ENSURING CHILDREN ARE NOT LEFT BEHIND:

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

INTRODUCTION

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

This paper provides guidance to Member States on how to include children's rights, including children's participation, in Voluntary National Reviews at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). It is relevant to countries preparing their first VNR report, as well as countries preparing their second or subsequent VNR report. 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 January 2021. It also provides examples of good practices from other VNRs from 2017-2020. 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 the outcomes and results achieved for children and the steps the country intends to take to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for children, including marginalized or vulnerable groups of children.[3] Second and subsequent VNR reports should also highlight the main steps taken towards SDG implementation for children, as a vulnerable group, since the previous VNR report.

GOOD PRACTICES:

- 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.
- The foreword of The **Gambia's** 2020 VNR report highlights progress in terms of school enrolment and retention, the prevalence of stunting, wasting and underweight among children under five years old and the proportion of women attended by skilled health personnel during delivery.
- The foreword of **North Macedonia's** 2020 VNR report states that it is strongly determined to reduce child poverty and to enable each child to have an equal chance of success in life.
- Liberia's 2020 VNR report's "Message from the President" emphasizes that accelerating actions to achieve the SDGs will focus on – inter alia – the protection of children's rights.

2 Highlights

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

- *On VNRs previously presented to the HLPF –* The report should identify the most significant changes in relation to children – both positive and negative – since the last review.
- *On the country-level review process –* The report should identify whether children, including children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, participated in the preparation of 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 statistical data. It should identify the factors of success or failure to achieve progress for children and note any specific areas where children are at risk of being left behind.

- *On new and emerging challenges –* The report should highlight the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, discrimination and inequality, climate change and other relevant issues on children's lives and well-being, as well as measures taken to mitigate their negative effects on children.
- *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 to address children as a vulnerable group generally, as well as specific strategies to address the situation of marginalized or vulnerable groups of children.
- *On examples of good practices and lessons learned –* The report should highlight measures that have a transformative potential for children – including in the context of the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic – such as measures to end child poverty, realize Universal Health Coverage and nutrition for all children and end violence against girls and boys.
- *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 national initiatives that need support –* The report should highlight any support needed to accelerate progress for children on the SDGs, including in terms of finance, capacity-building, policy advice and data disaggregation.

GOOD PRACTICES:

- **Bangladesh's** 2020 VNR report states that vulnerable people, particularly women, children and people with disabilities, have been given priority under its National Social Security Strategy.
- **Austria's** 2020 VNR report notes that the inclusion of young people in the implementation process is vital and encouraged through a wide variety of participatory programmes and projects. There are also targeted measures to improve the living conditions of young people and children.
- **Zambia's** 2020 VNR report discusses progress in relation to children's nutrition and health – with disparities between rural and urban areas highlighted – as well as key interventions for children.
- **Trinidad and Tobago's** 2020 VNR report highlights specific interventions targeting children such as the draft National Child Policy and the provision of healthy school meals to vulnerable children.
- **Mozambique's** 2020 VNR report outlines challenges for children including child poverty and rising crime, the latter which has a strong gender component of the violation of the rights of vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and people with disabilities.
- **Nigeria's** 2020 VNR report notes increases in both under-five child mortality and child and early forced marriages before the age of 18. The need to strengthen the development of women and girls in all sectors, including those with disabilities, is also identified as a critical action.

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 (CRC) and its significant overlap with numerous SDG targets, the introduction should describe how national reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as Concluding Observations from that Committee, have been used. In addition, the introduction should outline how reports to and recommendations from regional children's rights bodies, such as the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, have been used.

GOOD PRACTICES:

- **Bulgaria's** 2020 VNR report states that it takes into account recommendations from its periodic reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- **The Federated States of Micronesia's** 2020 VNR report identifies the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Country Report 2017 as a relevant document in relation to SDG 5 and provides an excerpt from that report on the issue of child marriage.

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 particular, this section should highlight any social platforms used to engage children, for example, UNICEF's U-Report tool, which empowers and connects young people around the world to engage with and speak out on issues that matter to them.[5] Countries preparing second and subsequent VNR reports should also discuss how the previous VNR helped to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda among children.

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 the children involved, 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.
- **Mozambique's** 2020 VNR report process involved national consultations – facilitated by World Vision – with children and adolescents who have been affected by natural disasters.
- The **Gambia's** 2020 VNR preparatory process involved the use of the U-Report platform to assess young people's understanding of the SDGs and the VNR process, as well as focus group discussions with youth and children, with their views included in the final VNR report.
- **Uganda's** 2020 VNR process was informed by consultations with stakeholders including youth organizations and school children. Notably, 23,324 young people and children (15-30 years old) participated in the U-Report survey, with their views on various issues provided in the final report.

5   Policy and enabling environment

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

The report should outline how children have been continuously involved in and contributed to the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda, including measures 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 sustain progress well beyond 2030. Child participation is also a core principle of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to which nearly all countries 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[6], 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, online and offline surveys etc.

Countries preparing second and subsequent VNRs should also discuss how children's ownership of the SDGs has evolved since the first VNR, indicating efforts to sustain or mainstream children's participation and ownership, and how this has impacted the government's engagement with children. Boxes may be used to highlight children's involvement in SDG implementation and review.

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 includes a 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.
- **Several** 2018 and 2019 VNR 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 workshops, competitions, debates or projects in schools.
- **Bulgaria's** 2020 VNR report highlights the Council of Children, which enables children – including children of different ages and those from vulnerable and marginalized communities – to express their opinions and participate in drafting legislation and formulating policies that affect them.
- **Finland's** 2020 VNR discusses the roles and activities of the 2030 Agenda Youth Group, which was established to better integrate the voices of children and youth in national SDG implementation.
- **North Macedonia's** 2020 VNR report has a detailed chapter on "Youth on the Road to Agenda 2030 and the SDGs", with information on youth activities and participation from 2014-2020.

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

This section of the report should outline how the integration of goals and targets relevant to children into national and sub-national frameworks – including legislation, policies, plans, budgets and programs – has helped with 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, plans, budgets and/or programs, has helped to make progress to end specific forms of violence against girls and boys, as well as to improve children's outcomes in others areas such as health or 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.[7] 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, the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and the Global Partnership for Education.

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.
- **Panama's** 2020 VNR report discusses the Colmena Plan, which focuses on early childhood through 12 intervention areas – many of which address specific SDG targets – including economic stability, energy, employment, water, basic sanitation, health, nutrition, education, housing, sports and culture, security and traffic infrastructure. Notably, the plan is focused on strengthening the integral development of children in the most vulnerable areas of the country.
- **Estonia's** 2020 VNR report highlights measures of the non-governmental sector in relation to the well-being of families with children, children's physical and mental health and violence against children (including bullying, online child sexual abuse, trafficking and domestic violence).
- **Liberia's** 2020 VNR report outlines achievements in positively shaping the enabling environment for the implementation of its nutrition program, including the Scaling Up Nutrition movement.

(c) Integration of the economic, social and environmental 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.[8] Key areas of sustainable development that should be considered include poverty, food security and nutrition, health, education, gender equality, equality and violence against children.

In particular, countries 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. Countries should also 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.
- **Honduras'** 2020 VNR report outlines its Strategy of Integral Policies regarding Adolescent Pregnancy, which includes priorities in relation to – inter alia – education and training, food and nutrition security, income generation, social assistance, health and gender-based violence.
- **Brunei Darussalam's** 2020 VNR report discusses the formulation of its National Framework on Child Protection to further strengthen national inter-agency collaboration on child protection.

(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 marginalized or vulnerable groups including: girls, children with disabilities, children living in poverty, children from ethnic or religious minorities, Indigenous children, migrant and refugee 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. Specific attention should be paid to the situation of these vulnerable groups of children in relation to SDG implementation generally, as well as in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In particular, this section should outline the following key points:
- **The status of children –** The report should discuss the status of children in relation to the SDGs, including children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, based on current disaggregated data;
- **Progress achieved –** The report should discuss progress on the SDGs for children, including children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, with succinct rationale as to why progress has or has not been made;

- **Measures targeting children –** The report should outline the overarching strategies, policies, laws, programs, budgets and actions to fulfill the rights of and support the empowerment of children generally, as well as measures targeting specific marginalized or vulnerable groups of children;
- **Challenges –** The report should identify any challenges or barriers to achieving the SDGs for children, especially children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, including those related to financial investment in children and/or the availability of data; and
- **Children's participation –** The report should highlight the actions taken to facilitate children's involvement, including children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, in finding solutions related to SDG implementation and review.

This section should also discuss national and sub-national efforts to ensure a child rights-based approach to implementing the SDGs[9], which would allow countries to meet both the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in an efficient and effective manner. A child rights-based approach to SDG implementation – guided by the CRC and its Optional Protocols – can ensure that all children, including those from marginalized or vulnerable groups, are reached.

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 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.
- **Bulgaria's** 2020 VNR report states that it works to integrate the rights of the child in all aspects of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- **Samoa's** 2020 VNR report includes a chapter on "Leaving No One Behind: A Human Rights Approach to Sustainable Development", which discusses a number of vulnerable population groups including women and girls, children, persons with disabilities, youth and the elderly.

While the marginalized or vulnerable groups of children discussed under this section will vary depending on the country context, all countries should consider addressing 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, countries affected by fragility should discuss the impacts of fragility and insecurity on children in relation to the SDGs, as well as measures taken to support children. Countries not directly affected by fragility should outline measures – including political support and international 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, gender equality, equality and child protection.[10]

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.
- **Finland's** 2020 VNR report notes support for the rights and participation of children and young people in fragile states, with Finland preparing a National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security.
- **Nigeria's** 2020 VNR report highlights the impact of fragility, insecurity and conflict on children in relation to girls' access to education, gender-based violence against women and girls, child abuse and sexual violence against minors and child labour in terms of becoming child soldiers.

(e) Institutional mechanisms

This section of the report should outline how the country's institutional framework has evolved in order to make or review progress on the SDGs for children. Countries 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 processes.

The report should also outline the creation of new institutional mechanisms to facilitate, monitor and/or review progress on the SDGs for children, 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.

Importantly, 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 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 the country.
- **Malawi's** 2020 VNR report highlights the establishment of a National Children's Commission to facilitate multi-sectoral coordination of child-focused programmes, including monitoring earmarked domestic and development aid allocations.
- **Panama's** 2020 VNR report discusses the creation of the High Level Commission for Early Childhood, whose objective is to align, approve and articulate policies, strategies, plans and budgets for the comprehensive protection of children in early childhood.
- **The Gambia** and **Zambia's** 2020 VNR reports highlight youth representation on the National SDGs Steering Committee (the Gambia) and National Development Coordinating Committee (Zambia).

6 Progress on Goals and targets and evaluation of policies and measures taken so far

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 marginalized or vulnerable groups of children. In reviewing goals and targets relevant to children, the following information should be provided:

- **The status of children** in relation to the goal or target, noting disparities in outcomes between different groups of children based on disaggregated data by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other relevant characteristics;
- **Progress** 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 the progress achieved for children since their last VNR report;

- **Measures** such as strategies, policies, legislation, plans, programs and budgets taken so far to implement the goal or target for children, including measures that target the groups of children who are the furthest behind. Countries presenting subsequent VNRs should outline efforts to address the findings and challenges relevant to children that were identified in their previous VNR;
- **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;
- **Existing gaps, challenges and/or difficulties** in implementing the goal or target in relation to children, how these will be addressed (including how children's participation will be fostered to address these challenges) and whether any additional advice or support from other countries or institutions is required;
- **Emerging issues or areas of concern –** such as the COVID-19 pandemic – in implementing the goal or target for children, including marginalized or vulnerable groups of children; and
- **Next steps and/or actions** to accelerate progress on the goal or target for children in the near future and over the coming years in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for all children.[11]

Countries should also consider including the reflections, perspectives and views of children on SDG progress in reviewing specific goals and targets.

GOOD PRACTICES:

- **Guatemala's** 2017 and 2019 VNR reports review goals and targets related to children in a comprehensive manner, noting disparities in outcomes among different groups of children and identifying short, medium and long-term national targets for children.
- **Lao PDR** and **Viet Nam's** 2018 VNR reports and **Mozambique, Panama** and **Uganda's** 2020 VNR reports are notable for highlighting disparities in children's outcomes across a range of SDGs and targets, including based on detailed disaggregated data.
- **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. Similarly, **Trinidad and Tobago's** 2020 VNR report includes a section on "leaving no one behind" for each SDG reviewed, with key measures for vulnerable groups highlighted.
- In reviewing the SDGs, several 2019 VNR countries include the views and perspectives of children, youth or young people in their reports including **Guatemala, Iceland, Lesotho, Mongolia, Serbia** and **Sierra Leone.** Similarly, 2020 VNR countries that include the views of children or youth in reviewing specific SDGs include **Malawi, the Republic of Moldova, Slovenia** and **Uganda.**

In reviewing specific 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 living on the street;
- Discuss social protection coverage for children including efforts to expand coverage to all children and/or make social protection measures child-sensitive, including as part of the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Outline measures to tackle child poverty in national poverty reduction strategies, policies or programs and/or in a dedicated strategy and national action plan to end 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, 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 addresses child and adolescent multidimensional poverty in detail, including disaggregated data and a summary of child poverty by dimension of deprivation.
- **Burundi's** 2020 VNR report provides excellent coverage of child poverty, with data on monetary and multidimensional child poverty, as well as measures and mechanisms to address child poverty.
- **Liberia's** 2020 VNR report discusses social protection for children in addressing child poverty.
- **Estonia's** 2020 VNR report outlines a range of central government measures as well as non-government measures to reduce poverty and/or the risk-of-poverty among children.

On children's food security and nutrition:

- Provide data on the prevalence of stunting, wasting, underweight and overweight/obesity among children, micronutrient deficiencies and anemia among children, adolescents, pregnant and lactating women and women of reproductive age, and breastfeeding;
- Outline the key actions taken to improve maternal nutrition and children's nutrition at all ages – including infancy, early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence – based on the World Health Organization's 2019 updated Essential Nutrition[12] Actions ; and
- Identify financial or political support for national nutrition policies and actions plans that have targets to reduce child malnutrition, including support for the Nutrition for Growth policy and financing agenda.

GOOD PRACTICES:

- **Lao PDR's** 2018 VNR report provides good coverage of children's nutrition including data, the underlying causes of undernutrition and 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.
- **Papua New Guinea's** 2020 VNR report addresses children's nutrition extensively including data, disparities, measures, gaps, challenges and next steps. The economic costs and impact of child malnutrition and the need for nutrition-sensitive investments across sectors are also discussed.

On children's health:

- Provide information and data on children's health at all ages – including maternal, newborn and child health, early childhood, middle childhood and adolescent health – and address specific health challenges for children such as sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, mental health, substance abuse (drug, alcohol and tobacco use), non-communicable diseases and the physical and mental health consequences of violence against children and the COVID-19 pandemic;
- 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 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 comprehensive 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.
- **Niger's** 2020 VNR report identifies disparities in children's health outcomes based on disaggregated data by urban or rural area, region, maternal education, maternal age and income.
- **Panama's** 2020 VNR report provides comprehensive coverage of children's health with disaggregated data, disparities, progress, numerous measures and challenges outlined.

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;[13]
- 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.[14]

GOOD PRACTICES:

- **Canada's** 2018 VNR report provides a case study on the Foundation for Environmental Stewardship (FES), which aims to educate children and youth on the climate crisis and empower them to take action on solving climate change in their local communities.
- **Guyana's** 2018 VNR report notes the work of the Office of Climate Change in institutionalizing 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.
- **Armenia's** 2020 VNR report discusses the "Adolescents as agents of climate action in their communities" project, which aims for adolescent girls and boys and communities to take action on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning through education, enhanced local governance and human and institutional capacity development.
- **Brunei Darussalam's** 2020 VNR report notes that a group of 51 youth representatives from different sectors of Brunei Darussalam were invited to participate in the review of the draft Brunei National Climate Policy (BNCP), in order to gain insights from a youth perspective.

On ending violence against children:

- Address ending all forms of violence against children[15] 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 considered explicitly in reporting on progress, measures and challenges to address gender-based violence;
- Discuss violence against children in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Identify legislation prohibiting violence against children, including legislation that bans all forms of violence against children in all settings;[16]
- Outline measures to prevent and respond to violence against children, including existing proven and effective solutions such as the INSPIRE strategies;[17]
- 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; and
- 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.
- **Kenya's** 2020 VNR report has a detailed annex on violence against children (VAC) with extensive data, programmes and activities, and the legal and policy frameworks to address VAC outlined.
- **Bulgaria's** 2020 VNR report discusses numerous measures to address violence against children and child trafficking including legislation, child protection institutions, programs, a coordination mechanism, a national help-line and various support centers, facilities and supportive measures.

7 New and emerging challenges

This section should describe new and emerging challenges impacting children – such as food insecurity, migration, violent conflict, gender inequality, fragility and climate change – and how countries are adapting their efforts to implement the SDGs for children in light of these challenges. In particular, this section should analyze how new and emerging challenges are affecting children's existing vulnerabilities, as well as whether they are creating new groups of vulnerable children or enhancing the marginalization of children already at risk of being left behind. In identifying and analyzing new and emerging challenges, efforts should be made to ensure the inclusive and meaningful participation of children.

Importantly, this section should describe how the country is recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic from a children's rights perspective, with the following issues discussed:
- The direct and indirect effects of the pandemic on children's lives and well-being in relation to the SDGs, including its immediate and longer-term impact on poverty, food security and nutrition, health (including mental health), education, gender equality, violence against children, child marriage, child labour, inequality and children's participation in SDG implementation and review;[18]
- The policies and concrete measures being taken to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on children, including targeted measures to address the situation of marginalized or vulnerable

groups of children who are at risk of being further marginalized due to the pandemic;

- Efforts to consult with children and young people in order to ensure that their voices are heard and considered in designing child-sensitive COVID-19 response strategies;[19] and
- The future actions needed to ensure progress on the SDGs for children and strengthen children's resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic or other similar pandemics or calamities.

GOOD PRACTICES:

- The 2020 VNR reports of **The Gambia, Kenya, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria** and **North Macedonia** discuss the impact or potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children in relation to food security and nutrition, health, education, child labour and/ or violence against children, with the negative impacts on specific groups of vulnerable children highlighted.
- **Mozambique's** 2020 VNR report discusses the economic and social impact of COVID-19 – including as a child rights crisis – with the potential effects of the pandemic on children's poverty, education, health and income highlighted.
- **Peru's** 2020 VNR report describes the impact of COVID-19 in relation to children including the number of deaths of children, adolescents and youth due to COVID-19, the suspension of face-to-face classes, the increase in consultations through a hotline for family violence and sexual abuse and the impact of different scenarios on children's nutrition and education.
- **Georgia's** 2020 VNR report notes measures to protect children's rights in response to the COVID-19 pandemic including a separate hotline for children and the provision of "teleschool" education, which offers TV lessons to school children who do not have access to the internet or a computer.
- **Bangladesh's** 2020 VNR report outlines the Prime Minister's 31-point directives to citizens to mitigate the risk of COVID-19, including the need to provide relief assistance to certain groups – including street children – and to take necessary measures for senior citizens and children.
- In discussing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, **Micronesia's** 2020 VNR report emphasizes the need to develop Educational Contingency Plans (ECPs) in the case of future school closures due to disasters and emergencies.

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8 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, countries should provide information on public spending, budgeting and investment in areas that directly benefit children – including social protection, health, food security and nutrition, education and child protection – in order to demonstrate their level of financial commitment to implement the SDGs for children. Efforts 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. Countries preparing second or subsequent VNRs should also identify whether public spending in relation to children has increased or decreased since the last VNR. In particular, countries should:

- Discuss domestic government spending in relation to children in a sub-section on public budgeting to achieve the SDGs;
- Provide information on the proportion of domestic government spending on social protection, nutrition, health, education and child protection relative to GDP and the national budget;
- Provide information on external government spending to support children to achieve the SDGs globally, including the level of international development cooperation dedicated to children, as well as any financial support for global initiatives or programs that benefit children;
- Identify financial commitments to address the situation of children affected by fragility; and
- Outline any financial measures to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children.

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.
- **Burundi's** 2020 VNR report discusses investment in children including a study on the "Investment Framework for Adolescents in Burundi." The importance of investing in children to consolidate gains, maintain momentum and accelerate progress to achieve the SDGs is emphasized.

In relation to data, countries should outline efforts to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated data in a sub-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.[20] In particular, countries should:

- Provide information on the level of disaggregated data currently available for SDG indicators;
- Identify any gaps and challenges in relation to data on children;
- Outline measures to improve the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data;
- Identify any external support needed to achieve the full disaggregation of data, as required by the 2030 Agenda; and

- Discuss next steps to improve data in relation to children, including plans to ensure that data collection efforts capture groups of children traditionally excluded from household surveys, such as stateless children, refugee children and children living on the street.

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.
- **Costa Rica's** 2020 VNR report addresses the issue of data disaggregation, with information on the number of indicators disaggregated by SDG and type of disaggregation, challenges and plans to strengthen data generation in order to better characterize the groups that are lagging behind.

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.
- **North Macedonia's** 2020 VNR report highlights its pledge to join the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. In support of this commitment, the Government has recently adopted the National Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence (2020-2025) and Action Plan to Reduce any Form of Violence against Children (2020-2022).

9 Conclusion and next steps

This section should outline the concrete 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. This section should also discuss how these accelerated actions for children will be achieved within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic – and its recovery – and whether any specific support is needed.

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

GOOD PRACTICES:

- 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.
- **Bangladesh's** 2020 VNR report's next steps include involving youth in the SDGs through the concept of 'by the youth' and 'for the youth'.

10 Annexes

Given the importance of data to monitor progress on the SDGs for children, countries 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 or vulnerable groups.

Countries 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 children's 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, countries should also include an annex detailing the nature and results of any consultations with children and their representatives, including a list of the 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 certain forms of violence against children.
- **Burundi's** 2020 VNR report contains an annex on key SDG indicators relevant to children, with information on the situation of children in relation to social protection, health and nutrition, education, child protection and water, hygiene and sanitation.
- **Kenya's** 2020 VNR report contains a detailed annex on 'Violence against Children (VAC) in Kenya (2016-2019)', with extensive data and information on programmes, activities and the legal and policy frameworks to address violence against children.

11 Making presentations at the HLPF

The Guidelines state that countries should consider a number of measures or options when conducting their presentation at the HLPF including "provide space for stakeholders such as civil society, youth and the private sector to share their contributions to the VNR and their views on SDG progress." Accordingly, countries should seek to provide space for children to present their views on the SDGs during VNR presentations, as well as at side events during the HLPF. Innovative and virtual approaches to bring children's views and voices to the HLPF – including through the use of videos, video-conferencing and social media – should be utilized in order to maximize opportunities for children's participation in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, countries 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, countries should establish child-friendly, age-appropriate and safe modalities, including adhering to a detailed child protection policy and all COVID-19 safety protocols, to ensure children's meaningful and safe participation at the HLPF.

GOOD PRACTICE:

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 AND NEXT STEPS

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 countries to consider children's rights, including children's participation, as they prepare for their national review at the 2021 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 countries 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 (VNRs) at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2021. 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 have been taken to implement the SDGs for children since the last VNR?
   - ☐ What steps will be taken to accelerate progress on the SDGs for children?

2. **Highlights:**
   - ☐ *On previous VNRs* – What have been the most significant changes for children since the last VNR?
   - ☐ *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 new and emerging challenges* – What has been the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges on children? What measures have been taken to mitigate their effects on children?
   - ☐ *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 to address children as a vulnerable group? What are the strategies to address marginalized or vulnerable groups of children?
   - ☐ *On good practices and lessons learned* – What practices have had a transformative impact on children?
   - ☐ *On examples of challenges encountered* – What have been some of the challenges in relation to children?
   - ☐ *On national initiatives that need support* – 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 were 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?
     - ☐ Were any social platforms – including the U-Report tool – used to engage 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?
   - ☐ How has the VNR helped to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda among children?

5. Policy and enabling environment

(a) Ensuring 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?
☐ How has children's ownership of the SDGs evolved since the first VNR? What efforts have been taken to sustain or mainstream children's participation and ownership? How has this impacted the government's engagement with children?

(b) Integration 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 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 economic, social and environmental 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 of children in relation to the SDGs based on current data? What is the status 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 measures targeting marginalized or vulnerable groups of children?
☐ What are the challenges or barriers to achieving the SDGs for children, especially children from marginalized or vulnerable groups? What is the situation of children from marginalized or vulnerable groups as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?
☐ What is the level of disaggregated data available in relation to children? Are there any gaps in data?
☐ What actions have been taken to facilitate children's participation, including children from marginalized or vulnerable groups, in finding solutions related to SDG implementation and review?
☐ What efforts have been made to ensure a child rights-based approach to SDG implementation?
☐ 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 and evaluation of policies and measures taken so far:
☐ What is the status 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 groups, in relation to the goal or target under review? Why has progress been made or not made?

☐ What are the strategies, policies, legislation, plans, programs and budgets taken so far to implement the goal or target for children? What are the specific measures targeting the groups of children who are the furthest behind? What measures have been taken to address the finding and challenges relevant to children from the last VNR?

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

☐ What are the existing gaps, challenges and/or difficulties in implementing the goal or target in relation to children? How will these be addressed? How will children's participation be fostered to address these challenges? Is any advice or support from other countries or institutions required to address these gaps or challenges?

☐ Are there any emerging issues or areas of concern – such as the COVID-19 pandemic – in implementing the goal or target for children, including for marginalized or vulnerable groups?

☐ What steps and actions will be taken to accelerate progress on the goal or target for children in the near future and over the coming years in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for all children?

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

7. *New and emerging challenges*

☐ What new and emerging challenges are impacting children? How are efforts to implement the SDGs for children being adapted to address these challenges?

☐ How are challenges affecting children's existing vulnerabilities? Are they creating new groups of vulnerable children or enhancing the marginalization of children already at risk of being left behind?

☐ What efforts have been made to involve children in identifying new and emerging challenges?

☐ What are the direct and indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's lives and well-being?

☐ What policies and measures are being taken to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children, including marginalized or vulnerable groups of children?

☐ What efforts have been made to consult with children in designing a response to the pandemic?

☐ What future actions are needed to ensure progress for children in the face of new challenges?

8. *Means of implementation:*

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

☐ What is the nature and level of domestic public spending to implement the SDGs for children? Are there key gaps in financing to achieve the SDGs for children?

☐ What is the nature and level of external public spending to achieve the SDGs for children globally?

☐ What financial investments have been made to support children affected by fragility?

☐ What financial measures have been taken to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children?

☐ What is the level of disaggregated data currently available for all SDG indicators?

☐ What measures have been taken to achieve the full disaggregation of data?

☐ What are the challenges or gaps in data in relation to children? How will these be addressed and what additional support is required?

☐ What capacity development is needed in order to implement the SDGs for children?

☐ What multi-stakeholder partnerships are contributing to achieving the SDGs for children?

9. *Conclusion and next steps:*

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

☐ What support is needed to accelerate action for children in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

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

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

10. Annexes:

☐ Is there a statistical annex with disaggregated data on children?

☐ Is there an annex with independent contributions from stakeholders including children?

☐ Is there an annex on the nature or results of consultations with children and/or their representatives?

11. Making presentations at the HLPF:

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

☐ What virtual approaches will be utilized to bring children's views and voices to the HLPF?

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

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[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 is available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27171SG_Guidelines_2021.final.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] For more information, see: U Report: Voice Matters. Available at: https://ureport.in/.

[6] 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.

[7] 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.

[8] 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.

[9] For information on how to ensure a child rights based-approach in the implementation of the SDGs, see: United Nations Office of the High Commissioner (2020), "Child Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development." Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26130Child_Rights_2030_Agenda_HLPF_2020.pdf.

[10] 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.

[11] See Note 3.

[12] 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.

[13] 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.

[14] 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.

[15] Violence against children includes physical, sexual and mental violence, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, harm or abuse – in-person or online – including gender-based violence, domestic violence, commercial sexual exploitation, child trafficking, child labour, harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage, the recruitment or use of child soldiers, physical punishment or psychological aggression, bullying, peer violence, gang violence and child homicides.

[16] 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.

[17] 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/.

[18] For more information on the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to children, see the following 2020 publications by World Vision International: *COVID-19 Aftershocks: Deadly Waves; COVID-19 Aftershocks: Secondary impacts threaten more children's lives than disease itself; COVID-19 Aftershocks: A Perfect Storm; COVID-19 Aftershocks: Out of time; and COVID-19 Aftershocks: Access Denied.* Available at: https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/coronavirus-health-crisis/covid-19-aftershocks-deadly-waves.

[19] For information on children's views and recommendations on the COVID-19 pandemic, see: World Vision International (2020), *Experiences and recommendations of girls and boys on the impact of COVID-19.* Available at: https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/WV-GLOBAL-ActNowReport-Final_small.pdf.

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

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. We serve all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender. We are committed to contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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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