While many non-state actors are creating their own spaces for dialogue and engagement, such as civil society, academic or private sector networks on the 2030 Agenda, a number of Member States have created online and in-person forums that serve as institutionalized spaces for information and knowledge sharing, awareness raising, coordination and the promotion of collective action.

The innovative whole-of-society partnerships envisioned by the 2030 Agenda are not automatic. Member states and non-state actors alike are increasing their capacity for partnerships. The creation of specific capacity development initiatives and dedicated funding mechanisms support collaboration. Working with non-state actors to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and carry out consultations are also ways to harness the expertise of non-state actors and work collaboratively in implementation. Importantly, by working in partnership, Member States can expand the reach of their efforts and work with and through organizations that have capacities to improve engagement with those at risk of being left behind. Finally, showcasing the individual efforts of non-state actors to contribute to the 2030 Agenda as well as examples of collaborations with governments helps tell the story of how all stakeholders are contributing to the 2030 Agenda in VNR reports. National and VNR reporting on progress serve as opportunities to showcase good practices, efforts to promote partnership and collaboration and the leadership by government as well as non-state actors in the 2030 Agenda implementation.

Stakeholder Engagement Leave No One Behind

The goal of leaving no one behind is a fundamental transformative element of the 2030 Agenda. As an approach to implementation, the concept translates into the prioritization of the needs of the most vulnerable and efforts to reach the furthest behind first. Leaving no one behind is closely linked to stakeholder engagement. People that are left behind in most societies are typically those excluded from decision making that impacts them. Engagement with historically marginalized groups is critical to informing local and national priorities and empowering those most at risk of being left behind to actively participate in implementation.



Photo: UNDP

How Member States report

For countries that reported to the HLPF in 2018 and 2019, the Secretary General’s common voluntary reporting guidelines included reference to the inclusion of a thematic chapter on leaving no one behind. According to several reviews of VNR reports, overall reporting on efforts to leave no one behind could be improved by member states. The 2019 Partners for Review report found that only 40% of countries included a chapter or sub-chapter on leaving no one behind (Oosterhof, 2019). The *Progressing national SDGs implementation* report for the 2018 VNR reports found that only 16 countries provided a detailed account of efforts to leave no one behind (Kindornay, 2019).

In the context of reporting on leaving no one behind, Member States tend to provide information on who is at risk of being left behind and programs and initiatives to address their concerns. Typically, they do not include reference to specific efforts to leave no one behind from the perspective of multi-stakeholder engagement. As shown below, the mapping of information in VNR reports against the Spectrum of Public Participation revealed very few activities that explicitly targeted leaving no one behind, regardless of the goal of engagement.

Country experience

Thematic consultations in Ghana to leave no one behind

Ghana carried out thematic consultations on youth engagement, leaving no one behind and synergies between SDGs in Cape Coast, Tamale and Kumasi respectively. In the spirit of leaving no one behind, consultations included over 100 participants from government agencies, civil society, the private sector, academia, traditional authorities, persons with disabilities, political parties, youth groups and marginalized groups. The government collected inputs ahead of meetings and contributed to the basis for discussions during meetings. The outcomes from these meetings were reflected in the VNR report, with full reports on each theme also published.

Targeting excluded groups in Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste took steps to ensure excluded groups participated in the VNR. The country established a CSO advisory group to inform the VNR with representation for civil society, youth, women and conflict-prevention non-governmental organizations. The advisory group provided advice to the VNR secretariat on how to best leave no one behind in the consultation process and supported the design and facilitation of meetings. Advice was provided on how to best include young women and men, children, people with disabilities and rural populations.

Engagement according to the Spectrum of Public Participation

The review of VNR reports revealed 28 examples of stakeholder engagement that was explicitly tied to leaving no one behind presented by 27 countries.⁵⁸ Consultation efforts appear to be the primary form of stakeholder engagement that Member States are pursuing as part of efforts to leave no one behind, captured by 15 of the identified activities. **Figure 18** provides an overview of the most common activities identified over 2016-19. In terms of trends over time, 2019 saw the most examples with nine Member States reporting stakeholder engagement to leave no one behind versus six each in 2016, 2017 and 2018.



Photo: UN ESCAP

Figure 18. Multi-stakeholder engagement to leave no one behind

⁵⁸ Bhutan (2018), Cabo Verde (2018), Chile (2019), Colombia(2016), Costa Rica (2017), Eswatini (2019), Georgia(2016), Ghana (2019), Guatemala (2017), India (2017), Ireland (2018), Jordan (2017), New Zealand (2019), Nigeria (2017), Norway(2016), Pakistan (2019), Paraguay (2018), Poland (2018), Romania (2018), Serbia(201), Saint Lucia (2019), Sierra Leone (2019,2016), Timor-Leste (2019), Togo (2017, 2016), Turkmenistan (2019), Uganda (2016), and Vanuatu (2019).



In 2016, Colombia, Georgia, Norway, Sierra Leone, Togo and Uganda noted efforts to leave no one behind. Colombia and Georgia pointed to multi-stakeholder engagement in governance arrangements in this context, while Norway and Uganda highlighted that consultation meetings were carried out to reach those left behind. Togo noted that its efforts to strengthen institutions and the enabling environment for civil society and the private sector were part of its efforts to leave no one behind.

Sierra Leone’s 2016 VNR process offered stakeholders an opportunity to agree on a definition of what is meant by leaving no one behind and agree on indicators for its VNR report that serve as the baseline for monitoring progress. In 2017, Costa

Rica, Guatemala, India, Jordan, and Togo highlighted efforts to leave no one behind in the context of consultations. In drafting its VNR report, Costa Rica opened consultations with excluded groups, including Afro-descendants, elderly, disabled people and LGBTIQ. Nigeria pointed to the creation of a stakeholder forum (an example under collaborate) to leave no one behind. The Internally Displaced Persons Forum serves as a mechanism to generate information on the internally displaced people and respond to their needs. Bhutan, Cabo Verde, Poland and Romania identified efforts to leave no one behind in their consultation efforts in 2018. For example, the main objective of Cabo Verde’s national consultation was to ensure groups often left behind have an opportunity to express priorities. As part of its efforts to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda, Paraguay organized a Forum on Human Rights and Sustainable Development under the slogan to “leave no one behind”. Ireland’s SDG Stakeholder Forum seeks to be as inclusive as possible and identify stakeholders excluded from discussions.

Nine Member States⁵⁹ provided examples of stakeholder engagement to leave no one behind in 2019 through activities aimed at consultation, collaboration and empowerment. Chile presented its efforts to create an enabling environment that leaves no one behind. Inclusivity is a pillar of the national development process, which translate into ensuring that sustainable development reaches all households without discrimination so that no one is left behind. Chile built a vulnerability map as part of its efforts to ensure inclusion of the most vulnerable groups in development planning. Based on this map, multi-stakeholder working groups were established to design, implement and evaluate collaborative solutions to leave no one behind. Eswatini collaborated with non-state actors to ensure that the drafting of its VNR report left no one behind. Ghana, New Zealand, Pakistan, Serbia, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu indicated that consultation efforts were carried out with the goal of leaving no one behind. Saint Lucia noted that the multi-stakeholder nature of its committee that oversees the 2030 Agenda implementation is also an example of efforts to leave no one behind.

⁵⁹ Chile, Eswatini, Ghana, New Zealand, Pakistan, Serbia, Saint Lucia, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu.

Lessons learned

While Member States have reported limited examples of multi-stakeholder engagement that explicitly seeks to leave no one behind, some strategies and approaches can be identified from the information found. Ensuring that national consultation processes explicitly target historically excluded groups helps to ensure that engagement is open and inclusive. This can include soliciting advice and feedback on how to best reach those furthest behind and partnering directly with non-state actors. Reaching excluded groups can also be supported by carrying out consultations in ways that are accessible to excluded groups, such as in more remote communities or through engagement online. Finally, reporting on how engagement efforts support efforts to leave no one behind is important for distilling challenges, lessons learned and good practices.

Follow-up and review

Member States have agreed to follow-up on their progress on the 2030 Agenda implementation at sub-national, national, regional and global levels. Reporting presents an important opportunity to continue to raise awareness of the 2030 agenda, engage with non-state actors and identify gaps, challenges, good practices and ways to accelerate action, including in partnership with others. As an essential element of the 2030 Agenda implementation cycle, national reporting allows for review of priorities, policies, and activities to inform future priorities and efforts. In this context, a whole-of-society approach to implementation also means a whole-of-society approach to follow-up and review. Reporting presents an opportunity for governments to present information on their own efforts as well as solicit information and inputs from other stakeholders.

How Member States report

Member States are encouraged to provide information on how they carried out VNRs in their reporting to the HLPF. While this information is provided for the most part, the level of detail presented in terms of who was engaged and how can vary significantly.

The Secretary General's voluntary common reporting guidelines also encourage Member States to include information on how they intend to review progress at the national level. Reviews of VNR reports, however, suggest that this information is not consistently presented. For example, a civil society review of VNR reports in 2017 and 2018 showed that roughly two thirds of countries reporting in those years provided information on national reporting arrangements. In this context, some Member States provide a transparent commitment to their future reporting plans. For example, Ireland will report at the national level every two years and submit an additional three VNR reports to the HLPF according to a set timetable. Spain plans to report on an annual basis to its national legislature and to the HLPF in 2020–21, 2025 and 2030.

Engagement according to the Spectrum of Public Participation

The review of VNR reports found numerous examples of multi-stakeholder engagement activities undertaken by Member States in the context of follow-up and review. Over 340 activities were identified for 151⁶⁰ VNR reports over 2016-19. The activities identified are primarily a result of Member State reporting on VNR processes. Eighty-eight (88) countries reported examples of national reporting on progress related to the 2030 Agenda implementation to inform the public, mainly through progress reports and online portals, though a limited number

⁶⁰ See Annex 2.

of countries also pointed to parliamentary discussions. In 2016, 8 countries noted progress reports, online portals and parliamentary discussions, followed by 32⁶¹ in 2017, 28⁶² in 2018 and 24⁶³ in 2019.

Figure 19. Main ways governments engage stakeholders in follow-up and review processes according to the Spectrum of Public Participation

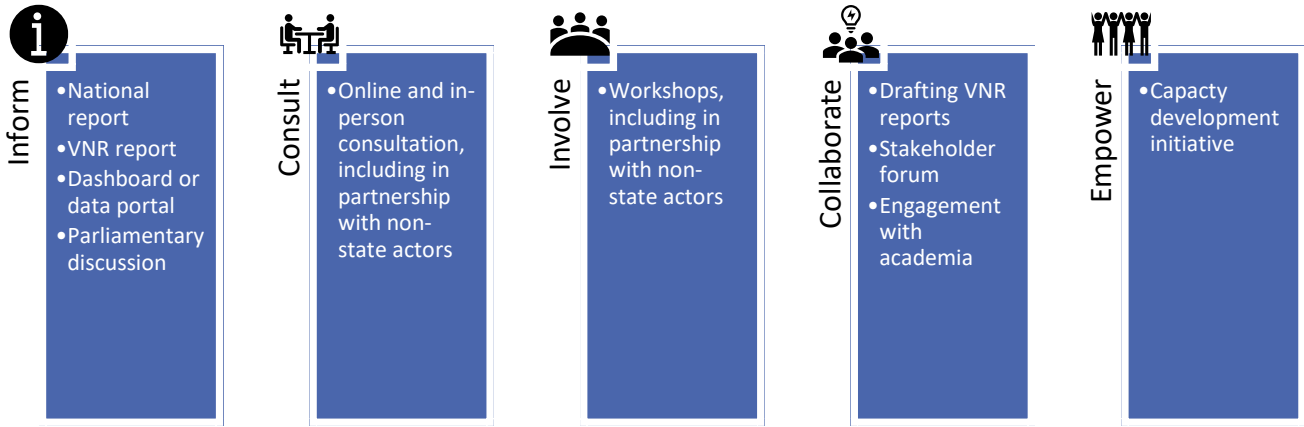
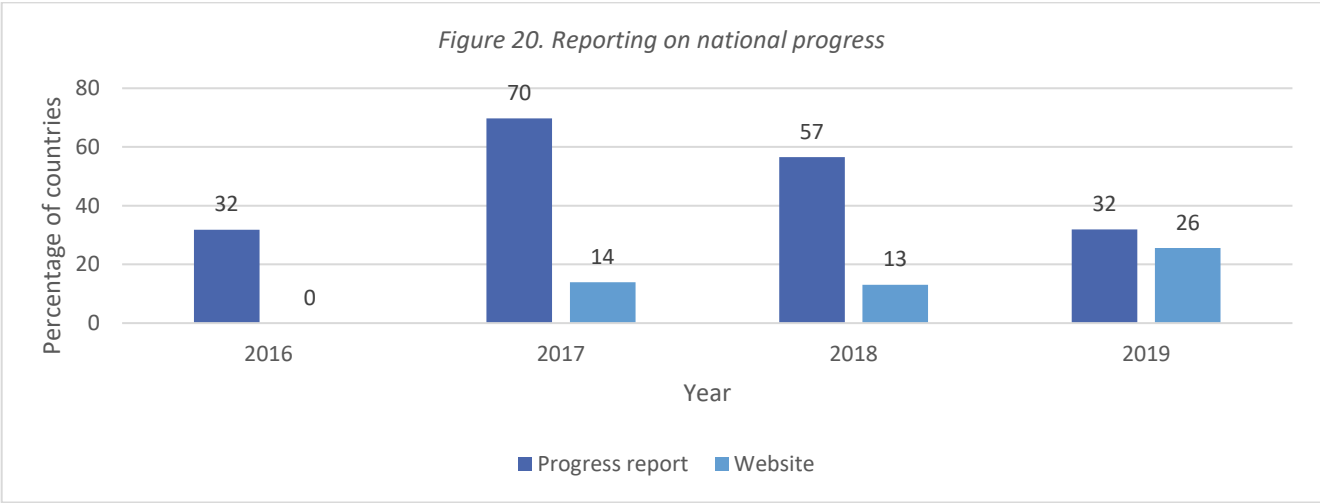


Figure 20 provides an overview of trends in terms of Member States reporting the use of progress reports and/or websites to inform the public of progress on the 2030 Agenda. Countries reporting to the HLPF for a second time were less likely to refer to progress reports than in their first submission.



⁶¹ Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru, Portugal, Qatar, Slovenia, Sweden, and Thailand.

⁶² Albania, Andorra, Australia, Bahamas, Bhutan, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malta, Namibia, Niger, Paraguay, Qatar, Romania, Senegal, Slovakia, Sri Lanka, State of Palestine, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, and Viet Nam..

⁶³ Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Congo, Ghana, Guyana, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lesotho, Mongolia, New Zealand, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom, and Vanuatu.

Analysis of these trends shows that Member States were less likely to provide information on national reporting in the form of progress reports in 2019 than in previous years. While countries tended to provide information on monitoring and evaluation processes such as noting that monitoring would occur through regular systems or technical commitments, there were limited references to the creation of regular progress reports though data on the use of dashboards and web portals shows an increase over previous reporting years.

In terms of commitments to prepare progress reports, VNR reports show a mixture of approaches. While some countries plan for reports to be submitted to the main governing mechanisms responsible for the 2030 Agenda implementation, others refer to reporting to parliament. For example, in Bhutan in 2017, a resolution was adopted that incorporates SDG oversight into parliamentary work. Denmark's legislature will discuss progress every four years on the 2030 Agenda. Chile and Nepal referred to stakeholder forums that are a part of follow-up and review processes. For example, Nepal has a multi-stakeholder forum, established in 2017, to follow-up on progress related to SDG 16.

In terms of websites, some Member States note the creation of dashboards to present the latest available data on SDG indicators. These websites are a means by which Member States can provide regular updates on the most recent progress on the 2030 Agenda implementation.⁶⁴

In addition to these common mechanisms for informing non-state actors on progress, one country, Lithuania (2018), noted that it makes use of an annual development cooperation conference to summarize the results of development cooperation with recent themes focusing on the 2030 Agenda. Ten examples⁶⁵ were also identified of Member States referring to parliamentary discussions on the 2030 Agenda (mainly for reporters in 2017, which accounted for seven). Other countries plan to have regular discussions in parliament on the 2030 Agenda. The government of Belarus (2017) has organized parliamentary hearings as part of the SDG implementation and monitoring process. The National Legislative Assembly of Thailand (2017) has established a sub-committee on monitoring the implementation of SDGs with a mandate to follow-up. A more limited number of countries point to the role of Supreme Auditing Institutions and other existing accountability mechanisms. For example, in 2018, VNR reports for Jamaica (2018), Paraguay (2018) and Sri Lanka (2018) referred to the work of their Supreme Auditing Institutions. Hungary (2018) and Malta (2018) referred to institutions responsible for safeguarding human rights, including the rights of future generations as part of accountability processes. Serbia (2019) included human rights monitoring in its follow-up and review efforts.

⁶⁴ For a discussion on websites in this context, often referred to as national reporting platforms, see Kindornay, S. 2019. *Accountability for 2030 Agenda Implementation*. Good Practice in 2030 Agenda Implementation Series. Vancouver and Ottawa: BCCIC and CCIC. <https://ccic.ca/2030agenda/global-efforts-to-implement-the-2030-agenda/>

⁶⁵ Bangladesh (2017), Belarus (2017), Bhutan (2018), Cyprus (2017), Greece (2018), Malta (2018), Nepal (2017), Netherlands (2017), Sweden (2017), and Thailand (2017).

Country experience

Using VNRs to identify and promote good practice in Turkey (2019)

Through Turkey's two VNR processes, the country developed an online National SDG Best Practices Database. Public and private sectors, academia, municipalities and civil society organizations contributed to the database, which includes 400 good practices. The government worked with seven coordinating stakeholder institutions or umbrella organizations to operationalize the database. Each organization informed their respective stakeholder group of the database, enabling submissions from over 350 organizations from different sectors. Good practices from this database were showcased in Turkey's 2019 VNR report. The government plans to monitor the efforts noted in the database to take note of the activities that have the most significant impacts on the SDGs and leaving no one behind. Good practices will also be presented at events to continue to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and advocate for solutions.

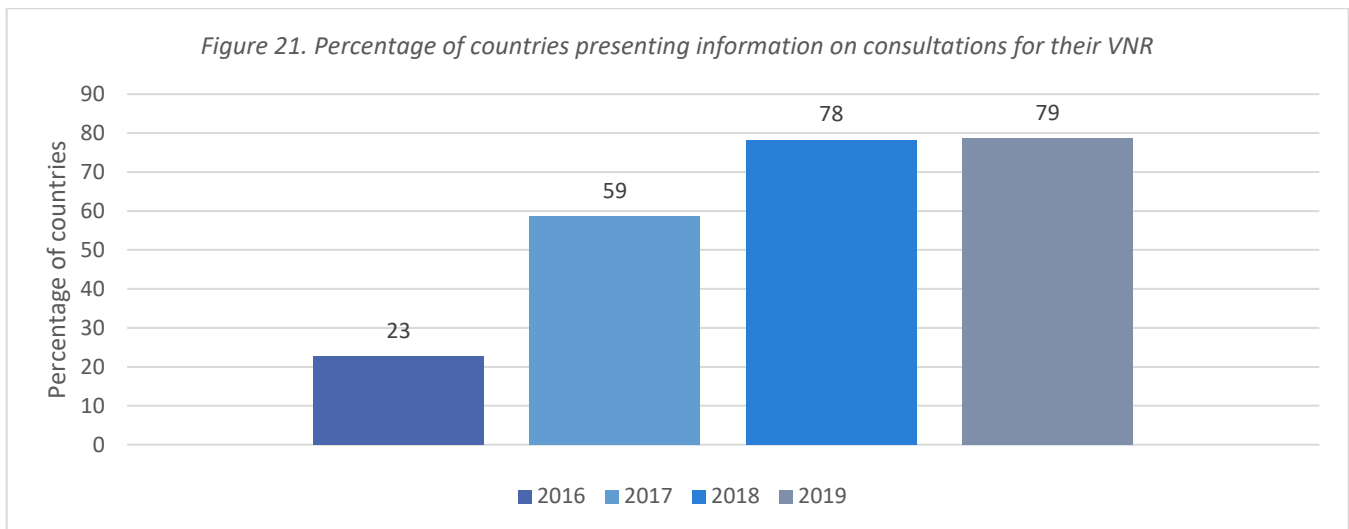
Incorporating human rights monitoring into SDG follow-up and review in Serbia (2019)

Serbia is integrating recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) into monitoring progress on the 2030 Agenda. The country is developing indicators to monitor progress on recommendations received under the UPR and linking the recommendations to the SDGs and relevant European Union accession plans. Serbia's approach has improved coordination and reporting to the United Nations. Civil society organizations are also formally involved in these processes and have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to this effect.

More limited examples exist of engagement in national follow-up and review processes beyond informing the public. Argentina (2017), Brazil (2017) and Pakistan (2019) pointed to university partnerships to support monitoring and evaluation activities while Denmark (2017), Nepal (2017), the Netherlands (Curacao, 2017) and Sri Lanka (2018) noted the use of stakeholder forum as spaces for discussions on progress. Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019), Iraq (2019) and Mali (2018) pointed to examples of partnership to raise capacities for monitoring and evaluation and/or the promotion of accountability. A workshop to build capacities for monitoring and implementing the SDGs was held in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme in Iraq (2019) while capacity building sessions for the planning and statistics units of ministerial departments, parliamentarians, members of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, civil society and others were held in Mali (2018).

With respect to VNR processes, 85 countries⁶⁶ that reported over 2016-19 noted that they had consulted non-state actors during their VNR through public meetings, consultation meetings or workshops. Eighteen countries pointed to the use of surveys or public comments online in VNR processes. In 2016, five countries (23%) used these online and/or in-person methods followed by 27 (63%) in 2017, 36 (78%) in 2018 and 39 (83%) in 2019, suggesting an upward trend in terms of stakeholder engagement through these methods in VNR processes (**Figure 21**).

⁶⁶ See Annex 3.



Reporters for 2019 were more likely to register the use of multiple methods of consultation, such as in-person meetings and online submissions than in previous years. Some countries have also provided detailed information on the number and types of stakeholders consulted. For example, the State of Palestine engaged more than 500 mid-level and high-level representatives from government, the United Nations, local and international non-governmental organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector in the VNR. Turkey highlighted that its 2019 VNR was grounded in consultations with 2,962 persons and institutions, including 312 non-governmental organizations, 2,000 company representatives, 50 municipality representatives and 600 experts. No major trend emerges overall concerning information provided on consultations in VNR processes for second-time reporters to the HLPF. Nevertheless, some countries, namely Togo and Sierra Leone, provided more information on their process, including a wider range of mechanisms to engage stakeholders. Azerbaijan, Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala and Switzerland provided information on the use of these types of consultation mechanisms in their second report but not their first.

Ten countries⁶⁷ provided examples of partnerships with non-state actors in carrying out consultation meetings, workshops or surveys. Sierra Leone’s 2019 VNR report recognized that it would not have been as comprehensive without the efforts to work in close collaboration with a wide range of civil society organizations, local councils, universities, the private sector and development partners. The report highlighted special recognition to civil society organizations for leading in data collection and holding consultations across the 16 districts of the country. Three countries noted the use of media in their VNR processes, namely Lesotho (2019), Philippines (2016) and Sierra Leone (2019).

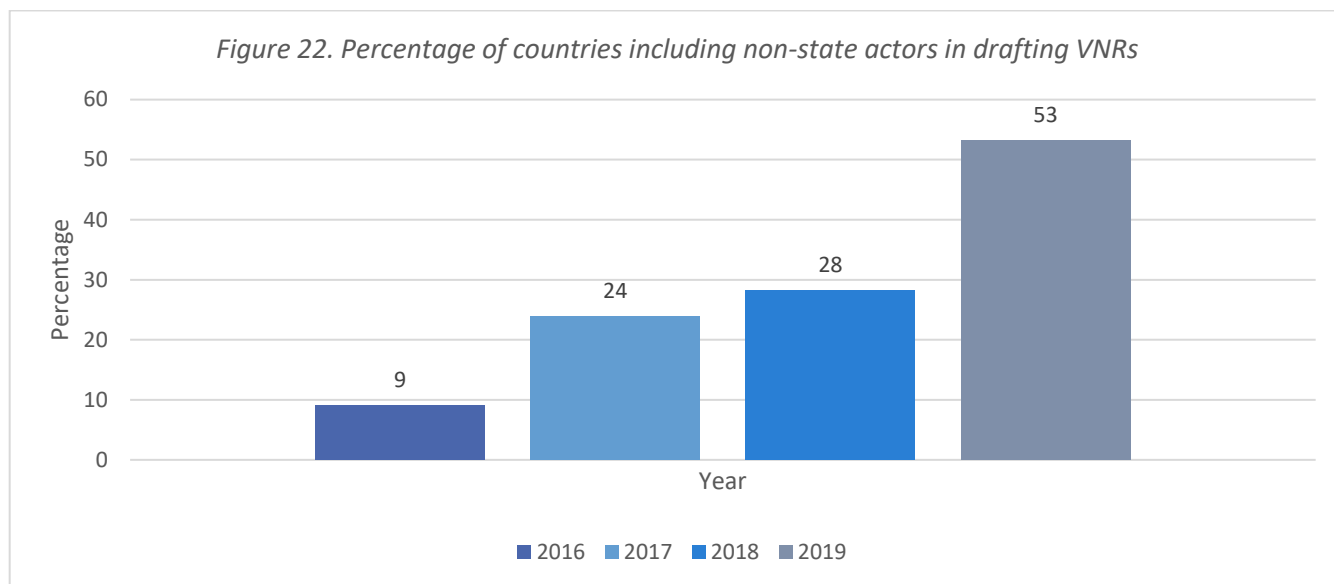
A positive trend noted from the review is the uptake in Member States indicating that non-state actors participated in the actual drafting of VNR reports, either as a part of drafting teams (including through existing institutional arrangements) or through the provision of written inputs featured in VNR reports (**Figure 22**). In 2016, 2 out of 22 (9%)⁶⁸ VNR reports included non-state actors in drafting processes. In 2017, the proportion of Member States taking this approach rose to 26%, with 11 out of 46 countries⁶⁹ noting participation in drafting process. This rising

⁶⁷ Australia (2018), Burkina Faso (2019), Croatia (2019), Laos (2018), Mali (2018), Portugal (2017), Senegal (2018), Sierra Leone (2019), Tunisia (2019), and Vietnam (2018).

⁶⁸ Finland and Sierra Leone.

⁶⁹ Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Cyprus, Denmark, Japan, Kenya, Nigeria, Slovenia and Thailand.

trend continued when 13 out of 46 (29%)⁷⁰ countries in 2018 and 25 out of 47 (53%)⁷¹ countries in 2019 noted the involvement of stakeholders. For countries reporting a second time to the HLPF, Chile and Sierra Leone noted participation in drafting reports in their first and second reports to the HLPF while Azerbaijan and Indonesia reported such efforts in their second report, but not their first.



Lessons learned

Experiences in national reporting and VNRs reveal several approaches for ensuring effective stakeholder engagement in monitoring progress on the 2030 Agenda. Presenting a clear timetable for reporting at national and international levels informs citizens, legislatures, government institutions and non-state actors of opportunities for engagement. Regular reporting to parliament ensures the utmost accountability for progress on implementation. Engaging non-state actors and citizens in discussions on report findings is also a meaningful way to continue to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and to work jointly to identify solutions and options for course correction when needed. Including other institutions that promote accountability on the 2030 Agenda is also good practice, such as supreme audit intuitions and other independent bodies. Websites that feature dashboards are a useful tool to provide the latest information on progress between official reports. Finally, good practice includes conducting VNRs in collaboration with non-state actors through inclusive drafting teams and/or collaboration on consultation processes.

⁷⁰ Bahamas, Egypt, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Paraguay, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, and State of Palestine.

⁷¹ Algeria, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Indonesia, Israel, Kuwait, Lesotho, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Pakistan, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tunisia, and United Kingdom.

Conclusion and next steps

This report has examined trends and experiences in multi-stakeholder engagement in all aspects of the 2030 Agenda implementation as reflected in Voluntary National Review Reports from 2016-2019. It has shown that Member States carry out a range of activities to inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower non-state actors. Across all aspects of the 2030 Agenda implementation, Member States are taking steps to engage with the public and working in partnership with non-state actors.

Going forward, **there is a need to improve reporting on multi-stakeholder engagement in VNR reports** to provide more detailed information on how Member States are creating an enabling environment for collaboration and partnership and empowering actions by non-state actors. More information is needed on how Member States are ensuring quality engagement across different aspects of implementation. Countries **could provide more detailed information on their multi-stakeholder engagement efforts overall, including how non-state actors are engaged across various aspects of the 2030 Agenda implementation, engagement to leave no one behind, good practices, challenges and lessons learned.** In addition, countries could provide an analysis of the impact of their multi-stakeholder engagement efforts including on overall approaches and policies. The inclusion of information on the value derived from and results of engagement would also help to further identify effective approaches and distill lessons learned. Member States should consider the Secretary General's Voluntary Common Reporting Guidelines and UN DESA's handbook for preparing VNRs to ensure inclusivity and participation in VNRs and consistency in reports produced. Importantly, when countries report to the HLPF for a second or third time, there is an opportunity to explain how multi-stakeholder engagement has evolved over time and how lessons learned are being applied.

This report has identified good practices and showcased country experiences, which can provide a basis for learning and exchange among Member States, and importantly, with the diverse range of stakeholders that contribute to the realization of the SDGs. Recommendations for Member States, United Nations partners and non-state actors follow below.

Quality of multi-stakeholder engagement

Member States

- Ensure quality multi-stakeholder engagement by adopting approaches that are timely, open and inclusive, transparent, informed and iterative.

United Nations

- Develop guidance materials spelling out opportunities and approaches for multi-stakeholder engagement across aspects of the 2030 Agenda implementation with a focus on promoting lessons learned and good practice.
- Provide support to Member States and stakeholders to further develop capacities for effective multi-stakeholder engagement.

Non-state actors

- Provide feedback to government on multi-stakeholder engagement processes.
- Engage with and through representative bodies in the process of the 2030 Agenda implementation.

- Ensure engagement activities carried out independent of or in partnership with government are timely, open and inclusive, transparent, informed and iterative.

Reporting on multi-stakeholder engagement

Member States:

- Report on multi-stakeholder engagement in VNR reports. Consider recommendations in the Secretary General’s voluntary common reporting guidelines and the guidance provided by the Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews.
- Provide detailed information on multi-stakeholder engagement across all aspects of the 2030 Agenda implementation, including challenges, good practices and lessons learned.

United Nations:

- Continue to provide guidance to Member States to ensure effective multi-stakeholder engagement in all aspects of the 2030 Agenda implementation, including VNRs.

Non-state actors:

- Input into national and VNR reports on progress.

Institutional arrangements

Member States

- Include non-state actors in institutional arrangements for the 2030 Agenda implementation, such as through direct participation in high-level or working level arrangements or through advisory bodies.

Non-state actors

- Engage with and through representative bodies when participating in institutional arrangements for the 2030 Agenda implementation.
- Support the mobilization of non-state actors that represent diverse stakeholders in institutional arrangements.

Awareness Raising

Member States

- Continue to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda as part of a long-term communication and engagement strategy, working in partnership with non-state actors to reach diverse communities through innovative and creative approaches. Countries should continue reporting on these efforts.

United Nations

- Develop guidance materials spelling out options and good practices for effectively raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda.

Non-state actors

- Partner to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda, including with government and diverse stakeholders from across sectors.
- Where possible, integrate messaging on the 2030 Agenda into regular organizational communications.

Generating national ownership

Member States

- Use a range of methods to engage non-state actors in generating national ownerships, including on-line and in-person approaches.
- Continue to report on efforts to generate national ownership in VNR reports, noting where progress has been made.

United Nations

- Provide guidance on how to continue to generate national ownership as part of an iterative process in 2030 Agenda implementation.

Non-state actors

- Partner with governments to nationalize the 2030 Agenda by participating in and carrying out surveys and consultations as well as through stakeholder fora.

Partnerships and collaboration

Member States

- Create an enabling environment for partnership through policies that support partnership and spaces for collaboration and engagement between diverse stakeholders.
- Empower non-state actors and citizens to contribute to the 2030 Agenda through support and direct partnerships.
- Report on the contributions of non-state actors to sustainable development as part of follow-up and review processes.

United Nations

- Provide guidance on how to establish an enabling environment for partnership, in particular with respect to options for regulatory and policy frameworks that support a whole-of-society approach to the 2030 Agenda implementation.
- Continue to provide guidance on good practices with respect to reporting on contributions of non-state actors as part of national and HLPF reporting processes.

Non-state actors

- Continue to pursue sustainable development independent of and in partnership with governments.

- Develop capacities to work across sectors, harnessing opportunities presented by government and other stakeholders supportive of a whole-of-society approach.

Leave no one behind

Member States

- Make leaving no one behind a strategic priority in multi-stakeholder engagement efforts and partner with non-state actors that have the appropriate expertise, experiences and relationships to support this priority.
- Report on experiences with multi-stakeholder engagement to leave no one behind to inform the identification of good practice and lessons learned.

United Nations

- Provide further guidance on how to use multi-stakeholder engagement as a way to leave no one behind, grounded in research on good practices and lessons learned.
- Ensure existing guidance materials, including the Secretary General's Voluntary Common Reporting Guidelines include references to multi-stakeholder engagement in the context of leaving no one behind.

Non-state actors

- Support government efforts to leave no one behind by providing guidance and advice and facilitating engagement with those left behind.

Follow-up and review

Member States

- Use follow-up and review processes as an opportunity to engage non-state actors and citizens on progress in the 2030 Agenda implementation.
- Inform the public of progress in implementation through regular national reporting, including through progress reports and websites.
- Conduct a participatory and inclusive VNR grounded in a range of opportunities for in-person and online consultations, making strategic use of partnerships to reach citizens and in the drafting of VNR reports.

United Nations

- Continue providing support to Member States to implement participatory and inclusive VNRs.

Non-state actors

- Participate in VNRs and national reporting on the 2030 Agenda, including by providing inputs into official reports.
- Report on organizational commitments to the 2030 Agenda and progress in realizing sustainable development.

Next steps

While the review provided insights on multi-stakeholder engagement, it also raised questions for future research and analysis. There is a need to **further explore lessons learned and good practices through a deeper examination of multi-stakeholder engagement** beyond information presented in VNR reports, including with reference to civil society reporting and key informant interviews with stakeholders in Member States. In addition, an **analysis of the VNR process vis-à-vis other reporting processes to the United Nations** could serve to identify how reporting processes could be improved with lessons from experiences under the 2030 Agenda.

Annex 1

Methodology

Shannon Kindornay and Renée Gendron of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation lead the research with the support of Naiara Costa, Riina Jussila, and Luisa Karst of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). Information on multi-stakeholder engagement in 2019 VNR reports was compiled by UN DESA and provided to the CCIC research team. Data for previous VNR reporting years was taken from the original data collected by CCIC from VNR reports for the 2017 and 2018 *Progressing National SDGs Implementation* series.⁷²

This report is also informed by secondary sources of information, including existing analysis and summaries of VNR reports from 2016-19. These include:

- Cutter, A. 2016. *Progressing national SDGs implementation: Experiences and recommendations from 2016*. London: Bond.
- UN DESA. 2019. *Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2018)*. United Nations.⁷³
- UN DESA. 2016. *Synthesis of Voluntary National Reviews*. New York: United Nations.⁷⁴
- UN DESA. 2017. *Synthesis of Voluntary National Reviews*. New York: United Nations.⁷⁵
- UN DESA. 2018. *2018 Synthesis of Voluntary National reviews*. New York: United Nations.⁷⁶
- UN DESA. 2019. *2019 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report*. United Nations.⁷⁷

These sources were used to fill gaps in available data from primary sources, notably information from the 2016 VNR reports and for countries not included in the *Progressing report* series, particularly Belarus. The research process did not include validation of information as presented in the VNR reports beyond the reports, and the sources noted above.

To identify trends of stakeholder engagement, stakeholder engagement activities identified through the data sources noted above were categorized according to the goals outlined in the International Association for Public Participation's engagement spectrum. Activities were then tagged according to the element of the 2030 Agenda implementation to which they applied, namely institutional arrangements, awareness-raising, nationalization, localization, partnership, efforts to leave no one behind and/or follow-up and review. In many cases, specific activities were used for multiple purposes. For example, VNR reports noted that consultation meetings were often used to identify national priorities and as part of VNR processes. Such activities were coded as both part of efforts to nationalize the 2030 Agenda and follow-up and review and appear in the analysis under both aspects of the 2030 Agenda implementation.

⁷² Progressing National SDG Implementation reports are commissioned by civil society. These reports synthesize information on VNR reports to examine overall progress on 2030 Agenda implementation, including with respect to multi-stakeholder engagement, and reporting against the United Nations Secretary General's Voluntary Common Reporting Guidelines. Reports based on VNRs submitted to the HLPF in 2017 and 2018 are available here:

<https://ccic.ca/third-edition-of-progressing-national-sdgs-implementation/>

⁷³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/22008UNPAN99132.pdf>

⁷⁴ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/127761701030E_2016_VNR_Synthesis_Report_ver3.pdf

⁷⁵ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17109Synthesis_Report_VNRs_2017.pdf

⁷⁶ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/210732018_VNRs_Synthesis_compilation_11118_FS_BB_Format_FINAL_cover.pdf

⁷⁷ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/252302019_VNR_Synthesis_Report_DESA.pdf

Annex 2

List of Member States that reported activities related to follow-up and review in their VNR report

2016 (14)	2017 (44)	2018 (46)	2019 (47)
China	Afghanistan	Albania	Algeria
Colombia	Argentina	Andorra	Azerbaijan
Estonia	Azerbaijan	Armenia	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Finland	Bangladesh	Australia	Burkina Faso
Georgia	Belarus	Bahamas	Cambodia
Germany	Belgium	Bahrain	Cameroon
Madagascar	Belize	Benin	Central African Republic
Mexico	Benin	Bhutan	Chad
Montenegro	Botswana	Cabo Verde	Chile
Norway	Brazil	Canada	Congo
Philippines	Chile	Canada	Côte d'Ivoire
Sierra Leone	Costa Rica	Colombia	Croatia
South	Cyprus	Ecuador	Eswatini
South Korea	Czech Republic	Egypt	Fiji
	Denmark	Greece	Ghana
	El Salvador	Guinea	Guatemala
	Ethiopia	Hungary	Guyana
	Guatemala	Ireland	Iceland
	India	Jamaica	Indonesia
	Indonesia	Kiribati	Iraq
	Italy	Laos	Israel
	Japan	Latvia	Kazakhstan
	Jordan	Lebanon	Kuwait
	Kenya	Lithuania	Lesotho
	Luxembourg	Mali	Liechtenstein
	Malayasia	Malta	Mauritania
	Maldives	Mexico	Mauritius
	Nepal	Namibia	Mongolia
	Netherlands	Niger	Nauru
	Netherlands - Aruba	Paraguay	New Zealand
	Netherlands - Curaçao	Poland	Oman
	Netherlands - St. Maarten	Qatar	Pakistan
	Nigeria	Romania	Palau
	Panama	Saudi Arabia	Philippines
	Peru	Senegal	Rwanda
	Portugal	Singapore	Saint Lucia
	Qatar	Slovakia	Serbia
	Slovenia	Spain	Sierra Leone
	Sweden	Sri Lanka	South Africa
	Tajikistan	State of Palestine	Tanzania
	Thailand	Sudan	Timor-Leste
	Togo	Switzerland	Tonga
	Uruguay	Togo	Tunisia
	Zimbabwe	United Arab Emirates	Turkey
		Uruguay	Turkmenistan
		Viet Nam	United Kingdom
			Vanuatu

Annex 3

List of Member States that have consulted non-state actors during their VNR through public meetings, consultation meetings or workshops according to VNR reports

2016	2017	2018	2019
Egypt	Afghanistan	Armenia	Algeria
Finland	Argentina	Cabo Verde	Bosnia and
France	Azerbaijan	Canada	Burkina Faso
Germany	Bangladesh	Dominican Republic	Cameroon
Madagascar	Botswana	Egypt	Chile
Mexico	Chile	Guinea	Congo
Montenegro	Costa Rica	Hungary	Côte d'Ivoire
Morocco	Czech Republic	Ireland	Croatia
Norway	Guatemala	Jamaica	Eswatini
Philippines	Italy	Latvia	Fiji
Samoa	Japan	Lebanon	Ghana
Sierra Leone	Jordan	Mali	Guyana
South Korea	Kenya	Mexico	Iceland
Switzerland	Luxembourg	Namibia	Iraq
Togo	Malaysia	Paraguay	Kazakhstan
Uganda	Maldives	Romania	Kuwait
Venezuela	Nigeria	Senegal	Mongolia
	Peru	Slovakia	Nauru
	Portugal	Spain	Oman
	Qatar	Sri Lanka	Pakistan
	Slovenia	State of Palestine	Palau
	Sweden	Sudan	Rwanda
	Tajikistan	Switzerland	Saint Lucia
	Thailand	United Arab Emirates	Sierra Leone
	Uruguay	Uruguay	Tanzania
	Zimbabwe		Timor-Leste
			Tonga
			Tunisia
			Turkey
			Turkmenistan
			United Kingdom
			Vanuatu