

2020 VNR Labs - Recovering Better

7-16 July 2020

Summary

Introduction

In 2020, a series of 17 VNR Labs was convened in the margins of the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The VNR Labs provide an informal platform for experience sharing and reflection on key aspects of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) and 2030 Agenda implementation. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a common theme addressed throughout the seventeen Labs was “Recovering Better.” All Labs were held in virtual format.

Representatives from Member States, the UN system and Major Groups and other stakeholders discussed cross-cutting themes, including policy coherence, the principle of leaving no one behind, data and statistics, resource mobilization and partnerships, amongst others. In addition, VNR Labs 14, 15 and 17 provided three countries, Mozambique, Moldova and Finland, presenting their VNRs in 2020 with the opportunity to expand on the review experience and share lessons learned on the national process with peers.

The informal reflection sessions held under the Chatham House rule were organized by UN DESA divisions, partners, and United Nations entities, throughout the duration of the HLPF from 7 to 16 July 2020. For the concept notes and further information on individual Labs, please see:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020/#labs>

VNR Lab 1 Data-driven programming and the Voluntary National Reviews

7 July, 800 – 900 am

The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework is informed by Government prioritization, planning, implementation and reporting vis-à-vis the 2030 Agenda, including the preparation of evidence-based Voluntary National Reviews based on SDG indicators. The UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) builds on processes such as the Voluntary National Reviews, and the country-specific findings and recommendations of UN principal organs. As per the proposal of the Secretary-General in his report 2020 report on QCPR implementation, UNCTs should work to strengthen their support to countries conducting these VNRs and ensure the reviews’ key findings inform the CCA and the Cooperation Framework.

The investments in UN reform are already yielding results immediate and longer-term response to the COVID-19 crisis. UNCTs under the leadership of the RCs are providing an integrated whole-of-system support to the countries in the preparedness and response to COVID-19. The support is leveraging the reinvigorated UN Development System by tapping into the comparative advantages of specific entities, WHO on Health, OCHA on humanitarian coordination, and UNDP as the technical lead for the socio-economic response.

This VNR lab invited Resident Coordinators and other stakeholders to reflect on their experience in connecting the Voluntary National Review to the CCA and Cooperation Framework, as well as to solicit ideas on how this can be strengthened in the next QCPR cycle, how RCs and UNCTs can better support Governments with the socio-economic response to COVID-19, and how to best implement decisions taken in the 74th session of the General Assembly related to the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The [COVID-19](#) pandemic presents a multi-faceted challenge for the 2030 Agenda implementation. While the impact of the pandemic will vary from country to country, it will most likely increase poverty and inequalities at a global scale, making the achievement of the SDGs even more urgent. How do we use data to help suppress the virus, save lives and build back better? This was the challenge set by the Secretary-General in his [Data Strategy](#). In line with this, and the [UN framework](#) to address the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, the UN development system has switched to emergency mode, with data at the center of its commitment to effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability. With the support from the UN Development Coordination Office, the [UNSDG](#) has launched a new [COVID-19 data portal](#) to track the roll-out of the socio-economic framework across countries, as UNCTs develop and implement plans to support Government in their response efforts, as well as tracking and visualizing the beneficiaries of UN programmes.

Taken together, the new UN reform documents, UN INFO, and the COVID-19 data portal represent a revolution in transparency and accountability for the UN system. They are also one of the many outcomes of the investments made by Member States in the UN development system reform. They are managed by the new and strengthened capacities of the [UN Development Coordination Office](#), and they offer easily accessible platforms to systematize and utilize the collective know-how of the United Nations' 131 country teams – serving 162 countries and territories. The reform has brought bold changes to the UN development system: a new generation of country teams have emerged, centred around a strategic Cooperation Framework and led by an impartial, independent and empowered resident coordinator. The country-level response to COVID-19, led by Resident Coordinators and drawing from the full network of global, regional and country-level expertise of the UN has tackled all facets of the pandemic and we are seeing results in both the immediate and longer-term response.

VNR Lab 2: Analyzing VNRs- What did we learn so far?

7 July 2020, 12:30 to 2:00 PM

The Lab was organized by DESA EAPD/Development Policy Branch and included speakers from the Committee for Development Policy, the UN system, civil society and from selected countries.

Building on the work that the United Nations Committee for Development Policy (CDP) has done on VNRs since 2017, the Lab reflected on what we have learnt so far about analyzing the VNRs. The concept of “Leaving no one behind (LNOB)” was noted as the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).. Among other findings, the Lab noted that very few VNRs describe adequate strategies for implementing LNOB. While most countries acknowledge it, VNRs often remain vague on how to implement it in practice. Most address children and youth, disabled, women and the elderly. Over a half of countries mention refugees and migrants but fewer countries address ethnic/religious/racial groups, and indigenous groups. Furthermore, regarding inequalities, it was noted that several countries succeeded in increasing the income of the bottom 40% more than the national average.

Participants also noted that there has been increased national ownership and coverage of all SDGs and more alignment with National Development Plans. On the other side, participants noted that VNRs need to be more interactive for mutual learning and exchange. Other lessons learnt include that the majority of countries now provide space for formal stakeholder engagement, and most countries have provided a baseline of data. More countries refer to ‘leaving no one behind’ but actual targeted support is still insufficient.

The discussion also stressed the need to use the expertise from the evaluation community and engage with gender machineries to provide evidence for advocacy. Furthermore, more evaluation of national gender policies plans and strategies need to feed into VNRs processes .

The Lab heard concrete examples of emerging good practice from selected Member States, including the importance of data disaggregation and of going beyond data presentation, to monitoring systems that ensure accountability for implementing LNOB, as well as the development of a welfare state with a Marshall Plan against poverty to ensure LNOB. The Lab also discussed how these practices can be used for mutual learning for implementing the 2030 Agenda.

VNR Lab 3. Multi-level governance and subnational reporting on VNRs and VLRs

Wednesday 8 July 2020, 8:00-9:00 am

This VNR Lab highlighted the need for effective multi-level governance for SDG implementation and showcased examples of interlinkages between the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and subnational reviews, also called the Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), and was organized jointly by DESA and UN-Habitat. Speakers of the session included representatives of the European Commission, a national government and several cities.

Key points from the presentations and ensuing discussion included the following:

There is a need to adopt a broader territorial approach to SDG implementation. In order to ensure a meaningful monitoring and follow-up of SDG progress, the VNRs should utilize and incorporate the VLRs and information gathered at the subnational level.

The value of peer learning and sharing of good practices also between different levels of governance should be more widely recognized. Participants shared examples of useful city networks, twinning exercises and facilitated peer learning initiatives which have added value to their SDG implementation and review preparations. Such initiatives have utilized study visits, webinars and direct collaboration between city officials on a variety of themes, ranging from waste and water management to transport solutions and climate action.

At the subnational level, many cities and regions have been striving towards sustainable development already for years but have not necessarily connected with the SDG framework. Now, over 200 municipalities and regions around the world are using the SDGs as a shared language and conducting their own VLRs. The next step would be to encourage these actors to integrate the SDGs also in their strategies, policies, and budgets to a growing degree.

There are a number of guidance materials for the VLRs which can prove useful for cities and regions starting their reviews, including on the use of indicators and data gathering. There is a need to ensure that these guidance materials are easily accessible and do not create an unnecessary barrier for participation for those cities and regions with weaker capacities, but rather help them start the process.

Conducting the VNR and VLRs simultaneously and in a collaborative manner within a country can bring immense added benefits from increased understanding between different levels to overall sharing of good and bad experiences of the review processes. However, coordination or alignment of VNRs and VLRs is

not possible in all cases, and independent cities and regions should be supported in these efforts since their SDG implementation actions can contribute greatly to the global progress.

Institutionalized multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms, such as sustainable development committees and councils, at the national level can be a useful way for ensuring meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders in SDG planning, implementation and monitoring. There is a need to ensure that people at the grassroots level understand the value of SDG implementation and their own role in it. Individuals must see the connection between their lives and the SDGs at every day, human level. In this context, the VLR can be a good tool for communication as well as for increasing engagement and ownership. A review can also be a tool for ensuring transparency of actions at all levels of governance.

VNR Lab 4: Engaging Social Groups in the VNR Process – A Case Study of Persons with Disabilities and Indigenous Peoples

8 July 2020, 1230 – 2 pm

This lab was organized by UN DESA/DISD to discuss the experiences in engaging persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples in the VNR reporting processes, identify obstacles, best practices and lessons that can be learned to reach those furthest behind and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

During the discussion, speakers strongly underlined the importance of the meaningful participation of indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities before and during the VNR process. They must be properly consulted, including through their representative organizations at the beginning and throughout the process. The national and subnational processes must provide ample opportunities for persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples to identify their needs and priorities aimed at the implementation of the UN Declaration the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) shared their experience of successful advocacy by investing on coordination mechanism to mainstream disability within the broader development agenda and working closely with other constituencies and equipping grassroots organizations to implement the SDGs with a human rights-based approach.

In the case of indigenous peoples, participants reiterated the relatively scarce attention to indigenous peoples in many VNRs, which is a negative indicator of reaching those furthest behind. Further, indigenous peoples reminded participants how difficult it was to promote the recognition of their rights as holders of individual and collective rights during the negotiation of the 2030 Agenda and to that end, collective right are not mentioned.

The Lab concluded that some progress has been made to include the perspectives and ensure the participation of indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities in the VNR process at national and at the HLPF itself. The lack of disaggregated data for indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities used in the VNRs must change if countries want to achieve their commitments to monitor the progress of the SDGs. Moreover, there is a need to supplement national statistics with co-generated and non-traditional methods of collecting data.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the HLPF 2021 could provide information on the responses and measures taken by countries for persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. However, this is, difficult unless data is disaggregated.

It is important to continue reminding Member States to respond to the rights of indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD).

The two critical aspects emerged from the discussions were (1) if the needs and priorities of indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities are to be adequately reflected in the VNR processes, they must be meaningfully engaged at every stage, and (2) to ensure that the VNR processes lead to implementation at the national level, there is an ongoing need to strengthen stakeholders' partnerships between Member States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations.

Business, as usual, is no longer an option if we are to leave no one behind and achieve the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Lab 5. Innovative approaches to spur action and delivery on the 2030 Agenda: lessons from the regions.

9 July, 7:00 - 8:00 am

Organized by the Regional Commissions, the 2020 VNR Lab built on lessons emanating from VNR preparation processes in the regions, with a focus on discussing innovative approaches emerging in the regions to accelerate action on SDGs as countries are striving to overcome and build back better from COVID-19 and inject momentum into the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

During the Lab, presenters shared perspectives and lessons learned in translating the 2030 Agenda into the respective national and local realities and how tools and mechanisms developed at the regional level were supporting their implementation efforts. In that context, the following innovative approaches to implementation were showcased: 1) the twinning of VNR countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including its potential to foster South-South Cooperation and to facilitate regional peer-learning; 2) the development of Voluntary Local Reviews in Africa, which was contributing to strengthening accountability to citizens and to implementing the principle of Leaving No-one Behind; 3) the establishment of VNR “communities of practice” in Latin America and the Caribbean and the critical role of the regional level to exchange knowledge and best practices; 4) the role of cities and the local level in SDG implementation and in building resilience in the UNECE region, in particular in a Covid-19 context, 5) and the community of practice and dedicated knowledge, learning and collaborative platform in the Arab region, as well as the specific challenges of countries in conflict and the importance of nexus approaches to development. In the course of the discussion, the importance of cross-regional learning, partnerships, collaboration in the regions, including joint efforts by the Regional Commissions and UN Country Teams, and overall leveraging of the wealth of experiences existing at the regional level were highlighted, in particular in the context of Covid-19 recovery efforts and the Decade of Action and Delivery on Sustainable Development.

Lab 6. VNR Town Halls – Building Momentum for the VNRs by Engaging All

9 July 2020, 8:00-9:00 am

The VNR Town Hall Lab provided space for conversation among Member States, civil society representatives, youth and other stakeholders to spotlight innovation and successful collaborations across sectors in support of Voluntary National Reviews, with the aim of raising ambition and catalyzing action on the ground as we recover better in the Decade of Action and Delivery.

Though the VNRs measure progress at the national level, they also serve as barometers for partnerships across all levels. COVID-19 is the latest global challenge to demonstrate the importance of collaboration across borders and at the subnational level, especially in the collection and dissemination of data, which remain persistent challenges in tracking SDG progress. Strategic partnerships across sectors and geographies are critical to exchange experiences, and accurate, reliable data: these exchanges become especially important as traditional sources of information continue to evolve.

The 2030 Agenda not only requires the engagement of all citizens, but for each individual to actively contribute towards the transformation sought. The VNRs can be tools to support a greater understanding of both the Agenda and of national progress, and the pandemic presents a window of opportunity by highlighting the urgency of the SDGs and can drive people to become advocates. Awareness and communication of the SDGs are key.

All levels of government must be activated around the 2030 Agenda. Parliaments in particular can function as a link between the global and local levels, and there is untapped potential to involve them in both implementation and in promoting civic engagement. Engaging parliamentarians has a quantifiable impact and, in some cases, has increased citizen awareness by approximately 50%.

Age should not be a barrier for action, as young people have demonstrated their ability to engage and contribute to SDG implementation by organizing around the SDGs, designing and developing their own data collection tools, and building processes that are inclusive across geographic and accessibility lines.

Ultimately civic engagement relies on communication, education, and awareness. Increased awareness plays a role in spurring innovation through incentive, especially among the private sector. A handful of companies have begun to report on their SDG progress, though with discrepancies and without clear pathways to VNRs, data monitoring, and accountability mechanisms. Breaking down pre-existing silos and creating platforms for all actors supports the overall SDG framework, while bringing in different voices and strengthening reporting.

The Lab closed with participants contributing key takeaways into a word cloud.

VNR Lab 7. Reflecting population data and migration trends in the VNRs

9 July, 12:00-1:00 pm

The Population Division organized on 9 July 2020, a VNR lab on reflecting population data including migration trends in the Voluntary National Reports presented by Member States. The event is part of the VNR Labs series of the High Level Political Forum. This VNR lab brought together national policymakers and experts from countries that have recently prepared VNRs, as well as representatives of international organizations and other stakeholders, with a view to exchanging knowledge and sharing good practices on the use of population data, including data on migration, for VNRs and national SDG monitoring.

Demographic data are essential to making sound policy decisions. The work of the Population Division in the area of monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was introduced, including its involvement producing some SDGs indicators and providing basic population data for others. In their presentations, the panelists reflected on the experience of their countries in integrating population data and indicators into their VNRs.

The meeting discussed a concern on the use of national versus UN data in the VNR reports. There were not always sufficient demographic data in preparing VNR reports. A speaker from a country presenting its first VNR this year noted that the country was facing a population decline and that the negative net migration had doubled during the past eight years. The meeting discussed the challenge posed by the lack of data on internal and international migration. There was also a discussion on the lack of data at the local level and the need to use big data in the VNRs.

In the ensuing discussions, representatives were asked to make recommendations to accelerate the availability, quality and comparability of population data, including migration trends, for their next series of VNRs. In their responses, they mentioned the importance of taking into account the impact on Covid-19 on sustainable development, the need to better understand population data, the importance to select the

priorities ahead of time before the preparation of the VNR report, and the need to increase the data literacy of the population in order to ensure institutional memory. It was also mentioned that more stakeholders should be involved in the preparation of the VNRs.

VNR Lab 8: Bridging the policy-statistics gap: Evidence-based VNRs in the time of COVID-19 Pandemic

9 July, 1:00-2:00 pm

The UN Statistics Division organized VNR Lab 8 ([programme](#)) which brought together national statisticians and policy makers from various countries who had prepared VNRs in 2020.

Panelists presented experiences from work on the preparation of the VNR on the data side and shared experiences around the challenges that the COVID-19 crisis has brought in terms of data collection and in providing timely and quality information on the impact of SDG achievements. This was complemented by a presentation of *The Sustainable Development Report 2020*.

Panelists also addressed questions received during registration focusing on disaggregated data, how to maintain focus on the SDGs while combating COVID-19 as well as effectively engaging with policy-makers.

VNR Lab 9: Integrating the 2030 Agenda into national development plans and strategies: Emerging lessons learned

10 July, 8:00-9:00 am

This Lab explored the experiences and lessons learned integrating the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into national planning frameworks. The Lab featured one speaker from academia and two country representatives, who shared their experience with development of national plans and strategies.

At outset, it was pointed out that the past decade has seen a resurgence in development planning. The large proportion of plans (60 per cent plus) based on communicative rationality is a key feature of the “new national planning”. It was explained that communicative rationality is based on the search for pragmatic improvement, grounded in a broad consensus in a specific context, and often allied with adaptive or “agile” management style. By contrast, linear/ends-means rationality is the traditional form of planning, associated with goals or targets, tools such as results-based management, input-output tables, social cost-benefit analysis, and the overall search for specific end point or “optimal” solution. Other important characteristics of development planning that were identified are: incorporation of a bottom-up approach, analytical rigour and a solid evidence base, and the degree to which the planning process has benefited from stakeholder engagement (social embeddedness). It was underlined that national development is not just a technical exercise, but also has political aspects.

Key points from the presentations and ensuing discussion included the following:

- The value of a carefully structured process to prepare the national plan, with an accent on broad-based participation, to arrive at the overall, strategic goals of the plan. It was mentioned that public consultation took place at several stages, during the development phase and with respect to the final draft. It was noted that during the plan preparation process vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and elderly persons were identified and consulted. The need to conduct rigorous monitoring was underlined.

- The broad, long-term strategies need to be translated into short-term delivery documents whether government action plans or three-year development plans. Similarly, plan priorities require cascading into sectoral plans and strategies.
- The importance of institutional arrangements that ensure SDG integration in the national planning process and provide oversight and strategic guidance was highlighted. The mainstreaming of other commitments, such as the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the SAMOA Pathway was also noted.
- The question was raised how challenges raised identified during the VNR preparation are fed back into the policy process, such as through roadmaps. It was mentioned that COVID-19 has brought to the fore how countries need to retain the flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances, without losing the focus on long-term goals. The potential to leverage support from international organizations was referred to, as was the usefulness of peer-learning through bilateral exchanges and informal reviews. The need to localize/redefine targets for the local context was referred to, as was the importance of ensuring coherence across short and mid-term sectoral targets in meeting long-term strategic goals. The question was also posed about what could be done to ensure continuity with changes in government.

Lab 10: What should institutions look like to support SDG implementation and how best to reflect it in VNR reporting?

Friday, 10 July, 12:30 - 2 pm

VNR Lab 10 focused on what institutions should look like to support accelerated implementation of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including at the sub-national level, and how to reflect progress in achieving more effective governance for sustainable development in VNR reporting. Representatives of four countries shared good practices and discussed concrete challenges in strengthening institutional capabilities for SDG implementation. The panel also included a representative of the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Experts from the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) served as moderator and discussant.

As a general point, the importance of institutions for SDG acceleration and transformative change was underlined. In this regard, it was noted that it is important to have an institutional agenda from the start, as business-as-usual SDG implementation runs the risks of policy incoherence and silo implementation. The institutional framework for the SDGs must cover the whole policy cycle and enable the engagement of all actors. It was underscored that political will to implement the SDGs and a shared vision of how to realize the goals among the government and non-State actors were preconditions for success.

Lab 11 Aligning reporting processes: Voluntary National Reviews and international human rights mechanisms

Monday, 13 July, 8:00-9:00 am

Given the mutually reinforcing relationship between human rights and the 2030 Agenda, crucial for accelerating progress towards achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind, this VNR Lab showcased the ways to effectively and systematically link VNR engagement with engagement and work conducted under the international human rights mechanisms.

Government and civil society representatives from Austria, Samoa, Costa Rica, Ukraine and Nigeria demonstrated how aligning reporting processes led to concrete benefits, such as the improved ability to integrate human rights in SDG implementation and to link up SDGs and their targets with national human rights policies and programs, more efficient and participatory data collection, and enhanced analysis.

Emerging good practices and experiences in aligning VNR reporting with human rights mechanisms:

- Integrated approach between different national coordinating bodies, with clear roles and responsibilities, including for the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF), which can collaborate with and contribute to national SDG implementation and reporting processes;
- Enhanced coordination among ministries leading VNR and human rights reporting, resulting in reduced reporting burdens, enhanced reporting coherence, and clear reporting calendars;
- Institutional framework for cooperation among human rights and development actors, such as national coordination bodies, relevant ministries, sectors and stakeholders, including civil society (e.g. NMRF or NHRI as standing member of the SDG implementation body or VNR drafting group);
- Systematically linking human rights recommendations with relevant SDGs and targets in a national online database (NRTD) and when conducting follow up and reporting;
- Recommendations from human rights mechanisms (which are increasingly linked to the SDGs) can be used to develop a national action plan, which can also advance human rights-based implementation of the SDGs and facilitate VNR reporting.

Aligning VNR and human rights reporting and follow up can:

- Accelerate implementation of the human rights and 2030 agendas and help build back better;
- allow for more meaningful participation;
- save resources, as inputs can feed into several processes;
- result in improved coordination and predictability;
- facilitate better identification of those at risk of being left behind;
- result in improved policies and programs in the development and human rights contexts.

Enhanced implementation of recommendations from human rights mechanisms and their thematic guidance addresses root causes slowing down the pace of sustainable development, like inequality and discrimination. The speakers acknowledged that while some positive steps are being taken, room for improvement remains as aligning human rights and VNR reporting is not yet done as a matter of course, and the integration of human rights norms and standards in development policies and programs could also be further developed.

VNR Lab 12: Financing health systems to strengthen preparedness for future shocks

13 July 2020, 1230 pm – 2 pm

VNR Lab 12, held on 13 July 2020, brought together government representatives, international organizations, civil society and stakeholders in the realm of health to outline strategies and policy options for Financing health systems to strengthen preparedness for future shocks. The VNR Lab was co-organized by the UN DESA Financing for Sustainable Development Office, WHO and UHC2030.

The Lab highlighted the challenges in health systems uncovered by the COVID-19 pandemic, stressing that the current system does not work for everyone and leaves some behind. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of universal, public health systems as backbone of a resilient society and world in response to the pandemic. Speakers underlined the shortcomings of current actions and appealed for greater global action to create a robust and resilient health system that can mitigate future shocks.

Speakers also pointed out the discrepancy between the public and private sector responses to the current crisis and called for greater partnership between the sectors to finance resilience in the health sector. Speakers appealed for a shift towards value-based health services, by shifting expenditures to more valuable areas such as common goods. Discussions also underlined the importance of a multi-sectoral approach in

creating stable health systems. Non-health related sectors hold crucial competencies that support a stable and resilient health care system, which must be included in the discussions and the construction of new and more resilient systems.

VNR Lab 13: Beyond the Voluntary National Reviews: mobilizing support and building national partnerships

14 July, 800 – 900 am

It is widely recognized that the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires a transformation in our societies that can only be achieved through engaging and leveraging the unique roles and resources of all sectors and stakeholders of society. The VNR Lab on “*Beyond the VNRs: mobilizing support and building national partnerships*” will explore and showcase practices on how countries can systematically catalyze national multi-stakeholder partnerships for mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support implementation of the SDGs, including through their VNR process. The Lab also explored how countries can help creating an enabling environment that may encourage and foster collaboration across stakeholders.

The Lab discussed ways for governments to ensure an enabling environment for mobilizing support and fostering national partnerships, and discussed examples policy and legislation that actively supported partnerships for sustainable development. It also reviewed examples of national partnerships for SDG collaboration.

VNR Lab 14: National experience of the VNR process: Mozambique

14 July, 12:30-2:00 pm

The VNR lab, organized by the DESA Office for Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development, the DESA Statistics Division and the Government of Mozambique, focused on data for national implementation of the SDGs and the Voluntary National Review process in Mozambique ([programme](#)). Opening remarks were given by representatives of DESA and the National Statistics Institute of Mozambique. Experiences from the preparation of the VNR were shared by the national SDG focal point at the Ministry of Economy and Finance, followed by a presentation from the SDG focal point at the National Statistics Institute of Mozambique, who discussed the process of designing the national SDG Indicator Framework, including the coordinating role of the National Statistics Office with regard to the compilation of data for global and national SDG indicators and the work to disseminate the indicators via a national reporting platform.

The VNR lab also included interventions from a number of stakeholders highlighting their involvement in the process of preparing the VNR report. A lively discussion was generated, focusing on the themes of monitoring progress toward the achievement of the SDGs and the engagement and participation of civil society.

VNR Lab 15: Children-sensitive VNRs

15 July, 730 – 900 am

The VNR Lab was co-organized by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (OSRSG-VAC) and the United Nations International Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and attracted nearly 200 attendees.

The programme was organized in two parts: four expert presentations, and overviews of good practices shared by five Member States. A geographically diverse panel joined the SRSG in an interactive dialogue. The panellists expressed the importance of integrating child rights and voices into their VNR processes and offered examples.

The Lab highlighted how inclusive and participatory VNR processes can help ensure that children's wellbeing and protection is at the centre of national development planning and accelerate progress towards reaching the SDGs.

The Lab also drew attention to the need to maintain national budgets for the health, education and protection of children from violence, even in the face of the global economic crisis created by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

VNR Lab 16: National experience of the SDG implementation and review processes: Republic of Moldova

15 July 2020, 1230 – 2 pm

Moldova was part of the 2020 Voluntary National Review of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and is conducted its first VNR Lab during the 2020 HLPF.

The objective of the VNR Lab was to present the country's experience in incorporating the 2030 Agenda into national policy and statistical frameworks, to present some of the lessons learned during the SDG implementation, to present the core principles that guided the 2020 VNR process and last but not least to present the country's opportunities in terms of sustainable development.

The Lab reviewed process and progress in the VNR preparations in the country. Also presented was a session on emerging development opportunities and measures aimed at accelerating achievement of SDGs in the Republic of Moldova. There was also a discussion on "Unmuting the voice of youth and the implementation of the SDGs."

VNR Lab 17: National experiences on the VNR process: Finland

16 July 2020, 8.00 – 9.00 am

VNR Lab 17 focused on the concrete involvement of a wide range of Finnish stakeholders in the actual process of writing the VNR report. The Lab discussed how different stakeholders as well as Statistics Finland were engaged, how the stakeholders themselves experienced the process, and how the Peer Dialogue contributed to the report.

The VNR lab also discussed linkages between VNR and Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). Two Finnish cities, namely Espoo and Turku, had prepared their VLRs for this year, and explored the synergies that existed between local and national reporting.

Finally, the Lab highlighted Finland's governance framework for sustainable development and the country's institutional mechanisms and innovative practices for stakeholder engagement.
