

# Global Forum learning note: VNR Lab 10: Showcasing multi-stakeholder participation in a VNR - Country examples and a checklist for multi-stakeholder participation

## Background

This VNR Lab was jointly organised by the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies and the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE). Global Forum members from Ecuador, Jamaica and Kenya reported on their specific experiences and exchanged views on the factors that determine whether the progress of the 2030 Agenda can be successfully and constructively monitored. The panelists agreed that diversity, continuity and, above all, trust are the three main ingredients for the voluntary reviews of SDG progress.

## Key takeaways

### **Kenya:**

The representative of the Kenyan SDG Forum emphasized how important it was for the VNR process in her country, which has now been successfully completed for the third time, to involve society as a whole, i.e. to involve non-state actors in particular. In addition, the importance of available, reliable data in order to monitor the progress of the 2030 Agenda was highlighted. Kenya has had good experiences in this area through its cooperation with the Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics, with which a memorandum of understanding exists.

Finally, the Kenyan experience shows, that a lot of communication is needed to involve as many people as possible: it is important to explain to local people what its all about.

This is not only essential for an inclusive engagement, but it is also a major challenge. It is a great advantage for the Kenyan SDG Forum that the platform is also continuously active beyond legislative periods. This helps to bring in voices that would otherwise not be heard. The diversity of the stakeholders gathered in the forum, who contribute different knowledge and skills, also contributes to this. The key element, however, is trust - both in the participants and in the process.

### **Ecuador:**

The importance of involving the subnational level and reliable data was also confirmed by the civil society representative from Ecuador. However, this experience also showcased that participation processes can be undermined. It was mentioned that a successful participation process also depends on the attitude of the government and its willingness to engage in dialogue: "Participation depends on the government." In this VNR, civil society was not really involved in the process as the time to have the report ready was short. It became clear: If a participation process is not institutionalised, it can be undermined.

### **Jamaica:**

The third country example was provided by the representative of Jamaica, who brought the government perspective to the discussion. Following the first VNR in 2018, the country produced its second VNR two years ago. Using the example of a woman who is committed to clean water in her village, the panelist made it clear that it is not absolutely necessary for individuals to know exactly what the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda are. But it is important that people understand what is worth campaigning for. This is why working on the ground in and with the community is so important.

### **Input from the secretariat**

Following the reports from the countries, the Secretariat of the Global Forum presented a checklist that assesses the environment for multi-stakeholder engagement. This also included a government's openness to the involvement of non-state actors in the VNR process.

### **Summary**

Summarising this VNR Lab, one take-away message for the representative of the German Council for Germany's next VNR in 2025, was that the involvement of civil society is a question of trust. Not providing insights into official reports for one's own society is a no-go: It was recalled that the SDGs can never be achieved by governments alone, but only by society as a whole, with the public and private sectors. It was concluded from this that not only the VNRs, but also the policies designed as part of the transformation must be discussed with society. The combined commitment of interest groups could help to involve other citizens who had not previously come into contact with the SDGs. Not everyone needs to know about all the SDGs, but they should know how a contribution to one of the areas interacts with other areas.