

Webinar Series on Stakeholder Engagement
Module 1: An Introduction to Stakeholder Engagement in the 2030 Agenda
UNESCAP, Environment and Development Division,
Environment and Development Policy Section

SUMMARY AND KEY POINTS

Introduction

This webinar, entitled **An Introduction to Stakeholder Engagement in the 2030 Agenda**, is part of a wider series of webinars on the topic of engagement and participation, and is a component of a wide-reaching stakeholder engagement project being undertaken by UNESCAP in partnership with the [International Association for Public Participation \(IAP2\)](#). This project seeks to improve stakeholder engagement around the implementation, follow-up, and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as build capacity of governments and stakeholders to better coordinate efforts and ensure progress on the goals.

Additionally, this stakeholder engagement project is part and parcel of UNESCAP's efforts to help make the 2030 Agenda a reality and is an element of the work being done through the [SDG Help Desk](#), a site spearheaded by UNESCAP as a one stop shop for information, knowledge, and learning around implementing and reviewing the 2030 Agenda.

The webinar speakers for this first installment of the series were:

1. **Naiara Costa**, Senior Sustainable Development Officer, Outreach and Communications Branch, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs –

Before that, she held several leadership positions in international civil society networks, including as Director of the Together 2030 Initiative and as Advocacy Director of the Beyond 2015 campaign. Prior to that, Naiara worked as an Advisor on Gender, Social and Economic Rights at the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations in New York as well as a development advisor at the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in Brazil. She served as a National Programme Officer at UNAIDS for more than a decade. She has also served the government of Brazil as an advisor at the Presidency of the Republic (National Anti-Drugs Secretariat) and the Ministry of Finance. Naiara worked as UN Public Affairs and Policy Advisor for the World Animal Protection. She holds a master on International Relations at the University of Brasilia (Brazil) and an MBA on Projects from Getulio Vargas Foundation.

2. **Jyotsna Mohan**, Regional Coordinator, Asia Development Alliance –

ADA is a regional NGO platform for the national CSOs of Asia, with members in 25 countries. Jyotsna is a development professional specializing in social science research. She has been associated with Beyond 2015 and now Agenda 2030 with a focus on governance, accountability, peace and human rights. Earlier she worked on various socio-economic themes and training and capacity building on

these issues at the national level in India and throughout Asia. Jyotsna holds a Ph.D. in Social Science from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi.

Presentation by Naiara Costa

An introduction to the 2030 Agenda process, the Voluntary National Reviews, and the role of stakeholder in this work.

1. The 2030 Agenda was the most inclusive and broad intergovernmental process of the UN so far and included stakeholders from all different levels and sectors. CSOs took the formulation and negotiation process very seriously and forced both governments and the UN to be serious about formulating a transformative agenda.
2. Stakeholders must continue to engage with governments to remind them of their 2030 Agenda commitments.
3. There are four chapters in the 2030 Agenda, including follow-up and review, that provide several elements and guides for stakeholders to participate in the monitoring of progress. Ultimately, overall review process is the responsibility of governments.
4. Follow-up and review should have a long-term orientation and keep the stakeholders involved at all stages.
5. Governments talk about accountability to citizens and call for regular and inclusive review for the 2030 Agenda. On the other hand, governments refer to the regional level as a platform for peer learning.
6. Governments decided to review, in depth, a selected set of goals at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) — this is the thematic review of the goals. Some governments would prefer a full review of all SDGs, but others see the merit of cluster goal analysis for more dedicated and focused discussion.
7. Engagement of stakeholders is a critical part of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). At the UN we work with countries and encourage them to work within the Secretary-General's guidelines as much as possible, which contribute to a better and more comprehensive review.
8. Governments are very clear that the VNRs are state-led and facilitate a learning process in terms of ensuring better implementation and review of the SDGs.
9. VNRs are considered good check of national level and exposes opportunities for partnership to achieve the goals.
10. The Major Groups (of which there are nine) have been identified for consultation back during the initial Rio process. This generated a self-organizing process in both civil society and the UN to make room for these groups. More groups were included through Rio+20 and are now known as the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders. HLPF is one of the few spaces that guarantees high levels of participation of stakeholders.
11. Stakeholder coordination, including funding, advocacy efforts, and speaking opportunities, are all organized at the HLPF.

12. At the global level, stakeholders have self-organized an HLPF Major Groups and other Stakeholders Coordination Mechanism to help coordinate their own strategies and engagement in the forum's work.

Resources:

- Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) page: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/mgos>
- Sign up to the MGoS Coordination Mechanism mailing list: bit.ly/MGoS_mailinglist
- Proposed voluntary common guidelines for MGoS reporting: <http://bit.ly/2r8K1lh>

Presentation by Jyotsna Mohan

*Insights on the experiences of Asia-Pacific stakeholders
in the 2030 Agenda review process thus far.*

1. The 2030 Agenda provides stakeholders with many entry points for engagement in implementation, follow-up, and review. Nevertheless, governments in Asia-Pacific have not always lived up to their commitments.
2. Already, several Asian countries have gone through the VNR process at the HLPF and have submitted their reviews. Some have put themselves forward for review a second time, like the Philippines and Indonesia.
3. Ultimately, CSO participation has been limited in the last few years and stakeholder experiences have varied in different countries.
4. South Korea submitted a CSO report. CSO reports for Nepal and Malaysia were created by CSOs.
5. A CSO engagement analysis in Asia report was created by the Asia Development Alliance.
6. Some countries have allowed for a high level of engagement. The government of Nepal has been very engaged with stakeholders and civil society have generally been happy with their involvement.
7. Similarly, in Bhutan, where civil society is not generally very active, there has been good engagement around the VNR and the 2030 Agenda, and stakeholders have been working together with the government towards the HLPF.
8. Civil society in Malaysia wrote some part of the VNR report and Indonesia had fairly good mechanisms for the engagement of stakeholders in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.
9. There are countries where engagement has been very low and in Thailand for example, some groups feel very engaged and others do not.
10. India initially reached out to stakeholders but then produced the VNR report without proper consultation and engagement, citing a lack of time.

11. Trustworthy citizen-level data is needed for a more effective follow-up and review process. Civil society has strong monitoring tools and if governments recognized this, it would be beneficial for both parties. In other words, civil society could be better utilized by governments to help obtain and update this data and would also have an opportunity for more active involvement of stakeholders.

Discussion

Katinka Weinberger, Chief of EDPS: Stakeholder engagement can be an abstract discussion, difficult to unwrap and envision. ESCAP looks for opportunities for engagement to bolster its work. ESCAP also supports governments' infrastructure and provides tools for them to increase their capacity for stakeholder engagement. Understanding of meaningful stakeholder engagement "depends on where you sit." ESCAP's planning and assessment tool can facilitate dialogue and provide standards of quality engagement.

Question: Are NGOs brought in and confirmed by governments or can they participate in the HLPF without government sanctioning?

Answer - Naiara: There are several ways for MGoS to participate at the HLPF: Through expert group meetings, invitations as identified speakers, dedicated sessions for MGoS with speakers identified by the groups themselves, etc. The main mechanism is to invite stakeholder representatives — speakers are identified and invited by the organizing committee. However, they are limited by time (2-3 min for example), so statements are carefully organized between stakeholders — self organized — and do not need to be vetted by governments. Also, there is a civil society and stakeholder registration process for the HLPF.

Q: Which indicators are used to measure CSO engagement?

A - Jyotsna: Indicators have already been framed — global and national alike. Governments use indicators, but engagement is difficult to measure as governments admit a lack of visible data. This is an issue many governments face. Much CSO data is already available and governments could utilize them to measure progress.

Katinka: Certain indicators have been identified for governments to understand where they fall on the spectrum. The ESCAP planning and assessment tool can increase the impact of decisions and show the government how "well" it is doing and what contributes to quality engagement.

Q: I have been to the HLPF and feel that there are always the same people and organizations. What has been done to diversify the presence? Also, what is being done to get the most marginalized or persons with disabilities involved?

A - Naiara: There are specific discussions held at the national level for stakeholder involvement. It is a challenge to bring new voices and faces, something that we at UNDESA strive to address

by partnering with others such as ESCAP is a way to encourage stakeholders to connect at the regional level.

Katinka: Active interest in ensuring that there is great diversity at the APFSD. Outline type of contributions they would like to see and make sure that there are people who can comment on these.

Chris: People need to know that spaces and platforms like MGoS exist and are open and accessible. This will ensure that more people are engaged in advocacy and provide for opportunities for new people and organizations to participate.

Comment - Hirotaka Koike: Latin America, Europe, and Africa, have started to create space for more institutionalized engagement — critical steps towards institutionalized engagement, but knowing the stakeholders is also important. It is critical, likewise, that there be focal points — a coordinating body. Can't ignore the importance of institutionalized faces.

A - Naiara: Stakeholder groups for persons with disabilities are very strong and have been working with the UN to make the HLPF more accessible. They also lead certain activities for processes to engage persons with disabilities in the VNR process.

Q: Is there a guideline to produce a roadmap that is adaptable for every stakeholder group?

Chris: Check the UNDESA [Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform](#) for more information on MGoS, their governance, and other information about their coordination and engagement in global processes.

Naiara: VNR handbook by UNDESA has a whole chapter on stakeholder engagement being updated for 2019 review process.