

### INTRODUCTION

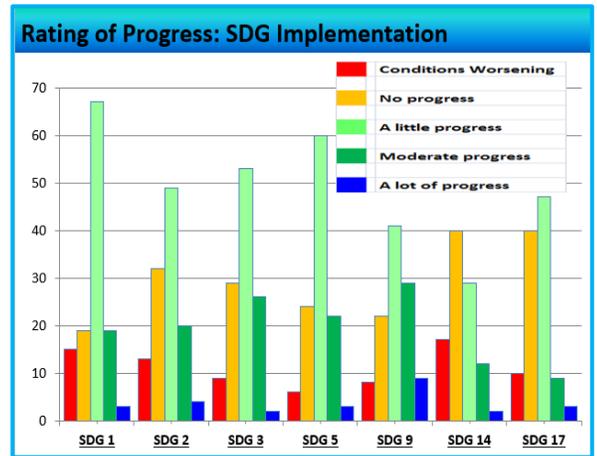
This is the second of three briefs that highlight findings from a global survey of locally based NGOs on their awareness of the SDGs and the voluntary national reviews and their assessment of implementation efforts to date. The survey was conducted in spring-summer 2017 by the NGO Committee on Social Development and was circulated in 5 languages to NGOs in the 44 countries up for voluntary review. Complete responses were received from 132 organizations from 28 countries across the world. Responding organizations represent both urban and rural programs, secular and religious, single focus and multi-purpose groups. In order to participate meaningfully in implementation of the SDGs and in the national voluntary views, NGOs and the broader civil society must be aware of the goals and processes. The findings of the survey suggest only mixed success in sharing information and engaging civil society.

### RATING OF PROGRESS ON SDG IMPLEMENTATION

55 per cent of the respondents to the survey indicated that they were aware of new government initiatives in response to the SDGs. Respondents were asked to rate their country's progress in implementing the SDGs that were being reviewed using a scale ranging from worsening conditions to a lot of progress. Based on their local context, they commented on their country's development as seen from the grassroots.

From the perspective of survey respondents at the grassroots in 28 of the 44 countries doing their VNR in 2017, "a little progress" has been made in implementing the SDGs. Ratings varied by country and by goal, as indicated below. Factors associated with some evidence of progress were often country specific but stressed factors such as supportive policies and programmes and the allocation of needed funds. However, a significant percentage of respondents stated that there had been no progress and some noted that conditions had actually worsened. The most widely reported factor associated with lack of any progress and the deterioration of conditions was corruption. This was often associated with lack of transparency and accountability on the part of Government officials and the limited access of people living in poverty to inputs, basic services and programmes, which in turn served to reinforce inequalities.

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### SDG 1: Poverty Eradication



Government corruption was a frequent reason given in countries where conditions were seen to be worsening or there was a lack of progress. Laws and policies led to increasing inequality and more poverty. Plans that would lessen poverty by increasing self-employment, free schooling, and school meals had not been implemented. Where some progress was identified, this was associated with better infrastructure, self-employment, free schooling, school meals and increases in minimum wages.

*"Corruption means that benefits fall into the hands of a few" (Nigeria)*

*"Much work needs to be done between the experts, local and central Government and the populations so that our agricultural areas could be used instead of being increasingly abandoned." (Portugal)*

### SDG 2: Food

The impact of climate change was identified as one of the biggest factors contributing to lack of progress or worsening conditions. Irregular rainfall and lack of land affect agriculture. Agricultural policies having to do with transport, food prices, and policies favoring industries were another issue identified. Unequal access to agricultural inputs and support programs also affect progress. Corruption was once again cited as an issue. On the positive side, diversification of economies, training on sustainable farming methods, investments in family farming and agricultural programs were identified as leading to a little or moderate progress.



### SDG 3: Health

Political factors and lack of services because of shortage of funds were seen to have led to a lack of progress or worsening conditions. Policies that negatively affect the most vulnerable such as privatization of health services were often in place and poor hygiene and sanitation was another problem. Those in poverty do not have access to health services. Mental and emotional health is not addressed. In the countries where a little or moderate progress was reported, government institutions selected health measures and treatments was cited. Free health care has also been introduced in some countries.

*"The health sector in Brazil is in a state of chaos. Instead of it being treated as a public right, it is simply being passed to third parties to manage." (Brazil)*

## SDG 5: Gender Equality



Ingrained cultural biases are still prevalent in many cultures and contexts, leading to a lack of meaningful progress or worsening conditions in gender equality. Gender-based violence, lack of women's representation, unequal economic opportunities, and disparity in remuneration were also cited.

In some cases where progress was recognized, improved education opportunities for women and girls was mentioned. NGO/CSO programs on awareness were also factors associated with success as were the establishment of structures such as Ministry of Women's affairs and the inclusion of women in influential positions.

*"In some cases, 33% and other cases 50% of seats are reserved for women. Equal treatment and pay has been introduced." (Nepal)*

## SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Worsening conditions were associated with governments choosing to invest in their own interests rather than paying attention to what the people need and what will build livelihoods. Some respondents also

*"Companies have closed down, there is no manufacturing taking place. The country is just importing cheap stuff from China and second-hand clothing because people do not have livelihoods" (Zimbabwe)*

explained that manufacturing has stopped due to cheap imports that do not last and lead to a lot of waste. Industries are developing, but without thought being given to the possible consequences. Waste management and water infrastructure are seldom included in planning, leading to poor health, increased pollution, tribal conflict, and the creation of more slums.

In the countries where respondents indicated that a little progress had been made, corruption was seen as hindering the achievement of their full development potential. Still others said that development has come at the cost of the poor and natural resources. Infrastructure programmes were seen to have favored urban areas over rural areas, failing to reach the people whose needs were greatest.



## SDG 14: Life Below Water



Construction of new megaprojects and diminishing water sources were the main issues cited by respondents saying that conditions were worsening. Improper waste-management and dumping untreated toxic waste into the ocean was another major problem leading to widespread pollution of water sources. In some cases respondents noted that there were very few conservation efforts for natural water resources.

Government support and adoption of conservation efforts were associated with more positive ratings of progress. In a few cases, governments had tried to make the fishing industry more sustainable, working together with local communities to protect the ecosystem and conserve biodiversity.

*"The Thai government has put all their efforts into attaining this goal especially in the fishing industry that impairs the functioning of ecosystems and reduces biodiversity, with negative repercussions for sustainable social and economic development." (Thailand)*

## SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals

In the countries where respondents identified worsening conditions or no progress, a lack of networking and exclusion of civil society from government decision-making was cited. They reported that NGOs are often

*"I feel that the alliances or agreements that may exist have only consisted in favoring the power of a few and the security of those who have. Corruption and mismanagement of aid are the common practices of the country." (Honduras)*

ignored and only those with good connections have a say. Some respondents replied that while there might be an effort in forging partnerships, the benefits and goals of development are not met for the ordinary person. Others stated that private agencies were able to freely spend their money in the ways that they chose without regard to what the community really needed. Corruption and lack of accountability were also seen as reasons for the lack of partnerships and the perception that the SDGs are unachievable.

Governmental willingness to collaborate with civil society and with other governments was identified as a factor associated with success in cases where some progress was recognized.



## RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. SDG implementation should be closely integrated into national and local planning. Greater coherence is needed.
2. Corruption needs to be tackled and accountability strengthened.
3. Governments should act as "enablers", recognizing existing NGO initiatives on the ground and inviting them to collaborate with them in SDG implementation.
4. More financial and technical support should be made available to scale up successful grassroots initiatives that cater to the most marginalized in society.
5. Best practices in implementation of the SDGs should be widely shared and disseminated.

*Government should consider the NGO sector as one significant partner to get the pulse of the people, especially the poor. They should involve this sector in framing policies and in the implementation of the policies. (India)*