

# **Voluntary National Review Guidance Note for Civil Society Organisations:**

## **Sexual Violence, Sexual Exploitation and all other forms of Violence against Children**



## INTRODUCTION

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are a vital method of measuring a nation's progress towards achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda encourages all levels of society – government, academia and the private sector – to engage in these annual appraisals and to include children in the reporting process.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and children are critical to ensuring VNRs place children at the centre of the 2030 Agenda. Together, they can press governments to include assessment of commitments, policies, initiatives and promising practices to prevent and address all forms of violence against children, including sexual violence and sexual exploitation. Strategic advocacy, campaigning and communication messages around VNR process can help hold governments accountable for the promises they made on ending violence against children in the long run. Such influencing can also raise awareness on the

scale and complexity of sexual violence, sexual exploitation and other forms of violence against children at local, national and regional levels.

This Voluntary National Review Guidance Note for CSOs: Ending Violence Against Children, Sexual Violence & Sexual Exploitation seeks to inform and support CSO engagement in the VNR process with an “EVAC-lens” – and a focus on sexual violence, commercial sexual exploitation and other forms of violence against children

It is designed to help national CSO advocates to influence the national VNR process from a child rights-based perspective and ensure that reviews meaningfully capture progress achieved against SDG targets related to ending all forms of violence against children. It provides key information on the VNR process, as well as how it can be used as a part of longer-term advocacy to end violence against children.

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## WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDANCE NOTE?

This Guidance Note is intended for civil society organisations working on SDG implementation and seeking to influence VNR processes and public policies at the national level. Good VNRs ensure a child-sensitive progress review of 2030 Agenda progress and secure lasting change for children to thrive and live free from all forms

of violence, including sexual violence and sexual exploitation.

Advocacy and communications teams, policy influencers, child rights champions and community members may find this guidance note useful.

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## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDANCE NOTE

This document contains information and actions on the entire VNR lifecycle: planning, reporting, evaluation and long-term accountability. It describes the stages of the VNR influencing process and equips advocates with the tools to review the implementation of government commitments and to present recommendations towards improving policies, programmes and services to address and prevent violence against children.

The influencing process is iterative and not always sequential. As such, this guidance note divides the process into steps related to three areas: 1) External Focus, 2) Internal Focus and 3) Forward Focus. This approach can help advocates determine where they are currently in the VNR influencing process, choose the starting point and focus on the necessary tasks for each step.

## SDGS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



**4.A:** Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all



**5.1:** End all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere



**5.2:** Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation



**5.3:** Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation



**8.7:** Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms



**16.1:** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere



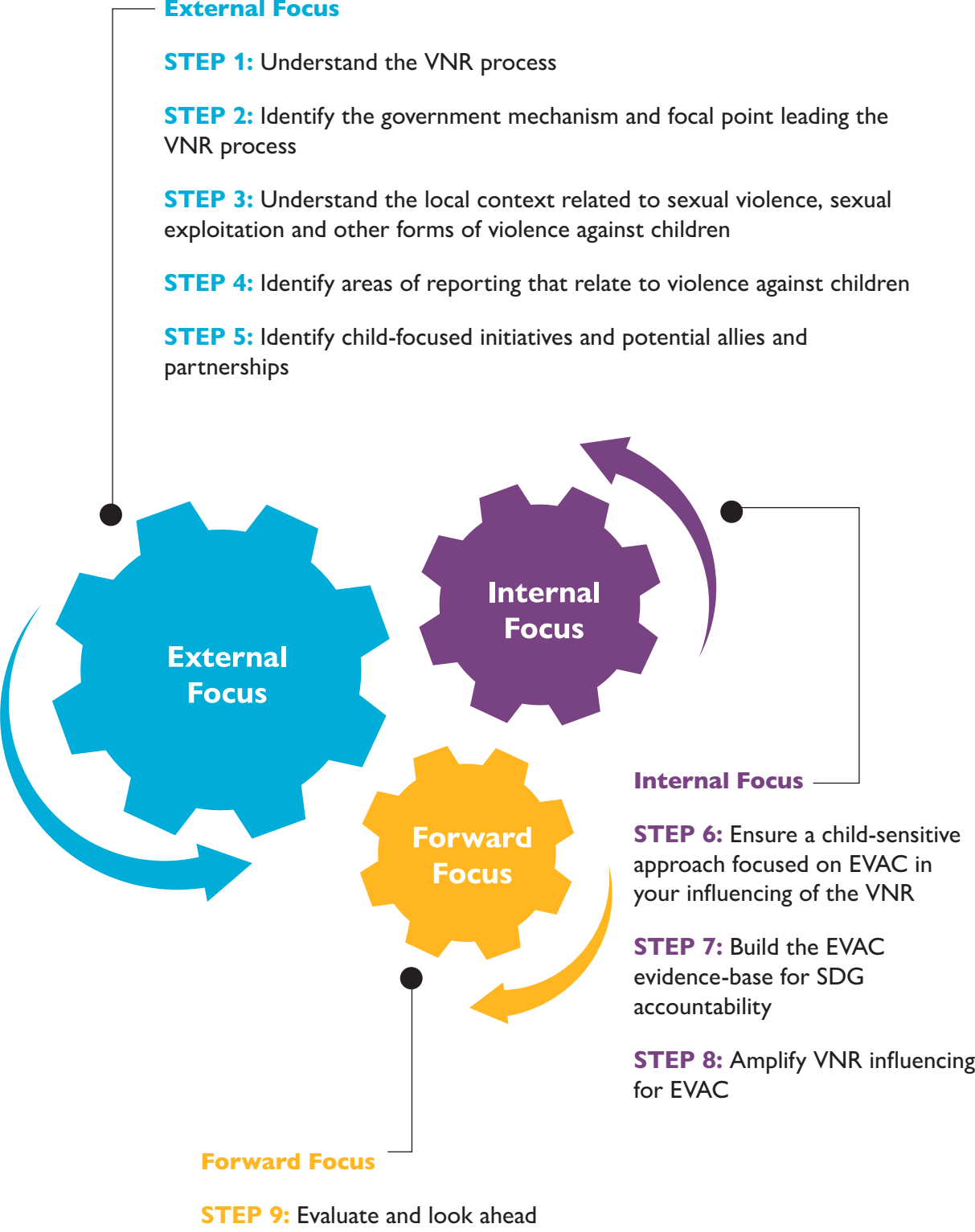
**16.2:** End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

### COVID-19

Despite the challenges presented by the global pandemic in 2020, governments still found creative solutions and new approaches to conduct VNR consultations. It is more important than ever that CSOs advocate for meaningful engagement in VNR consultations to ensure their voices are heard, concerns are addressed, and solutions are highlighted to ensure that no one is left behind as countries recover from COVID-19 and build back better.



# KEY STEPS IN THE VNR INFLUENCING PROCESS





## STEP 1: Understand the VNR Process

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recommends that UN Member States “conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven” (paragraph 79). Paragraph 84 stipulates that such reviews should occur regularly, be voluntary, be state-led, be conducted in developing and developed countries and involve the participation of a wide variety of stakeholders. These VNRs result in reports presented and discussed during July’s annual [High-level Political Forum](#) (HLPF) at the United Nations in New York.

### What is the benefit of the VNR?

VNRs ideally serve as a platform to share national-level achievements, challenges and lessons learned while implementing the 2030 Agenda. They present an opportunity to strengthen government policies and institutions, as well as mobilise multiple stakeholders in the implementation, review and accountability processes around the SDGs, including those that address various aspects of violence against children.

The development of a country’s VNR is a government-led process. Countries express their interest to present a VNR report between August and September. The final list of countries presenting a VNR report is usually available by October (see [reference tools](#)). Once you know your government intends to report, go to [Step 2](#) which helps you identify the government mechanism leading the development of the VNR report.

### Why should CSOs and children influence the VNR?

Civil society and children can play a significant watchdog role in holding governments to account for their 2030 Agenda commitments and ensure that children thrive and are free from violence.

**Civil society can bring a child-sensitive lens with a particular focus on ending violence against children.** They can do so by amplifying children’s voices and ensuring their views

## Questions

How does your government engage non-governmental stakeholders, including children (ages 18 & under), in the VNR consultations and broader political decision-making processes?

How is your government managing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; what links are there to ministries addressing each area of the 17 goals – especially target 16.2?

## Checklist

- Has violence against children been addressed in your country’s VNR?
- Have NGOs or child rights institutions engaged in the VNR?
- Have children under 18 participated in the VNR?
  - Which groups?
  - What frequency, nature, type of engagement?
  - What methods for child-safeguarding were used?

on violence against children and solutions to the problem are heard during the government process. By engaging children in national consultations, as well as conducting parallel consultations with children using World Vision’s Citizen Voice and Action approach (see [Step 7](#)) CSOs can present citizen-generated data and amplify children’s voices within governance.

[Citizen Voice and Action \(CVA\)](#), equips communities to hold their own governments accountable for the promises they make. CVA works by educating citizens about their rights and equipping them to advocate for improvements to basic services.

## How can you influence VNR?

- Use **official statistics** to highlight if a government's implementation of an SDG is factoring for children's rights – specifically ending violence against children.
- Promote the inclusion of references to progress on **targets and indicators** to end violence against children in VNR reports.
- Demonstrate how all SDGs relate to **protecting children** from all forms of violence.
- Highlight approaches which **leave no child behind**.
- Highlight **disaggregated data** on children that can highlight which forms of violence are being addressed.
- Identify **if/how children**, especially vulnerable ones, **participated** in VNR consultations and preparation of the final report.
- Underscore **challenges** such as meaningful participation, financing and data disaggregation.

## What if this is my first time participating in the VNR consultations?



- Participate in training workshops and online primers hosted by your organisation and umbrella networks to learn more about the process.
- Read your country's VNR which can be found in the [online VNR database](#).
- See the [reference tools](#) at the end of this guidance note to learn more on how to participate in the process.
- Prepare data and information on violence, including sexual violence, against children in your country, so that you can take part in discussion.





## STEP 2: Identify the government mechanism and focal point leading the VNR process

Every October, the VNR Database publishes a final list of governments that have indicated their intention to report at the following year's HLPF. The government process for VNRs varies by country and is sometimes challenging to follow. Once your government is listed in the [VNR database](#), it is critical to quickly identify which government office will be overseeing the implementation of the SDGs and who is managing the VNR process.

### How are the VNR consultations coordinated?

- A 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development **Coordination Secretariat** usually sits in the Office of the President/Prime Minister and typically oversees the VNR process.
- The **National Commission for Sustainable Development** is often based in the Ministry of Environment and participates in a coordination role, together with the Coordination Secretariat.
- An **Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Group or Network** could be led by the Office of the President/Prime Minister and made up of sustainable development focal points from other ministries to support the Coordination Secretariat.
- A **National Statistical Commission or a National Follow-up Network**, together with the Office of the President/Prime Minister, reviews the national monitoring framework and indicators.
- Voluntary Local Reviews are sometimes led by **local (mayor) and regional (governor) governmental offices**. However, only 1/3 of countries report that local and regional governments are engaging in the national monitoring processes.

### Questions

- What will the consultations look like?
- Will there be a shadow report?
- How do you want your government to engage CSOs in the VNR consultation?
- What data and key messages do you have to share with your government?

### Checklist

- Have you met with the VNR focal point or coordinator in your government?
- Has your government shared a VNR consultation roadmap?

### How can you engage CSOs in the 2030 Agenda implementation and review processes?

- **Contact the Office of the President/Prime Minister** and request a meeting with staff from the VNR Coordination Secretariat to learn more about their process and their plans for civil society engagement. In the same contact, encourage your government to recommit to ending violence against children and ensure the meaningful engagement of children and civil society in VNR consultations. See [sample letter](#) in resource tools.
- When it is unclear who is the focal point on the VNR consultations, or if that focal point is not actively engaging with civil society, consider **contacting the United Nations Resident Coordinator or UNICEF Director or national/regional civil society network** (e.g. [Civicus](#); [Together 2030](#); [Global Call to Action Against Poverty \(GCAP\)](#); [Transparency Accountability and Participation Network \(TAP Network\)](#)). Ask an ally to support your planning, introduce you to the focal point and/or advocate for civil society engagement in the VNR process.

- Some **fragile states facing protracted conflicts may have no or a limited government mechanism** for SDG implementation, due to political instability and lack of reliable government funding or donor support. In these countries, the Office of the President/Prime Minister should be contacted regarding the VNR process. Despite ongoing challenges related to peace and security, eight fragile states presented VNRs at the 2020 HLPF.

### How do CSOs influence the VNR consultations on EVAC?

Once you identify the SDG focal point or office, you will need to determine if you can directly influence this decisionmaker (focal point) or if you need to collaborate with or target the people who can influence your decisionmaker. This might mean focusing your advocacy and outreach towards an individual, team, or group that can help achieve your objectives.



- **Build the relationship with your government early.** Successful influencing on EVAC requires relationship-building, both early in the process and after consultations have been completed.
- **Find out early on if there will be a shadow report.** A shadow report enables CSOs to report on issues that the government might not prioritise, such as ending violence against children, child sexual violence and child sexual exploitation.
- **Formalise your relationship with the government.** In **Nepal**, CSOs have coordinated well on SDG 16 to promote peace, justice and strong institutions with technical support from the [TAP Network](#). With their support, the government established a multi-stakeholder working group to give inputs.
- **Identify how your government engages with civil society.** **Mozambique** formed an SDG Working Group and divided stakeholders into four groups with different skills and experiences to contribute to the VNR consultations and include children’s issues, including EVAC. The political will was clear, but not all stakeholders had the same understanding and experience of VNRs. More funding is needed to ensure that those impacted by violence and with lived experience engage.

### How should you approach your government to participate in the VNR consultations?



- Request a meeting with the government focal point to learn more about the VNR process and share your recommendations for meaningful engagement of civil society, children and youth.
- Adopt a sectoral approach by requesting meetings with government agencies that address different children’s issues, such as health, education, protection, etc.





### STEP 3: Understand the local context related to sexual violence, sexual exploitation and other forms of violence against children

As part of the VNR process, it is critical to understand the context of violence against children in your country and to learn about basic rights to services for children and their families. In addition, it is important to assess if there is political will and commitment to end violence against children. This will help you better engage in the consultation process and inform your contributions to the VNR.

#### What are key questions to help understand the local context?

Conducting a problem analysis will help frame your influencing activities within the local context. The analysis should involve children, youth and community members to help define the problem and highlight solutions and key action steps.

- In what context does violence against children occur (political, social, economic, cultural, etc.)?
- What government, CSO, or private interventions and services are available to address violence against children?
- What local and national data exist on violence against children, sexual violence and exploitation?

#### Build an action plan to map the local context

- **Conduct your problem analysis** through a literature review, including national data, INGO reports, etc. The Out of the Shadows Index on sexual violence (developed by the Economist) as well as the WHO Global Status Report on Violence against Children are excellent resources to understand the strengths and gaps in national responses to these issues. See [resources tools](#).

#### Questions

What organisations work to address different forms of violence against children, including sexual violence and exploitation?

What policy and public/ private programmes exist to address different forms violence against children?

What social, political, economic, and cultural factors impact violence against children?

What local and national data exists on different forms violence against children, including sexual violence and exploitation?

#### Checklist

- Have you taken an external scan of your environment to understand the context in which children face violence?
- Have you assessed national and local policies to address violence against children?
- Have you reviewed data collected by the government and other stakeholders?

- **Strengthen problem analysis and collect evidence of progress by collecting primary data** through interviews with key stakeholders, surveys of children, focus groups with community members on ending violence against children.
- **Consolidate data on violence against children early** in the process to share with government representatives, include them in the consultation discussions and combine with other advocates for joint messaging. (See [Step 7](#) on Citizen-Generated Data)
- **Conduct a stakeholder mapping** to identify potential partners and resources for EVAC. (See [Step 5](#))

## How can you adopt an EVAC approach to reporting on SDG progress?



- Place children at the centre of assessments on government progress on achieving SDG targets related to ending violence against children.
- Differentiate between children (under 18) and youth and between girls and women. VNR Reports often reference youth when the data just refers to children. Likewise, data on gender-based violence often refers to girls and women. Asking for data disaggregation per age can help highlight issues related to sexual violence and all other forms of violence against children.

### EVAC Resources:

- **Out of the Shadows -- Shining a Light on the Response to Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation:** This index reviews government responses to sexual violence against children in 60 countries. The index includes information on: 1) the legal framework to protect children from sexual violence; 2) the context where such violence occurs; 3) solutions being implemented; 4) human and financial resources available; 5) government commitments and capacity; 6) engagement of various stakeholders to address the problem, including CSOs and the media.  
(<https://outoftheshadows.eiu.com/>)
- **Small Cracks Big Gaps: How governments allow violence against children to persist:** A World Vision International review of national legislation and policies related to ending violence against children in 20 countries.  
(<https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/it-takes-world/small-cracks-big-gaps>)
- **The Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS)** are nationally representative household surveys of males and females ages 13 to 24 that measure violence in childhood. They are led by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as part of the Together for Girls partnership. The surveys measure the prevalence, past 12-month incidence and circumstances surrounding violence in childhood and young adulthood (before age 24). The VACS measure multiple forms of violence: sexual, physical and emotional. The surveys also provide important data on risk factors, protective factors, and consequences of violence.  
(<https://www.togetherforgirls.org/about-the-vacs/>)
- **World Health Organization Global Status Report on Violence Against Children:** This report includes survey information from 155 countries on ending violence against children as of 2020. It examines progress at the country level to achieve the SDG targets on EVAC and the utilisation of the INSPIRE strategies. <https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/violence-prevention/global-status-report-on-violence-against-children-2020>)



## STEP 4: Identify areas of reporting that relate to violence against children

As you review each thematic area of the current VNR, assess how it relates to violence against children.

### SDGs with a direct link to violence against children:

SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) *with a focus on ending violence against children*; and SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) *with a focus on specific forms of violence*.

### SDGs addressing drivers of violence and the unique vulnerabilities of children:

SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 4 (Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

In the earliest VNRs, few government reports addressed EVAC. This has changed with over 70% of countries now addressing violence against children.

### What information on EVAC can be included in VNRs?

While many governments mention violence against children in their reports, there are still significant gaps in information shared and statistical data presented. As such, it is critical to raise EVAC messages on concerns and solutions across all the SDGs, addressing social, cultural, political and economic factors. Information on EVAC might include:

- Evidence on **promising interventions** to prevent the drivers of violence against children and **legal and policy frameworks**. (See [resources tools](#)).
- Information on human and financial resources to support existing or planned EVAC programmes.

## Questions

How does violence impede the progress of each SDG under review this year?

What information on ending all forms of violence against children can be included in VNRs?

## Checklist

- Have you reviewed the recommended resources section and reviewed how violence against children related to each SDG?
- Have you addressed child safeguarding concerns?

- Experiences in meaningful and **safe child participation** in the design, implementation and monitoring of EVAC policies and programmes.
- Examples of **EVAC partnerships** at local, national and global levels.
- **Existing prevalence data, including citizen-generated data, from NGOs and civil society networks.**



### What if my government is not discussing violence against children in the VNR consultation?



- Ahead of government meetings and official consultations, highlight key points raised in your needs assessment and data your organisation collections on violence against children. Spell out how the SDG targets are linked to violence against children and outline a plan of action to address them.
- Consider contacting the relevant government officials urging them to review and include progress in achieving targets related to all forms of violence against children.

### Good practices where CSOs engagement in VNR processes led to inclusion of EVAC in VNRs

- **Bulgaria** (2020 VNR) reports on legislation and programmes to address violence against children, child trafficking, and child protection. Bulgaria highlights its coordination mechanism, support facilities, a helpline and other key actions.
- **Iraq** (VNR 2019) reports on how violence against children is addressed, including the creation of the national policy for child protection.
- **Paraguay** (VNR 2018) reports on the national action plan to achieve target 16.2 and progress addressing abuse and all forms of violence.
- **Indonesia** (VNR 2019) reports on EVAC, including steps to improve data, provide birth certificates, address forced and early child marriage, and promoting meaningful child participation.
- **South Africa** (VNR 2019) reports on efforts to reduce school-based violence, including physical punishment and bullying.
- **Finland** (VNR 2020) reports on the prevention of bullying, addressing hate speech, and the promotion of child and youth engagement through the 2030 Agenda Youth Group.

More information:

<https://www.wvi.org/publications/guidance-note-ensuring-children-are-not-left-behind>



## STEP 5: Identify child-focused initiatives and potential allies and partnerships

When preparing to influence VNR national consultations on EVAC, it is important to understand how you might exert influence. Experience in advocacy has shown that it is critical to understand the advocacy playing field and identify allies in your influencing agenda. A **stakeholder mapping** helps to identify potential partners and resources for your advocacy, as well as better understanding those individuals or groups who might not prioritise the issue of violence against children. A good spokesperson is an important partner in your influencing. Governments are particularly open to listening to children and youth who speak from their own experiences. This is why it is critical to empower children to participate in the VNR process. Many child activists are comfortable talking about actions they are taking to address harmful practices, such as child marriage or other forms of violence against children.

### Engaging children and youth in advocacy for VNRs is a transformative approach

that raises the voices of children on ending violence against children in communities, homes, schools, as well as among policymakers.

### Political will is critical to ensuring meaningful CSO and child engagement.

Many CSOs in various countries have faced challenges in achieving participation in national VNRs. In such cases, it is important to seek support through partnerships with umbrella networks, UN Resident Coordinators and other key champions of civil society engagement in political processes.

With space for CSOs shrinking in global political processes, maintaining grassroots advocacy is even more critical. Encourage governments and other stakeholders to see CSOs as a resource to understanding everyday realities.

## Questions

What organisations work on ending violence against children, and sexual violence and exploitation?

How is VAC perceived by the government, policymakers, community members, children, etc.?

What do you want from stakeholders?

Do you know what governments want from your stakeholders?



## Checklist

- Have you identified the individual or group that will help you realise your objectives?

### How can CSOs engage and support engagement of children and citizens?

- Create opportunities for **child and youth voices to be heard** and considered in the VNR consultations.
- Advocate to include **children as members of official government delegations to raise EVAC awareness.**
- Support or join development of parallel **spotlight reports** on progress achieved in ending violence against children where civil society has little to no access to VNR consultations
- **Engage the most excluded and vulnerable children and citizens** to ensure that they are not left behind in this process.
- **Ensure links are made across sectors to raise issue of violence against children** through outreach to all ministries and through multi-stakeholder approaches to outreach.

## Keeping children safe whilst engaging in VNR consultations



Involving children is a good strategy and practice to draw government attention to EVAC, both during VNR consultations in your country and during reporting at the HLPF. Child and youth advocates can be engaged in every step of your planning and implementation process. However, you must also ensure that children's participation is safe, informed and meaningful, and that it includes their parent or guardian.

It is also important to involve child safeguarding experts throughout the process; they can advise on the consultation format for meaningful inclusion of children. Violence against children is a difficult topic to address. Any consultation process must be protective to ensure that children are not traumatised. As such, it is safer to talk about the issues rather than experiences (see experiences using EVAC-lens in [Step 1](#)). Finally, when engaging children, it is important to ensure that their participation is meaningful and not tokenistic. Meaningful participation:

- Is a human right and works to fulfil other child rights.
- Is ethical and safe.
- Is meaningful and sustainable.
- Is a process and method across different sectors.
- Strengthens familial, community and societal relationships.

### Good Practices

- Building on VNR report references on children and EVAC, **Iceland, Ghana, Indonesia, and Spain** have taken innovative approaches and methodologies to ensure that child and youth voices are meaningfully engaged in VNR consultations, especially using online approaches during the pandemic.
- The SDG Kenya Forum mobilised independently through coalition-building, bringing together partners and then going directly to the **Kenyan** government to advocate for prioritisation on the SDGs and CSO engagement in VNR consultations. As a result, the government has continued to work closely CSOs creating a platform to address EVAC.

More information:

<https://www.wvi.org/publications/guidance-note-ensuring-children-are-not-left-behind>



## STEP 6: Ensure an “EVAC-Lens” in your influencing of the VNR

Once you understand the VNR process, the local context and potential partners, the next step is to identify what you want to achieve by influencing the VNR consultations on ending violence against children. In the short-term, do you hope for the inclusion of specific language or data on violence against children in the country’s VNR report on children? In the long-term, what do you want to achieve for policy change related to ending violence against children?

**It is critical to ensure a child-sensitive approach and process in VNRs, with a focus on ending violence against children as your primary goal.** You will then develop measurable influencing objectives to promote action. Some examples of strategic influencing objectives include:

- National governments prioritise achievement of SDG targets related to ending violence against children or its specific forms (sexual violence, for example)
- Accelerate action in pathfinding countries to end violence against children
- Mobilising local and national funding to address ending violence against children in the context of the 2030 Agenda.



### ?? Questions

In the short-term, do you hope for the inclusion of specific language in the country VNR report on addressing violence against children?

In the long-term, what do you want to achieve in terms of policy change related to violence against children?

### ✓ Checklist

- Have you determined your objectives, aspirational outcomes and funding required?

- Promoting local and national policy and programmes to eliminate violence against children.
- Ensuring the meaningful engagement of children and youth in the development of the national policies to end violence against children, including sexual violence.

### Mobilise Resources

Influencing requires financial, technical, and human resources. It is important to allocate staff to engage in VNR influencing and funding to support attendance at national, regional and global meetings. Should you plan for meaningful engagement of children and youth, you should also budget for staff with expertise in child participation, child safeguarding, and all related costs for activities with children and youth. Often, these resources are not integrated in the national and international CSO advocacy budgets including designated staff. If you are a field office for a larger NGO, **request funding early in the process** from your national or global advocacy budget.

For individual advocates and smaller organisations, **join forces** with umbrella networks and alliances to amplify your voices together and mobilise joint funding

### Examples of CSOs' joint actions to influence EVAC focus in VNRs

- **Call to Action:** The CSO Forum to End Violence Against Children is an advocacy coalition of CSOs. It has created a Call to Action for its members across the countries preparing VNRs in 2019 and 2021. The purpose of the call was to mobilise CSOs to engage with governments and ensure that VNR processes meaningfully reflect progress in EVAC.
- **Raising the Voices of Children to raise awareness on EVAC:** Child Fund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, World Vision and regional-level partners secure roles for children in select official delegations for the HLPF. In 2019, children were included in the official delegations of **Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Paraguay, South Korea and Uganda** and were able to participate in the official UN proceedings and side events, which included addressing violence against children. Children raised issues of concern including bullying, child marriage, climate change and children on the move. Child participation was secured through engagement of children in VNR consultations, the building of trust, official requests and securing budget and human resources to support and protect child delegates.
- **Rights-based approach:** The Office of the Special Representative to the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children supports Member States to adopt a rights-based approach in reporting EVAC progress in the VNRs. They have produced a guidance for national governments on how to integrate EVAC into their VNR reporting processes. Seven domains of action are suggested for every member state to include in their VNR to address violence against children: 1) political commitments on EVAC; 2) policy and legal frameworks on EVAC; 3) VAC prevention and response; 4) EVAC data; 5) EVAC budgets; 6) child participation; and 7) EVAC partnerships.







## STEP 7: Build the EVAC evidence-base for SDG accountability

National statistical agencies play a significant role in measuring SDG progress and advancing accountability on commitments. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, governments have been strengthening and modernising NSOs. [The Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development](#) recognises that non-official, citizen-generated data complements national statistics. **Citizen-generated data** and **citizen report cards** on violence against children can help communities hold their governments accountable for EVAC commitments. (See [box below](#)) **They can complement data from national statistical agencies**, especially where data may be lacking on challenging topics, such as violence against children.

**EVAC advocacy** translates research and data into action by disseminating evidence-based recommendations and solutions through VNR consultations, private and public meetings, the media, etc. This outreach should build upon your expertise in the **local/national context** ([Step 3](#)) and include external factors, such as policy, the political situation, cultural norms, etc.

**Evidence-based EVAC messages** can be shared by spokespeople and target government officials who oversee the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda and SDG accountability. Strengthen EVAC messages by sharing research and programme findings, solutions, voices from children and community, etc. Identify the interconnectedness of EVAC to the 2030 Agenda and highlight how EVAC relates to the annual themes of the current VNR and HLPF. Messages should be clear, concise, and easy to understand.

By the time governments start writing their VNR report, they are usually behind schedule. This means that they might be open to receive content and specific suggestions from CSOs.

### ?? Questions

What activities will reach your target audience?

Who is the best spokesperson to reach your target audience?

What messages will resonate with your target audience?

### ✓ Checklist

- Have you identified your broad goal for messaging and vision for change?
- Do you know what you want to achieve? (i.e. inclusion of language, policy change, etc.)
- Have you defined 2-3 key messages together with partners?

- **Offer clear and concise text** on violence against children; this is helpful, especially when governments might be receiving thousands of inputs from civil society.
- **Share your EVAC expertise** by compiling data from research and programmes run by your organisation and partners, including human and community stories and have this data ready-to-go, so that it can be convenient for the VNR author(s) and inserted easily in the final report.
- **Share positive reflections** regarding government efforts to address violence against children, highlights gaps, and craft a call to action with 1-2 key requests for action.
- **Attract attention to EVAC** by featuring children and child-focused groups in the consultation.

### What if your government is not responsive to your messages?



- Seek support from your United Nations Resident Coordinator to facilitate communication. <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/List-of-Resident-Coordinators-as-of-1-January-2021.pdf>
- Bring your messages to the international level through the HLPF.
- Join Tap Network, Together 2030, CSO Forum and other networks in New York to ensure your messaging is included in CSOs overall messaging

### Tools to support building EVAC evidence

Citizen-generated data can contribute to fill the data gap and bridge challenges faced by national statistics institutions. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to include citizens as agents of change.

#### [World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action \(CVA\)](#)

The CVA approach aims to:

- educate citizens about their rights to basic services and standards
- conduct a mini-social audit comparing standards to local/national realities
- rate government through a community “scorecard”
- build citizen skills to advocate with decisionmakers
- create platforms, such as “town hall meetings” for a dialogue between citizens and governmental decisionmakers to share scorecard data and develop an action plan to deliver improvements

**Modelling Tools for Sustainable Development:** The 2030 Agenda calls on all governments to address economic, social, and environmental priorities, and create the necessary public policies. To support policymakers, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and partners developed analytical modelling tools to track the complex connections between SDGs, including violence and vulnerabilities. These tools are being used by governments to address social and economic concerns, as well as climate. (<https://un-modelling.github.io/>)



## STEP 8: Amplify VNR influencing for EVAC

Start your planning early to influence the VNR consultations on EVAC. It is important to define your timeline, clarify roles and responsibilities with partners, and assess how you will secure the budget to execute your plan. When choosing your approach and activities, it is critical to learn from other CSOs' experiences.

The box on the following page shares World Vision's country-level experiences working with partners to influence VNR consultations highlighting children and EVAC

### Monitoring Results

Monitoring results will help assess the influencing process and EVAC language incorporated in the final VNR. A key success would be that children's concerns are reflected in the country's VNR report – and specifically a chapter on actions to end violence against children. However, **follow-up and sustained monitoring beyond the VNR process are critical to achieving long-term impact for children.**



### Questions

What is your timeline to execute your activities?

Who will carry out which roles and responsibilities?

What funding is available for these activities? Where will you raise it?

### Checklist

- Did you meet early with your government?
- Did you secure funding and spaces to bring children's views and voices to the VNR?
- Have CSOs and children played an active role in the VNR consultations?
- Has your government included EVAC in VNR consultations?

### Disseminate your organisation's evaluation of the VNR experience and inclusion of EVAC



- Share your assessment of the VNR process with your government on your website and in spotlight reports. Define recommendations to improve engagement of civil society in future VNR consultations and the inclusion of EVAC.
- Call for the inclusion of a summary of consultations with children and community members as an annex to the country's VNR report. Offer this to your government focal point early in the process.

### Good Practices

- **Philippines** (VNR 2016) reported on building stakeholders' capacity to advocate on child protection within the framework of the 2030 Agenda.
- **Mexico** (VNR 2018) reported on how to engage CSOs, children and youth in VNRs and also highlighted EVAC priorities.
- **Costa Rica** (VNR 2020) reported on a national plan of action to prevent and eradicate violence against children.
- **Armenia** (VNRs 2018 & 2020) reported on a National Strategy for Human Rights Protection, including the protection of children and prevention of gender-based violence among other issues.

More information:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

### CSO Experiences with VNRs and EVAC

**GUATEMALA:** After months of advocacy, World Vision Guatemala, Save the Children and Child Fund International secured the inclusion of sessions with children as part of the 2021 VNR consultations. In a series of three virtual consultations, 149 Guatemalan children, adolescents and young people (ages 9-24) met with the Secretariat of Planning and Programming of the Presidency to share their perceptions of progress in the implementation of the SDGs, as well as the prevalence and types of violence against children in their communities and households. The final report of the virtual consultations with children was included as an annex to Guatemala's VNR Report.

**INDONESIA:** The World Vision team engaged in the 2019 and 2021 VNR consultations in coalition and as an individual organisation. The VNR advocacy in 2019 focused largely on SDG 16.2 with EVAC highlights. For the 2021 VNR, World Vision conducted research on children, EVAC, COVID-19 and the SDGs. Those findings were included in the VNR report. Child participation was not achieved in 2019, however for the 2021 VNR, a two-day consultation was secured.

**SRI LANKA:** VNR advocacy by CSOs in Sri Lanka mobilised an existing EVAC coalition formed under the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. The effort brought together EVAC experts to conduct outreach to the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Forest Conservation and the Division of Sustainable Development which manages the SDGs and VNR process. Despite concerted efforts, the government did not include the CSO contribution in the VNR. With continued outreach to the government, CSOs aim to increase engagement in the next VNR and bring their EVAC expertise to the consultations.

**MOZAMBIQUE:** The Ministry of Finance coordinated the VNR in a transparent manner, sharing the process and expectations, and engaging stakeholders through an SDG Working Group and four sub-groups. World Vision contributed on SDG 16 progress and was key to supporting child participation. Engagement was a success, with the VNR report including the recommendations as well as children's drawings. During the HLPF, the Prime Minister's statement recognised CSOs and their recommendations. Monitoring of progress and planning toward the next cycle will be critical.



## STEP 9: Evaluate and look ahead

When reviewing the impact of country-level influencing on the current VNR, it is important to assess how to ensure the following one will have a child-sensitive approach and framework. Beyond this, you should seek to engage your government to address violence against children in the long-term. Think about your follow-up messaging and recommendations for ongoing engagement with the representatives who are monitoring and implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Governments often see the VNR as a single consultation, but it is a critical step in the SDG implementation process to review where progress is being made and where it is stagnating. It is a moment to address gaps, reaffirm political commitments and make financial commitments. A follow-up process can support a path to focus on gap areas for children and report on progress.

The VNR is intended to assess and report on all goals and targets. Some governments prefer to report on successes related to a narrow set of goals and their priority issues. SDG 16 and targets on ending all forms of violence, often get left behind. This is because it covers the more politically charged issues that are also difficult to report on, with no data points in many statistical systems. Civil society, including children, have a critical role to hold governments accountable for all commitments, including for implementation of goal 16.

While the VNR process may be over, the advocacy to ensure that government commitments to ending violence against children should continue. Keep your eye on the goal, making sure EVAC-related SDG activities are being recorded, reviewed and monitored for future policy and action.

### Looking Ahead

- **Advocate with your government for a CSO mechanism on the 2030 Agenda**, such as a working group or task force to monitor SDG implementation beyond the VNR. It is critical to have regular opportunities

### Questions

How would you rate your success next to your objectives? What were some unexpected challenges? What would you do differently for the next VNR? What would you do the same?

How do you plan to engage with your government and partners in the long term?

### Checklist

- Have your government and other actors committed to take action to accelerate progress on the SDGs and to eliminate violence against children?
- Has your government developed plans to disseminate the VNR among CSOs and children?
- Have you identified long-term influencing priorities and objectives?
- What feedback mechanism have you developed within your own organisation and with partners to reflect on the experience and adjust going forward?

for engagement between civil society and your government on the SDGs.

- **Advocate for political commitments and policy changes on violence against children.** Raise CSO voices on EVAC throughout the entire policymaking processes.
- **Amplify the voices of the most vulnerable children and communities on EVAC.** Share good practices in research and programmes to address how violence against children impacts the most vulnerable children and their families.
- Raise your voices on EVAC to a global level at the **HLPF**. This is a space where shadow reports can be presented and where civil society and children can join government delegations

### What should your organisation do after VNR consultations are completed?



- Follow the HLPF discussions on [www.unwebtv.org](http://www.unwebtv.org).
- Develop a long-term plan to continue the dialogue with your government and collaboration with partners.
- Closely review the VNR reports and seek out EVAC language.

#### Good Practices

**World Vision** scrutinises all VNR reports annually to assess key messages and progress for children, including ending violence against children. In 2019, Member States conducted the first in-depth review of SDG 16.2 at country and global levels in preparation for VNRs and reporting at the HLPF.

World Vision engaged in country-level advocacy to raise the importance of addressing the thematic review. The number of countries referencing children and violence against children in their VNRs increased in 2019 largely due to the outreach work of World Vision and other CSOs. Still, many countries reported having limited data on violence against children and most did not adequately plan or budget for the engagement of civil society and children.



## CHECKLIST OF KEY QUESTIONS BY STEP

Key Steps	Questions	Checklist
<p><b>STEP 1:</b>  <b>Understand the VNR Process</b></p>	<p>How does your government engage non-governmental stakeholders, including children (ages 18 &amp; under), in the VNR consultations and broader political decision-making processes?</p> <p>How is your government managing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; what links are there to ministries addressing each area of the 17 goals – especially target 16.2?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Has violence against children been addressed in your country's VNR?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have NGOs or child rights institutions engaged in the VNR?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have children under 18 participated in the VNR?                      - Which groups?                      - What frequency, nature, type of engagement?                      - What methods for child-safeguarding were used?</p>
<p><b>STEP 2:</b>  <b>Identify the government mechanism and focal point leading the VNR process</b></p>	<p>What will the consultations look like?</p> <p>Will there be a shadow report?</p> <p>How do you want your government to engage CSOs in the VNR consultation?</p> <p>What data and key messages do you have to share with your government?</p>	<p>Have you met with the VNR focal point or coordinator in your government?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Has your government shared a VNR consultation roadmap?</p>
<p><b>STEP 3:</b>  <b>Understand the local context related to sexual violence, sexual exploitation and other forms of violence against children</b></p>	<p>What organisations work to address different forms of violence against children, including sexual violence and exploitation?</p> <p>What policy and public/ private programmes exist to address different forms violence against children?</p> <p>What social, political, economic, and cultural factors impact violence against children?</p> <p>What local and national data exists on different forms violence against children, including sexual violence and exploitation?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Have you taken an external scan of your environment to understand the context in which children face violence?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have you assessed national and local policies to address violence against children?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have you reviewed data collected by the government and other stakeholders?</p>

Key Steps	Questions	Checklist
<b>STEP 4:</b> <b>Identify areas of reporting that relate to violence against children</b>	<p>How does violence impede the progress of each SDG under review this year?</p> <p>What information on ending all forms of violence against children can be included in VNRs?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Have you reviewed the recommended resources section and reviewed how violence against children related to each SDG?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have you addressed child safeguarding concerns?</p>
<b>STEP 5:</b> <b>Identify child-focused initiatives and potential allies and partnerships</b>	<p>What organisations work on ending violence against children, and sexual violence and exploitation?</p> <p>How is VAC perceived by the government, policymakers, community members, children, etc.?</p> <p>What do you want from stakeholders? Do you know what governments want from your stakeholders?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Have you identified the individual or group that will help you realise your objectives?</p>
<b>STEP 6:</b> <b>Ensure an “EVAC-Lens” in your influencing of the VNR</b>	<p>In the short-term, do you hope for the inclusion of specific language in the country VNR report on addressing violence against children?</p> <p>In the long-term, what do you want to achieve in terms of policy change related to violence against children?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Have you determined your objectives, aspirational outcomes and funding required?</p>
<b>STEP 7:</b> <b>Build the EVAC evidence-base for SDG accountability</b>	<p>What activities will reach your target audience?</p> <p>Who is the best spokesperson to reach your target audience?</p> <p>What messages will resonate with your target audience?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Have you identified your broad goal for messaging and vision for change?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Do you know what you want to achieve? (i.e. inclusion of language, policy change, etc.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have you defined 2-3 key messages together with partners?</p>
<b>STEP 8:</b> <b>Amplify VNR influencing for EVAC</b>	<p>What is your timeline to execute your activities?</p> <p>Who will carry out which roles and responsibilities?</p> <p>What funding is available for these activities? Where will you raise it?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Did you meet early with your government?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Did you secure funding and spaces to bring children’s views and voices to the VNR?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Have CSOs and children played an active role in the VNR consultations?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Has your government included EVAC in VNR consultations?</p>



Key Steps	Questions	Checklist
<p><b>STEP 9:</b> <b>Evaluate and look ahead</b></p>	<p>How would you rate your success next to your objectives? What were some unexpected challenges? What would you do differently for the next VNR? What would you do the same?</p> <p>How do you plan to engage with your government and partners in the long term?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have your government and other actors committed to take action to accelerate progress on the SDGs and to eliminate violence against children?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has your government developed plans to disseminate the VNR among CSOs and children?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have you identified long-term influencing priorities and objectives?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What feedback mechanism have you developed within your own organisation and with partners to reflect on the experience and adjust going forward?</li> </ul>

## REFERENCE TOOLS

### Background

- Sustainable Development Goals  
<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development  
<https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- High-level Political Forum (HLPF), every July at the UN Headquarters in New York, USA  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>
- UN Voluntary National Review Database  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/#VNRDatabase>
- Out of the Shadows Index  
<https://outoftheshadows.eiu.com/>
- WHO Global Status Report on Violence against Children  
<https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/violence-prevention/global-status-report-on-violence-against-children-2020>

### Voluntary National Review Engagement

- 2021 list of United Nations Resident Coordinators  
<https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/List-of-Resident-Coordiators-as-of-1-January-2021.pdf>
- Multi-Stakeholder Engagement in 2030 Agenda Implementation: Review of VNRs  
<https://sdgs.un.org/publications/multi-stakeholder-engagement-2030-agenda-implementation-review-voluntary-national>
- What is a Good Practice? A framework to analyse the Quality of Stakeholder Engagement in implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda  
<https://sdgs.un.org/publications/what-good-practice-framework-analyse-quality-stakeholder-engagement-implementation-and>
- On good practices for VNR engagement  
<https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/progressing-national-sdgs-implementation>

### Voluntary National Review Guidelines

- The Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews/DESA VNRs handbook  
[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27024Handbook\\_2021\\_EN.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27024Handbook_2021_EN.pdf)
- Secretary-General's Voluntary common reporting guidelines for VNRs  
[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27171SG\\_Guidelines\\_2021.final.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27171SG_Guidelines_2021.final.pdf)

### VNRs & Violence Against Children

- NR Lab 15: Creating a child-sensitive and child inclusive Voluntary National Review (2020)  
[https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/2020/vnr\\_lab/hlpf\\_vnr\\_lab\\_summary\\_15\\_july\\_2020.pdf](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/2020/vnr_lab/hlpf_vnr_lab_summary_15_july_2020.pdf)
- 5 Steps to Include Children's Voices in the VNR  
[https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/2020/vnr\\_lab/photo\\_sdgs.jpeg](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/2020/vnr_lab/photo_sdgs.jpeg)
- VNR Reviews: How to Highlight Promising Practices to End Violence Against Children  
[https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/2021/sdgs\\_vnr\\_doc\\_final\\_english.pdf](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/2021/sdgs_vnr_doc_final_english.pdf)
- Ending Violence Against Children: Reflections on Reporting in the 2020 VNRs  
[https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/2021/sdgs\\_vnr\\_brief\\_analytical\\_review\\_english.pdf](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/2021/sdgs_vnr_brief_analytical_review_english.pdf)
- Small Cracks, Big Gaps - How governments allow violence against children to persist  
<https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/Small%20Cracks%20Big%20Gaps.pdf>

### Advocacy Toolkits

- Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit  
<https://tapnetwork2030.org/goal-16-advocacy-toolkit/>

- World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action approach  
<https://www.worldvisionadvocacy.org/2020/09/16/citizen-voice-action-what-empowerment-looks-like/>  
[https://www.worldvision.de/sites/worldvision.de/files/pdf/WVD\\_Citizen\\_Voice\\_and\\_Action\\_0.pdf#:~:text=Citizen%20Voice%20and%20Action%20\(CVA\)%20is%20a%20local%20level%20advocacy,relationship%20between%20communities%20and%20government.](https://www.worldvision.de/sites/worldvision.de/files/pdf/WVD_Citizen_Voice_and_Action_0.pdf#:~:text=Citizen%20Voice%20and%20Action%20(CVA)%20is%20a%20local%20level%20advocacy,relationship%20between%20communities%20and%20government.)  
<https://www.wvi.org/social-accountability/our-approach>

### **Accountability**

- SDG Accountability Handbook  
<https://www.sdgaccountability.org/>
- White and Case Report on VNRs  
<https://www.sdg16hub.org/topic/global-alliance-white-case-review-2019-voluntary-national-reports-vnrs>
- Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network  
<https://tapnetwork2030.org/>; <https://www.sdg16toolkit.org>

- Progressing National SDGs Implementation  
<https://cooperation.ca/fifth-edition-of-progressing-national-sdgs-implementation>

### **Global Modelling Tools**

- Global Modelling Tools for Sustainable Development  
<https://un-modelling.github.io/>

### **COVID-19**

- COVID-19 Pandemic VNR Preparations  
<https://sdgs.un.org/survey-impact-covid-19-pandemic-preparations-voluntary-national-reviews-stakeholder>

### **Engaging CSOs**

- Civicus; Together 2030; <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/es/component/tags/tag/agenda-2030>
- Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)  
<https://gcap.global/agenda-2030/>

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.

Contact for this Guidance Note:

Tamara Tutnjevic  
tamara\_tutnjevic@wvi.org

Arelys Bellorini  
arelys\_bellorini@wvi.org

[www.wvi.org](http://www.wvi.org)

