

# How Civil Society can advance Ending Violence against Children in the Voluntary National Reviews

**CSOs have a key role**  
to play in the VNRs in defining progress and challenges to achieving the SDGs

**Ending violence against children** (SDG 16.2) is included in the in-depth thematic review for the first time in the 2019 HLPF

**Take action!**  
Engage in the VNRs to advocate for better reporting on ending violence against children

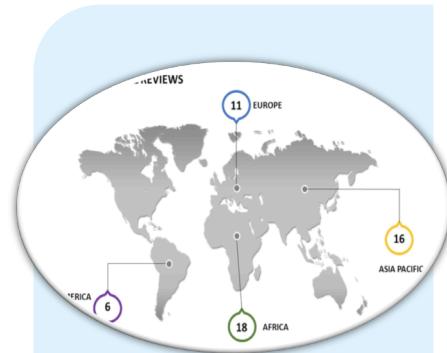
The annual High Level Political Forum (HLPF) is the main space for follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level. Each year, a number of Goals are selected for in-depth review and governments can volunteer to present reports on national progress towards implementation of the SDGs as a whole, referred to as Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

The HLPF 2019 will take place from 9-18 July at the UN in New York, and is the first year to include an in-depth review of SDG 16: *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.*

## Call to Action!

National and local CSOs working together can actively engage with governments in the VNR process to promote reporting on SDG 16.2 and related Goals and Targets to end violence against children:

- **16.2 - End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.**
- 4.a - provide safe, inclusive, non-violent and effective **learning environments** for all.
- 5.2 - eliminate all forms of **violence against all women and girls** in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- 5.3 - eliminate all **harmful practices**, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- 8.7 - secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of **child labor**, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labor in all its forms.
- 16.9 - By 2030, provide **legal identity** for all, including birth registration.



## Countries presenting VNRs in 2019

**51 countries** will present Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) including:

**8 Pathfinding Countries** of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children: Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Indonesia, Mongolia, Philippines, South Africa and Tanzania.

**Countries in discussion** to become Pathfinding: Cambodia, Guatemala, and the United Kingdom.

# 5 Actions CSOs can take together to accelerate progress to end violence against children

## 1. Participate in VNR consultations

Assess the space to participate in the VNR consultation processes in your country. VNR processes will vary from country to country. Some governments will create formal space or online platforms to include input from civil society and the voices of children, while others may consult very little and report more selectively on state data only. Some may focus purely on successes, or certain SDGs. Reach out to the government focal points and other stakeholders, such as UNICEF, to understand the process, timeline, and how you can engage. CSOs also have a role in regional consultations, which can offer more space and tailored conversations than the HLPF.

## 2. Meet with the government focal point and other key stakeholders

Each country submitting a VNR will have a focal point assigned. Information about the designated focal point can be found in the country listing in the [VNR database](#). Request a meeting with the focal point as soon as possible, as some governments have already begun work for drafting the VNR. It is advised to request the meeting as a collective of CSOs, rather than as individual organizations, to make it clear CSOs are united in their advocacy asks to end

violence against children. The focal point may also be working with the UNICEF office in country or other key agencies.

## 3. Promote SDG 16.2 and other goals to end violence against children in VNR reports

Many governments may not prioritize, or may not have enough statistical data to report on, violence against children. The first step in ensuring that governments include SDG16.2 in their report is providing suggestions for content that governments can report on when asking them to prioritize 16.2 in their report. Suggested content may include any major progress governments have made enacting and implementing child protection legislation, increases in budget allocations, new commitments undertaken (such as becoming a Pathfinding country), and data or studies developed (such as the [VAC Study](#)).

Governments can note any challenges, such as gaps in data, capacity, constraints, or needs for professionals. Input from civil society can include non-governmental data, survey data, research, and the voices of children to add context or bridge data gaps. The objective of the advocacy should be that governments dedicate at least one paragraph of text to reporting on progress against SDG 16.2.

## Regional Preparatory Meetings in Spring 2019



ECE  
Geneva, 21-22  
March 2019



ESCAP  
Bangkok, 27-  
29 March 2019



ECLAC  
Santiago, 22-26  
April 2019



ESCWA  
Beirut, 9-11  
April 2019



ECA  
Tangier, 16-18  
April 2019

Regional Sustainable Development Forums  
organized by Regional Commissions

UN DESA VNRs 101 [webinar](#) slide, January 2019

#### **4. Support meaningful and inclusive participation of children**

Member States should outline how children as agents of change are informed of the SDGs, including children from marginalized and vulnerable groups. Children should be involved in their implementation, including in ending violence against children, and engaged in the review of the SDGs, including the 2019 VNR. To ensure meaningful participation of children, ask governments to establish adequate processes to include the voices of children, including from marginalized or excluded groups, in the VNR.

#### **5. Utilize VNRs to elevate advocacy to end all forms of violence against children**

Civil society can employ a wide variety of resources and avenues to best utilize the VNR process as a catalyst for accelerating actions to end violence against children.

This may include:

- tracking progress and monitoring implementation of SDG 16.2 and related goals
- dissemination of key findings on violence against children
- utilizing traditional and/or social media to increase public awareness
- lifting up children's perspectives
- producing an alternative report, or
- organizing a civil society response to the VNR presentation.

Beyond the HLPF in July, there will be additional opportunities to utilize the data and information on progress assessed during voluntary national reviews. Heads of State will meet in September for a review of all of the SDGs. November 20 will mark the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, another key moment to elevate the work needed to end violence against children.

*"It is not only about Government policies or actions, but also about real and active involvement of every member of the society, businesses, and civil society organizations."*

Armenia VNR 2018

#### **Tips for CSOs:**

- ✓ Join or convene a national coalition of civil society organizations and partners committed to ending violence against children.
- ✓ Schedule a meeting between the coalition leadership and the VNR focal point – the sooner the better!
- ✓ Develop joint key advocacy asks - these may include:
  - Request a commitment of a paragraph or more of text to SDG 16.2 be included in the VNR
  - Report progress on legislation and financing, as well as data
  - Include supporting Goals and Targets to end violence against children
  - Inclusion of voices of children in the VNR
- ✓ Identify CSO data, reports and research that add critical insights to violence prevention and response.
- ✓ Document and publicize collective work.
- ✓ Meeting minutes, flyers, media, publications and social media posts can all be used to document successes and challenges.
- ✓ Share updates with colleagues in other countries, regional networks, or global coalitions, such as the CSO Forum EVAC.

## **Elevate National Plans of Action to End Violence Against Children**

*Highlight reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, their Concluding Observations, and the Universal Period Review*

## TIMELINE FOR 2019 VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS



### VNR Report Elements

The reports from Member States should include information on ending violence against children, such as:

- changes in **legislation** to prevent or respond to violence against children
- **financing** – including information on how public spending, budgeting and investment in areas that directly benefit children – such as social protection and child protection – has increased or changed
- **data** on violence against children at national and sub-national levels, and **disaggregated** by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

Disaggregated data is essential to ensure that children, especially marginalized or vulnerable groups of children, are not left behind. CSOs can help generate and share non-official data, in particular by children themselves, to address data gaps and enrich the official report.

### How CSOs can advance SDG 16.2 to end violence against children

Regional and national review mechanisms feed into the High-Level Political Forum. Civil society should be consulted in the development of the VNR processes, and governments should create space at all levels for such dialogue to occur. Civil society organizations bring experience in implementation, data, and insights from working directly with children and communities.

Barriers to CSO engagement can include a lack of transparency for local CSO engagement, lack of political will to prioritize ending violence against children in SDG implementation, and a lack of readily available disaggregated data. In such climates, CSOs can:

- Highlight national reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, including Concluding Observations
- Reference the Universal Periodic Review reports
- Elevate National Plans of Action to end violence against children



## Getting Started!

Here is a sample letter to request a meeting with the VNR focal point in your country, which you can adapt to your needs.

Consider sending the letter as a coalition of CSOs working together to end violence against children.

For more tips and examples, check out [Together 2030's quick guide for civil society](#).

## Sample joint letter from CSOs to the VNR focal point

[Download letter in Word](#)

Dear [insert name and title],

On behalf of the [name of group], a collaboration of civil society organizations working locally on the prevention and intervention to end violence against children, I am writing to formally congratulate your Excellency and the Government of [Name] for presenting a Voluntary National Review at the 2019 High-Level Political Forum. We respectfully request to meet to discuss civil society engagement in the 2019 Voluntary National Review consultation process, and to encourage the inclusive participation of children.

As a [Pathfinding country/country in discussion to become Pathfinding], we appreciate the leadership opportunity for our government to prioritize SDG 16.2 and highlight our progress to end violence against children. The VNR report should include the following elements [insert joint advocacy asks on legislation, financing, and/or data specific to SDG.16.2, or related goals and targets, to prevent or respond to violence against children].

Thank you in advance for your consideration. We look forward to working together to end all forms of violence against children.

Sincerely,  
[insert name, title, organization/coalition, contact information, and name(s) of member/co-signing organizations]

## VNR Examples

- [Mexico 2018 VNR](#) dedicated a full-page text box to addressing violence against children, including 2019-2030 priorities for EVAC (page 70). Mexico also offers detailed examples of consultation processes for civil society and young people (pages 37-40).
- [Armenia 2018 VNR](#) included policy on birth registration, access to justice for children, and VAC data (pages 78-79).
- [Brazil 2017 VNR](#) highlighted a new law to organize the system for safeguarding the rights of children and adolescent victims or witnesses of violence (page 43).
- [Indonesia 2017 VNR](#) outlined efforts to improve the availability of disaggregated data on gender, region, disability, and migration status. CSOs also helped ensure the mention of child marriage in the report (page 58).
- [Philippines 2016 VNR](#) included how CSOs, government, and development partners to “build capacity of CSOs to advocate for child protection using the SDG framework.” (pages 7-8). 2019 also offers an opportunity to follow up on the outcomes of youth participation in 2016.



## Learn more!

- Secretary-General's updated voluntary common reporting guidelines for VNRs (the Guidelines):  
[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17346Updated\\_Voluntary\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17346Updated_Voluntary_Guidelines.pdf)
- 2019 *Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews*:  
[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20872VNR\\_hanbook\\_2019\\_Edition\\_v2.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20872VNR_hanbook_2019_Edition_v2.pdf) (available in English, French and Spanish)
- Focal Points contact information is available for each Member State on the UN DESA Knowledge Platform here:  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates>
- UN DESA webinar Voluntary National Reviews 101 is available online in English, French and Spanish. January 2019 presentations and recordings are available under the tab "Preparation" at:  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019>
- Global Partnership to End Violence against Children VNR Webinar (conducted in partnership with the CSO Forum EVAC, November 2018). Recording available here:  
[https://zoom.us/recording/share/\\_An2R3ykiR615Id8WLQkw\\_gGSymqYsZxycJ\\_hEvJwQ8](https://zoom.us/recording/share/_An2R3ykiR615Id8WLQkw_gGSymqYsZxycJ_hEvJwQ8)
- World Vision International, *Ensuring children are not left behind: Guidance for countries preparing for Voluntary National Reviews at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2019*.
- Together 2030, *Voluntary National Reviews – a civil society quick guide* available online at:  
[https://www.together2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Voluntary-National-Reviews-quick-guide-for-civil-society\\_Oct2018.pdf](https://www.together2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Voluntary-National-Reviews-quick-guide-for-civil-society_Oct2018.pdf)
- *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, paragraph 79. Available online at:  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
- UNICEF Briefing Note on Goal 16 (annex):  
[https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SDG-briefing-note-14\\_abuse-exploitation-and-violence.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SDG-briefing-note-14_abuse-exploitation-and-violence.pdf)



The logo for the Civil Society Forum, which is working to end violence against children. It features a stylized graphic of three interlocking shapes in blue and orange, with the text 'Civil Society Forum' above it and 'Ending violence against children' below it.

**Contact us**

Share how CSOs in your country are working together to advance SDG 16.2 in the VNRs:

**CSO Forum to End Violence against Children**  
Email us at [csoforumevac@gmail.com](mailto:csoforumevac@gmail.com)  
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