

Key Extracts from: The Impacts of COVID-19 on Stakeholder Engagement for the SDGs

Prepare for the UN DESA virtual expert group meeting:
Building Back Better for Older Persons post COVID-19
 2-5 March, 2021

Introduction- This paper presents some key findings¹ considering older persons from a [survey](#) addressing the current and future impacts of COVID-19 on stakeholder engagement and partnerships for implementation, follow up and review of the SDGs, commissioned by UN DESA and supported through a grant with the European Commission. The main report is available [here](#) and an Executive Summary can be found [here](#). Data presented below is based on two surveys - one distributed to governments of countries undertaking a Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the SDGs in 2020 and 2021, the other distributed to stakeholders worldwide.

Context and Methodology

478 responses were received in total. About 50% of respondents were from NGOs or civil society organizations, 13% from academic or think tanks; local and regional governments, private sector organizations and UN entities make up about 7% each; small numbers of national governments and philanthropic organizations responded. The survey reached stakeholders globally, with 28% of respondents from Africa, 29% from the Americas, 27% from Asia, 15% from Europe and 1% from Oceania.

Findings on States

This section presents key results on the responses to the survey of governments, focusing on findings in respect of VNRs, implementation, and partnerships.

Overall, respondents saw *significant and severe impacts* of COVID-19 on 2020 VNRs. The *biggest impacts* were on engaging vulnerable and marginalized groups (60%) and presenting the Voluntary National Reviews at a national level (62%). Responses to the survey also gave clear evidence of a move to remote, online working. When asked about their perceptions of the effects of this shift, states responded, overall, that the changes to online engagement in response to COVID-19 had a negative

impact on participation in the 2020 VNRs. Government respondents thought COVID-19 changes had a particularly negative effect on the participation of **older people** (57%), people with disabilities (52%), rural dwellers (38%), and children and youth (39%).

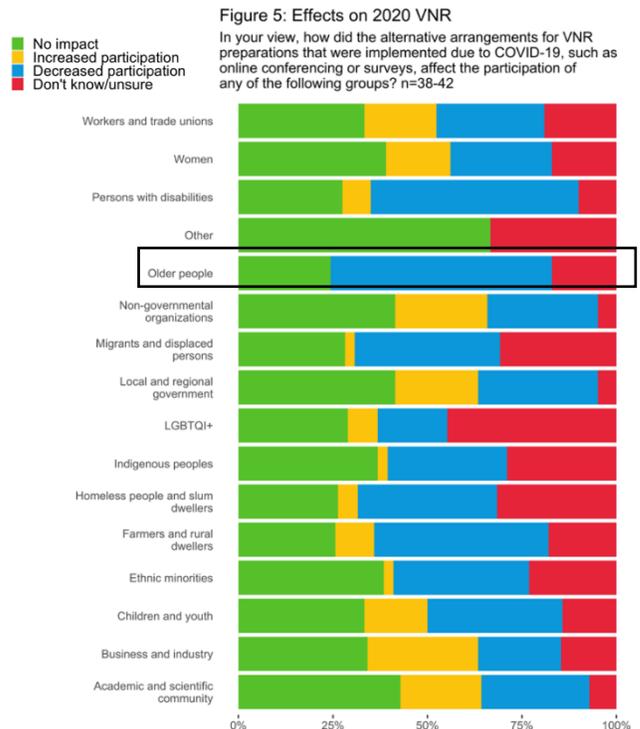


Figure 5

¹ This summary is based on the main report drafted by Dr Emily Clough, Dr Graham Long, as commissioned by UN DESA. The full report is available [here](#).

Survey results also indicate a clear perception that the need for stakeholder engagement in both implementation and review of the SDGs will **increase** in a COVID and post-COVID context (69%). However, government respondents also replied that, overall, stakeholder engagement in implementation and follow up of the SDGs **would decrease**, on balance, across a range of elements. This data suggests a worrying gap between a growing need for stakeholder engagement and the impacts of COVID-19 on conditions in which engagement thrives.

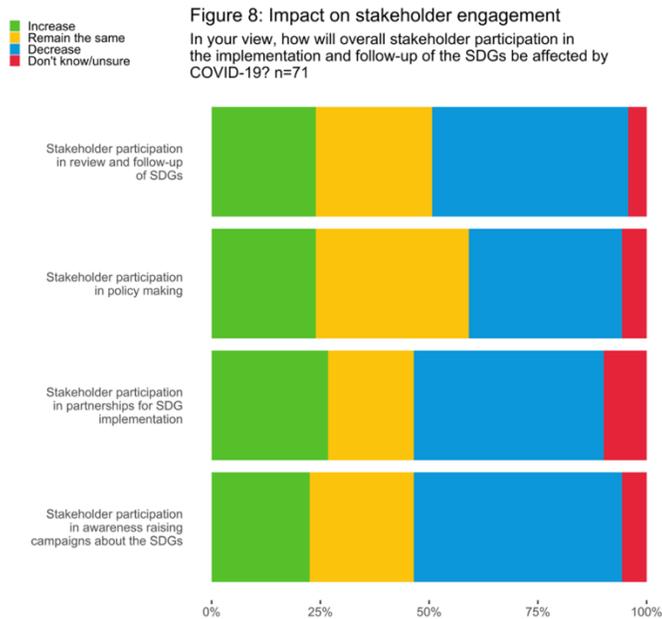


Figure 8

Findings on Stakeholder Perceptions

This section presents key results from stakeholders – their perceptions on areas of progress, challenges, and partnerships.

43% of respondents forecast that stakeholder involvement with the SDGs, both in implementation and review, will **increase** post-COVID-19. 66% of respondents had formed new partnerships in response to COVID-19. The evidence suggests that Civil Society Organizations have been central to many of the new partnerships formed in response to COVID-19.

Figure 14: Challenges for the organisation

To what extent have the following issues become more challenging for your organization's activities around the SDGs in the context of COVID-19?

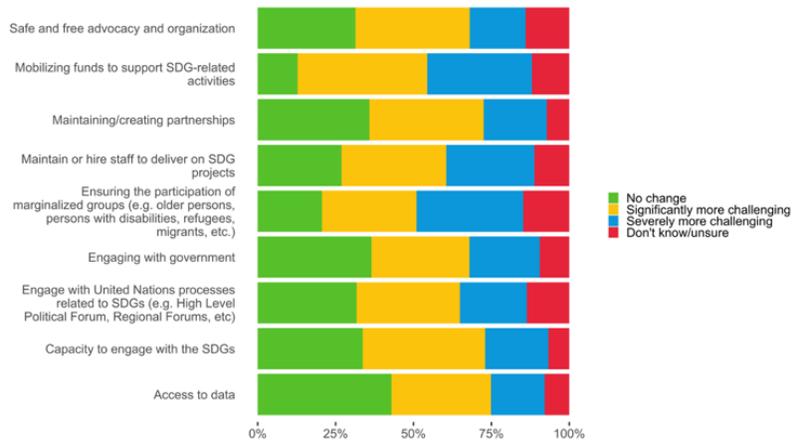


Figure 14

Respondents were also asked about the key challenges that COVID-19 had posed for their activity around the SDGs. Many showed concern about how the COVID-19 pandemic might be shrinking civic space, with 'Safe and free advocacy and organization' viewed as more challenging by 37%, and severely more challenging by 18%.

Figure 16: Impact on groups

In your experience, to what extent has COVID-19 impacted on progress towards the SDGs for the following marginalized and/or vulnerable segments of society? n=320

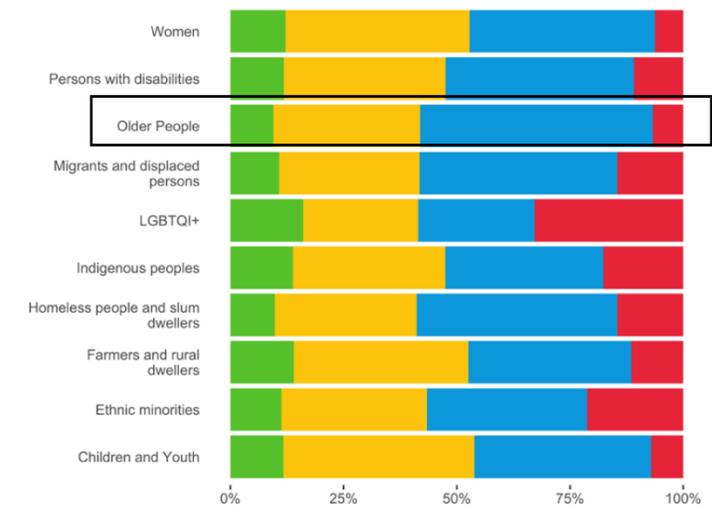


Figure 16

When asked to identify the SDG impacts of COVID-19, stakeholders saw widespread impacts of COVID-19 across all SDGs, with the most perceptions of severe

impacts on SDGs 8, 1, 3 and 4. Severe impacts from the pandemic are seen for all vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially **older people** (52%), homeless and slum dwellers (45%), migrants (45%), women (42%), and persons with disabilities (41%), but the proportion of respondents identifying 'severe' impacts is over 35% for all groups.

Importantly, stakeholders indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic has decreased the participation of certain groups in implementation and review, with proportions above 40% for many vulnerable and marginalized groups. Stakeholders also see COVID-19 generating *increased* involvement for particular *sectors*: academia, local and regional governments, and NGOs, reflecting that *first*, some sectors have been relatively well placed to participate in remote, online engagement, and *second*, that some sectors have mobilized in response to COVID-19 to a greater degree than others.

For a set of recommendations from the survey, please, check [here](#). For the full report, please, check [here](#).

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