Toolkit for a People's Scorecard:

Independent Civil Society Assessment of National Delivery of the 2030 Agenda

2025 Edition

ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

People's Scorecard on the 2030 Agenda

Contents

Page

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. Since that time, progress has been slow. Political instability, the impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic and major economic challenges have led to limited progress. At the time of the second SDG Summit in 2023, the UN Secretary General's report highlighted that only 12% of the SDGs were on track.

There is therefore a real challenge to ensure the commitments made in 2015 lead to meaningful transformative actions. Now, with only 5 years to go until 2030, there is a need to re-double action and push forward with delivery.

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 earlier templates produced by Action for Sustainable Development for national 'Civil Society Reports' undertaken in parallel to the official Voluntary National Review process. This toolkit aims to set 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 of 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*

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 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 share the report's findings – to policy makers, officials and the media?

ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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

The People's Scorecard methodology is based on a qualitative assessment of the degree of progress within the implementation process for each SDG, and an overview of progress on the SDG framework as a whole. As an independent assessment by civil society, the Scorecard intends to measure the collective, aggregated perception on tangible progress (or lack thereof) of the national SDG implementation process, based on the official SDG targets. As such, this perception-based progress assessment is based on two main dimensions:

1. **Whether adequate public policies exist** to address the various policy aspects included in a given SDG.
2. **Whether these policies are actually being implemented** and **producing tangible results** on the ground and in people's daily lives.

Survey methodology

- 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.

- The **Scorecard** aims to provide national civil society with a global template for an independent, collective assessment of perceived progress on each SDG and the framework as a whole. Therefore, the survey sample should consist **exclusively** of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in all their diversity—NGOs, foundations, grassroots organizations, and thematic networks. It is **not recommended** to include private sector actors or government officials at any level.

- To ensure a **comprehensive assessment**, the sample of CSOs invited to participate should be **geographically and thematically diverse**, covering areas such as education, health, socio-economic development, environment, and democracy. The survey' s implementation would benefit from mobilizing additional CSOs, including those outside of the national coalition, as the larger the sample is, the more representative of national civil society the collective assessment will be.

Some key points to consider:

- Where possible arrange in person meetings in different geographic regions/states to ensure participation at the local level. 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 civil society review of the 17 Goals. Initially, we suggest that an online survey is shared widely across civil society in the country as a way to gather views from diverse stakeholders.

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 with key stakeholders
- Consider availability of data as well as potential gaps in evidence, including identifying 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.

Points to consider when scoring:

- As stated in the introductory paragraph of the survey, respondents are **not required** to rate each SDG. To simplify the process and encourage participation, they are primarily invited to rate the SDGs they know best or feel most comfortable assessing. This approach also enhances the accuracy of the scores. That said, each respondent may choose to rate all SDGs if they wish.

- The text accompanying each SDG is based on the official SDG targets, and serves as a **reference guide** to help respondents fully understand the different policy aspects covered. While based on the official SDG goals, these descriptions have been **adapted for clarity and accessibility**.

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

- The Scorecard survey can also be carried out at in-person consultations, which can be done either by requesting each individual to provide a separate response on each goal, or by organizing discussion in groups (either one for each goal or one for clusters of thematically-linked goals) and agreeing on a collective score through open dialogue.

- 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 also be done online).

- The data is then processed by the convening organisation (A4SD can provide support for this) and a draft aggregated scorecard is developed.

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

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 website with full list of Civil Society Reports 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

More information from the UN here:

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

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