

# LEARNING BY DOING: CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM'S NATIONAL REVIEW PROCESS (2016)



JULY 2016

*Produced by Action for Sustainable Development*



## INTRODUCTION

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) provides the pre-eminent space for dialogue with the UN system on sustainable development. 2016 is the first year of implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and in this context 22 countries have volunteered to undertake national reviews to be presented at the HLPF. As this is the first review of its kind, it is to be hoped that this process can set a benchmark for future reviews, so that the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda are delivered in a truly just and sustainable way. There are major questions remaining on implementation, monitoring and accountability of this agenda; this paper aims to provide some initial reflections on the engagement with civil society in the countries under review and to set out some recommendations on how this engagement can be further strengthened.

‘Action for Sustainable Development’ is an ambitious new platform that brings together over 500 civil society organisations and activists from around the world, particularly from the global South; who have come together over the past year and are working closely with national partners in many countries in every region to build opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, sharing innovative approaches and taking action to ensure delivery of a transformative agenda.

Over March-June 2016, the Action for Sustainable Development platform collected summaries from national civil society organizations (CSOs) within the 22 countries that have volunteered to be reviewed by the High Level Political Forum. Through the comparison of these summaries, general observations can be made to link the inclusion of civil society in the SDG process, and provide an analysis of the degree of depth and breadth found in national SDG proposals. Each country demonstrates a very different context for civil society; including whether civil society activity is open or restricted, whether there is a strong national coordination mechanism of CSOs and whether governments include CSOs in their planning for implementation of the 2030 agenda.

# SUMMARY OF INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

## 1. Protection of civil society and civic space

A strong civil society and a working relationship with government seems to directly correlate with a strong plan for SDG implementation, especially regarding adaptability of implementation to local contexts.

Across each region, civil society interacts with governments in unique ways, but the national governments that have included CSOs in a consultation for drafting their HLPF report, and included them in the overall process in an inclusive and participatory fashion, have a much more detailed and tangible plan set forth to tackle the SDGs. This can be seen in countries like Finland and Uganda.

When civil society is weakened, due to a tense political environment or lack of strong national coordination within CSOs, civil society is more likely to be left out of formal processes. The outcomes of the formal processes are therefore weaker and they often do not reference the entire context by including the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. The countries under review that have had less engagement with CSOs in the drafting or consultative process have submitted less well defined proposals that may not include how practical implementation will be achieved. This can be seen in Venezuela, Togo, and Sierra Leone.

## 2. Coordination of civil society at national level, led by strong local networks

A key element in ensuring effective implementation stems from genuine coordination and self-organising by national civil society. In Uganda for example, civil society is well organized at a national level and has been effective in facilitating engagement with the government and multiple other stakeholders. This has increased public awareness on the SDGs and has made SDG implementation a national priority. Finland submitted a strong report that highlights the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach building on initiatives that have been successful in Finland. Finnish CSOs have noted the report is still missing a proper review process to monitor progress on policy coherence mechanisms, but are advocating to improve these gaps in the next steps of national planning. The Finnish government has included CSOs in each draft of their report, making them highly involved in the process and having their inputs included with each step.

In both Togo and Sierra Leone, civil society coordination is not strong at the national level, and there has therefore been limited success in advocating for inclusion of CSOs in formal processes. Both governments have included certain different stakeholders in their consultations, however the process remains very exclusive. The current proposals in these two countries are vague and seem to be relatively broad with limited practical steps. CSOs in Togo and Sierra Leone are now coming together to create a strong coordinating mechanism in order to advocate on behalf of the SDGs, making them goals of the people. Building stronger civil society partnerships ensures a strong case to be included in multi-stakeholder discussions on the SDGs.

## 3. Monitoring and review by civil society

Monitoring and reviewing the action plans set out for delivery of the 2030 Agenda is crucial in achieving successes and in creating innovative solutions with the ever changing contexts. The first draft of the country reports rarely seem to add review processes to check the status of their action plans, evaluation milestones or how processes can be updated. Currently, CSOs in a number of countries are preparing spotlight reports to bring attention to the plans proposed by governments and analysing their feasibility. Such spotlight reports can provide a great mechanism to pressure governments to remain accountable to the public and can draw from official data as well as citizen-generated data. This approach has been adopted in the Philippines, Egypt, Morocco, and Germany.

In the Philippines, a draft CSO Spotlight Report carried out by the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) for Social Watch Philippines focused on the need for an SDG-sensitive socioeconomic plan to be communicated to the new administration. In Egypt and Morocco, members of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) are actively engaged in the monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and are undertaking national assessment reports particularly for Goal 1, 8 and 10. These reports look at the prioritization and localization of SDGs, awareness raising activities relating to Agenda 2030 and the role of CSOs. The report highlights challenges and puts forward a set of recommendations.

Although Venezuela is unsure of how the Venezuelan government plans on implementing the SDGs with social obstacles in place, they are creating their own monitoring mechanisms to participate in the process, holding the government accountable with shadow reporting.

#### 4. Timely and meaningful consultation processes

It is essential that any consultation that is carried out, is built in a meaningful way to ensure appropriate time for engagement and full consultation with grassroots community organisations. For example in Germany, although the government is consulting civil society and providing space to share ideas, drafts are only shared in their final stages and input from civil society is not always included in the final report. Germany has a strong model in terms of their multi-stakeholder approach, but there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure spaces for meaningful participation from civil society. German civil society has submitted a comprehensive report to the German government to serve as a call to action with specific outputs for each of the sustainable development goals. The German government now has direct deliverables to answer to and can consult the CSO coalition on how to properly implement them. It would be interesting to continue this and implement a monitoring mechanism to see which inputs are being included and to what extent. By creating simultaneous reports and indicators, governments are held up to the standards set out by civil society.

#### 5. A dedicated lead body in the government to provide strategic oversight

In order to ensure effective dialogue and to enhance mutual understanding, the most effective countries are those that have developed a high-level point of contact to provide strategic oversight for the 2030 Agenda.

In the case of the Republic of Korea, the process has been driven by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whereas the CSO representatives are pushing for a lead body in the Prime Minister's office or the Presidential Council. In France on the other hand, there has been clear leadership from the Ministry for Environment, Energy and the Sea. While this is not a cross-cutting ministry, it seems that there has been strong leadership owing to the influential position of the particular minister and the opportunity presented by the broader engagement with the COP process in France.

Uganda appears to have the most coherent approach, whereby the Prime Minister's office is taking a direct role in designing the implementation plans and engaging with civil society through a Communication & Advocacy Task Group.

#### 6. Co-design of SDG country level implementation to set out a transformative agenda

Overall the countries in this review appear to have been broadly open in consulting civil society. The importance of including civil society and other stakeholders is evident in the development of successful holistic approaches to SDG implementation. However improvements can be made moving forward to include civil society in each step of the national plan, such as the monitoring and review process, ensuring no one is left behind, and implementation on all levels. By ensuring the engagement of all stakeholders in each step of the process and including open transparent opportunities for feedback, the policy agenda can take root in the national context.

# REFLECTIONS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ON ENGAGEMENT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE 2030 AGENDA

## Asia

### *Philippines*

The Philippines is in a political transition, having just conducted national and local elections for the executive and legislative bodies of government. This has resulted in the adjustments in defining the trajectories of the Philippine Development Plan, where ideally the SDGs would be adopted as the guiding framework.

Civil society in the Philippines has been proactive in the SDG process, asking the Secretary of NEDA (National Economic and Development Authority) to include CSOs in the planning, implementation, monitoring and review. The first report focuses on i) picking up lessons from the MDG experience; ii) how the government plans to implement the SDGs in the Philippine Development Plan; and iii) how to institutionalise the monitoring and review processes to include all SDG stakeholders from the local, sub-national and national levels.

CSOs were able to participate (after much lobbying and insistence) in the process of developing the national SDG indicators in two workshops held with all government agencies. The result was a set of Tier 1-2-3 classified indicators for each of the targets. A draft CSO Spotlight (not Shadow, as this is the first year of the implementation process) Report done by Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) for Social Watch focuses on the imperatives of an SDG-sensitive socioeconomic plan to be communicated to the new administration.

The spotlight report challenges the new administration to address poverty and all forms of inequalities that have persisted despite several quarters of sustained GDP growth by changing the system - to adopt a low-carbon growth by breaking free from fossil fuels and avert the disastrous effects of climate change, to change the metrics for sustainability to value labour and nature more than growth, and be guided by the principles of justice and fairness (human rights, accountability) in governance at all levels.

The plan to put up a mechanism for institutional participation in SDG planning, implementation and review has also been discussed by CSOs and will be communicated to the NEDA to shape the broad formation that is envisioned to focus on the 17 SDGs and targets. PRRM sits in the National Steering Committee of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as the UN Civil Society Advisory Committee representative. The SDGs have been adopted as the guiding

framework for the UN Country Team assistance to the Philippine government, and therefore, all reporting under UNDAF outcomes will refer to SDG implementation.

### *South Korea*

The most important task in implementing the SDGs in Korea is to build a cross-ministerial mechanism. Civil society is urging that an integrated entity should be established at the Prime Minister's Office or the Presidential council level. Currently, only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is dealing with the preparation for the HLPF with minimal participation of other ministries.

The Korean government submitted the summary report for the Voluntary National Review on 9 June. The report was drafted by a commissioned research team under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and finalized in consultation with other ministries. The MoFA initiated a consultation with civil society including development NGOs and domestic organizations before submitting the summary report to the UN. However, the consultation was boycotted by several domestic CSOs due to the feeling that an insufficient amount of information was shared before the meeting and the absence of an integrated cross-government approach to the dialogue.

Some development NGOs still met the MoFA and delivered CSOs' voices on the draft report, they urged the government to establish a cross-ministerial body for the implementation of the SDGs as well as inclusion of a wider range of CSOs; and suggested some points for correction in the content. The MoFA

reflected quite a few points in the final summary and agreed to have an open consultation in June before the submission of the full report.

The government, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Environment, Prime Minister's office and the Office of Statistics Korea held a consultation on the draft full report with a broader range of CSOs on 1st July. CSOs pointed out that it appears that the government is artificially trying to fit existing policies into the SDG framework without providing clear relevance. They also highlighted a lack of philosophy that can reflect "leave no one behind" and fulfill the rights of vulnerable groups such as women, children and people with disabilities at the policy level. Delivering a statement of 13 pages on the draft full report, CSOs demanded for participation in the process of setting up the national implementation framework and national indicators. The officials said that they are discussing establishment of an integrated coordinating body for SDGs and a consultation with CSOs will be held after the HLPF with Prime Minister's Office taking the lead.

## Pacific

### *Samoa*

The government of Samoa ran a number of consultative processes for a national sustainable development strategy called 'The Strategy for the Development of Samoa', with a view to include implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the SAMOA Pathway, and other global platforms. This process included multiple stakeholders such as government, private sector and civil society to align sector and national indicators to the SDGs and targets. All Ministries have SDGs included in their sector plans, however some targets are not covered and therefore are not part of sector plans.

SUNGO held a members meetings to gauge their views for inclusion in the Samoa report which will be presented at the HLPF meeting in July. The Samoan government has acknowledged the inclusion of civil society through an ongoing shadow process.

## Europe

### *Estonia*

The draft version of the Estonian report on Agenda 2030 aimed to map the current situation regarding the Sustainable Development Goals within Estonia, as well as preparing the first steps for implementation of Agenda 2030. Estonian civil society is pleased to note that the national sustainable development strategy, government policies and the national indicators for sustainable development will be assessed in light of the international scope of the SDGs.

Civil society organizations from the Estonian Commission for Sustainable Development have been consulted in the process of writing the report thus far. They have suggested that to continue to review the process, national indicators should be updated for reporting after every two years. The planning process is projected to last until the end of 2016.

There are a few shortcomings in the current report that still need to be addressed. The level of coordinated and strategic involvement of civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders remains unclear at this stage. There is no public plan to ensure communication amongst stakeholders including Estonian citizens; and a plan for reviewing the implementation process has yet to be defined. Through potential assessments of national policies, the concept of policy coherence for sustainable development does not receive substantial attention, however it is indicated that next steps will be derived from the outcomes of policy and strategy assessments.

The agenda seems to lack ambition thus far, but there is hope that once the national context becomes clear and initial steps are taken, stronger plans will be created and implemented.

### *Finland*

The [summary report](#) submitted by Finland is relatively strong on civil society participation in Agenda

2030 and policy coherence, but in the view of civil society stakeholders, it could use a more critical approach in identifying gaps and for example assessing policy coherence mechanisms. The presentation at the HLPF will be given by the Minister for Environment.

Civil society advocacy efforts towards the HLPF are undertaken in an Agenda 2030 working group, and there is a civil society representative in the official delegation. The Summary Report of Finland emphasises the importance of civil society participation, as well as the various dimensions that it entails. Civil society has been involved in the preparation of the report by commenting on each draft directly as well as through longer-term engagement in two key multi-stakeholder platforms: the National Commission for Sustainable Development and the Development Policy Committee. The role of civil society is also highlighted in awareness raising and implementation, and perhaps more importantly in the review and accountability processes. Finland further recognises the importance of high-level leadership, policy coherence for sustainable development, multi-stakeholder participation and long-term perspective among all as guiding national principles.

Although Finland recognizes the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach, the report still lacks a level of critical analysis. It focuses mainly on indications or practices that have seen successful results, but remains vague about the areas for improvement. For example, while policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) is recognised as an important principle, the report does not clearly state that policy coherence mechanisms are not currently sufficient to assess and monitor progress towards delivery and impacts for policy coherence.

### **France**

The French government has no established strategy so far when it comes to SDGs monitoring or implementation. The leading institution of this process is the Ministry for Environment, Energy and the Sea, but this was only confirmed in April, more than 6 months after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. An institutional steering committee has been created which gathers the ministry for Environment, the ministry of Foreign affairs and the French Agency for Development (AFD); however no other stakeholder has been invited to the formal discussions.

A first draft of the French report was displayed to a wide range of non-governmental actors (NGOs, labor unions, local authorities, economic forces, academics) in early June; this first draft and the first step of the consultation process were inconsistent.

Coordination SUD, the French platform of NGOs working in the various fields of international solidarity (169 members), has created a working group dedicated to the SDGs. The group gathered shortly after the presentation of the draft report to discuss the next advocacy steps to consider in order to influence the French government before the HLPF. A common position and advocacy paper has been issued to criticize the lack of consultation and recommend concrete improvements within the “international solidarity” parts of the draft report. These position papers arose interest from both the Ministry for Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that both promised that most of our recommendations would be integrated into the final report. However, to this date (July 5), the French report has not been issued and the ministries notified the United Nations that the report would not be ready in due time.

We regret that civil society has not been fully involved in the reporting and early implementation of this Agenda at the very beginning of the writing process,. We lack information regarding the mobilisation of different stakeholders in relation on this Agenda, their roles and responsibilities. The means of implementations remain largely unknown as the French government has decided to focus on measures that are already implemented instead of mobilizing new resources to carry out the 2030 Agenda.

## Germany

German civil society has been very well organized on Agenda 2030 and has been working very closely with the German government. Many CSOs have come together on a national level to coordinate consultations and position papers.

The German 2016 HLPF report is strongly based on the process within Germany of rewriting the National Sustainability Strategy, which will be a major instrument of the SDG implementation in Germany. It was first introduced in 2002. The national implementation is led by the Chancellery. For the HLPF and the international SDG process, the ministries of development and environment are responsible.

During the course of 2015 and 2016 the National Sustainability Strategy has been under a major readjustment, newly aligned with the SDGs and with all ministries contributing new activities and indicators. Besides the National Sustainability Strategy, Germany has a rather complex sustainability architecture, stretching from ministries to the parliament to civil society. However, despite this for a CSO point of view, Germany is generally not considered a sustainable country, with huge challenges in all 3 dimensions of sustainability (i.e. growing inequality, industrialized agriculture, car-oriented transport sector). Furthermore, the National Sustainability Strategy has so far focused on only a few aspects of society and mostly only on sustainability within Germany. Thus, Germany is a prime example for the fact that a sustainability strategy does not automatically lead to sustainability. In its revised version, the National Sustainability Strategy though newly aligned with the SDGs does not cover all relevant policy areas relevant to the 2030 Agenda. German CSOs thus do not regard the GSS as an adequate tool for comprehensive national SDG implementation. Other ministries will complement SDG implementation in and by Germany with their own strategies and/or plans. It is not clear how the national SDG implementation plan will come together, or whether a coherent strategy and international comparability can be ensured.

CSOs regularly exchange views, information and strategies on the SDG implementation and engagement in its national as well as international processes, such as the HLPF. One example: To raise awareness of the huge gaps in German sustainability policies, a group of 39 CSOs published a position paper (Feb 2016) outlining what initial steps and overall objectives should be considered unique to each of the 17 goals. The coalition has called for goals, indicators and strategy plans to be implemented under 3 categories: i) within Germany; ii) effects outside Germany; and iii) supporting countries in the global south with SDG implementation. Some CSOs are currently also working on a common statement on the National Sustainability Strategy.

German CSOs have been strongly involved in the negotiation process of the SDG, also through various consultations with the government. Since the beginning, CSOs have also been part of the German delegation to the HLPF. For both the HLPF report and the revision of the National Sustainability Strategy, German CSOs have been consulted. However, one major issue has been that drafts were only shared in their final stages and input from civil society is seldom included in the final report. There is also particular concern regarding the lack of transparency in these processes. Finally, so far the government has not come up with a proposal on how to engage civil society regularly in monitoring the implementation of the SDGs. Therefore, though the German government has adopted a strong position in terms of a multi-stakeholder approach, but there is still considerable work to be delivered in order to ensure spaces for meaningful participation across all parts of civil society.



## Middle East and North Africa

### *Egypt*

Egypt initially launched a National Strategy in March 2015 for sustainable development during the Economic Development Conference in Sharm El-Sheikh following a two years of a preparatory process. The final strategy, Egypt's Vision 2030, was officially launched in February 2016. During the SDGs adoption in UNGA, Egypt's statement stressed on the linkage between the SDGs and people's uprisings in Egypt, noting that the right to development and providing a better standard of living was amongst the top priorities of the Egyptian people.

The final Vision 2030 document covered economic, social, environment, energy and transparency dimensions, but lacked strategy by civil society groups in Egypt. They note that a worrying feature of the framework for Egypt's national sustainable developmental strategy is the lack of a detailed roadmap to achieve several key goals, especially reducing poverty and unemployment and tackling the informal sector, for which it also lacks indicators.

For the implementation of the SDGs, it is noted that efforts are underway to align the Strategy's key performance indicators to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. It is also noted that the Egyptian Government formally expressed to the UN systems in Egypt, including the UNDP, the need for coordination and technical support to advance the 2030 Agenda. This push for coordination includes stakeholder engagement, M&E, reporting, localizing the SDGs and data. Under the partnership established between the UNDP Egypt and the Ministry of International Cooperation (MOIC) a series of consultation workshops will be organized in June 2016 for officials, experts and other relevant stakeholders (to be selected by MOIC Secretariat).

Members of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) are actively engaged in monitoring the implementation of Agenda 2030 and are undertaking national assessment reports particularly for Goal 1, 8 and 10. These reports look at the prioritization and localization of the SDGs, awareness raising activities on Agenda 2030 and the role of CSOs. The report highlights challenges and puts forward a set of recommendations. Many of these groups are registered to attend the HLPF, moreover, the groups contributed to the Social Watch 2016 reports that aimed at bringing Spotlight reports for selected countries from the region that identify challenges and recommendations for the implementation of Agenda 2030.

### *Morocco*

In 2015 the High Commission for Planning published the National Report that assessed the situation in Morocco from MDGs to SDGs. The report focused on achievements and challenges for sustainable development in Morocco and noted that "a communication plan will be implemented to raise the awareness of decision-makers, NGOs and the public at large as to the results of the MDGs, and the new commitments to be taken up by our country for the post-2015 period". The UNDAF in Morocco process is considered as opportunity to promote, discuss and mainstream the SDGs in line with the national priorities. This initiative engages more than 100 partners from the Government, parliament, private sector and NGOs.

Under the SD2015 project funded by the European Commission, Morocco was among the countries where UN DESA Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) organized multi-stakeholder consultations. These capacity building events aimed to foster multi-stakeholder cooperation for accountability and transparency, and support national efforts to strategize future engagement with the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

A national consultation was held on civil society & other national stakeholder's engagement in the development and implementation of the SDGs Roadmap on 5 May 2016. Morocco is also among the 8 pilot countries where UNDP, is mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda through its mainstreaming, acceleration, and policy support (MAPS) approach.

UNSDSN, WBCSD and ICLEI engagement in the country is most apparent at the environmental level, in particular given that Morocco will host the COP22 in November 2016. Recently, during the Climate Action Summit in May 2016 a MoU was signed among the Moroccan Minister in Charge of Environment and these three stakeholders to prepare the organization of a conference to convene key players for deliver-

ing coordinated solutions to emissions reduction. The conference, bringing these stakeholders aims at enhancing global exchange and partnerships for technology solutions between all levels of governments, businesses, academia, and civil society organizations.

## Africa

### *Sierra Leone*

The implementation of the SDGs in Sierra Leone is being led by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The ministry has begun engaging with non-state actors and plans to popularize the SDGs at district level in the local language of Creole, however engagement outside of the ministry has been very minimal. As of now there is a lack of information sharing, and civil society is unaware of the government's official plans and strategies surrounding the SDG process.

The state of civil society is currently weak in Sierra Leone, since the country is recovering from major obstacles such as the Ebola crisis. CSO coordination is not strong at a national level, which makes it difficult to advocate for inclusion in the drafting process of the SDG plans and implementation strategies. CSOs have begun strategizing on the creation of a national platform on the SDGs, to advocate for inclusion in the planning process led by the Ministry as it moves forward.

### *Togo*

The implementation of the SDGs in Togo is being led by the Ministry of Planning and Development. The mapping process has begun with a seminar of the prioritization of SDGs and targets. Government representatives, local governments, and the private sector were invited, yet only a few CSOs were included.

Although Togo has volunteered to be evaluated and to submit national reports at the HLPF, it does not seem that SDG implementation is a priority within the government due to other national issues. This is apparent when reading the first draft of the report as it is more focused on broad policy direction rather than practical implementation. Some of the major challenges of Agenda 2030 in Togo are financial support and capacity building on the concept of SDGs as most of civil society has yet to have a strong comprehension of the agenda.

CSO consultations have been limited and have been quite exclusive thus far by the government and national planning committee. In efforts to create an open consultative process, a few CSOs are creating a national coalition to advocate for inclusion.

### *Uganda*

Civil society in Uganda is well organized under national platforms and has been very involved with the Ugandan government as well as with multiple stakeholder groups to facilitate an open SDG process.

Uganda National NGO Forum hosts the National Core CSO Reference Group on SDGs. The group meets often both physically and online to update on the progress so far on their engagements on the implementation of the SDGs. Most CSOs in Uganda are already engaging with the various Government Institutions on the implementation of the SDGs such as the Ministry of Water, and the Ministry of Gender among others on clean water and women's empowerment respectively.

Furthermore, there has been close collaboration with the government. The Uganda National NGO Forum is part of the multi sector technical committee for the National Review report and as well as part of the

drafting team of the same report. This space is an opportunity for CSOs in Uganda to make contributions and also participate in the implementation of the SDGs.

The institution also sits on the Communication and Advocacy Task group chaired by the Office of the Prime Minister which has opened CSO space in the implementation of the SDGs. The core reference group is also preparing a CSO report on Uganda's readiness on the implementation of the SDGs ahead of the HLPF in July, this will be shared with the relevant authorities before July.

The National Core CSO Reference Group is planning to run a massive awareness campaign, to encourage domestication and ownership of the SDGs; development of a Citizen Score Card as a means of monitoring the extent of implementation of the SDGs; and engaging the relevant authorities on how best to implement the 2030 Agenda

The various CSOs involved in the will engage Government Institutions and Departments on the Goals through capacity building at both planning and implementation level, monitoring the implementation of the second National Development Plan, translating the Goals into local languages to ensure they are understandable to all citizens. These CSOs will also carry out several evaluation meetings with the implementers to assess progress of implementation of the SDGs and also devise the best way forward.

## Latin America and the Caribbean

### *Venezuela*

The sustainable development plan in Venezuela has been carried out by the government, but there has been a lack of information sharing with civil society. The Venezuelan State has decided to align the 2030 Agenda with the National Human Rights Plan, whose production had little or no participation of independent civil society organizations and human rights activists. Unfortunately, communication and relationships of independent CSOs with the Venezuelan government are challenging due to the limited engagement maintained by the government in reference to independent CSOs.

The UNDP expert on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Venezuela, Gonzalo Pizarro, held working sessions with national authorities, to guide them in the preparation of the national report for the HLPF 2016. The sessions were held between May 30th and June 3th, and the agencies were: the Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of People's Power for Planning and the National Statistics Institute among others.

Civil society has created a separate plan to implement and monitor the SDGs within a local context. The NGO network, Sinergia, has promoted not only a diagnosis of the Venezuelan context as a starting point for the new period 2015-2030, but also proposed, the different initiatives and contributions that could be delivered by various representatives of Venezuelan civil society.

The report: "Indicators and a monitoring framework for Sustainable Development Goals: Launching a Data Revolution for the SDGs" prepared in May 2015 by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network Leadership Council, as well as the results of a national survey, conducted in 2015 by Sinergia and the Venezuelan CSO Networks Platform (with the participation and contributions of nearly 200 organizations), served to propose a first effort for monitoring and control. They are currently identifying partnerships with institutions (public and private, practitioners or academic experts), to establish reliable national monitoring systems.

## CONCLUSIONS

As set out above, the picture for engagement of civil society is highly variable. This is perhaps not surprising, as this is the first year for national reviews and many countries are still in the planning phase in terms of their approach to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

As set out above there are several clear recommendations to governments to ensure that they engage in a broad consultative process as they move forward in setting out their plans for implementation, follow-up and review. As this is still the first year, it is to be expected that the process for delivery is still being defined.

In order to deliver a truly transformative agenda, the following recommendations will ensure real change:

1. Protection of civil society and civic space
2. Coordination of civil society at national level, led by strong local networks
3. Monitoring and review by civil society
4. Timely and meaningful consultation processes
5. A dedicated lead body in the government to provide strategic oversight
6. Co-design of SDG country level implementation to set out a transformative agenda

## **ANNEX: CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS**

ECONOMIC JUSTICE NETWORK SIERRA LEONE

JEUNES VERT TOGO

GCAP TOGO

CHALLENGES INTERNATIONAL

UGANDA NGO PLATFORM

ASIA DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

PHILIPPINE RURAL RECONSTRUCTION MOVEMENT

NETWORK OF ESTONIAN NONPROFIT ORGANISATIONS (NENO)

ESTONIAN ROUNDTABLE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

COORDINATION SUD

THE FINNISH NGDO PLATFORM TO THE EU - KEHYS

SINERGIA

ANND

SAMOA UMBRELLA FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (SUNGO)

PIANGO

GERMAN NGO FORUM ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (FORUM UMWELT UND ENTWICKLUNG)

## MORE INFORMATION

If you are interested in getting to know this process and to engage with the key opportunities described, you can start by reviewing the following websites:

UN DESA Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

Action for Sustainable Development: <http://action4sd.org/>

Please get in touch with us for further information: Suhani Bhushan at [info@action4sd.org](mailto:info@action4sd.org)