

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are government-led initiatives, whereby the government produces a report – often in consultation with different stakeholder groups – on their plans, activities and results with respect to their national implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The reports are then presented during the UN [High-Level Political Forum \(HLPF\)](#) at the annual meeting of the Forum in July at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The reports are *voluntary* – as noted in the [Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Outcome Document](#) (para 74) -- but in the two years since the adoption of the Agenda in September 2015, 65 countries¹ have already reported to the HLPF in 2016 and 2017, and an additional 48² countries are scheduled to report at HLPF 2018, signifying a substantial appetite among governments to showcase their work in implementing the SDGs at national level.

The UN System at the country-level is often called upon to assist the Government in the production of the report, including: providing technical knowledge and support; assessment of data availability and gaps; establishing SDG baselines; and facilitation of consultations with different stakeholder groups (e.g. children and youth, marginalized groups, etc.).

UNICEF Country and National Committee Offices whose governments have participated in a VNR have received support for inputting into and influencing these processes from UNICEF HQ, notably through the [Key Asks and Principles for Voluntary National Review Activities](#) document, coordinated by the Agenda 2030 Team in the Public Partnerships Division (PPD) in collaboration with Programme Division (PD); Division of Data, Research and Policy (DRP); Division of Communication (DOC); and Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division (PFP). The Asks are updated on a yearly basis, based on lessons learned from the previous HLPF as well as feedback from UNICEF Country Office users.

In addition to the main *Key Asks* document, in 2017 the Agenda 2030 Unit -- together with PD -- also developed sector-specific issue briefs for five of the six goals that were reviewed at the 2017 HLPF: [Goal 1 \(No Poverty\)](#); [Goal 2 \(Zero Hunger\)](#); [Goal 3 \(Good Health and Well-Being\)](#); [Goal 5 \(Gender Equality\)](#); and [Goal 14 \(Life Below Water\)](#).

A similar process will be undertaken in 2018 for the Goals under review at the 2018 HLPF: Goal 6 (Water and Sanitation); Goal 7 (Clean Energy); Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities); Goal 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production); and Goal 15 (Life on Land). The overarching theme for the 2018 HLPF is:

¹ Afghanistan, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, Uruguay, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

² Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Bahamas, Bahrain, Benin, Bhutan, Cabo Verde, Canada, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Jamaica, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Mali, Malta, Mexico, Namibia, Niger, Paraguay, Poland, Qatar, Republic of the Congo, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, State of Palestine, Sudan, Switzerland, Togo, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and Vietnam.

Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.

In early 2017, the Agenda 2030 Team conducted a short survey with the UNICEF Country and National Committee offices whose Governments were participating in a 2017 VNR. The purpose of the survey was to better understand how UNICEF was involved; opportunities and challenges faced at country level; and the type of support that would be most helpful from HQ. A strong theme that emerged was that Offices wanted some documentation of the experiences of other Country and National Committee Offices. To that end, the following document aims to briefly capture such examples as to assist offices whose governments will conduct a VNR in the coming years.

SPECIAL THANKS

The UNICEF Agenda 2030 Team would like to thank the following staff/offices for providing information on their SDG implementation efforts at country level which helped us to produce this document. In particular, thank you to: Ana De Mendoza and Antonia Canaviri (**Argentina Country Office**); Sophie Berlamont and Greet De Ridder (**Belgium National Committee**); Souraya Hassan and Narcisse Kouton (**Benin Country Office**); Remy Pigois, Vincenzo Vinci and Zeleka Paulos (**Ethiopia Country Office**); Charlotte Lie-Piang (**Indonesia Country Office**); Aiko Takahashi (**Japan National Committee**); Ousmane Niang and Godfrey Ndeng'e (**Kenya Country Office**); and Vikas Singh (**Zimbabwe Country Office**).

For any questions on SDG implementation globally, please contact [Shannon O'Shea](#), Agenda 2030 Partnerships Manager, Public Partnerships Division.

COUNTRY LEVEL CASE STUDIES

ARGENTINA



See VNR Full Report: [Argentina: Informe Voluntario Nacional](#)

Contact for further information: [Ana De Mendoza](#), Deputy Representative and [Antonio Canaviri](#), Monitoring & Evaluation Officer.

Highlights from the VNR

Argentina's *El Consejo Nacional de Coordinación de Políticas Sociales* (CNCPS) was established in December 2015 with a mandate for coordinating the country's implementation of the SDGs. It involves 26 different institutions. Strategic allies for the CNCPS are the Legislative Branch and the Judicial Branch, which can create a legal conducive environment and ensure that public budgets reflect the commitments made.

In their VNR, Argentina reported on their efforts to assist children and families in vulnerable situations, reduce the rate of teen pregnancy and include young people in government decisions. In recent years there has been an uptick in the number of teen pregnancies in Argentina -- the rate was 69% in 2014 for 15-19 year olds. The Government has set the goal of lowering this rate to 65% by 2020 and 60% by 2030.

The Argentinian Government has created social welfare programs to provide vulnerable citizens, including children and pregnant women, with assistance, such as a federal food program; the Universal Child Allowance (AUH) which assists 9.3% of the population; and public interventions for different social sectors: education, health, labor, housing and sewage, housing and urban planning and social security.

To focus more exclusively on children and youth, Argentina plans to build 10,000 kindergartens for children aged 3-4 and to construct neighborhood centers for early childhood and youth. The Government is also making efforts to promote the participation of groups that are typically ignored, such as youth, in all levels of decision making through broad exchanges. One effort was to train young people by translating all SDG materials into indigenous languages so all facets of the Argentinian society can learn about the SDGs.

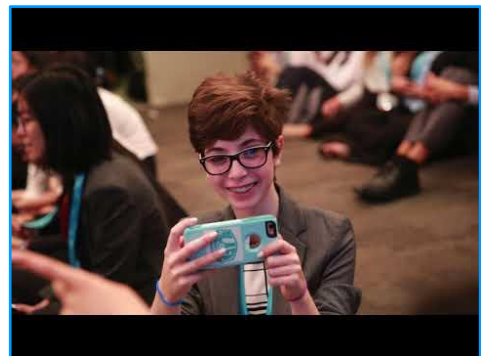
UNICEF's Involvement

The UN Country Team is actively involved in the planning and implementation of the SDGs in Argentina, both at national and subnational levels and has signed agreements to work with the Government on this. There have been some delays in finalizing and signing the current UNDAF (2016-2020), but it is expected that the contribution from UNICEF and UN system to the achievement of SDGs will be clearly reflected. UNICEF currently is fully involved in the process of reporting contribution to SDG via UNDAF and the first report is expected to be launched at Q1 2018.

UNICEF, specifically, is supporting two studies on the topics of *SDGs for children at subnational level* and *Baseline SDGs for children at national level*.

Strengths

- The VNR process was led by the National Council of Social Policy Coordination. Even though an inter-sectoral consultative process was held that involved various ministries and civil society, the consultative process should continue to be strengthened.
- Argentina has set national priorities, but these have not been articulated through a formal document as yet (e.g. National Development Plan). However, the government sees the 2030 Agenda as an important framework and milestone for adopting goals, expected results and indicators under a common framework.
- A focus on different marginalized and/or vulnerable groups. Mainstreaming human rights, gender, disabilities and indigenous approaches to assure adequate inclusion of vulnerable and excluded populations in progress on the Goals.
- At the global level, the Government of Argentina also showcased their leadership in their rollout of the [World's Largest Lesson](#), a global initiative to bring the messages of the SDGs to students in the classroom through lesson plans, videos, comics and other creative, educational content. H.E.



Video from the HLPF side event: 'Bringing Action on the SDGs to the Classroom,' where the Government of Argentina served as a co-host and panelist, showcasing their work on implementing the World's Largest Lesson.

Mr. Estanislao Zawels, the Director of the Division of International Organisations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, spoke at a side event hosted at UNICEF entitled: [Bringing Awareness and Action on the SDGs to the Classroom: A Presentation of Students' Experience w/the World's Largest Lesson](#).

Weaknesses

- The VNR could have been more inclusive of different actors at the provincial level and created a link between their planning processes and the National Government's work on the SDGs.
- Although there are goals and indicators related to SDGs covered in the VNR, there is room to improve focus on certain topics such as multidimensionality (e.g. starting to measure multidimensional child poverty); social investment (e.g. monitor trends and levels of social investment in excluded and vulnerable populations); adolescents' health (e.g. obesity and suicide); and monitoring situation of populations living in rural and disperse areas.

Key Lessons

- Even though Argentina made considerable efforts on aligning and further compiling information and data to monitor SDG's progress; there is need to continue advocating for invisible topics and populations. The Equity approach is *visible* in Argentina but not necessarily *operationalized* when capturing data and information.
- A federal country such as Argentina requires extra effort for coordinating and especially for implementing public policies. Although this remain a continuing challenge, UNICEF plays a key role in this space.

BELGIUM



See Full VNR Report: [Pathways to Sustainable Development: First Belgian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda](#).

Contact for further information: [Greet De Ridder](#), Advocacy Officer.

Highlights from the VNR

Belgium issued a particularly strong VNR that addresses child rights and a wide range of children's and young people's issues including child poverty, early education, protection and civic participation. The country committed to developing a second national plan to combat child poverty and will continue its efforts to strengthen the national child protection system to address all forms of violence against girls and boys and to prevent social exclusion. The country also highlights the need for better data for children: "upon the recommendation of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Belgian National Commission on the Rights of the Child has developed 40 national indicators...to provide a better understanding of the extent to which children's rights are increasingly being realized from the point of view of the child itself."

UNICEF's Involvement

UNICEF Belgium worked with a coalition of 34 CSO partners during the SDG negotiations' process with strong advocacy messages on the need to integrate the SDGs into the government's domestic and external policies. This coalition also strongly lobbied the Government to volunteer for an early VNR, which resulted in the Government volunteering in 2017, the second year of SDG reporting.

Strengths

- Belgium's VNR addresses child rights and a wide range of children's issues including child poverty, early education, child protection and child-friendly environments.
- The report notes the "importance of inclusive participation, accessible services, energy poverty and the prevention and combating of poverty in families with young children." It also references "a separate government policy on children's and youth rights [that] strives for equal opportunities, chances and space to develop and increased formal and informal engagement for all children and young people (page 8)."
- The report also notes their use and promotion of [Children's Rights and Business Principles](#) and that the Government "has adopted a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights with special attention to children's rights and engages and participates in the annual Geneva Forum on Business and Human Rights (page 35)." Belgium established and supports a dedicated Children's Rights and Business Principles (CRBD) Commission, composed of several representatives from the corporate world and civil society in stimulating companies to implement the 10 principles in their corporate strategy and to take local action to improve children's rights (page 60).
- "Belgium is also committed to developing a second national plan to combat child poverty and will continue its efforts to strengthen the national child protection system to address all forms of violence against girls and boys and to prevent social exclusion (page 60)."
- Upon the recommendation of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Belgian National Commission on the Rights of the Child has developed 40 national indicators since 2013. The aim is to provide a better understanding of the extent to which children's rights are increasingly being realized from the point of view of the child itself. While highlighting vulnerable groups is one of the cornerstones of indicator development work, one of the main findings has been that some of these groups are left out in the data collection, either because they are not captured by existing surveys, or because no survey investigates their specific situations. To overcome this lack of data, two specific surveys are being carried out by the Commission concerning children and migration and children in public institutions.
- Belgium specifically recognized in their report that they are a member of the Group of Friends of Children and SDGs (where UNICEF serves as the Secretariat) and the Group of Friends of Children and

Armed Conflict.

- Other initiatives, specifically directed to involving young persons in reflections on citizenship and global challenges such as climate change or sustainable development, abound. They include youth parliaments, associations of 'young change makers,' training programs and platforms connecting government, civil society and youth in the endeavor to build a sustainable, solidary and participatory society (page 21).
- Belgium established a government policy on children's and youth rights for increased formal and informal engagement for all children and young people. The Belgium report states: "Young people are natural and special custodians of a 15 year Agenda aiming to transform our world. Aware of the challenges of the future and well-placed to help shape the changes needed, they take countless initiatives for a more sustainable world. The Belgian youth councils act as a bridge between youth and the authorities, informing young people about the challenges and opportunities connected with this Agenda and reminding governments about the importance of ensuring intergenerational solidarity. They have already put a considerable amount of effort in aligning their initiatives to the SDGs, including through actions to reduce inequalities within and outside the educational system (SDGs 4 and 10), to 'green' universities (SDGs 12, 13, 14 and 15), to combat food waste (SDGs 2 and 12) and stimulate recycling practices (SDGs 12 and 13), to focus on urban ownership (SDG 10) and mutual help in the job search and in creating start-ups (SDG 8)" (Page 70).

Weaknesses

- Overall the VNR from Belgium was very strong on the child rights agenda. That being said, there is always the challenge of translating plans into implementation and action. Even if certain child rights' related goals and indicators related to SDGs are covered in the VNR, and even if there is room to improve focus on certain topics such as child poverty, child rights' based approaches and child participation, there remains a capacity challenge for the Belgium NatCom to fully cover this space.

Key Lessons

- A country such as Belgium requires extra effort for coordinating and especially for implementing public policies. Although this remain a continuing challenge, the Belgium NatCom will continue to follow the SDG framework.

BENIN



See Full VNR Report: [Contribution Nationale Volontaire a La Mise en Oeuvre Des ODD Au Forum Politique de Haut Niveau](#)

Contact for further information: [Souraya Hassan](#), Chief Social Policy, Planning & M&E and [Narcisse Kouton](#), Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist.

Highlights from the VNR

Benin has initiated a road map for SDG implementation, developed in a participatory manner and bringing together government agencies, municipal councilors, local elected officials, parliamentarians, civil society, the media and the private sector. The Government also noted that over 50 meetings reaching nearly 5000 participants were conducted as part of the VNR process, which also involved young people through the *Youth Advisory Body and the young international chamber of Benin* (page 4). Benin specifically mentioned efforts to raise awareness on the SDGs through education and other communication channels. Particular emphasis was placed on the Goals receiving in-depth review at the HLPF in 2017: Goal 1 (No poverty); Goal 2 (Zero Hunger); Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being); Goal 5 (Gender Equality); Goal 9 (Innovation and Infrastructure) and Goal 14 (Life under water). They also reported on consulting with students and youth organizations as part of the process.

The Government of Benin has identified a subset of 49 of the SDG targets that are particular priorities for the country. They include a number that are child focused including those targets relating to child poverty, nutrition, child mortality, education and protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse. Cross-cutting priorities were also mentioned, including equality, childhood, social capital, human capital, standard of living, water and energy, economic diversification, sustainable management of land, climate change, gender and good governance all levels (vii). Although there were no references to the issue of FGM in the report, this practice has declined in Benin. According MICS 2014 survey data less than 1% of girls aged 0-14 has undergone FGM.

Poverty remains a significant issue in Benin, with 40.1% of the population living in poverty as of 2015. Furthermore, the Government has noted that only 8.4% of the population is covered by health insurance. To remedy this, the Government has launched the *Assurance for the Strengthening of Human Capital (ARCH)* to increase social protection for the population. This is intended to boost health coverage, create better living conditions for the most vulnerable and address issues of food security and malnutrition.

The Government is reporting that 34% of children in Benin are experiencing chronic malnutrition, and that rates of under 5 mortality are unacceptably high, noting that there are significant gaps between the richest and poorest families. Family planning and the need to reduce fertility rates were also highlighted as national priorities. The Government reports that 19.4% of adolescents have had at least one live birth, according to a national MICS survey in 2014 (page 12). The Government also noted the link between education and other SDGs, particularly that boosting secondary enrolment and completion rates for girls is key to making progress on issues of nutrition and child survival (page 13).



UN Staff supporting the SDGs in Benin. © Beni, UNDP, 2017

UNICEF's Involvement

The Benin country office actively participated in the process of national prioritization of the SDGs targets which started in 2016 and completed in 2017. The first VNR at the HLPF highlights the prioritization process that comprises three phases namely: 1) the preparation phase which involved the appropriation of the [MAPS \(Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support\)](#), tools developed by the United Nations Development Group; 2) Prioritization matrix and the

theory of change; 3) the Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) 1 and 2 implementation phase that enables the production of the prioritization matrix and the contextual analysis, and finally the drafting phase of the VNR.

The presence of the UNICEF team in all phases of the process and data-based advocacy made it possible to select the key issues for children in Benin through the corresponding SDG targets.

Based on the results of prioritization phase, the next challenge for UNICEF Benin was to ensure that the narrative of the VNR reflects key issues for children; this was done in close collaboration with relevant staff from line ministries. Another strategy adopted to ensure that key references for children are visible in VNR was to prepare 2 pages documents summarizing the key elements for the Director-General in charge of the SDGs so that he can draw “inspiration” from it.

Strengths

- The process of the prioritization of SDG targets in Benin was conducted in an inclusive and participatory way under the coordination of the Government through the Ministry of Planning and Development. The public sector (Central administrations, parliament, municipalities), the private sector, civil society, financial and technical partners (UN Agencies, Bilateral and Multilateral partners) were involved in that process and divided into four thematic working groups (Social, Economic, Environmental and Governance). At the end of the process, 49 targets were prioritized for Benin among which 34 are relevant to UNICEF’s work (21 targets directly relevant to UNICEF’s work and 13 targets somewhat relevant to UNICEF’s work).
- The Benin VNR emphasizes a number of key issues for children in Benin, among others: combatting under-five mortality and persistent disparities in this area; combatting the alarming rate of under-five malnutrition; improved education and the importance of secondary education for girls; strengthening child protection; and improving gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment, etc.
- The report stresses the importance of equity and targeting the most left behind households and their children. It is important to underscore that social protection (target 1.3) is selected as accelerating target among the four retained to boost progress.

Weaknesses

- Representatives designated from line ministries were not necessarily the right people with adequate information and knowledge to influence.
- The period and time devoted to the process could have been longer to in order to ensure sufficient consultation and production of report.

Key Lessons

- **More time for future VNR reports**
Noting that it would have been ideal to have more time to produce the report and ensure as robust and inclusive a process as possible, it would be good to work with Governments to volunteer as early as

possible so that the UN System and partners have ample time to work with stakeholders in the production of the report.

- **Need to improve coordination and preparedness of UN system to support Government, including fostering collaboration**

With regard to engaging with Government, the collaboration was positive given that the newly appointed Director-General in charge of SDGs was open to work with UNICEF. However, lack of adequate preparedness from the United Nations System before the process and during the process was a challenge. The national Directorate leading the process from the Government side was directly in contact with UNDP and it was difficult, at times, for UNICEF to have sufficient information on the whole process (in terms of planning main workshops, methodology adopted, etc.), especially in the beginning and intermediate phases. This situation is detrimental for UNICEF CO engagement in the SDGs' reporting process and therefore in working with Government. In *One UN* countries, the UNCT should play a key role and facilitate close collaboration and coordination among all agencies, including transparency and full sharing of information and plans.

- **Bridging the gap between plans and implementation will be essential**

Beyond making children visible in report narrative, the challenge will be the effective implementation of plans and national engagement.

ETHIOPIA



See full VNR report: [The 2017 Voluntary National Review on SDGs of Ethiopia: Government Commitments, National Ownership and Performance Trends](#)

Contact for further information: [Remy Pigois](#), Chief Social Policy and Evidence for Social Inclusion; [Vincenzo Vinci](#), Social Policy Specialist; and [Zeleka Paulos](#), Social Policy Specialist.

Highlights from the VNR

As part of the VNR Process, the Government of Ethiopia took a three pronged approach: 1) Reviewing existing government laws and development policies and plans; 2) Organizing and analyzing statistical data and/or information collected from official sources; and 3) Conducting inclusive national consultations (federal and regional levels) on the draft 2017 VNR.

On item three, the Government reports that a number of consultations were held as part of their VNR process at federal, regional and city levels, including with government, the private sector, civil society and non-government organizations, professional associations, women, persons with disabilities, youth associations, farmers and pastoralists, the parliament, political parties and other development partners.

Ethiopia has integrated the SDGs with in its [Second Five Year Growth and Transformation Plan \(GTP II\)](#) spanning the period 2015/16-2019/20 and notes that implementing the current Second Growth and Transformation Plan

(GTPII) and its successors means implementing the SDGs. There is and will be one national development plan in which the SDGs are mainstreamed.

Ethiopia's VNR dedicates chapter 7.2.2 to the issue of *children's rights and welfare*. They have noted that children's affairs is a cross-sectoral issue and deserving of special attention. The report also indicates the progress on child rights in the 18 months of work on implementing the SDGs including: a draft policy for children's rights and welfare a federal level database; and the establishment of child-friendly courts (page 15).

Nearly 22,000 government sector officials have completed awareness seminars on "children's rights and welfare; illegal facilitation of the migration of children; labor exploitation; gender related offences and on the proper raising of children" (page 15). Over 461,000 members of the public have also been given orientations on harmful practices and the exploitation of children through child labor practices.

Ethiopia has also established a *Children's Parliament*, whereby the primary objective is "to enable children to have their voices heard so that they can safeguard themselves and other children from environmental and family oppressions, to enable them raise petitions in an organized way on matters concerning them [and] to have discussions and advance their joint positions" (page 16). There are over 8400 members of the children's parliament, of which over 4400 are girls.

Ethiopia acknowledged some progress in overall child health in their VNR, but noted there have been some recent upticks in the rate of under-5 mortality and wasting of children under 5 and where corrective measures should be taken (page 27).

UNICEF's Involvement

UNICEF Ethiopia has been directly involved since 2016 in preparing for Ethiopia's VNR. The UN Country Team (UNCT) set up an SDG Task Force, to which UNICEF contributed technically in federal and sub-national panel consultations to inform discussions on SDGs and children. Additionally for the 2016 day of the African child, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to facilitate a consultation with children on the SDGs.

UNICEF is currently supporting with the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the Central Statistics Agency the establishment of a national SDGs Dashboard using DevInfo (a tool previously used for MDG monitoring). UNICEF worked with the Central Statistics Agency on the Multiple Overlap Deprivations Analysis (MODA) to set-up a national baseline for SDG 1.2. UNICEF Ethiopia is working closely with the NPC and the Ministry of Finance (MoF) on a study which aims to analyze the cost and the fiscal space in Ethiopia to achieve the child-centred SDGs over the next 15 years. This will be a complement to a broader SDG costing exercise being led by UNDP, which UNICEF will also contribute to.

Strengths

- Process led by the UNCT with the establishment of a SDGs taskforce. The Team worked closely with the NPC which lead the Ethiopia VNR process, with inputs from various line ministries;

- The UNCT-NPC SDGs taskforce agreed early on a joint roadmap;
- Comprehensive 9-month consultation process at subnational level with regional authorities, line ministries, civil society organizations and development partners;
- VNR process aligned with national Growth and Transformation Plan reporting process;
- Children and youth consultation organized by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs with the support of UNICEF;
- The Ethiopia VNR mentions the role of the Child Parliament and makes reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Weaknesses

- The draft national VNR report was not shared during any consultative workshop so most of the discussions remained theoretical with very few technical discussion on the content. UN Staff were not able to make any comments or give further inputs to draft and only saw the final outcome product when it was posted to the UN SDG website;
- In order to influence content of the VNR, informal channels to share relevant publications -- such as the 2016 UNICEF SiTAN -- were preferred. A more formal/official channel to influence the content would have made the process more transparent;
- The national review missed the opportunity to build its analysis on the latest data (e.g. analyze progress based on the 2016 Demographic Health Survey (DHS));
- Technical consultations between the NPC and line ministries were not open to partners.

Key Lessons

- **Important for UNICEF Country Office to build partnerships outside of the UNICEF 'classic' partners** (e.g. line ministries in charge of social sectors) and to engage with national institutions such as the NPC or MoF in order to get the 'child' and 'human' faces well-reflected during the process and in the final report.
- **Engage at the beginning of the process with the UNCT and establish a government-UNCT taskforce.** Despite some challenges as listed above, UNICEF was able to present and to provide inputs related to the importance of domestic financing for human capital investment in order to achieve the SDGs in Ethiopia.
- **VNR as a key entry point to further strengthen and position policy work of the Country Office.** Following this initial engagement, UNICEF Ethiopia is now in a direct partnership with the NPC and the MoF to produce a national SDGs dashboard, a SDGs costing and financing study and to support establishing a SDG 1.2 baseline. UNICEF has also recently supported the establishment of the [Ethiopian Centre for Child Research](#) hosted within the Ethiopian Development Research Institute with the

objective to generate child focused evidence to generate multidisciplinary child- focused research and evidence on policy and practice to inform decision and enhance programmatic capacity concerning the development, equity, wellbeing and protection for children in Ethiopia.

INDONESIA



See full VNR report: [Republic of Indonesia: Voluntary National Review \(VNR\): Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing World](#)

Contact for further information: [Charlotte Lie-Piang](#), Knowledge Management Specialist.

Highlights from the VNR

In Indonesia, the SDGs are aligned the President's vision for Indonesia's national development (*Nawacita*), which is integrated in development policies, strategies and programs of *National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2015-2019*, and translated into Government Work Plan (RKP) with its associated budget.

The preparations of the VNR included four major stakeholder groups: the government (both national and subnational); civil society; philanthropy and business; and academics and experts. They employed a number of principles to encourage active participation, both online and offline, in order to make the process transparent and inclusive. See Indonesia's [SDG website](#) for more information.

Indonesia has complemented its VNR with a [SDG Baseline Report on Children in Indonesia](#), which was published jointly by the Ministry of Development Planning (BAPPENAS) and UNICEF. Developed in collaboration with 11 ministries, the report pulls together disaggregated baselines from existing national data (government surveys and administrative data) and supports Government's capacity to track and report on progress for SDGs and children specifically. The Report constitutes an important step in making children visible in planning and monitoring SDG in Indonesia, and presents new opportunities to advance policy discussions with Government on emerging SDG issues. The Minister of Bappenas, representing the Government of Indonesia, launched the report at both international level at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July, and at national level in August 2017.

Indonesia has reported progress in significantly reducing the number of people living in poverty over the last decade, but notes that the absolute number of people living in poverty stands at 22.76 million people and disparities among regions remain. The fulfilment of basic needs for poor and vulnerable groups has been expanded through improving child delivery services at health facilities; providing birth certificates; improving net enrolment rates of elementary level (SD/MI/equal to 7-12 years old, SMP/MTs/ equal to 13-15 years old, SMA/SMK/MA/equal to 16-18 years old); improving access to improved drinking water and sanitation, improving the quality of urban residential houses and access to electricity. In addition, poor and vulnerable

groups are provided with comprehensive basic immunization services for children aged 12-23 months and access to contraceptive services. Victims of disaster are also provided with access to basic services to prevent from falling into poverty (page viii)."

The Government also made explicit reference to the issue of child poverty, stating "Child poverty is also an important issue in Indonesia which requires government to shape its interventions to accommodate the needs of poor children" (page xi). UNICEF provided technical support to the National Statistical Bureau (BPS) to strengthen analytical capacity for child poverty analysis, and produce the Government's first report on child poverty, including monetary and multi-dimensional child poverty. The Government of Indonesia, as a result, adopted MODA as SDG indicator for

multidimensional child poverty. The results show that children are more likely to live in poverty and in vulnerable economic situations than other groups. Although there has been a decline in child poverty (national poverty line of IDR 12 000 a day) between 2009 and 2016 from 16 to 13 per cent, 57 percent of children still live under twice the national poverty line. The results also show that 65 percent of children in Indonesia are deprived in two or more of dimensions of well-being.



Youth working on the SDGs in Indonesia. ©Raditya Henrile, UNICEF, 2017

The government noted reductions in child stunting and wasting and the link between food, nutrition and education, stating "Education influences behaviour (parenting and eating patterns) that in turn affects the nutritional status of children. The lower the education of mothers the worse nutritional status of children. Therefore, access to education needs to be improved" (pages 22, 24). The government mentioned their explicit focus on early childhood development through their implementation of *the First 1000 Days of Life Movement* and the impact this will ultimately have on national health and prosperity. The report states "Malnutrition early in life can cause irreversible damage to children's brain development and their physical growth, leading to a diminished capacity to learn, poorer performance in school, greater susceptibility to infection and disease and a lifetime of lost earning potential" (page 28).

The percentage of children receiving diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (DPT) vaccine is often used as an indicator of how well countries are providing routine immunization services. In 2015, national coverage for the third dose of DPT stood at 74 per cent, according to the SUSENAS survey. Protection against measles was somewhat higher, at 82 per cent. Both fall below the targets of 90–95 per cent. A child's immunization status is strongly associated with her or his place of residence. For instance, children living in Maluku or Papua are two times less likely to receive all their basic vaccinations compared with their peers born in Bali or Kepulauan Riau. Disparities by wealth and parental education levels are less pronounced. Overall, under-coverage is still substantial: only half of children 12–23 months of age received all basic vaccinations.

Child Marriage has decline while the median age at first marriage for women has increased, though there remains a significant disparity between urban and rural populations.

Education rates have overall increased for both girls and boys, including at the junior high school level where the report notes there "were more children aged 13-15 years from the poor and vulnerable groups who were able to utilize the Junior High School Level education facilities" (page 15)

The VNR report also showcased a number of activities at the local/village level, including community efforts to end violence against women and children in Papua by raising awareness and working with local religious leaders. UNFPA, UN WOMEN and UNICEF were credited in supporting these efforts (page 58).

UNICEF's Involvement

UNICEF has adopted a proactive approach in supporting the Government to localize the SDGs for children specifically. Efforts so far have focused on integrating priorities for children in national SDG planning, monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Last year, UNICEF together with Government agreed on a set of priority SDG indicators for children specifically.

In preparing for the VNR, a key piece of complimentary work was the development of the [SDG Baseline report on Children in Indonesia](#), which was done in collaboration with Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS). UNICEF has been working closely with Statistics-Indonesia (BPS) to fill data gaps for SDG targets related to children, including on child marriage, (multidimensional) child poverty and water quality. Work is ongoing with the Ministry of Villages to mobilize Village funds for SDG priorities related to children.

The Indonesia Country Office has developed multiple advocacy documents, for example, [A Snapshot: SDGs and Children in Indonesia](#), which gives highlights of the data in a given sector and then presents a short list of advocacy asks on what needs to be done and what can be done to accelerate progress in a given goal area.

UNICEF has been working with youth organizations in Indonesia to help raise awareness on the SDGs and facilitate a channel of communication between youth and Government. As part of the consultative process, UNICEF organized a [Young People's Consultation](#), together with the *Youth Network on Violence against children*. Three concrete priorities were distilled: 1) The Government should help youth groups conduct 'reality checks' and policy reviews regarding the SDGs. A 'reality check' invites young people to provide qualitative support in the field for data-backed findings; 2) The Government and UN agencies should ramp up advocacy and allow young people to assist in the formulation of SDG reports; and 3) All relevant parties, including the Government, UN agencies and NGOs, should provide capacity-building for youth network members to ensure that this forum lead to real action.

UNICEF is providing technical support to Ministry of Village to ensure that village funds can be used to improve child well-being and to support Government efforts to achieve SDGs at the village level. Government of Indonesia plans to increase the transfer of village funds to IDR 1 billion per village per year to around 84,000 villages in Indonesia by 2019.

Together with the Economist Intelligence Unit, UNICEF also developed a *2030 Megatrend and Scenario analysis*, looking at how macro-economic trends in Indonesia are likely to affect children in Indonesia in 2030.

Finally, UNICEF's country office and Public Partnerships Division (NYHQ) organized a side event during the HLPF 2017 in New York, [Ending Child Poverty and Violence against Children: A Conversation with Leaders on Investing in Children to Achieve the SDGs](#), co-hosted by the Governments of Indonesia and Sweden, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, and UNICEF. This helped to shine a spotlight on these two new global development goals and targets, bringing together government, civil society, UN and private sector representative to share challenges and opportunities in addressing goals 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). It also made children highly visible, together with the SDG Baseline Report in the VNR.

For access to documentation on SDG work in Indonesia, please see [here](#).

Strengths

- Strong Government ownership of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and a commitment from Government to localizing the SDGs. A presidential decree committing to SDG implementation was signed in July 2017.
- Government has adopted a participatory approach to the roll-out of the SDGs, including stakeholders at national and subnational level in planning and implementation processes.

Weaknesses

- The UN System is not included as an official "stakeholder group." Therefore, it is somewhat of a challenge to provide technical advice and advocate for children's issues during official stakeholder consultation processes through which the VNR, the national SDG action plan and others are developed.
- Indonesia is rich in data, but challenges remain in terms of quality, availability and accessibility. UNICEF works closely with Government to improve the quality of data and fill important data gaps for children. Another emerging area of concern, is to strengthen the use of data on children to inform SDG policy dialogues at national and subnational level.

Key Lessons

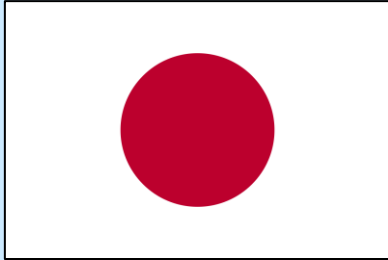
- **When UN System is not considered a stakeholder group, pursue other channels to integrate UNICEF messages**

The UNICEF Office worked with Indonesia Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS) to jointly develop a [SDG Baseline report on Children in Indonesia](#). The report is an important policy tool to track progress on the child-related targets and indicators in Indonesia going forward.

- **Use the [UNICEF HQ Key Asks and Principles Document](#) as a framework for planning SDG-related activities at national level.**

The Indonesia Country Office was able to use the main asks for tracking their own activities and accomplishments. [See example from Indonesia Country Office here](#).

JAPAN



See full VNR report: [Japan's Voluntary National Review: Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Contact for further information: [Aiko Takahashi](#), Advocacy Officer (Japan Committee for UNICEF)

Highlights from the VNR

The Government of Japan has done much work in preparing their country for SDG implementation including their 2017 VNR. A new Cabinet body called the “SDGs Promotion Headquarters,” headed by the Prime Minister and comprising all ministers was formed in May 2016. The SDGs Promotion Headquarters was established “to foster close cooperation among relevant ministries and government agencies, and to lead the comprehensive and effective implementation of SDGs-related measures as a control tower” (page 4). After consultation with various stakeholders, the “SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles” was adopted in December 2016, which became the basis of 2017 VNR.

Based on the “Principles” in the VNR, the government of Japan placed even a stronger emphasis on building future generations of children that live by the values articulated through the SDGs, and see schools as a major channel for their broader work to get the public aware of and inspired by the SDGs. This is also part of a broader focus to get the Japanese public aware of and investing in the SDGs.

Japan has noted their child poverty ranking of 25 out of 35 OECD countries and has been taking countermeasures to improve the situation, including through the 'The General Principles of Policy on Poverty among Children' drafted in 2014 (page 22).

Japan has also focused on issues of child injuries and taking measures to combat child abuse and sexual exploitation of children. Child welfare law and child abuse prevention law have recently been revised on this front and the "Basic Plan on Measures against Child Sexual Exploitation" has been formulated (page 45).

UNICEF's Involvement

The involvement of UNICEF in the VNR process was led by the Japanese National Committee (JCU). In advance of the preparations of the VNR, JCU submitted an official letter to the Government of Japan asking for a focus on children's issues and also met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to further discuss. The results of these efforts were reflected in both the [SDG Implementation Guiding Principles](#) Document and the Government of Japan's VNR.

JCU is also assisting the Government in their efforts to fully integrate SDG-focused learning into school curricula and is working with the Government on related materials for this.

The UNICEF Public Partnerships Division has also been involved through the PPD Office in Tokyo. Shannon O’Shea, Agenda 2030 Partnerships Manager in PPD NY, travelled to Tokyo in February 2017 and discussed headline messages on children (Investing in children as the foundation for achieving all SDGs; Inclusion of children in SDG implementation as “agents of change” by fostering their awareness of and activation of key issues) with Government representatives including: Director Akira Yokochi, Global Issues Cooperation Division, International Cooperation Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA); Hon Mitsunari Okamoto, Member of the House Representatives; and Mr. Masumi Tamura, Counsellor, Cabinet Secretariat, Office of Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary (Foreign Policy).

Strengths

- The Government of Japan prioritized a number of key issues for children as part of their domestic implementation of the SDGs: reducing child poverty; increasing inclusive and equitable education; and prevention of child injury, sexual exploitation and child abuse. The priorities of the Government of Japan were further articulated in their document: [Outline of the SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles](#), which articulated 8 broad areas of focus.
- Japan highlighted that public awareness of the SDGs is a necessary precedent to implementing SDG related measures as a national movement. In addition to establishing the SDG Promotion Headquarters, the report states, “in order to nurture in children, who will lead society in 2030 and beyond, the competencies to be the future creators of sustainable societies and leaders of world, we are promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), as well as encouraging learning about SDGs in all settings, including schools, households, workplaces and local communities.”
- This particular emphasis on SDG-focused Education was noted in other parts of the report as well: “Japan will promote SDGs-related education by improving curricula and revising teaching materials at schools in accordance with the new national curriculum standards that will be implemented from April 2020 (page 23).” The Japan National Committee Office is working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on SDG-focused learning materials.
- During the HLPF itself, the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated the following on Japan’s priorities for children: “Firstly, Japan will squarely address various issues at home, such as inequality and the role of women. We will implement strong and holistic policies to tackle challenges like poverty among children, youth unemployment, and violence against children, based on the SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles. We will nurture children who will act as a creators of sustainable communities through our new school curricula.”



The Government of Japan has prioritized public awareness as part of their SDG Implementation strategy and enlisted Japanese YouTube star Pikotaro to help spread the word.

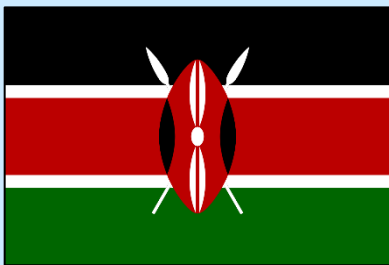
Weaknesses

- There are still some important issues for children that were not included in the VNR (such as good nutrition and prevention of suicide).

Key Lessons

- JCU was not part of the roundtable discussion under the government's SDGs Promotion Headquarters, which basically consists of one representative per stakeholder group i.e., NGOs, academia, private sector, UN organizations, etc. The Committee decided to convey UNICEF voice directly to the head of the Headquarters (Prime Minister), in the form of official letter, after consulting HQ for the contents. A strong 'UNICEF brand' is believed to have helped the letter to receive certain attention within the government.
- Domestic children's issues tend to be overlooked even in the areas where there are ongoing initiatives, presumably because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the one coordinating the work for VNR, and the SDGs were relatively new to other ministries. Providing links with existing domestic initiatives to the relevant SDG targets is believed to have been useful reference for the Ministry.
- HLPF/VNR can be a good opportunity to accelerate actions for children, e.g. Japan's statement made commitment to 'tackle violence against children', while there is no existing overarching strategy on EVAC; VNR was a push for the SDGs to be included in the new official school curriculum.

KENYA



See full VNR report: [Implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in Kenya](#)

Contact for further information: [Ousmane Niang](#), Chief of Social Policy and [Godfrey Ndeng'e](#), Social Planning Specialist.

Highlights from the VNR

Kenya is linking their work on development and the SDGs to their recently developed [2010 Constitution](#) and Bill of Rights which explicitly notes the rights of specific groups including children, youth and persons with disabilities (page 6). Kenya chose to review progress on all Goals and did not only focus on the Goals highlighted as part of the 2017 HLPF (Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14).

Much of the report takes note of social protection measures aimed at operationalizing work on the SDGs to target vulnerable groups. The government has instituted a number of social protection programmes, including in the sectors of water, roads/infrastructure, health facilities and electricity to marginalized areas. The National Social Safety Net Programme (NSNP) is one of the major government initiatives to help meet the SDGs (page 20). Within the NSNP, there is a specific cash transfer programme to target children, *the Orphans and Vulnerable Children- Cash Transfers (OVC-CT)*. Through their "expansion of *Technical and Vocational Educational Training (TVET)* institutions to the village level, the Government of Kenya endeavors to ensure that children and pupils from poor backgrounds attain a decent education and life skills that equip them to compete with those from

privileged backgrounds” (page 18). The *Kenya Youth Empowerment Project (KYEP)*, among others, aims to reach the disadvantaged, combat poverty and promote equity.

Kenya has noted that the proportion of people suffering from hunger has fluctuated. There has been a decrease in the rate of stunting in children under 5 to 26% (compared to 35.3 % in 2008), but there are marked disparities between rural and urban populations. Child malnutrition is higher in the poorest households and Kenya plans to address such disparities with more devolved funding (e.g. to community levels).

In their *Health Sector Strategic and Investment Plan*, Kenya has identified six policy objectives for the health care sector, which include: eliminate communicable diseases; halt and reverse burden of non-communicable diseases; reduce the burden of violence and injuries; provide essential health care; minimize the exposure to health risk factors; and strengthen collaboration with sector providers. Kenya has noted progress in reducing maternal mortality and under five mortality during the MDG era, but that rates remain unacceptably high (page 23). Mother-to-child transmission of HIV has decreased from 12,000 (2013) to 4600 (2016) and the number of people living with HIV that have access to ARVs increased to 66%. Kenya has a unique statutory body -- *the HIV and AIDS equity Tribunal* -- which has helped to unearth and redress HIV-related human rights violations. It may be a useful model for replication in other countries (page 24).

UNICEF has specifically worked with the Kenya Government on a project aimed at improving maternal and infant nutrition through sensitizing members of the private sector on the need to promote exclusive breastfeeding for children by providing working mothers with a conducive working environment as well as providing breaks for them to breastfeed their children. The project encourages businesses to create mother and baby friendly spaces which includes the creation of a lactation station for lactating mothers (page 26).

In the report, Kenya highlighted their introduction of free primary education in 2003 as significant contribution towards increasing enrollment rates for Kenyan boys and girls. Other highlights include increasing the reach of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) programmes and training; improvements to sanitation facilities in schools (particularly for girls); and supplementation of education expenses not covered by FPE for poorer students.

Kenya noted that they have set up a helpline aimed at combatting sexual and gender-based violence, but have acknowledged that challenges remain in ending harmful traditional practices such as FGM/C, and tolerance for gender-based violence in embedded in social-cultural norms (page 31).

Kenya has also noted the importance of citizen participation and public awareness in SDG implementation. The Ministry of Devolution and Planning has issued Public Participation Guidelines to support this idea (page 18).

UNICEF’s Involvement

UNICEF co-chairs the UN SDG group in Kenya, which is mandated is to support the Government agenda on implementing the SDGs. An annual UN work plan is developed in line with the key priorities identified by the Government.

In line with the advancement of the children’s agenda in Kenya, UNICEF contributed – together with other UN agencies --- in training aimed at sensitizing and internalizing the SDGs at country level. UNICEF also supported evidence generation to inform national level policy decisions, especially on the child-related SDGs (for example in the area of child poverty, to provide a national baseline on SDG 1 and budget analysis in the social sectors in line with the [Addis Ababa Agenda Action](#)).

Strengths

- The review provides a good baseline for monitoring and evaluating the status of its SDG implementation in the future and also assisted in mapping all the SDGs to the long term Development Vision ([Vision 2030](#)). This process has helped the Government and partners understand what is feasible and how implementation of SDGs can be integrated with ongoing programmes to contribute towards the medium and long term development of Kenya.
- This review and mapping process also brought out a clearer understanding of the specific Goals and Targets on children including the deficiencies in basic information necessary for better SDG programming.
- The VNR review process assisted in clarifying the roles and institutional framework for SDG implementation. In summary, the VNR review process has been beneficial to both Government and development partners, and the VNR report’s evidence and analysis will help to strengthen plans and programmes for integrating SDGs, including mainstreaming both at the national and subnational levels. The recommendations and proposed next steps are good and can facilitate enhanced multi-stakeholder participation and increased effort towards SDG implementation among development actors in Kenya.

Weaknesses

- Absence of adequate baseline data for some of the key targets/indicators will affect proper assessment and monitoring of SDG progress. The National Bureau of Statistics identified only 128 out of the 230 indicators that can presently be monitoring/reported on in the next two years.
- Inadequate government capacity on SDGs implementation, monitoring and reporting affected the quality of stakeholder submissions. During the reporting workshops organized by the Government, the interpretation and understanding of some of the SDGs indicators/targets including those that address children’s issues was a challenge. So far, very few sub-national awareness building activities have been held, and not many programmes/implementers in different levels of government understand how to design/develop child focused programmes to address SDGs.
- There were no clear modalities for engaging a large number of potential stakeholders in the preparatory process or for consolidation of inputs from different sources into one report that conforms to the common reporting guidelines. Although efforts were made to get Kenya involved in the “We the Peoples” SDG perception data pilot project leveraging U-Report (UNICEF tool) and MVAM (WFP tool), the Ministry of Devolution and Planning (in charge of the VNR process) did not have the required capacity and/or level of interest to include this type of data in the VNR. The in-country capacity to

prioritize and undertake a perception survey could be created to facilitate better reporting of SDG progress in the future.

- The analysis of children’s indicators and current levels of performance could be improved through capacity building to interpret various indicators and key performance indicators. For example, the analysis of overall poverty including child poverty -- monetary and multidimensional -- is weak. While there are various reports/analysis available, the basic understanding of child poverty including programmes to address child poverty needs strengthening.

Key Lessons

- **Need to strengthen the technical capacity for SDGs implementation and monitoring within the National Government Ministries within and Sub national government structures.**

At present, very few sub national staff (sub national government entities) that have the capacity to drive the SDG agenda with a focus on children. There is a short window of opportunity (between September and December 2017) to ensure integration of SDGs into the new 5 year plans -- Medium Term Plan (MTP) III and / County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP) II -- and in sector plans.

- **Importance of awareness-building among and engagement of different stakeholders**

The strengthened technical leadership of the *Ministry of Devolution and Planning* should trigger and promote sustained capacity development for mainstreaming SDGs and mobilization of a variety of stakeholders (both public and private) who have parallel initiatives to deliver on the twin agendas-- notably the global Agenda 2030/SDGs and Kenya’s Vision 2030 Development Agenda. This improved technical capacity should also facilitate increased funding of SDGs and related awareness-building activities, including broadening the monitoring and evaluation of programmes and investments geared towards leaving no child behind. In order to ensure proper SDG mainstreaming at all levels, broad multi-stakeholder participation is essential. This is best organized at national level with strong links to the sub-national levels.

ZIMBABWE



See full VNR report: [Zimbabwe Voluntary National Review \(VNR\) of SDGs for the High Level Political Forum.](#)

Contact for further information: [Vikas Singh](#), Chief of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Highlights from the VNR

Zimbabwe took a three-pronged approach to develop their VNR: a desk review of relevant policy documents, complemented by a trend analysis for the indicators; interviews with key stakeholders including government, development agencies, private sector, civil society organizations and youth groups (page 11); and circulation of key messages and draft report to a SDG technical committee for feedback. In their VNR,

Zimbabwe choose to focus specifically on the Goals receiving in-depth review at the HLPF in 2017: Goal 1 (No poverty); Goal 2 (Zero Hunger); Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being); Goal 5 (Gender Equality); Goal 9 (Innovation and Infrastructure) and Goal 14 (Life under water).

Zimbabwe also reports a public awareness campaign on the SDGs "through mass media including live radio and TV programmes, engagement with youth, journalists, private sector, young entrepreneurs, university students and civil society" (page 14). UNICEF also supported the Government in this endeavor, running a U-report poll to gauge public awareness, knowledge and perceptions of SDGs (page 53).

A national youth taskforce *Youth4SDGs*, brought together over 100 youth organizations across 10 provinces "to provide strategic direction for youth inclusion and participation in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs" (page 14). The coalition also aims to educate youth about the importance of the SDGs in their own lives and communities.

Another youth engagement initiative highlighted was an *SDG Lecture Series in Universities*. It aims "to raise awareness and to encourage active engagement by providing the opportunity for students and the local academic community to engage with the UN or experts on SDGs of particular relevance to their respective universities and to Zimbabwe at large. To date, the lecture series has reached some 3,000 students and staff in different Universities. The UN in Zimbabwe also supported a training of trainers on SDGs for 120 young people to empower them to mobilise themselves and take up proactive initiatives towards achieving SDGs" (page 14).

The Government has prioritized ending multidimensional poverty for the people of Zimbabwe and explicitly reported on child poverty rates in their VNR. They are specifically focused on reducing extreme poverty in the most vulnerable households and reducing poverty-related abuse, neglect and violence against children through the launch of *the 3rd phase of the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP3)*. This is done in partnership with UNICEF. Though progress on reducing child poverty has been made, the government is still reporting that "of the 6.3 million children in Zimbabwe, 78 per cent (4.8 million) live in consumption poverty and 26 per cent (1.6 million) live in extreme / food poverty" (page 19).

In terms of the specific goal areas, the Government is reporting reductions in under-5 mortality, stunting and recently passed a law on ending child marriage in line with their commitments to uphold the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* and the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*. Zimbabwe is part of the *Zero Hunger Challenge*, the *Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) Initiative* and has set up a *Standing Cabinet Committee on Food and Nutrition Security* chaired by the Vice President. Through the *Participatory Health and Hygiene Education (PHHE)* in Mutoko under their '14 Small Towns Wash Programme (STWP), UNICEF has also supported the Government to improve equitable use of safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene practices (page 37).

The Government has developed the *National Health Strategy for Zimbabwe 2016-2020* which seeks to achieve 'Equity and Quality in Health: Leaving no one behind.' The Strategy is anchored by four priority areas: communicable diseases; non-communicable diseases (NCDs); reproductive, maternal, new-born, child and adolescents; and public health surveillance and disaster preparedness and response (page 24).

Although the Government entitles every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe to a basic state-funded education, they have noted challenges in the areas of inadequate school infrastructure, including inadequate

Early Child Development (ECD) facilities, science laboratories, libraries, electricity, computers, water and sanitation among others.

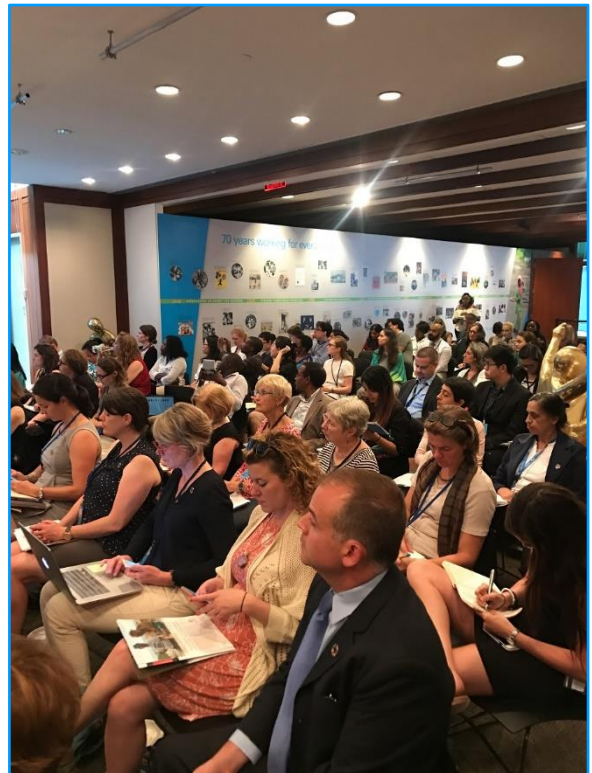
UNICEF's Involvement

In Zimbabwe, UNDP led the UN's system's support for the VNR process. However, UNICEF reviewed and contributed to the concept note on preparing for the VNR and provided guidance to ensure that the [Key Asks and Principles for Agenda 2030](#) were considered during the review process including utilization of key lessons from HLPF 2016 process.

UNICEF also engaged the Resident Coordinator's Office to take the VNR process as an opportunity to push the government to finalize selection and prioritization of indicators and targets for the country before the government engaged in the VNR process and continues to provide technical support to the government as they implement the SDGs.

Strengths

- The report included some of the key indicators directly related to child rights, specifically on SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well Being), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (WASH), 16 (Peaceful Societies). The report attempts to provide trends for those indicators as well as disaggregated data where available. This provides an opportunity and channel for UNICEF's continued engagement and advocacy for mainstreaming child rights in national priorities.
- UNICEF, leveraging our mobile engagement tool [U-report](#) and WFP, leveraging their mobile engagement tool [mVAM](#) produced a [perception data report – 'We the Peoples'](#) which was shared and discussed with the government as part of an interagency pilot exercise initiated by UNICEF's Agenda 2030 Team (HQ) in close collaboration with the Zimbabwe country office. The idea and inspiration behind this initiative is that in addition to data collected through official channels and methods, people's perception of progress and lived experiences are an important source of evidence for more informed decision-making and better service delivery, as part of governments' efforts to implement and monitor their progress on the SDGs. Findings from U-report were used to inform the next steps of the VNR report. The 'We the Peoples' report was presented by the Government of Zimbabwe at a [side event held at UNICEF on 13 July on the margins of the High-Level Political Forum \(HLPF\)](#). Acceptance by the Government to discuss and present the findings of the 'We the Peoples'



Attendees at the 'We the Peoples' side event on the margins of the HLPF where the Government of Zimbabwe presented results from their SDG U-Report Survey.

report, was a significant step forward and will provide an opportunity for continued engagement with the Government to encourage the further utilization of perception data to inform decisions in Zimbabwe.

- The government did encourage the participation of CSOs, including child rights'-focused organizations during the VNR process. To some extent this provided a platform for initiating further engagement between the government and civil society with respect to SDG implementation efforts.

Weaknesses

- The lack of direct participation and inclusion of children during the VNR process was a missed opportunity. Children's voices could have been heard and included through, for example, the involvement of child parliamentarians.
- Participation of typically marginalized and excluded groups was also an area for improvement. National consultations were only held in the capital city, therefore the voices and views of different stakeholders living outside of the capital and/or in rural areas were not directly sought or received.
- More efforts could have been made on the public advocacy/engagement front. For example, by raising awareness that the VNR process was taken place among citizens and the general public.

Key Lessons

- **Use of nationally recognized data sources (e.g. MICS and ZUNDAF)**
While it is not always easy to influence government processes and production of national reports such as the VNR, e.g. [MICS](#) and [ZUNDAF](#) annual reports made it possible to ensure inclusion of data and information on child rights in the report.
- **Open and ongoing discussions on other sources of data (e.g. perception data)**
Continuous engagement and open and transparent discussions on perception data made it possible for the government to accept the value of this type of data and thus agreed to present the data in New York. This can be an important step in increasing the use of perception data in SDG-related monitoring, follow-up and review activities.
- **Need to strengthen public awareness and engagement with civil society and the private sector**
The VNR itself acknowledged a number of areas of work for follow-up. Notably, a number of these focused on the strengthening of engagement with stakeholder groups and the public. The VNR highlighted the need to "Improve public awareness, knowledge and perceptions of SDGs. Findings from the U-Report poll that was conducted on 30 November 2016 by UNICEF to gauge among others awareness and knowledge of the SDGs show that the majority of the respondents (72 per cent) said they were not aware of SDGs (page 53)."