



How To Make Your Voice Heard in Your Country's **VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW** of SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION

WHAT ARE THE SDGs AND VNRs?

[The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) is a comprehensive framework and plan of action for all countries to achieve peace and prosperity. Building on the Millennium Development Goals and adopted by Governments in September 2015, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) and 169 accompanying targets take an intersectional approach to development and emphasize the aspiration to **“leave no one behind.”**

An important international mechanism for review of progress towards achieving the SDGs in Agenda 2030 is the annual [High Level Political Forum](#) (HLPF), which includes a ministerial meeting and interactive dialogue for [Voluntary National Review](#) (VNR) of SDG implementation. Member States choose to participate in the VNR process and are encouraged to conduct a **transparent and open consultation with civil society to report on all 17 SDGs.**¹

This is a key entry point for civil society to raise issues about **engagement and participation in SDG implementation, investment and prioritization of country-level interventions, and stigma, discrimination, and human rights as they pertain to women and adolescent girls, lesbian and bisexual women, gay and bisexual men, people who use drugs, sex workers, transgender people, migrants, and prisoners (from this point forward referred to as key populations) in the national HIV response.**

¹The UN DESA-DSD 2018 [Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews](#) contains guidelines for Member States to engage civil society and other stakeholders.

Each July during the HLPF at the United Nations in New York, a set of SDGs united by a [theme](#) are discussed by experts, civil society, and representatives from Member States. In 2019, the theme will be **“Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality,”** presenting a unique opportunity to highlight community engagement in sustainable development.

HIV AND THE SDGs

The 2030 Agenda includes commitments to protect human rights and to build peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. Many of the SDGs and accompanying Targets are relevant to organizations working on HIV and other key population priorities, as illuminated in the following resources:

- [HIV and the SDGs: Joint Action, Shared Progress](#) (2018, UNAIDS)
- [Guide to the Sustainable Development Goals for Networks of Women Living with HIV](#) (July 2016, ICW)
- [Sustainable Development Goals and LGBT Inclusion](#) (January 2016, Stonewall International)
- [Agenda 2030 for LGBTI Health & Well-Being](#) (June 2017, MSMGF, OutRight Action International, and the Platform)

Aligned with the UNAIDS [Fast Track Strategy](#), the SDG Target on HIV is included in [SDG 3](#) (Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-Being for All at All Ages):

 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	Target 3.3 Indicator 3.3.1	“By 2030, end the epidemic of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.” “Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations.”
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Additional SDGs that are relevant to HIV organizations and key population-led groups are highlighted in color below:



WHY ARE THE SDGs AND VNRs IMPORTANT FOR KEY POPULATIONS AND COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY AND LIVING WITH HIV?

Structural barriers prevent key populations from accessing tailored HIV prevention strategies, care, and treatment, and seriously impede the ability of countries to develop and realize an equitable society. **Continued visibility and integration of HIV within mainstream development goals has never been more important.**

The VNR process provides a valuable opportunity for communities to raise their priorities outside traditional public health and human rights forums, and to strengthen linkages between HIV and education, employment, and gender equality. The development framework and concept of “leave no one behind” **invites civil society to share best practices and ongoing challenges in realizing their full inclusion and participation in society.**

Despite this, in [Getting on Track in Agenda 2030](#), MSMGF found that HIV was inconsistently reported on among only **32 of 43 VNR reports submitted in 2017**, with only nine reports referring to key populations and HIV.

You can change this!

HOW TO GET INVOLVED IF YOUR COUNTRY IS PARTICIPATING IN THE VNR PROCESS

- 1 Check the Sustainable Development [platform](#) to verify that your country has chosen to participate in the VNR process this year.
- 2 Identify and contact your in-country focal point on [UN DESA's website](#) to understand how to contribute in the national consultation process.
- 3 Ascertain if a coalition or network organization in your country is already coordinating a civil society response to the VNR consultation process. If such an organization or network does not exist, create a coalition with other organizations working on topics in the SDGs, such as women's rights, housing, environmental protection etc.
- 4 Find similarities and commonalities with other civil society organizations working on the SDGs, and advocate as a united front for inclusion of key issues in the VNR report.
- 5 To the best extent possible, submit data and evidence with regard to Indicator 3.3.1 and the HIV response to the ministry producing your country's VNR report.

DATA FOR VNR REPORTS

During national VNR consultations, pay special attention to which data your government includes regarding the HIV response. If data presented is incomplete, consider the following sources to supplement and complement reporting on HIV:

- 1 **AIDS Info:** Managed by UNAIDS, this resource includes data submitted annually via **Global AIDS Monitoring (GAM)** by Member States. GAM represents the most comprehensive and systematic review of HIV in each country and includes indicators for the 10 Global Commitments in the [2016 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS](#). The [Key Populations Atlas](#) contains more KP-specific data.
- 2 **PEPFAR Data:** The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief ([PEPFAR](#)) contains information on HIV programs and national epidemiological data in over 50 countries.

CREATING A PARALLEL REPORT

A shadow report, spotlight report, or status report² is a useful tool if your national consultation process for the official VNR report lacks transparency or fails to yield desired results. Parallel reports can **include supplemental data and highlight the role of civil society in implementing the 2030 Agenda, as well as make recommendations to address flaws in the preparation of the official VNR report or the exclusion of certain groups or issues.** A parallel report may be more successful when undertaken with a coalition working on a range of issues covered by the SDGs.

The [Women's Major Group](#) produced [recommendations for engaging in VNR shadow reporting](#) that suggests considering the policy framework under review in country, which we have adapted for organizations focusing on HIV:

- o **REGARDING POLICY:** Consider including an analysis of the gaps in government HIV programming and coverage, as well as funding commitments. Are key populations included? Are laws and policies discriminatory or place undue burden on people living with and affected by HIV? Additionally, it is important to highlight what is working well in your country; it creates goodwill with your government and can also serve as an example of best practices for others.
- o **REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION:** What are the most significant failures or weaknesses in HIV policy implementation? What is the scale and reach of policies and programs? Who is left out? Also, importantly, are there social factors (community, religious, workplace) that limit access to services for key populations, women and girls, even if policies and programs are in place?

² See SDGs Kenya Forum, [Submissions by Civil Society Organizations to the Government of Kenya Towards Voluntary National Review Report](#) (2017); Gestos, [Spotlight Synthesis Report: the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in Brazil](#) (2017).

- **REGARDING DATA:** What data is collected regarding the HIV response? What gaps in HIV data exist, especially for Indicator 3.3.1? Is the data disaggregated to include key populations? Are these data used to inform programming?
- **REGARDING OUTCOMES:** What outcomes do you see from SDG implementation? How are key populations and people living with HIV affected? How are women and girls affected?

OTHER BEST PRACTICES FROM CIVIL SOCIETY CONTRIBUTIONS TO VNR REPORTS IN 2017*

1 TAKE INITIATIVE TO FORM COALITIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Given the wide breadth of topics in Agenda 2030, no single issue is guaranteed comprehensive coverage in VNR reporting, especially HIV and key populations. Multiple voices and a unified front among civil society organizations is an important strategy for activists and community members to consider. Civil society leaders should capitalize on this opportunity and proactively build coalitions and partnerships with development implementers, sexual and reproductive health and rights organizations, human rights defenders, and other non-State actors.

2 ADVOCATE FOR NATIONAL PRIORITIES SUPPORTED BY DATA

Activists are encouraged to link current work and initiatives to the SDGs, even if it is not the framework traditionally used in national advocacy. Data is particularly useful during this process, and in particular, data that is outlined in the agreed upon indicators in the SDGs. These data may be available in government agencies, UN agencies, or through civil society generated and collected data.

3 CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOVERNMENT

Government response to civil society advocacy on VNR content may depend upon relationships with specific government departments and offices including the ministries responsible for developing the VNR report (this is determined by country and may include the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or others). Submitting data, narrative, and other content was useful to build relationships with government officials.

* Read about the experiences of eight activists who participated in the 2017 VNR national consultation process in six different countries in [Getting on Track in Agenda 2030](#).

CONTACT MSMGF FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

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This info sheet has been developed by MSMGF in collaboration with our partner at Free Space Process. FSP convenes a partnership of 11 key global civil society and community networking organisations with a focus on HIV. FSP aims to enhance the HIV response and the role of civil society by facilitating proactive exchange of information and positions among partners, strategizing on (joint) policy advocacy and increased collaboration. <http://icssupport.org/what-we-do/free-space>