Toolkit for a People's Scorecard

Independent Civil Society Assessment of National Delivery of the 2030 Agenda

2022 edition

ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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People's Scorecard on the 2030 Agenda

Introduction: Developing an Independent Civil Society Report on SDG Progress

In 2015, world leaders adopted a series of agreements to begin a critical shift away from the current unsustainable and unjust development model to a more just, equal and sustainable world under the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement. Knowledge about these commitments which were made on behalf of all citizens across the world by their leaders is patchy at best and engagement is often still very limited. There is therefore a real challenge to ensure the changes heralded by the commitments happen and to deliver meaningful transformative actions.

Civil society is a crucial actor in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). It has a key role to play in raising awareness, keeping the spotlight on these commitments and calling for accountability. Civil society organisations are increasingly active on the planning, implementation and monitoring of the Agenda, and above all in holding leaders to account for the commitments they have made.

In order to ensure effective delivery of the 2030 Agenda, governments committed to a follow up and review process that should be "robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent, and integrated"; and that monitoring and accountability on progress should be carried out with data that is "high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts" (SDG 17.18).

In order to ensure these objectives are achieved there is a critical need to engage a wide range of civil society organisations in the process and to find innovative ways to enable all voices to be heard.

This toolkit builds on the earlier template produced by Action for Sustainable Development for a 'Civil Society Report' undertaken in parallel to the official Voluntary National Review process. At this stage, as we are into the second cycle of review, this toolkit aims to go further than earlier templates, setting out the ways that civil society organisations can monitor delivery of the Goals independently, raise greater awareness of the commitments made by governments to their citizens as well as respond to government reviews.

These reviews take place on a regular basis and form the basis for the reporting to the High Level Political Forum, held under the auspices of the UN every July. The reviews are called Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and have been in progress since 2016, and will run until 2030.

The purpose of developing a Scorecard is to provide an opportunity for civil society organisations to review delivery of the 2030 Agenda in their own country.

The toolkit aims to provide key steps for national civil society coalitions:
1. How to develop an inclusive national civil society process;
2. How to use the Scorecard to deliver transformation;
3. Case study examples of good practice

The toolkit draws from the experience of A4SD members in countries where a national review process has already been conducted. It aims to provide advice on a straightforward accessible process that can be adapted to suit different levels of capacity and experience.

Step by step guide to develop an inclusive national civil society process for a People's Scorecard

In order to make full use of the opportunity provided by a Voluntary National Review, it is useful to go further than responding to official government plans and reports. We can now look back on the first cycle of implementation, and this enables us to develop an independent assessment of delivery of the various goals and targets within each country.

The analysis should start with an overview of delivery within the country and a summary of key aspects of the Agenda, in order to identify both major achievements and challenges from the point of view of civil society.

Working in a broad partnership across diverse thematic areas, you should aim to consider all the Sustainable Development Goals to develop:
   a) An overall narrative report
   b) Specific scoring for each goal to enable a comparative analysis over time and between countries.

This toolkit will guide you on how to develop a national report.

1. Forming a broad civil society coalition on the 2030 Agenda

As the 2030 Agenda covers a wide range of topics it is crucial to deliver on the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle to the SDGS with a multi-sectoral alliance of civil society organisations representing the diversity of voices and experiences of organisations working on specific issues (eg age, disability, poverty, health) and in different thematic areas.

Guiding questions for the formation of a broad coalition:

- Do you already have a national CSO coalition?
- Have you prepared a previous VNR?
- Are you able to bring together a wide range of community views to leave no one behind?
- Is your process fully gender, age and disability accessible to enable participation of all?
- You could get in touch with regional and international constituency groups and INGOs to increase the participation and visibility of all groups
- Ensure the national coalition includes different sectors and all the different constituency groups specified below, including clear geographic (urban and rural), age, disability and gender balance

We can suggest links to relevant partners including through the Major Groups and other Stakeholders and broad civil society networks. Here is an initial list of groups to be included as a minimum, responding to the guidance in goal 17.18. Please feel free to add and adjust these categories for your own country context:

Women & Girls	
Children & young people	
Indigenous peoples	
Older persons	
Persons with disabilities	
People discriminated by caste, work and descent	
People discriminated by geographic area: eg. urban slums/rural areas	
People from the LGBTQI community	
Small scale farmers	
Ethnic & Religious minority groups	
Migrants or undocumented persons	
Refugees and asylum seekers	

2. Assessing national implementation and engagement

It is helpful if this alliance can then identify a panel of national experts, covering each of the SDGs, to develop analysis within the coalition.

The drafting panel can then develop an initial narrative analysis on the delivery of the 2030 Agenda, to assess the steps taken within the country, the gaps as well as progress and how far CSOs have been able to engage with delivery and ensure their issues are reflected in the governmental review. This can form the basis of dialogue with the government through review channels and can also form the basis of an independent CSO report.

This initial overview should include cross-cutting aspects such as:

- An assessment of mainstreaming and integration of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs across national policies and implementation, with a focus on the three dimensions of sustainable development: social, environmental and economic.

- How far the 'whole of government' and indeed 'whole of society' approach shapes SDG implementation with clear policy coherence between different policies; as well as the policies, actions and budgets of the different Ministries charged with specific issues (finance, social development, health, education, work and pensions etc).

You can use our full template for a CSO Report including a *People's Scorecard* [here](#)

Guiding questions for report development:

- Do you have experts who can support the coalition in developing a narrative report?
- Is there data – quantitative and qualitative – in the country covering all the groups specified in SDG 17.14
- Can gaps be filled by independent data from across civil society?
- Is there a process in hand for sharing results of the report with policy officials, parliament and civil society?
- Are you able to develop a collaborative approach to define key messages and recommendations?
- Can you identify and support spokespeople to speak to the report's findings – to policy makers, officials and the media?

3. Data-collection process and convening national multi-stakeholder dialogues

The People's Scorecard methodology is based on a qualitative assessment of the implementation process for each SDG - and by aggregation, for the SDG framework as a whole- centred around 10 key areas that together constitute an inclusive conception of the implementation process. The Scorecard thus intends to measure the collective, aggregated perception on the depth, scope and concrete progress of the national -and subnational- SDG implementation process from national civil society coalitions.

The proposed sequence for the consultation process is as follows:

- National civil society coalitions are asked to distribute widely a Scorecard-based survey - preferably online-, among national and local CSOs, grassroot organisations and key constituencies in their country that are known to be involved in SDG implementation on the ground and/or in an advocacy capacity. Each organisation will be expected to focus on the SDGs that are more closely linked to their daily work to draw in their insights and expertise. It will be key to target a diverse mix of CSOs sufficiently, in order to cover insights from groups familiar with each of the 17 SDGs.

- You should aim to bring together a cross-section of organisations with expert knowledge of the SDGs overall; as well as individual SDG specialists; and the voices and experience of the specific interest groups.

- The Scorecard survey participants are asked to provide a score from -5 to +5 for each of the Goal's 10 key areas.

- The online survey should then be supplemented by organising online or in-person consultations with specific constituencies that are most often excluded from policy-making processes within a given national context, see list above.

- You should aim to convene dialogues across civil society to include at least one national meeting and where possible at least 3 sub-national meetings (these can be done digitally given Covid restrictions).

The data is then processed by the convening organisation (by an internal or external consultant and/or expert group) and a draft aggregated scorecard is developed, which should be presented at an in-person or online workshop for validation of the results.

Some key points to consider:

- Where possible arrange in person meetings in different geographic regions/states to ensure participation at the local level, subject to Covid restrictions. This can provide an opportunity to ensure a safe space for those experiencing discrimination to share their experiences so it must be hosted in a way that enables open dialogue within civil society.
- Consider separate consultations on each SDG or clusters of key issues
- Create a short analysis or report of each local consultation with recommendations.
- Arrange a National Dialogue to take place after the local consultations
- Identify representatives from the local consultations to attend the larger national dialogue and represent the key issues discussed as part of a larger group.

It is very important to include partners from a wide range of backgrounds so you build a cross-section of organisations working across all the topics of the SDGs. Ensure the national dialogues include different sectors and all the different constituency groups specified above, including clear geographic (urban and rural), age, disability and gender balance

Please see our initial suggested list of key groups in part 1 above.

For more advice on this area, **please check out: The Leave No One Behind report and toolkit on the tools and resources pages on our website [here](#)**.

A key part of the dialogues is to go through the goals and targets and consider progress on each one. We have set out guiding questions for each goal below.

It is important that **input from all the members of the CSO coalition is given to rate progress on each goal from - 5 to +5, this will enable a comparative assessment of progress as part of a Summary Report**.

4. Scoring progress on the 17 Goals & Summary Report

As part of your broad-based consultation process as set out above, it is important to provide a detailed review of the 17 Goals and 169 targets; rated against the 244 global indicators once they have been localised. Initially, you could use the global indicators to provide a comparable benchmark but where possible you should identify if your national statistical agency has provided national indicators.

If needed local/national indicators can also be proposed as part of the independent monitoring mechanism.

At a minimum- we recommend that you provide a score from -5 through to +5 in terms of delivery of each of the 17 Goals, please fill in your scores on our People's Scorecard website.

Depending on your capability nationally it may not be possible in all countries to cover all Goals and Targets, so the following steps provide a range of options and a series of key steps to assess national implementation:

- Conduct evidence-based assessments
- Consider availability of data as well as potential gaps in evidence, including identifying what official data exists plus cross-reference with local citizen generated data sources where possible
- Agree whether there are key Goals and principles and potential clusters around key issues for your country context.

After you have brought together the data and received all feedback from your coalition members, you will be able to develop a Summary Report that provides an overview of progress, at this point you may also consider *interlinkages* between goals, including potential trade-offs such as for example the need to balance employment opportunities for all while ensuring a strong process to reduce inequality, provide decent work and tackle environmental degradation.

In the Summary report, you should include:
- Narrative overview assessment of country implementation
- Specific scores on progress for each goal

5. Final validation and submission of report

Once your detailed analysis has been carried out, it is important hold a round table discussion with other partners and with representatives from key groups to enable a final chance for feedback and validation by civil society partners.

The final major step is preparing an engaging report, to make use of the evidence to ensure clear recommendations on what needs to be done for real transformation to take place in your country.

Here it is important to consider how to provide data in a visual way so that the report can link to a wider audience. **The report should use the colour coded assessments set out in our template, this will add a clear visual comparability for each of the national reports**.

A launch event to feature a dialogue with key government officials ahead of the HLPF meeting is a good way to build public ownership and ensure accountability in the process.

It is a good idea to conduct a stakeholder analysis of the key decision-makers for you to influence, such as:
- Legislators at local or national
- Government departments with the (potential) mandate to implement government programmes related to the SDGs
- Other CSOs that have the capacity and expertise to support implementation
- Cross-sector allies and supporters (academic institutions, media, bloggers etc.)

Think about how much they are already associated with your Goal or specific Targets by researching their objectives and recent activities, to uncover:
- Relationships and tensions between the players
- Their agendas and constraints
- Their motivations and interests
- Their priorities – rational, emotional, and personal.

6. Follow up after the VNR at the national level

In order to bring about real transformation within your country, the process should not end with the VNR presentation, it is important to ensure that national engagement continues beyond the HLPF and that the implementation is broadened out to include all parts of government and society.

Many countries are now delivering their second or subsequent VNR, so you can check the baseline from the previous VNR and identify key follow up and engagement frameworks, such as a cross-party committee for joint engagement with parliamentarians.

What follow up has taken place since the last VNR in your country?

How have the 2030 Agenda priorities been integrated into national plans?

In order to keep the momentum going you could consider:
- Quarterly meetings of the national multi-sectoral coalition, for example with a focus on different topics each time, but always with the broad aim of transformation towards sustainability
- Regular engagement with relevant ministries, parliamentary committees and national development planning and budgetary processes
- Engage with the UN Resident Coordinators Office and the national planning processes, including the Comprehensive County Analysis (CCA) and the Cooperation Framework (CF)
- Your own action plan on delivery for the 2030 Agenda and developing an independent evidence base
- Peer learning across your region – sharing experience, monitoring and implementation insights, improving the ways to gather your evidence base
- Identify other international processes that can reinforce the key recommendations in the VNR, this could include regional processes such as EU engagement; as well as other UN processes such as the Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council

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More Information?

If you would you like more advice and information on how to engage with your government on the Voluntary National Reviews and the HLPF, you can find useful additional resources on engaging with the HLPF from our CSO partners such as:

- Major Groups & other Stakeholder pages on the UN website here.
- CIVICUS Monitor to support Goal 16 assessment of civic space here.
- TAP Goal 16 Handbook is here.
- Forus: Guidelines for CSO shadow reports monitoring the implementation of Agenda 2030 at national level available here.
- Together 2030: Quick Guide to engaging in a Voluntary National Review available here.
- Women's Major Group: Engaging with the VNR Process: A Guide for members of the WMG here.
- Voluntary National Reviews - Reporting the impact of volunteering to achieve the Agenda 2030 here.

- For more information on the Goals and access to the SDG icons, please visit the UN website here: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs

Case Study 1 – SRI LANKA Voluntary People's Review: in-depth independent assessment
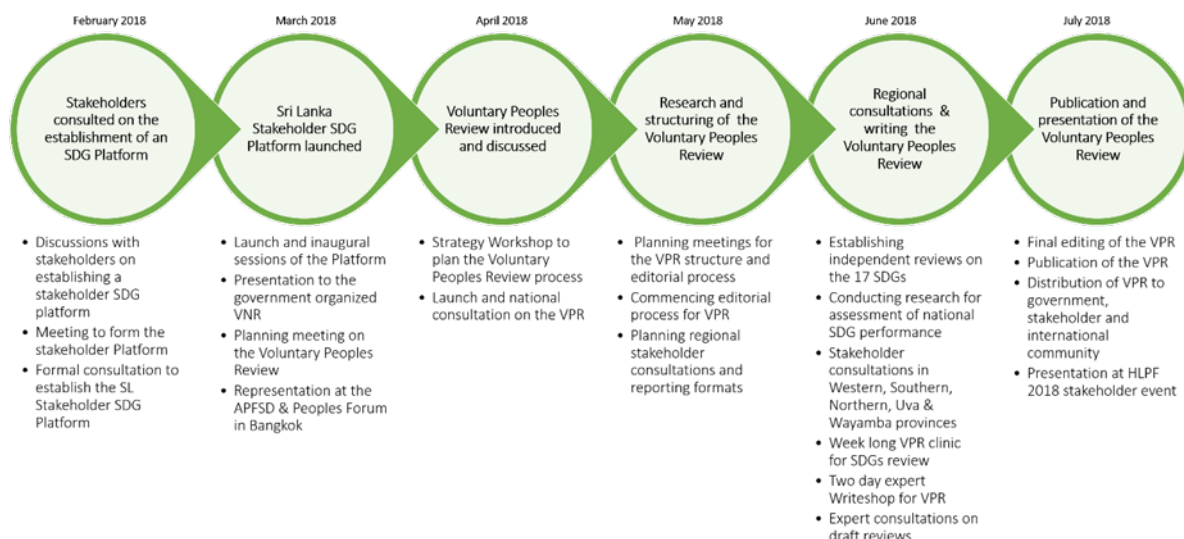

The Sri Lanka Voluntary Peoples Review (VPR) on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2018) was formulated by the Sri Lanka Stakeholder SDG Platform (SLS SDG Platform) which was established in March 2018 by a collective of CSOs, private sector, academia, professional associations, trade unions, etc. to facilitate an inclusive transformation towards sustainable development in Sri Lanka.

As a systematic analysis of SDGs had not been adopted so far by the government or by the official-led VNR process, voluntary reviewers of the VPR had a difficult task in conducting the performance rating and providing rationales and justifications.

The process was able to draw over five hundred direct contributors from government, academia, CSO, CBO, business and other stakeholders during the period of formulating the VPR. Even the regional consultations drew politicians and government officials representing provincial, district and local government levels. Senior experts in their respective fields were engaged along with farmers, fishermen, women and youth to seek clarity in understanding the ramification of policy determinations and development interventions.

The Platform Facility conducted a week long VPR clinic to help streamline the draft reviews and provide expert assistance to enable the reviewers to be able to conduct proper research and prepare rationales for the rating and baseline recommendations. A two-day 'writeshop' was organized to bring experts to further review the drafts and input information and draw fair and credible ratings and recommendations. The reviews were presented as work-in-progress and will continue to be improved in the process of establishing the independent monitoring and reporting mechanism on SDGs.

The process of formulating the VPR was as important as the outcome as it helped build the foundations for an independent monitoring and reporting mechanism for the SDGs.

February 2018	March 2018	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018	July 2018
Stakeholders consulted on the establishment of an SDG Platform	Sri Lanka Stakeholder SDG Platform launched	Voluntary Peoples Review introduced and discussed	Research and structuring of the Voluntary Peoples Review	Regional consultations & writing the Voluntary Peoples Review	Publication and presentation of the Voluntary Peoples Review
• Discussions with stakeholders on establishing a stakeholder SDG platform • Meeting to form the stakeholder Platform • Formal consultation to establish the SL Stakeholder SDG Platform	• Launch and inaugural sessions of the Platform • Presentation to the government organized VNR • Planning meeting on the Voluntary Peoples Review • Representation at the APFSD & Peoples Forum in Bangkok	• Strategy Workshop to plan the Voluntary Peoples Review process • Launch and national consultation on the VPR	• Planning meetings for the VPR structure and editorial process • Commencing editorial process for VPR • Planning regional stakeholder consultations and reporting formats	• Establishing independent reviews on the 17 SDGs • Conducting research for assessment of national SDG performance • Stakeholder consultations in Western, Southern, Northern, Uva & Wayamba provinces • Week long VPR clinic for SDGs review • Two day expert Writeshop for VPR • Expert consultations on draft reviews	• Final editing of the VPR • Publication of the VPR • Distribution of VPR to government, stakeholder and international community • Presentation at HLPF 2018 stakeholder event

Following submission of the VNR, the SDG process in Sri Lanka had taken a major dip with official focus now moving on to other matters and limiting action to fragmented programmes and workshops. A similar approach was visible from CSOs and other stakeholders with key partners of the SLS-SDG Platform showing limited commitment to follow-up and resource the planned activities.

Coordinating a stakeholder SDG platform at a national level and to conduct regular VPRs requires a considerable amount of resources. Unfortunately, the lack of international support to continue national coalitions and independent monitoring is a major obstacle to progress.

Recently, the Centre for Environment and Development which acts as the initiator and Platform Facilitation body, partnered with Janathakshan (GTE) Ltd. and secured the financial support of the GIZ 2030 Transformation Fund; to implement a follow-up projected titled 'Strengthening the Mobilization of Private and Subnational Domestic Investments in Sri Lanka for the 2030 Agenda'. The project was launched in October 2020 with the publication 'LOCALISING THE TRANSFORMATION IN THE NEW NORMAL: A Domestic Resource Mobilization Framework for Sustainable Development Goals in Sri Lanka'.

The Voluntary People's Review is available here

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Case Study 2 – SDGs Kenya Forum: inclusive dialogue with a wide range of partners

SDGs KENYA FORUM
For Sustainable Development

The **SDGs Kenya Forum** is a platform resulting from a transition process by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) who came together in 2013 as the Kenya CSOs Reference Group on the Post 2015 process. After the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, the SDGs Kenya Forum was launched in March 2016, the coalition brings together diverse civil society organizations (CSOs) with an affiliated membership of over 350 constituencies seeking to contribute to the implementation, monitoring and review of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (SDGs) in Kenya. The CSOs in the Forum's thematic focus represent all the 17 SDGs across all the 47 counties. The membership therefore covers representation of CSOs at both National and at Subnational level.

In 2020, Kenya was reporting at the High-Level Political Forum under the theme 'Accelerated action and transformative pathways: Realising the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development'. To inform this, Kenyan CSOs shared their views and experiences in implementing the 2030 Agenda including successes, challenges, gaps, alignment to national policies, support needs, plans for 2020 and recommendations for accelerating the implementation of the SDGs.

Image: Kenya's VNR Virtual Presentation HLPF 2020

The first Workshop was hosted by SDGs Kenya Forum from Wednesday 19th February to Thursday 20th February 2020. The report was developed through an inclusive approach and it covers all goals, except SDG 9. The report was consolidated from submissions by 103 CSOs, in a three-step-approach.

The first step was to organise a two-day writing workshop for CSOs, drawn from the membership of the SDGs Kenya Forum (hereafter the Forum) and beyond using an online survey, to key-in their inputs.

For inclusivity, this was followed by further contacting all other CSOs that could not make it to the writing workshop, but who desired to provide an input.

The last step involved validating the reports (organized into the 17 goals) by contributing CSOs. The validation of the report was however undertaken virtually in April 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions on movement

The Third Progress Report by Kenyan civil society organizations was informed by how Kenyan civil society performed and saw their roles in the 2030 Agenda as implementors of sustainable development and as a keen voice of the people who are likely to be left behind and the watchdogs of office holders. The report also dedicated a separate section on 'leave no one behind'. Overall, besides informing Kenya's VNR 2020, the report provided recommendations to inform policy design and to strengthen partnerships particularly with the government and donors.

Image: Participants on day 2 of the VNR workshop held in February 2020

However, it is still a challenge for CSOs to consolidate their results into outcomes and map them onto the SDGs, especially those CSOs working across multiple sectors. A high number of CSOs (73%) have indicated that SDG's reporting is an area they require capacity building.

The SDGs Kenya Forum CSOs VNR 2020 report also incorporated the 'people's score card' in the popular version.

The [full report](#) and [popular report](#) are posted on the SDG Kenya Forum website which includes visuals for the [people's score card](#).

Case Study 3 – BRAZIL, 2030 Agenda Working Group: collaboration in action

In the case of Brazil, the coalition of civil society representatives around the 2030 Agenda was formed during the post-2015 negotiation process. Organisations that were following the negotiations came together, at the time led by ABONG (the Brazilian Association of NGOs) and Gestos (an NGO with experience in UN negotiations), with different stakeholders.

They were able to engage in advocacy with the Brazilian government negotiators in the capital in the formative phase and at a meeting in July 2015, one of the CSOs present proposed formalising the coalition as a Civil Society Working Group for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (*Grupo de Trabalho da Sociedade Civil para a Agenda 2030*), even prior to the full adoption of the 2030 Agenda by the UN on August 2nd.

The Brazilian Civil Society Working Group for the 2030 Agenda (GTSC A2030) is now co-facilitated by Gestos, ACT and IDS. By 2020 there are approximately 51 members in a very diverse alliance, to ensure engagement across such a large country. The group includes dozens of NGOs; thematic networks or forums on specific themes, such as the Solidarity Economy, Environmental Network, and HIV/AIDS Forum of SP, as well as networks that interface with sub-national governments, such as Rede Nossa São Paulo. The organisations are located in all five geographic macro-regions of the country, though most are concentrated in the Southeast and Northeast of Brazil.

The Working Group provides a shared space across civil society to connect between experts and diverse community groups to share knowledge on the SDGs. Using communication technology, the WG keeps connected about the issues at hand regarding the SDGs in the country and internationally and they use the website and social media to communicate more broadly with different stakeholders.

In 2017, Gestos invited the CSO Working Group to gather key inputs to produce its first monitoring report for the HLPF, with analysis of the seven SDGs programmed to be debated in that year. Besides analyzing the targets using official data, the first Spotlight Report also included a case study of a mega infrastructure project in the state of Pernambuco, the Suape

Port Complex, with its ZPEs (Export Processing Zones) and a major refinery that are causing major threats to the achievement of all these seven SDGs at least.

The following year, with more experience and participation after the success of the first, the Working Group produced its second Spotlight Report (available here in English), launched in Brasilia and in New York, at the 2018 HLPF. This time they covered all SDGs and created a baseline towards 2030. In 2020 the IV Spotlight report analysed 145 out of 169 SDG targets and had 103 CSO experts as authors.

The production of content is a major driver for people's engagement, they value the opportunity to feed into these major reports, otherwise they fear that the dialogue could become stale and speculative

The GTSC A2030 (the working group) has engaged with governments at the Federal and sub-national levels, including mobilisation toward forming state-level SDG Commissions, aiming to accelerate the dissemination of the 2030 Agenda within the different levels of government around the country. The group also aims to shape decisions in the National Congress, through the Joint Parliamentary Task Force for the 2030 Agenda, composed of members of the congress and senate.

The Working Group had an NGO representative (World Vision BR) with a seat at the Brazilian SDGs National Commission until it was closed by a decree of President Bolsonaro in 2019, shortly after his inauguration. At the same time, hundreds of commissions and councils in all areas of public policy were extinguished or suspended, in an immense attack on social participation and the principles of the Federal Constitution of Brazil.

The GTSC A2030 is also engaged in partnering with national and international coalitions working to strengthen civil society engagement and impede the demolition of the foundations of sustainable development that had been built in Brazil in the past decades, in order to achieve the transformative potential of the SDGs in Brazil.

All Spotlights reports for Brazil can be found here.

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