Ensuring Children are Not Left Behind

Guidance Note

Supporting countries preparing for Voluntary National Reviews at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

World Vision

INTRODUCTION

Children are central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the key to sustaining progress beyond 2030. In line with the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda) that follow-up and review processes at all levels will "be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people" and "have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind",[1] children – including those from marginalized and vulnerable groups – must be considered and included in Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports and processes.

This Guidance Note provides specific recommendations to Member States on how to include children's rights, including children's participation, in VNRs at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). It follows the general structure of the Secretary-General's updated voluntary common reporting guidelines for VNRs[2] (the Guidelines), which were most recently updated in November 2019. It also provides examples of good practices from other VNRs from 2017-2019. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, this paper defines "children" as people below the age of 18.

GUIDANCE

1 Opening statement

The opening statement should highlight the current status of SDG progress for children. It should highlight any outcomes or results achieved for children and the steps the country intends to take to accelerate progress on the SDGs for children, including marginalized or vulnerable groups of children.[3]

> **Good Practice:** The foreword of **Ghana's** 2019 VNR report identifies "the effective mainstreaming in national development of issues related to children" as one of five issues of particular importance in order to accelerate progress and increase efficiency in achieving the SDGs in the coming years.

2 Highlights

The highlights section should refer to children in the following areas:

- On the country-level review process – The report should identify whether children, including children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, participated in preparing the VNR.
- On the status of SDG implementation – The report should highlight whether children generally, as well as children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, have made progress in relation to the SDGs based on official statistical data as well as complementary one such as citizen generated data. It should identify the factors of success or failure in achieving progress for children and note any specific areas where children are at risk of being left behind.
- On the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs – The report should highlight how goals and targets relevant to children have been pursued in a manner to accelerate implementation and avoid trade-offs that would compromise achieving all of the SDGs for children.
- On the principle of leaving no one behind – The report should highlight overarching approaches that address children as a vulnerable group generally, as well as specific strategies that address the situation of marginalized or vulnerable groups of children.
- On examples of good practices and lessons learned – The report should highlight practices that have a transformative potential for children, such as measures to end child poverty, realize Universal Health Coverage and nutrition for all children, end violence against girls and boys and inclusion.
- On examples of challenges encountered – The report should highlight any challenges encountered in relation to children, including challenges in ensuring children's meaningful and safe participation – as critical agents of change – in SDG implementation and review processes.
- On areas of support needed – The report should highlight any support needed to accelerate progress for children on the SDGs, especially in relation to finance and data disaggregation.

3 Introduction

The Guidelines state that the introduction may describe "…whether and how existing national reports to regional and international mechanisms have been used." Given the near-universal ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its significant overlap with numerous SDG targets and indicators, the introduction should describe how national reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as Concluding Observations from the Committee, have been used. In addition, the introduction should outline how reports to and concluding observations from regional children's rights bodies, such as the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, have been used.

4 Methodology and process for preparation of the review

This section should identify whether the process to prepare the VNR involved the participation of national children's rights institutions[4], non-governmental representatives for children such as child-focused CSOs or NGOs, international agencies such as UNICEF and/or children directly.

In relation to children's participation, the details of consultations with children and the mechanisms used to ensure their meaningful, safe, inclusive and effective participation should be outlined, including the following key points:

- The frequency, nature and level (national or local) of consultations with children;
- The age groups of children, including identifying whether children were included in consultations involving 'youth' or 'young people';
- The participation of children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, identifying, where appropriate, the specific groups consulted;
- The methods used to consult children including:
  - the form of consultation (e.g. face-to-face workshops, focus groups, online platforms, written comments on the draft VNR report, etc.);
  - the type of materials used (e.g. child-friendly and/or age-appropriate materials);
  - whether safe and child-friendly spaces and facilities were provided; and
  - how financial, linguistic, logistical and other barriers to children's meaningful participation were addressed, including for children with disabilities;
- How children's views were taken into account and reflected in the VNR report; and
- Plans to engage with the children consulted following the presentation of the VNR.

Good Practices:

- In preparation for its VNR in 2017, **Jordan** held extensive consultations with line ministries and other stakeholders using a variety of approaches, with special attention paid to ensuring the inclusion of women, youth, children and people with disabilities. Representatives of Syrian and other refugee communities were also included and actively participated in the consultations.
- As a result of providing a non-final draft of its VNR report to various stakeholders, including UNICEF, **Andorra's** final 2018 VNR report includes a dedicated section on children's rights with useful comments from the Andorran Committee of UNICEF.
- Several 2019 VNR countries highlight consultations with children in preparing their VNR reports including **Ghana, Lesotho, Mongolia, the Philippines, Serbia** and **Sierra Leone.** As a result, many of these reports include the direct views and reflections of children on SDG progress.

5 Policy and enabling environment

(a) Creating ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals and the VNRs

The report should outline how children have been involved and contributed to the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda, including actions taken to facilitate their direct engagement. Recognized as "critical agents of change" in paragraph 51 of the 2030 Agenda, children are key stakeholders to achieve the SDGs and to sustain progress well beyond 2030. Child participation is also a core principle of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to which nearly all Member States are legally bound.

In particular, this section should address how children – including children from marginalized and vulnerable groups and those living in fragile contexts – have been:

- **Informed of the 2030 Agenda** – The report should highlight actions to raise awareness of the SDGs, promote sustainable development education and disseminate child-friendly and age-appropriate information about the SDGs among children, including information on how children of different ages, capacities and abilities can participate in SDG implementation and review.
- **Involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda** – The report should identify effective and adequately resourced mechanisms, platforms, forums and institutions that are available to and used by children to contribute to SDG implementation, both in relation to specific goals and targets, as well as for activities such as awareness-raising, data collection and generation[5], policy development, decision-making and budgeting. Examples of such mechanisms may include children's parliaments, children's councils and dedicated SDG bodies with child representatives.
- **Involved in the review of the 2030 Agenda** – The report should outline actions to facilitate and support children's participation in reviewing progress on the SDGs at national and local levels through different formal or informal means such as child-friendly consultations, citizens' hearings, child led and focused community score cards, social audits, online and offline surveys etc.

Good Practices:

- **Chile's** 2017 VNR report highlights the participatory initiative of the National Council for Children, "Yo Opino es mi derecho" day, to engage children and youth in SDG implementation.
- **Sweden's** 2017 VNR report highlights the campaign #FirstGeneration, an initiative of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which seeks to create engagement, strengthen communication and broaden popular support for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs among young people around the world.
- **Ireland's** 2018 VNR report notes that it has established a national SDG Stakeholder Forum to provide a mechanism for key stakeholders – including youth – to be engaged on an ongoing basis in the national implementation of and reporting processes on the SDGs.
- The **United Arab Emirates** 2018 VNR report provides a comprehensive section on youth engagement for the 2030 Agenda, with multiple youth engagement policies and initiatives outlined in detail.
- **Ghana's** 2019 VNR report provides a detailed section on "Children and Youth Engagement and Participation in SDGs Implementation Processes in Ghana", which considers the ways in which children and youth are involved in SDG advocacy, implementation, monitoring and reporting, in order to further deepen their engagement in SDGs processes and national development.
- Several countries – including **Mauritius, Romania, Slovakia** and **Tunisia** – highlight initiatives to raise awareness of the SDGs and/or gain young people's perspectives on sustainable development through various workshops, competitions, debates and/or projects in schools.

(b) Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals in national frameworks

This section of the report should outline how goals and targets relevant to children are integrated into national and sub-national frameworks – including legislation, policies, plans, budgets and programs – have contributed to the successful implementation of the SDGs and targets for children. For example, the report could discuss how incorporating the commitment to end violence against children in national legislation, policies, budgets and/or action plans, has helped to make progress to end certain forms of violence against girls and boys at different stages of childhood, as well as to improve children's outcomes in health and education.

This section should also highlight major efforts undertaken by non-State actors to implement the SDGs in relation to children, including civil society initiatives to build a stronger nexus between development, humanitarian and peace-building interventions that seek to benefit children.[6] It should also outline the benefits of multi-stakeholder partnerships in contributing to SDG implementation for children such as the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

Good Practices:

- **Mexico's** 2018 VNR report states that the 2030 Agenda has provided a framework for structuring other development goals in different sectors and in cross-sectoral systems, citing the example of the policy "25 by 25: National Objectives on the Rights of Children and Adolescents," which uses the SDGs to establish national goals for this demographic segment.
- **Croatia's** 2019 VNR report highlights the contribution of civil society organizations and the business community to achieving the SDGs, with several initiatives involving children highlighted.

(c) Integration of the three dimensions

This section should provide an analysis of the interlinkages between targets that are relevant to children and outline how policies and institutional arrangements address these targets in an integrated manner. For example, unconditional cash transfers to young girls in Africa can reduce poverty, keep girls in school, reduce unwanted teen pregnancies and decrease HIV transmission by as much as two-thirds. Thus, a social protection intervention can advance goals related to poverty, education, health and gender equality.[7] Key areas of sustainable development that should be considered include poverty, nutrition, health, education, gender equality, equality and violence against children.

In particular, Member States should highlight the interlinkages between violence against children and other SDGs and targets, given the negative impact of violence on achieving goals related to poverty reduction, health, education, gender equality, employment and economic growth, equality, and peaceful and inclusive societies. Member States should outline the integrated policies or strategies to address violence against children, for example, a national coordinating framework that provides a mechanism for integrated planning, communication and action across Government ministries as well as among civil society and other actors, including children, to end violence against children.

Good Practices:

- **Cyprus's** 2017 VNR report highlights its National Youth Strategy which establishes an integrated, cross-sectoral mechanism for designing, implementing and monitoring all policy areas that are inter-related and directly affect young people, including in relation to education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and wellbeing and social inclusion among others.
- **Fiji's** 2019 VNR report notes that as child protection cuts across the activities of many agencies, Fiji has established a National Coordinating Committee on Children (NCCC), which is mandated to monitor and coordinate the implementation of child-related laws, policies and programs.

(d) Leaving no one behind

In support of the principle that follow-up and review processes at all levels will "…have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind," this section should include a focus on children as a vulnerable group generally, as well as children from specific marginalized or vulnerable groups including: girls, children with disabilities, children living in poverty, children from ethnic or religious minorities, indigenous children, migrant, refugee and internally displaced children, children without parental care, children living in remote, rural or urban areas, children living or working on the street, children in conflict with the law, children of single parents, boys and LGBTQI children.

In particular, the following key points should be outlined:

- **The status or situation of children** – The report should discuss the status or situation of children generally, as well as children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, in relation to the SDGs, based on available statistical and disaggregated data;
- **Progress achieved** – The report should discuss progress on the SDGs for children generally, as well as progress for children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, with succinct rationale as to why progress has or has not been made;
- **Initiatives targeting children** – The report should outline the overarching strategies, policies, laws, programs, budgets and actions to fulfill the rights and support the empowerment of children generally, as well as specific initiatives targeting marginalized or vulnerable groups of children that seek to ensure their inclusion and reduce inequalities;
- **Challenges remaining** – The report should identify any challenges or barriers to achieving the SDGs for children, especially for children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, including those related to financial investment in children and the availability of disaggregated data; and
- **Children's participation** – The report should highlight the actions taken to facilitate children's engagement, including children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, in SDG implementation and review processes.
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Good Practices:

- **Ethiopia's** 2017 VNR report includes a dedicated section on leaving no one behind with a comprehensive sub-section focused on children's rights and welfare.
- **Bhutan's** 2018 VNR report states that a Vulnerability Baseline Assessment conducted in 2017 identified 14 vulnerable groups including orphans, out-of-school children, unemployed youth, children in conflict with the law, and single parents and their children.
- **Jamaica's** 2018 VNR report identifies a number of groups of children at risk of being left behind including children living in poverty, children with disabilities, children living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, children in state care, children deprived of familial care and living in state institutions, children working and living on the streets, children who are victims of all forms of abuse, adolescents and youth, and unemployed youth.
- **Turkey's** 2019 VNR report includes a section on leaving no one behind, with a sub-section on children that provides a detailed snapshot of policies and practices for children and youth.

While the marginalized or vulnerable groups of children discussed under this section will vary depending on the country context, all Member States should consider discussing the situation of children living in fragile contexts given that this particular group of children is at the greatest risk of being left behind by SDG progress. In particular, Member States affected by fragility should discuss the impacts of fragility and insecurity on children in relation to the SDGs, as well as actions taken to address these impacts and the root causes of this fragility. Other Member States should outline measures – including international support or development cooperation – to support children living in fragile contexts to achieve the SDGs, especially in relation to child poverty, food security and nutrition, health, education and child protection.[8]

Good Practices:

- **Hungary's** 2018 VNR report outlines international support for children in fragile contexts including financial assistance for new schools for internally displaced children in Iraq, a youth centre in Za'atar refugee camp in Jordan and an educational project in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- The 2019 VNR reports of **Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic** and **Cote d'Ivoire** all highlight the impact of insecurity and/or conflict on children's education.

(e) Institutional mechanisms

This section of the report should outline how the country has adapted its institutional framework in order to make or review progress on the SDGs for children. Member States should highlight how existing institutions – including national human rights institutions, children's commissioners or ombudspersons, and parliaments – have been adapted or strengthened to facilitate or review progress on the SDGs for children and/or to support children's participation in SDG implementation and review.

The report should also outline the creation of new institutional mechanisms to facilitate, monitor and/or review progress on the SDGs, for example, a national coordinating committee for SDG implementation that coordinates policies and actions among different ministries, levels of Government and other stakeholders. Importantly, the report should identify whether such bodies provide for child representation and how they interact with governmental and non-governmental bodies responsible for representing children and their rights.

Notably, this section should describe how the views of children and their representatives – including child-focused CSOs and NGOs – are considered by both existing and new institutional mechanisms responsible for SDG implementation and review.

Good Practices:

- **Chile's** 2017 VNR report highlights efforts to strengthen existing institutions such as the System of Guarantees for the Rights of the Child, the Undersecretary of Childhood and the Children's Ombudsman.
- **Ethiopia's** 2017 VNR report discusses the creation of the 'Public Wing', the main coordination mechanism for SDG implementation, which provides a platform for government organs and stakeholders – including youth associations – to participate in discussions on the SDGs.
- **Armenia's** 2018 VNR report discusses how UNICEF is supporting the government to achieve SDG 16, including by establishing a Child Rights Unit under the Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) to ensure that all government policies that affect children are in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Similarly, **Paraguay's** 2018 VNR report highlights a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNICEF to provide technical support to incorporate a child-centred focus in the work of Paraguay's 2030 SDG Commission.
- **Iceland's** 2019 VNR report profiles the establishments of the Youth Council for the SDGs, which is an observer in Iceland's Working Group for the SDGs, while **Turkmenistan's** 2019 VNR report discusses the 17 Young Ambassadors of SDGs who were appointed to ensure the participation of youth in the SDG process and to serve as a bridge between the government and young people in different regions of the country.

6 Progress on Goals and targets

This section should review all 17 SDGs in a balanced manner in order to provide a comprehensive and holistic review of progress for children generally, as well as specific marginalized or vulnerable groups of children. In reviewing goals, targets and indicators relevant to children, the following information should be provided:

- The status or situation of children in relation to the goal or target, noting disparities in outcomes between different groups of children based on available disaggregated data;
- Progress made in implementing the goal or target in relation to children, including marginalized or vulnerable groups, noting trends, successes, solutions and/or good practices as well as succinct rationale as to why progress has or has not been made. Countries presenting subsequent VNR reports should report on progress made for children since their last report;
- Measures such as strategies, policies, legislation, action plans, programs and budgets to achieve the goal or target for children, including specific measures that target marginalized or vulnerable groups of children who are the furthest behind, including those in fragile and/or conflict affected areas;
- National SDG targets for children, including short-, medium- and long-term targets, as well as national targets for the groups of children who are the furthest behind;
- Gaps and/or remaining challenges in implementing the goal or target in relation to children, how these will be addressed, and whether any additional advice or support from other countries or institutions is required;

- Emerging issues or areas of concern in implementing the goal or target for children, including marginalized or vulnerable groups of children;
- Next steps to accelerate progress to achieve the goal or target for all children by 2030.[9]

Member States should also consider including the reflections, perspectives and views of children on SDG progress in reviewing specific goals, targets and/or indicators.

Good Practices:

- **Guatemala's** 2017 and 2019 VNR reports are comprehensive in reviewing goals and targets related to children, noting disparities in outcomes among different groups of children and identifying short-, medium- and long-term national targets for children.
- Both **Lao PDR's** 2018 VNR report and **Viet Nam's** 2018 VNR report are notable for highlighting disparities in children's outcomes across a range of SDGs and targets.
- **Senegal's** 2018 VNR report provides detailed coverage of key children's rights issues – including child poverty, nutrition, health, child labour and birth registration – with rationale provided as to why progress has or has not been made.
- **Timor-Leste's** 2019 VNR report includes a section on "leaving no one behind" for each SDG reviewed, which highlights the situation of different social or economic groups.
- In reviewing progress on the SDGs, a number of 2019 VNR countries include the direct views and perspectives of children, youth or young people in their reports including **Guatemala, Iceland, Lesotho, Mongolia, Serbia** and **Sierra Leone.**

In reviewing several areas of relevance to children, the following key points should also be addressed:

- **On child poverty:**

  - Provide data on extreme, national and multidimensional poverty among children, as well as data on children at-risk of different forms of poverty, including those not traditionally captured by household surveys such as children in institutional care or on the street;
  - Discuss social protection coverage for children and any efforts to expand coverage to all children, as well as actions to make social protection measures child-sensitive; and
  - Outline measures to tackle child poverty in national poverty reduction strategies, policies or programs and/or a dedicated strategy and national action plan to address child poverty.

Good Practices:

- **Bhutan's** 2018 VNR report discusses its Child Multidimensional Poverty Index (CMPI) in detail including data on the rates of child poverty, the consequences of child poverty, the need for a child-focused approach to end poverty and measures to address child poverty.
- **Spain's** 2018 VNR report provides a comprehensive focus on child poverty with detailed data and measures to address child poverty discussed, including the creation of a High Commissioner for Child Poverty and budget credits to benefit children.
- **New Zealand's** 2019 VNR report discusses child poverty in detail, with a range of measures outlined including the *Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018*, which requires successive governments to measure and report on child poverty and set intermediate and long-term targets.
- **Lesotho's** 2019 VNR report discusses child and adolescent multidimensional poverty in detail, including disaggregated data and a summary of child poverty by dimension of deprivation.

- **On children's food security and nutrition:**

  - Provide data on the prevalence of stunting, wasting, underweight and overweight/obesity among children, micronutrient deficiencies among children, adolescents and pregnant and lactating women, and rates of breastfeeding;
  - Outline key actions taken to improve children's nutrition, based on the World Health Organization's 2019 updated Essential Nutrition Actions[10]; and
  - Identify financial or political support for national nutrition policies and actions plans that have targets to reduce child malnutrition, including support for the 2020 Nutrition for Growth policy and financing agenda.

Good Practices:

- **Lao PDR's** 2018 report covers child nutrition well, including providing data, identifying the underlying causes of undernutrition and outlining strategies to improve children's nutrition.
- **Ireland's** 2018 VNR report addresses the issue of overweight and obesity among children – with data and measures outlined – as well as food poverty among children under five years old. Ireland's actions to improve children's food security and nutrition globally are also outlined.
- **Timor-Leste's** 2019 VNR report provides comprehensive coverage of children's nutrition, with disaggregated data, key issues, challenges and measures to improve nutrition addressed.

- **On children's health:**

  - Provide information and data on children's health throughout their lives – including maternal, newborn and child health, early childhood health and adolescent health – and address specific health challenges for children such as sexual and reproductive health, HIV, mental health, substance abuse and non-communicable diseases;
  - Discuss progress in achieving Universal Health Coverage for all children, women of reproductive age, and pregnant and lactating women;
  - Identify the proportion of GDP invested in the national health sector budget, including the proportion of funding allocated to primary health care plans; and
  - Outline progress in achieving health workforce staffing at primary health care levels, per WHO guidelines.

Good Practices:

- **Guinea's** 2018 VNR report provides comprehensive data and information on children's health, including highlighting disparities between different groups and addressing child issues such as maternal, newborn and child health, adolescent fertility, HIV, malaria, chronic respiratory diseases, smoking, and safe water and adequate sanitation and hygiene.
- **Romania's** 2018 VNR report provides excellent coverage of children's health – on a target-by-target basis – including addressing maternal and child mortality and outlining a range of policies and measures to improve children's health.
- **Cote d'Ivoire's** 2019 VNR report provides detailed information on children's health including addressing maternal mortality, skilled birth attendance, newborn and child mortality, HIV and adolescent fertility in detail. Challenges in relation to SDG 3 are also identified.

- **On climate change and disaster risk reduction:**

  - Discuss the impacts of climate change on children as a vulnerable population;
  - Outline national and local disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies and national adaptation plans that prioritize children as a vulnerable population;[11]
  - Discuss the promotion of climate change and DRR education among children; and
  - Outline measures to involve children in climate change adaptation (CCA) and DRR, including efforts to ensure their meaningful participation in undertaking climate and disaster risk assessments, planning and implementing CCA and DRR, and raising awareness of climate risks and solutions.[12]

Good Practices:

- **Canada's** 2018 VNR report provides a case study on the Foundation for Environmental Stewardship (FES), which aims to cultivate a growing spirit of environmentalism by educating children and youth on the climate crisis and empowering them to take action on solving climate change in their local communities.
- **Guyana's** 2018 VNR report states that in 2017, the Office of Climate Change commenced the institutionalization of climate change awareness and education through a School Outreach Programme in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions across the country, benefitting more than 5,000 students.

- **On ending violence against children:**

  - Address all forms of violence against children[13] in reviewing targets 4.a, 5.2, 5.3, 8.7, 11.2, 11.7, 16.1 and 16.2, and address birth registration in reviewing target 16.9, given that a birth certificate is a child's "passport to protection";
  - Ensure that girls are explicitly considered in reporting on progress and measures to address gender-based violence;
  - Identify legislation prohibiting violence against children, including legislation that bans all forms of violence against children in all settings;[14]
  - Outline measures to prevent and respond to violence against children, including existing proven and effective solutions such as the INSPIRE strategies;[15]
  - Provide information on domestic public spending, budget allocations and other financial investments – including ODA – to end violence against children;
  - Discuss efforts to address harmful social norms and practices that condone violence;
  - Report on new initiatives or commitments to end violence against children including participation in the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

Good Practices:

- **Uruguay's** 2017 VNR report discusses violence against children including gender-based violence, child abuse, sexual abuse, child marriage, psychological and physical punishment, child labour, trafficking, homicides and adolescent violence, as well as measures to address violence such as the Comprehensive System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents against Violence.
- **Paraguay's** 2018 VNR report refers to its country action plan "Paraguay and the Protection of Children against abuse and all forms of violence" to achieve target 16.2 and its role as a pathfinder country in the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. Notably, 10 achievements related to Paraguay's pathfinder status are outlined.
- **Indonesia's** 2019 VNR report addresses violence against children extensively, noting that the protection of children, women and marginalized groups is a national priority for Indonesia.
- **Iraq's** 2019 VNR report provides excellent coverage of violence against children, including data on different forms of violence and a detailed discussion on the development of its National Policy for Child Protection.
- **Fiji's** 2019 VNR report addresses violence against women, girls and children extensively, with numerous measures to address violence cited.

7 Means of implementation

The report should discuss the means of implementation – including financing, data, capacity development and partnerships – that are needed to achieve the SDGs for children.

In relation to financing, Member States should provide information on how public spending, budgeting and investment in areas that directly benefit children – such as social protection, health, nutrition, education and child protection – has increased or changed, since measures to achieve the SDGs for children cannot succeed without sufficient financial resources being mobilized, allocated and spent effectively and equitably on the poorest and most vulnerable children.

Member States should discuss domestic spending in relation to children in a dedicated section on public budgeting to achieve the SDGs for children. Member States should also highlight their global financial contribution to children, including their level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) dedicated to children and any financial support for global initiatives or programs that benefit children. Notably, financial commitments to address the situation of children living in fragile contexts should be identified.

Good Practices:

- **Spain's** 2018 VNR report discusses the creation of a special fund to combat child poverty and finance social intervention programs for families with dependent children suffering from severe material deprivation, noting that there have been significant increases in the fund in recent years.
- **Paraguay's** 2018 VNR report states that an objective of its National Policy on Childhood and Adolescence is to ensure sufficient resources for investment in children and adolescents in all areas of the state. Through the initiative "Accountability for Children and Adolescents", public authorities also provide information in an accessible manner to children and adolescents on the way in which public resources have been used for the implementation of policies and plans that affect them.
- **New Zealand's** 2019 VNR report states that there is new legislation that requires governments to outline how official budget decisions will impact child poverty.
- **Croatia's** 2019 VNR report highlights international development cooperation projects including psycho-social rehabilitation of Ukrainian children from conflict affected areas and improvements to Camp Learning Environments in Jordan, including the construction and reconstruction of playgrounds for five primary schools and kindergartens in Azraq and Za'atari refugee camps.

In relation to data, Member States should outline efforts to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated data in a dedicated section on data, given that data in national and international statistical systems is still very limited for over half of the child-related indicators for the SDGs.[16] In particular, Member States should provide information on the level of disaggregation across all relevant SDG indicators, identify gaps and challenges, outline efforts or measures to improve the availability of disaggregated data and identify any additional support needed to achieve the full disaggregation of data, as required by the 2030 Agenda. Plans to address shortcomings in official data should also be discussed, including ensuring that data captures groups of children traditionally excluded from household surveys, such as stateless children, refugee and internally displaced children and children living on the street as well as those children in the most fragile and/or conflict affected areas. Additionally, States can address these gaps by using citizen generated data.

Good Practices:

- **Belgium's** 2017 VNR report outlines specific plans to address gaps in data collection in relation to children by conducting surveys on migrant children and children in public institutions.
- **Paraguay's** 2018 VNR report provides useful information on its statistical capacity assessment, which included evaluating the possibility of disaggregating indicators by criteria such as income, geographical area, sex, age, disability, ethnicity, race, migratory status and other areas.
- **Indonesia's** 2019 VNR report identifies the availability of adequate, up-to-date and disaggregated data and information as a challenge, with various efforts to improve the availability of disaggregated data outlined. Notably, the report highlights the Central Bureau of Statistics' (BPS) work with UNICEF and BAPPENAS to support the development of SDGs Baseline Data on Children.
- **The United Kingdom's** 2019 VNR report discusses the issue of data disaggregation extensively, including the UK's current coverage, its importance to leaving no one behind and the UK's strong commitment to the full disaggregation of data. Global support for data disaggregation is also covered in detail, with various sector and country examples provided.

The report should also outline specific capacity development needs in order to deliver the SDGs for children effectively and equitably, such as increases in the supply of qualified health workers, teachers and/or social workers. The contribution of multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieving the SDGs for children, such as the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, should also be considered.

Good Practices: Romania's 2018 VNR report highlights the work of World Vision Romania's partnerships to deliver community development programs where adults and children, including the most vulnerable children, are contributing, sharing ideas and implementing activities.

8 Conclusion and next steps

This section should outline the steps that will be taken to accelerate progress on the SDGs for children generally, as well as for children from marginalized or vulnerable groups. In particular, actions to end child poverty, invest in ending violence against children, realize Universal Health Coverage and nutrition for all children, ensure children living in fragile contexts are not left behind and support child-centred disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation should all be highlighted.[17]

Member States should also outline plans to disseminate the findings of the VNR among children in a timely, age-appropriate and child-friendly manner and detail how it will involve children in implementing and reviewing the SDGs at national and sub-national levels in the future.

> **Good Practice:** The conclusion of Ghana's 2019 VNR report states that its youthful population requires that the nation invest meaningfully in sustainable child development and reduce child poverty, with urgent action required from stakeholders to tackle the root causes of multidimensional child poverty.

9 Annexes

Given the importance of data in monitoring progress on the SDGs for children, Member States should include a statistical annex with data on the global SDGs indicators and any relevant regional or national indicators. The statistical annex should include as much disaggregated data as possible in order to assess progress on the SDGs for children generally, as well as children from marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Member States should also consider including an annex with independent contributions from stakeholders, including children, in their VNR report. Contributions from children could be in the form of comments on the country's VNR report, children's views on progress, challenges and emerging issues in implementing the SDGs, or reporting on their own contribution to SDG implementation. An annex with independent contributions from children should be in addition to – rather than a substitute for – any consultations held with children at national and sub-national levels to prepare the VNR report.

Where not addressed elsewhere in the report, Member States should also include an annex detailing the nature and results of any consultations with children and their representatives, including a list of specific child-focused organizations and/or groups of children consulted.

> **Good Practices:**
>
> - Both the **Netherlands'** and **Denmark's** 2017 VNR reports include annexes with contributions from various stakeholders including civil society, the private sector, academia, sub-national governments, municipalities and youth. Notably, Denmark's report includes a contribution from the Danish Youth Council, an umbrella organization of 72 children's and youth organizations.
> - One of the annexes of **Ecuador's** 2018 VNR report includes the results of consultations with children and adolescents on their views of cities, in the context of the UN Habitat III conference.
> - The inclusion of a detailed statistical annex in **Rwanda's** 2019 VNR report provides valuable information on several children's issues that are not addressed in the narrative of the report, including child poverty and some forms of violence against children.

10 Making presentations at the HLPF

The Guidelines state that countries should consider a number of options when conducting their presentation at the HLPF including "providing space for stakeholders such as civil society, youth and the private sector to share their contributions to and views on SDG progress."

In relation to children, Member States should seek to provide space for children to present their views on the SDGs during formal VNR presentations, as well as at informal side events during the HLPF. Innovative approaches to bring children's views and voices to the HLPF such as the use of videos, video-conferencing and social media should also be explored in order to maximize opportunities for children's participation.

In addition, Member States should support the participation of child and youth representatives – including from marginalized or vulnerable groups – in their official delegation to the HLPF. In all cases, Member States should establish child-friendly, age-appropriate and safe modalities, including adhering to a detailed child protection policy, to ensure children's meaningful and safe participation at the HLPF.

> **Good Practices:** During the 2017 HLPF, **Belgium, Denmark, Guatemala, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Thailand** and **Zimbabwe** were among the VNR countries with youth representatives in their official delegation to the HLPF. Notably, both Thailand and the Netherlands also provided space for presentations by youth representatives as part of their VNR presentation.

CONCLUSION

As key stakeholders and "critical agents of change" in relation to the 2030 Agenda, it is essential that Member States consider and include children in preparing their VNR. The above guidance and illustrative examples from other VNR reports can support Member States to consider children's rights, including children's participation, as they prepare for their national review at the HLPF.

To further support Member States, a checklist for including children in VNRs is provided as an annex to this paper. This checklist may be used as a practical tool to prepare VNR reports, as well as an assessment tool to measure the extent to which Member States have considered children, including children from marginalized and vulnerable groups, in their draft VNR report and other preparations.

ANNEX: A Checklist for Considering Children in Voluntary National Reviews at the HLPF

The following checklist is provided as a practical tool to support Member States in considering children's rights, including children's participation, in Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Member States should consider children as a group generally, as well as specific groups of marginalized or vulnerable children, in preparing their VNR.

1. Opening statement:

- ☐ What is the current status of SDG progress for children?
- ☐ What outcomes or results have been achieved for children?
- ☐ What steps will be taken to accelerate progress on the SDGs for children?

2. Highlights:

- ☐ *On the review process* – Have children participated or been consulted in preparing the VNR?
- ☐ *On the status of SDG implementation* – Have children made progress in relation to the SDGs? What are the factors of success or failure in achieving progress for children? Are there any specific areas where children are at risk of being left behind?
- ☐ *On the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs* – How have goals and targets relevant to children been pursued in order to accelerate implementation and avoid trade-offs?
- ☐ *On leaving no one behind* – What are the overarching approaches that address children as a vulnerable group? What are the strategies that address marginalized or vulnerable children?
- ☐ *On good practices and lessons learned* – What practices have had a transformative potential for children?
- ☐ *On examples of challenges encountered* – What have been some of the challenges in relation to children?
- ☐ *On areas of support needed* – What support is needed to accelerate progress for children?

3. Introduction:

- ☐ Have reports related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child been used and, if so, how?
- ☐ Have reports from regional children's rights bodies been used and, if so, how?

4. Methodology and process for preparation of the review:

- ☐ Have national children's rights institutions, non-governmental representatives for children or international children's agencies such as UNICEF participated in the process to prepare the VNR?
- ☐ Have children participated or been consulted in preparing the VNR? If so:
    - ☐ What was the frequency, nature and level of consultations with children?
    - ☐ What age groups were consulted?
    - ☐ Did children from marginalized or vulnerable groups participate in consultations?
    - ☐ What methods were used to ensure meaningful, safe and inclusive consultations with children?
    - ☐ How were children's views taken into account and reflected in the VNR report?
    - ☐ What plans are there to engage with children following the VNR presentation?

5. Policy and enabling environment

(a) Creating ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals:

☐ What actions have been taken to inform children of the 2030 Agenda including the SDGs?

☐ What mechanisms and platforms are available to children to contribute to SDG implementation?

☐ What actions have been taken to facilitate and support children to review progress on the SDGs at national and local levels?

(b) Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals in national frameworks:

☐ How has the integration of goals and targets relevant to children into national and sub-national frameworks – including legislation, policies, plans, budgets and programs – helped with the successful implementation of the SDGs and targets for children?

☐ What have been the challenges and how are you overcoming/addressing them?

☐ What are the major efforts of non-State actors to implement the SDGs in relation to children?

☐ What are the benefits arising from multi-stakeholder partnerships in contributing to SDG implementation for children?

(c) Integration of the three dimensions:

☐ What are the interlinkages between targets that are relevant to children?

☐ How do policies and institutional arrangements address these targets in an integrated manner?

(d) Leaving no one behind:

☐ Does this section include a focus on children including marginalized or vulnerable groups of children?

☐ What is the overall status or situation of children in relation to the SDGs based on statistical data? What is the status or situation of children from specific marginalized or vulnerable groups?

☐ What progress has been made for children, including marginalized or vulnerable groups of children, in relation to the SDGs? Why has progress been made or not made?

☐ What are the overarching strategies, policies, laws, programs, budgets and actions targeting children generally? What are the specific initiatives targeting marginalized or vulnerable groups of children?

☐ What are the remaining challenges or barriers to achieving the SDGs for children, especially children from marginalized or vulnerable groups?

☐ What is the availability of disaggregated data on children? Are there any gaps in data?

☐ What actions have been taken to facilitate children's engagement, including children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, in SDG implementation and review processes?

☐ What measures have been taken to address the situation of children living in fragile contexts?

(e) Institutional mechanisms:

☐ How have existing institutions been adapted or strengthened to make or review progress on the SDGs for children and/or to support children's participation in SDG implementation and review?

☐ What new institutional mechanisms have been created to facilitate, monitor and/or review progress on the SDGs for children? Do these mechanisms provide for child representation or interact with governmental and non-governmental bodies responsible for representing children and their rights?

☐ How are the views of children and their representatives considered by existing and new institutional mechanisms responsible for SDG implementation and review?

6. Progress on Goals and targets:

☐ What is the status or situation of children in relation to the goal or target under review? Are there disparities in outcomes between different groups of children based on disaggregated data?

☐ What progress has been made for children, including marginalized or vulnerable children, in relation to the Goal or target under review? Why has progress been made or not made?

☐ What are the strategies, policies, legislation, action plans, programs and budgets to achieve the goal or target for children? Are there specific measures that target marginalized or vulnerable groups of children who are the furthest behind?

☐ What are the short-, medium- and long-term national SDG targets for children generally, as well as for the groups of children who are the furthest behind?

☐ What are the gaps and/or remaining challenges in implementing the goal or target in relation to children and how will these be addressed? Is there any advice or support from other countries or institutions that is required?

☐ Are there any emerging issues or areas of concern in implementing the goal or target for children, including marginalized or vulnerable groups of children?

☐ What are the steps to accelerate progress to achieve the goal or target for all children by 2030?

☐ Have children's views been included or considered in reviewing the goal and/or target?

7. Means of implementation:

☐ What means of implementation are needed to achieve the SDGs for children?

☐ How has public spending, budgeting and investment in relation to children increased or changed? Are there key gaps in financing to achieve the SDGs for children?

☐ What is the nature and level of domestic and global public spending to achieve the SDGs for children? What kind of financial investments have been made to address the situation of children living in fragile contexts?

☐ What efforts have been made to achieve the full disaggregation of data? Are there specific challenges or gaps in data in relation to children? If so, how will these be addressed and what additional support is required?

☐ What are the capacity development needs to deliver the SDGs for children?

☐ What is the contribution of multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieving the SDGs for children?

8. Conclusion and next steps:

☐ What steps will be taken to accelerate progress on the SDGs for children?

☐ What plans are there to disseminate the findings of the VNR among children?

☐ How will children be involved in implementing and reviewing the SDGs in the future?

9. Annexes:

☐ Has a statistical annex with disaggregated data been included in the VNR report?

☐ Has an annex with independent contributions from stakeholders, including children, been included in the VNR report?

☐ Has an annex detailing the nature and results of consultations with children and their representatives been included in the VNR report?

10. Making presentations at the HLPF:

☐ Will formal or informal spaces be provided for children to present their views on SDG progress?

☐ Have innovative approaches been considered to bring children's views and voices to the HLPF?

☐ Will child and youth representatives be included in the official delegation to the HLPF?

NOTES

1 United Nations, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,* General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1, United Nations, New York, 25 September 2015, paras. 74(d) and (e).

2 The most recent version of the voluntary common reporting guidelines are available in Annex 2 of UN DESA's *Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews: The 2020 Edition.* Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25245Handbook_2020_EN.pdf.

3 For guidance on key areas to accelerate progress for children, see: World Vision (2019), "Time to pick up the pace for children: The 6 commitments Member States must make to accelerate action and progress." Available at: https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/WV%206%20commitments%20asks%20on%20SDGs%20Acceleration%20Actions_Sep3-FINAL.pdf

4 National children's rights institutions may take different forms including National Children's Commissioners, Children's Ombudspersons and Representatives for Children and Youth.

5 There is a growing body of evidence that indicates that child-led research provides promising opportunities to engage children and young people in shaping policies and practices, ultimately creating changes that lead to better lives for them. For further information, see: World Vision International (2019), *Child-led Research: From participating in research to leading it* https://www.wvi.org/stories/child-participation/child-led-research-participating-research-leading-it.

6 For more information on building an effective nexus among humanitarian, development and peace approaches, see: World Vision International (2019), *A Brighter Future for Children: Our approach to fragile contexts.* Available at: https://www.wvi.org/publications/brighter-future-fragile-contexts.

7 UN Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) and Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) (2020). *Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews: The 2020 Edition*, p. 25. Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25245Handbook_2020_EN.pdf.

8 For more information on children living in fragile contexts, see: World Vision International (2019), *A Brighter Future for Children: Our approach to fragile contexts.* Available at: https://www.wvi.org/publications/brighter-future-fragile-contexts.

9 For guidance on key areas to accelerate progress for children, see: World Vision (2019), "Time to pick up the pace for children: The 6 commitments Member States must make to accelerate action and progress." Available at: https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/WV%206%20commitments%20asks%20on%20SDGs%20Acceleration%20Actions_Sep3-FINAL.pdf

10 World Health Organization (2019), *Essential nutrition actions: mainstreaming nutrition through the life course.* Available at: https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/326261/9789241515856-eng.pdf?ua=1.

11 These strategies and plans should identify the short and long-term risks faced by children in a changing climate, recognize children's unique needs, vulnerabilities, rights and capacities, identify child-centered disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) targets and address education, health, child protection and social protection needs for children.

12 For more information on child-centred disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, see: The Children in a Changing Climate Coalition (2016), *A View from 2016: Child-Centered Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.* Available at: http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org/a-view- from-2016.html; and The Children in a Changing Climate Coalition (2015), Child-centered Adaptation: Realizing children's rights in a changing climate. Available at: http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org/realising-childrens-rights-in-a-changing-climate.html.

13 Forms of violence against children include physical, sexual and mental violence, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, harm or abuse, including commercial sexual exploitation, child trafficking, child labour and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage, the recruitment or use of child soldiers, physical or psychological punishment, bullying or peer violence, gang violence and child homicides.

14 World Vision International (2019), *Small Cracks, Big Gaps: How governments allow violence against children to persist.* Available at: https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/Small%20Cracks%20Big%20Gaps.pdf.

15 INSPIRE is a set of seven strategies that have shown success in reducing violence against children. Developed by experts, INSPIRE places a strong emphasis on prevention through a multi-sectoral response, with strategies that include health, social welfare, education, and finance and justice sectors. For more information, see: http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/inspire/en/.

16 Child Rights Now! (2019), *A Second Revolution: Thirty years of child rights and the unfinished agenda.* Available at: https://child-rights-now.org/.

17 World Vision (2019), "Time to pick up the pace for children: The 6 commitments Member States must make to accelerate action and progress." Available at: https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/WV%206%20commitments%20asks%20on%20SDGs%20Acceleration%20Actions_Sep3-FINAL.pdf

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We believe a world without violence against children is possible, and World Vision's global campaign It takes a world to end violence against children is igniting movements of people committed to making this happen. No one person, group or organisation can solve this problem alone, it will take the world to end violence against children.

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