



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



VNR LABS
HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

Summary document of VNR Lab 4: Engaging Social Groups in the VNR Process – A Case Study of Persons with Disabilities and Indigenous Peoples

08 July 2020, 12.30 – 2pm EDT

UNDESA, Division for Inclusive Social Development organized the Voluntary National Review (VNR) Lab entitled “*Engaging Social Groups in the VNR Process – A Case Study of Persons with Disabilities and Indigenous Peoples*” to explore experiences in engaging persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples in the VNR reporting processes, identify obstacles, best practices and lessons that can be learned to reach those furthest behind and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Invited speakers were H.E. Ambassador Rodrigo A. Carazo, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations; Mr. Stanley Kimaren, Executive Director, Indigenous Livelihoods Enhancement Partners (ILEPA); and, Mr. Jose Viera, Chief Executive Officer of World Blind Union.

Additional participants included Ms. Maria Soledad Cisternas Reyes, Secretary-General’s Envoy on Disability and Accessibility; Ms. Pratima Gurung, General Secretary, Gurung, Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network and President, National Indigenous Disabled Women Association, Nepal; Ms. Dovilė Juodkaitė, President of Lithuanian Disability Forum, Board member of European Disability Forum; Mr. Roberto Múkaró Borrero, Taíno, United Confederation of Taíno People and some 150 participants joined the virtual meeting that was moderated by Ms. Chandra Roy-Henriksen, Chief of the Indigenous Peoples and Development Branch, DISD, DESA.

Highlights of the discussions

Speakers strongly underlined the importance of the meaningful participation of indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities before and during the VNR process. They must be properly consulted, including through their representative organizations at the beginning and throughout the process. The national and subnational processes must provide ample opportunities for persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples to identify their needs and priorities aimed at

the implementation of the UN Declaration the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The monitoring processes of the SDGs must also be grounded within community-based processes that are culturally and technologically appropriate for indigenous peoples and accessible for persons with disabilities, for instance, consultation processes need to be accessible for persons with disabilities and reasonable accommodation provided to ensure full participation. Some of the most important issues include ensuring accessibility in areas such as education and health, accessibility to national consultations and recognition of the diversity of both persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples and their needs.

Recognition must be given to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination / multiple identities to address the specific needs and challenges of various groups as well as the different priority issues for each social group. Transforming commitments to actions can only be achieved through participation and inclusivity, which is a prerequisite for public trust. Participation increases the effectiveness of decision-making processes and is the main building block for strategic development. In this regard, the participation of indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and their representative organizations within the formal national mechanisms for policy coherence coordination and periodical review and follow up on their countries' commitment will enhance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It was noted that further alignment is also required between the VNR and the international human rights mechanisms, as outcomes of the consultative processes in human rights reporting mechanisms are often not reflected in the VNR reporting processes.

The United Nations country offices and Resident Coordinators should also play a proactive role in ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples in national processes (taking into account the diversity of peoples, gender, and age).

A positive example highlighted was organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) that have successfully advocated inclusion in the VNR processes by strengthening coordination mechanisms to mainstream disability within the broader development agenda and working closely with other constituencies, such as older people and indigenous peoples, to implement the SDGs with a human rights-based approach. This has been possible due to the support of donor countries, which allowed OPDs to produce research reports to highlight the needs of persons with disabilities in the national review process. OPDs have also developed the VNR toolkit – a practical step by step guideline – for grassroot organizations to meaningfully engage in this process.

In the case of indigenous peoples, participants reiterated the relatively scarce attention to indigenous peoples in many VNRs, which is a negative indicator of reaching those furthest

behind. Further, indigenous peoples reminded participants how difficult it was to promote the recognition of their rights as holders of individual and collective rights during the negotiation of the 2030 Agenda and to that end, collective right are not mentioned.

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis has exposed inequalities more fully and has made it all the more clear that there is an urgent need to address the attitudinal, environmental and institutional exclusion of persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples and to build back better societies that are more inclusive, accessible and sustainable for all.

Recommendations for further progress

Some progress has been made to include the perspectives and ensure the participation of indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities in the VNR process at national and at the HLPF itself. Progress has been most notable where strong representative organizations exists. This includes NGOs and expert groups that have proactively participated in, and monitored, the implementation of the SDGs and ensured that it goes hand-in-hand with the international human rights mechanisms and National Strategies and Action Plans/Programmes.

The lack of disaggregated data for indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities used in the VNRs must change if countries want to achieve their commitments to monitor the progress of the SDGs. Moreover, there is a need to supplement national statistics with co-generated and non-traditional methods of collecting data.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the HLPF 2021 could provide information on the responses and measures taken by countries for persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. However, this is, difficult unless data is disaggregated.

It is important to continue reminding Member States to respond to the rights of indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities in line with the UNDRIP and the UNCPRD.

The two critical aspects emerged from the discussions were (1) if the needs and priorities of indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities are to be adequately reflected in the VNR processes, they must be meaningfully engaged at every stage, and (2) to ensure that the VNR processes lead to implementation at the national level, there is an ongoing need to strengthen stakeholders' partnerships between Member States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations.

Business, as usual, is no longer an option if we are to leave no one behind and achieve the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.