



Introduction **Grassroots Survey** **Brief #1**

This is the first of three briefs that highlight findings from a global survey of locally based NGOs on their awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the voluntary national reviews, their engagement in partnerships, and their assessment of implementation efforts to date. The survey was conducted in spring-summer 2017 by the NGO Committee on Social Development and was circulated in 5 languages to NGOs in the 44 countries submitting their voluntary national reviews in 2017. Complete responses were received from 132 organizations from 28 countries across the world. Responding organizations represent both urban and rural programs, secular and religious organizations, single focus and multi-purpose groups.

Awareness of the SDGs

In order to participate meaningfully in implementation of the SDGs and in the national voluntary reviews, NGOs and the broader civil society must be aware of the goals and related processes. Furthermore, awareness must go beyond mere familiarity of the list of the 17 goals to engagement with specific targets and measures as part of ongoing and new programs.

The findings of the survey suggest only mixed success in sharing information and engaging civil society in working toward goal achievement. On the plus side, almost all (121) of the responding NGOs had heard of the SDGs. 118 indicated that they connect their work to the SDGs; however, only 81 respondents said that their organizations had changed their programs to address the SDGs. This may suggest that the linking is primarily by indicating that the core work of the NGO (such as poverty reduction) is related broadly, but not specifically, to a goal.

Over half of the respondents learned about the SDGs through social media. 30% learned of them through other NGOs or from their central office. Other frequently mentioned sources of information were community meetings, television, and government publications (n=25) in that order. Only two cited UN publications.

The responding organizations were much less optimistic about awareness of the SDGs in the broader population in their areas. Only 41% thought the population was generally aware of the new agenda. No difference was noted between rural and urban-serving respondents.

“As 80% of the population live in rural areas, broadcasting the SDG’s on the radio would be the best way to create awareness”. (Ethiopia)

Many recommendations were offered to improve civil society awareness and engagement. Respondents thought that governments should take the lead and should then partner with NGOs to share information.



“There are moments of awareness in the community through activities such as day against sexual abuse of children and adolescents, Peace Walk, planting of seedlings in preservation area, but they are not relating them to the SDGs.” (Brazil)

Recommendations

1. More use should be made of television and radio to discuss the SDGs. Radio should be emphasized in rural areas
2. Put more emphasis on the important roles NGOs and CSOs can play in the SDGs
3. Initiate awareness programs in schools to reach children. This engages the next generation but also leads to sharing information with parents
4. Translate the SDGs into local languages
5. Use village meetings for information sharing
6. Use traditional communication forms including dance, puppet shows and street theater

Awareness of the Voluntary National Reviews:

Although only 2017 VNR countries were included in the survey, most responding NGOs were unaware of the VNR process. Almost half the respondents (64) indicated that they had no awareness that their country was undertaking the voluntary national review. Of the remainder, 26 organizations said they were aware and another 42 answered some awareness, but with no specific information. Only 7 organizations said they had been invited to participate in their country's review in any way and only 1 respondent described their involvement; in that case, the organization submitted an independent report to the UN on a specific topic. The 2030 Agenda calls for *inclusive* national reviews. It appears that at least at this early stage in implementation, more work is needed to achieve inclusiveness.

“All member states should specify in their review procedure to include representatives of all sectors of society. NGOs must express their rights and concerns to participate in the country's review.” (Thailand)

Improving Awareness of VNRs

- ✓ Governments should recognize the roles NGOs can play in reporting
- ✓ Create more space for NGO participation
- ✓ Be more transparent about resources and funding
- ✓ Share more information widely
- ✓ NGOs should mobilize, raise issues and speak with one voice
- ✓ NGOs should insist on being included in VNRs as well as SDG implementation

Overall Recommendations on Raising Awareness:

NGO and civil society awareness of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs is important to ensure national and global success in achieving the goals. Strong partnerships and wide participation will enhance the capacity of governments to make progress on the sweeping and ambitious 2030 agenda. These begin with awareness, an awareness that goes beyond memorizing numbers and labels to deeper understanding that will encourage people and their civil society

organizations in all countries to engage with government entities in pursuit of progress. Responsibility for implementation is shared and NGOs as well as governments must increase their efforts to share information, build knowledge, and commit to action on the SDGs. Briefs 2 and 3 will elaborate additional findings of the NGO survey.