

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR 2030 AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION



NEEDS AND GAPS FROM THE VNRS

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Contents

I.	Introduction	4
	Background and objectives	4
	Methodology	4
I.	Main findings	5
II.a	Capacities relevant to SDG localization and overall coordination of the Agenda 2030	5
	Overview	5
	Policy and legislative environment for implementing SDG agenda	6
	Institutional capacity	8
	Monitoring and reporting capacity	9
	Human resources and leadership capacity	11
	Financing capacity	12
	Information, knowledge and technological capacity	13
II.b	Capacities specific to SDG 1-16	13
	Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere	13
	Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	14
	Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	15
	Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	16
	Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	16
	Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	17
	Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	17
	Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	18
	Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	18
	Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries	19
	Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	20
	Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	20
	Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	21
	Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	22
	Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt	

biodiversity loss.....	22
Goal 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	23
II.c Capacities relevant to achieving ‘Leave no one behind’ objectives	23
II. Summary of capacity development experiences	24
North-South Cooperation	24
South-South Cooperation	26
Multilateral cooperation	28
III. Conclusions and recommendations	29
Policy making capacity	29
Institutional capacity	29
Monitoring and reporting capacity	30
Human resource and leadership capacity.....	30
Financing capacity	30
Technology capacity	31
Appendices	32
List of countries and year of VNR included in the review	32
List of countries and year of VNR not included in the review due to unavailability of English translation	34

I. Introduction

Background and objectives

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are presented at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, which is the central platform within the United Nations system for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹ The VNRs aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In their VNR reports, countries highlight progress and challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda. This includes the identification of capacity development gaps and challenges.

This report is based on a structured review of VNRs submitted at the 2016, 2017 and 2018 HLPFs and presents key findings on capacity gaps and priorities of countries based on the VNR reporting.² The report highlights capacity gaps and priorities relevant to the overall/national implementation of the Agenda 2030 and capacities relevant to specific SDG goals as reported in the VNRs.

The overall objective of this review of the VNRs is to capture capacity building needs and gaps identified in the VNRs, so as to enable countries, as well as other interested parties, to better align capacity development interventions with the relevant priorities of developing countries.

Methodology

The analysis of capacity gaps and priorities in this report have been organized into six main areas:

- **Policy and legislative capacity for implementing Agenda 2030.** This covers capacity gaps facing countries to mainstream SDGs in national plans, sector-based policies/strategies, local planning and bottom up processes, and or legislative instruments.
- **Institutional capacity.** This covers gaps related to coordinating the Agenda 2030 implementation including the lack of or a need for a central coordination agency, horizontal (multi-sector) and vertical (national and local) collaboration, mention of any need for partnerships with civil society, academia, private sector and or engagement with the public.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity.** This relates to gaps and challenges in localizing targets/indicators, data collection/availability, data information systems/monitoring platforms and quality of reporting/progress monitoring.
- **Human resource and leadership capacity.** This relates to the lack of or need for human resource capacity, both technical and managerial and the need for sensitizing policy makers/decision makers to support the Agenda 2030 implementation.
- **Financing capacity.** This relates to the challenges of financing SDG implementation and the capacities needed to address financing gaps through resource mobilization and strengthened public finance processes.
- **Information and technology capacity.** This relates to capacities to generate information, knowledge sharing, technology and innovation to accelerate SDG implementation.

A total of 111 VNRs from 102 countries were available on the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform website. This review included 103 VNRs from 97 countries (see list in Appendix). Eight reports were not included in the review due to non-availability of content in English (see list in Appendix). Out

¹ Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1.

² See VNR database: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

of the 103 reports, the contents of the whole VNR were screened for 78 reports. For 16 reports, an English translation of the report summary available on the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform website were reviewed. In the case of the 2018 HLPF, for 9 countries translated content provided by DESA was reviewed, because translated summaries of reports in languages other than English were not available for the year 2018.³ Out of 97 countries covered in the review, six countries had conducted more than one VNR.⁴

The VNRs were reviewed in a structured manner. All sections of the reports were screened for any relevant content on capacity gaps and or priorities and the information was mapped into six capacity areas described above using a matrix in Microsoft Excel. Given that capacity gaps were not systematically assessed and reported in the VNRs in a consistent manner, this review included broad content that made reference to barriers, challenges, gaps, issues, constraints, weaknesses and strengths, needs, need for improvement or emphasis on the importance of having a capacity with respect to the six areas mentioned above. Similarly, content referring to capacity development such as reference to strategies/programmes/projects to address capacity issues/gaps were included.

I. Main findings

This section will present findings from the review of VNRs. The section focuses on three areas; (i) capacity gaps relevant to SDG localization and overall management of the Agenda 2030 (ii) capacity gaps specific to various goals as reported in the VNRs and (iii) summary of findings relevant to ‘Leave no one behind’ objective of the SDG agenda.

II.a Capacities relevant to SDG localization and overall coordination of the Agenda 2030

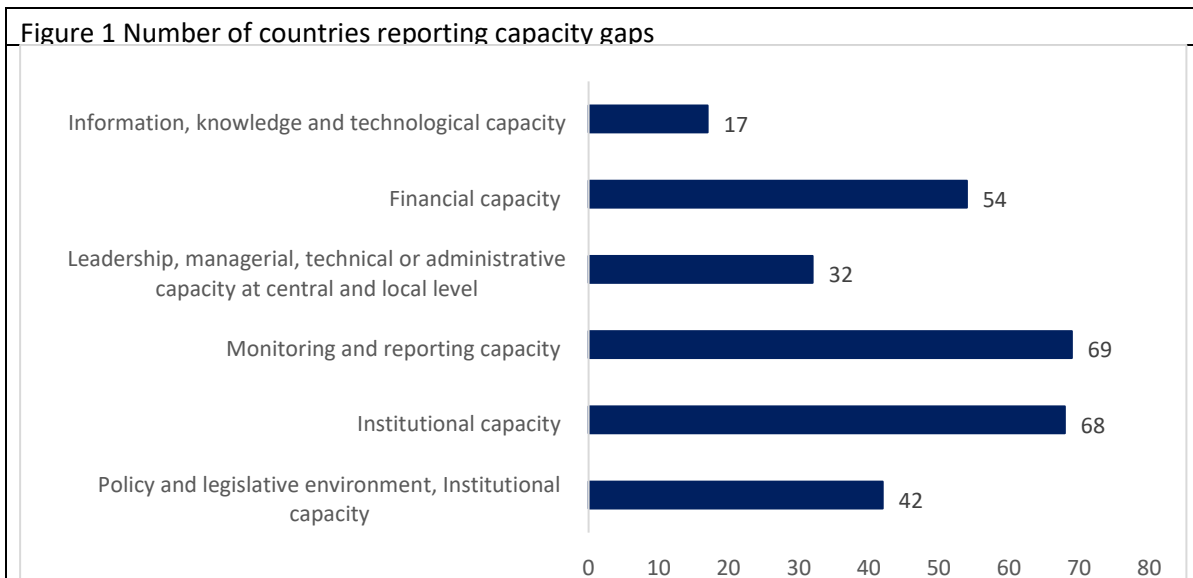
Overview

This section examines the SDG localisation and coordination process of countries. VNRs reported capacity gaps relevant to this overall national process in several sections including in the section ‘policy and enabling environment’, ‘means of implementation’, progress on goal 17 and overall discussions of challenges and reporting capacities. The VNR contents were mapped based on challenges and gaps highlighted into six capacity categories. Several of the capacity gaps overlapped or had interdependency in many instances – for example the challenge of collecting data was often associated with human resources and financing in which case the contents were mapped into three of the six capacities.

Figure 1 shows that the greatest number of countries reported gaps relevant to monitoring and reporting capacity (69) and institutional capacities (68). A significant proportion of the countries stated gaps in financial capacity (54) and gaps related to policy and legislative environment (42). About a third of countries stated gaps in leadership and human resources (32). A small proportion of countries stated gaps related to information and technology (17). A breakdown of the types of gaps reported in each of these capacity areas are discussed in the next sections.

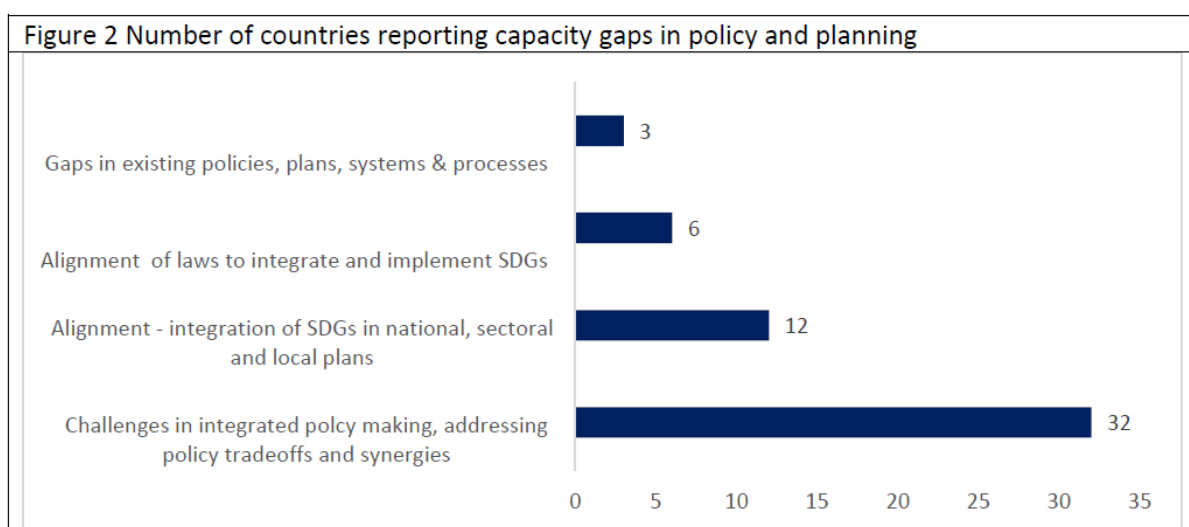
³ Andorra 2018, Benin 2018, Colombia 2018, Ecuador 2018, Guinea 2018, Mali 2018, Niger 2018, Senegal 2018 and Uruguay 2018.

⁴ Benin, Egypt, Qatar, Switzerland, Togo and Uruguay.



Policy and legislative capacity for implementing the Agenda 2030

As stated above, this capacity area covers gaps facing countries to mainstream SDGs in national plans, sector-based policies/strategies, local planning and bottom up processes, and in legislations. Out of 103 countries, 42 countries in total, reported gaps and or challenges related to policy and legislative environment in their respective VNRs. The capacity gaps or constraints mentioned include that related to integrated policy making, integration of SDGs in planning, alignment of laws to implement SDGs and gaps in existing policies, systems and processes. Figure 2 shows the number of countries that reported gaps in each of these areas. Many countries reported gaps in more than one area.



The largest proportion of countries highlighted constraints in integrated policy making (32), while a lesser number of countries highlighted the need for support in integrating SDGs into their

development plans (12) and laws (6). A limited number of countries indicated gaps in existing policies, plans and systems that was not conducive to localising SDGs in their policy and planning frameworks (3).

Under integrated policy making, the most commonly stated challenge was to address three dimensions of sustainability (social, economic and environment) in policy making. The capacities required included technical know-how to address sustainability. For example, several reports mentioned the need to formulate standard concepts and mechanisms to guide sustainable policy making, while other reports were more specific expressing a need for capacity in ‘measuring natural capital’ and ‘valuing the environment’ which can guide sustainability policies. To a lesser extent reports highlighted country contexts where several policies and laws existed that address the different dimensions of sustainability but some of them conflicted with each other. Therefore, there was a need to harmonize the existing policies, plans and laws, or develop a long-term sustainable development strategy that consolidates the existing policies and laws. Another capacity required was the need for a mind-set change or more awareness raising amongst policy makers to support sustainable policies as they demand long-term policies beyond electoral terms. Other constraints related to policy making include the know-how for addressing short-term versus long term trade-offs, analysing and prioritising policies that are most likely to make a difference or has potential for results (effectiveness evaluation), to establish inclusive policy making, the need to address interconnectedness of goals and targets, the need to link policy making with budgeting, to establish more participatory and bottom up planning (for example how to incorporate citizen’s feedback) and the need to practice more evidence based planning and policy making. Several developed countries highlighted the need for addressing national versus international priorities and managing spill over effects of national policies globally (for example emission reduction). Other than technical expertise, reports highlighted that financial support, human resource capacity and institutional support was necessary to achieve these changes in policy making. These capacity requirements are further explored in the next sections.

Under legislation-related gaps, countries stated that legislative changes would help to confirm or guarantee a country’s commitment to SDGs and will provide a more enabling environment to integrate SDG agenda into the national development context. The types of changes required include changes to laws and the need for raising awareness of law makers. Regarding these intended changes, reports did not mention any specific capacity requirement.

A majority of countries reported that work is underway to integrate SDGs into their development plans including sectoral plans. Many countries reported the application of the UNDP supported Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) tool for assessing the level of alignment of SDGs in their development plans. According to the VNRs, some of the outcomes of the RIA exercises include prioritising SDGs within the local context based on the level of alignment and the development of a roadmap to support full integration of SDGs in national plans to support Agenda 2030 implementation. With respect to countries that highlighted challenges in this exercise, the capacity required mostly relate to technical and human resource capacity as per the reports.

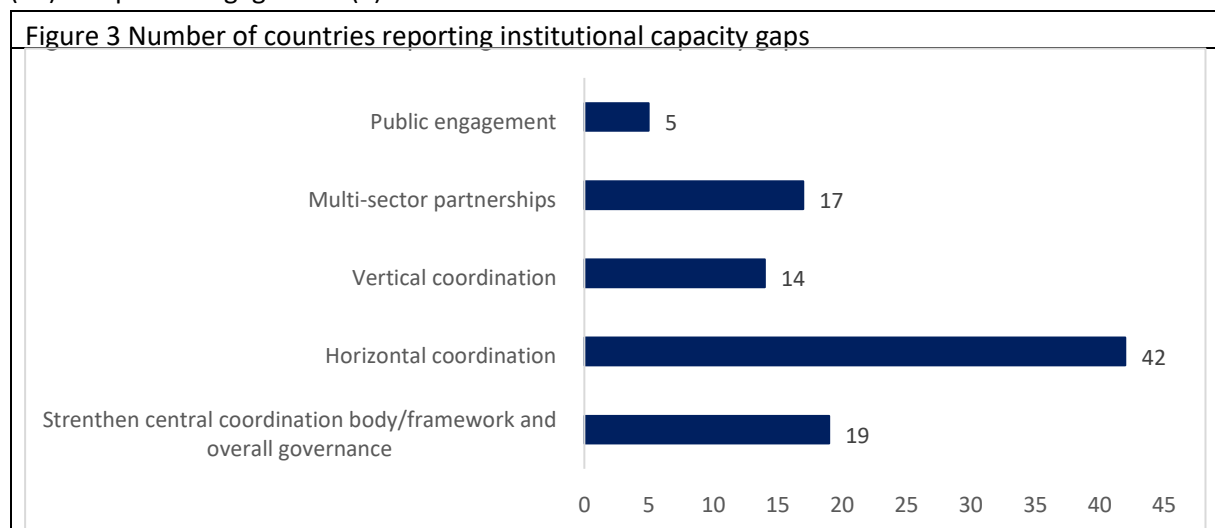
Few countries explicitly stated gaps in their existing policy and planning frameworks and processes which affected or did not support the integration of SDGs in a meaningful way. According to the reports the integration of SDGs remained ‘broad’ and or ‘vague’. Examples of these gaps include existence of complex planning documents, unavailability of complete documents, lack of measurement frameworks and indicators in existing planning documents and complex national measurement/monitoring frameworks that made alignment of SDGs too burdensome. The reports did not mention any specific capacity requirement to address these gaps.

Institutional capacity

This capacity area covers gaps related to coordinating the Agenda 2030 implementation including the need for central and local coordination, partnerships and governance.

Many countries acknowledge the need for strong institutional coordination and a ‘whole of government approach’ to implement the ambitious SDG agenda and to achieve integrated implementation in the VNRs. The types of institutional capacity gaps stated in the VNRs are highlighted in Figure 3. Majority of the countries stated in their respective VNRs that work is underway to establish a central coordination mechanism or institutional arrangement for coordinating the Agenda 2030. These arrangements range from high level advisory committees supported by thematic working groups or central planning ministries taking lead in coordination supported by inter-ministerial committees.

The largest proportion of countries highlighted challenges related horizontal coordination (42) while a smaller proportion of countries reported challenges in establishing a central coordination mechanism (19), in establishing multi-sector partnerships (17) and in achieving vertical coordination (14) and public engagement (5).



Horizontal coordination includes reference to a lack of inter-sectoral or inter-ministerial coordination where the central planning or SDG coordination body coordinates/relies on other ministries for inputs including data, which can prove to be complex. Some of the reports mentioned that institutions or government agencies do not have the necessary know-how to assume inter-disciplinary roles or integrated thinking as required by the SDG agenda and continue to be limited to their own specialised areas which limits agencies’ openness to contribute to coordination. Other reports stated the difficulty of sustaining coordination over a long period of time. Specific capacity requirements stated in some of the reports include the need to have technical knowledge to address these gaps such as formulating mechanisms or modalities for engaging wide range of stakeholders. One country mentioned the need for knowledge transfer, in other words they would like to know how other countries carry out the complex coordination task. Many countries stated the need for awareness building across the different institutions as knowledge and importance of SDGs is often limited to key ministries or bodies that lead the process and not widely across the government.

Central coordination and governance challenges include inability of countries to set up the institutional mechanism for coordinating SDGs. Some countries highlighted the need for a governance framework with oversight bodies, accountability mechanisms for SDGs, with involvement of key

institutions such as the parliament. Other countries highlighted that while central planning and coordination arrangements existed for the purpose of implementing the MDGs, such arrangements were no longer sufficient given that SDGs had a broader thematic focus than the MDGs. One of the countries emphasized the need for strengthening and adapting existing planning frameworks and systems as much as possible to steer the SDGs than creating parallel bodies and duplication although this may prove to be more difficult as it would involve sensitizing and building knowledge of existing agencies on the SDGs. Other countries highlighted the inherent weakness of existing institutions and lack of clarity in organizational mandates which weakened the coordination of the SDGs. This includes countries with ongoing conflict/fragility statuses. With respect to specific capacity requirements, most countries did not specify inputs needed to address these gaps. Few countries mentioned the need to designate human resources, develop clear roles and responsibilities to have a well-functioning SDG coordination arrangement. One country highlighted the need for technical capacity, i.e. tools for managing the overall implementation of SDGs.

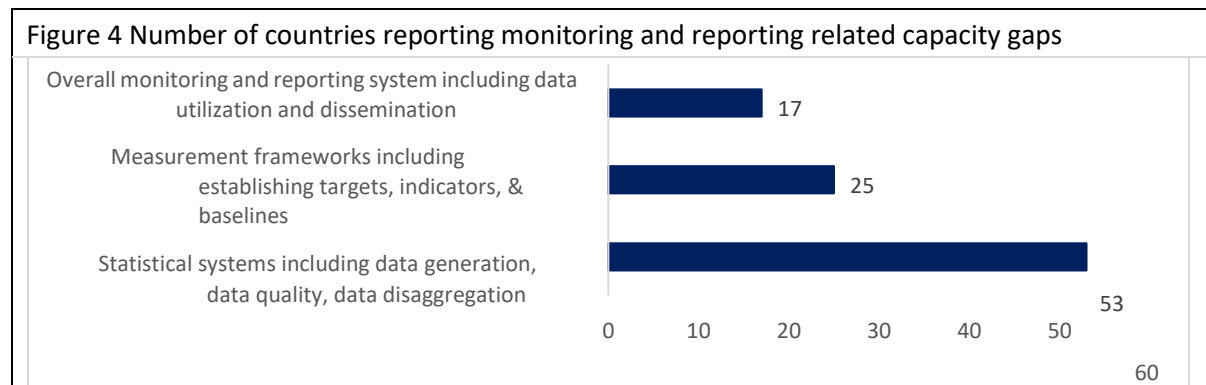
Problems associated with vertical coordination include lack of awareness of SDGs amongst local actors, the lack of operational capacity to implement interventions to achieve SDGs even if resources get mobilised, the lack of capacity of local actors to coordinate planning for SDG implementation with central agencies. Some of the reports reflected on the importance of engaging local actors in a meaningful way, i.e. engaging local stakeholders in decision making than for purposes of consulting. Regarding specific capacity requirements to address these gaps, the most commonly mentioned action is to conduct awareness raising and transfer of technical expertise in planning and data management to the local level. Some countries highlighted the need for developing specific guidelines and clear direction that central governments can extend to local level stakeholders on defining local level SDG targets and prioritizing them.

Challenges reported under multi-sector partnerships which include partnerships with civil society, private sector and academia include lack of stakeholder awareness on SDGs. An example mentioned in one of the reports was the low level of understanding of SDGs amongst private sector which made it difficult for central government to work with business community to carry out sustainability initiatives such as greening the economy. Similarly, few countries stated the importance of engaging public/society to implement SDGs, highlighting public's responsibility and role for influencing stakeholder decisions but not being able to achieve this due to lack of public understanding of the Agenda 2030. While most countries did not specify capacity requirements to address these gaps other than reference to 'awareness raising', one country highlighted the need for a technical input, to design and put in place platforms for creating dialogue and action on SDGs with civil society and public.

Monitoring and reporting capacity

This capacity area covers gaps and challenges related to monitoring and reporting of the progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Figure 4 shows that majority of countries reported gaps in statistical systems and data generation (53) while a smaller proportion of countries reported challenges in developing measurement frameworks, targets and indicator methodologies (25) and in establishing an overall monitoring and reporting system on SDGs (17) which to some degree overlaps with statistical capacity issues. It is noted that majority of the VNRs reported on data gaps in a systematic manner taking guidance from the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDGs Indicators (IAEG-SDGS) on the indicator tiers.



Many countries acknowledge that the Agenda 2030 provides an opportunity to enhance, harmonize and or modernise existing statistical systems and capacities of countries. The gaps and challenges related to statistical systems and data generation reported in the VNRs range from countries' inability to produce a wide range of data required for SDG monitoring and generation of disaggregated data which was frequently discussed in the 'leave no one behind' sections of the VNRs. Other challenges include weak administrative data and records, importance of using qualitative data which is largely missing in the current data gathering process and addressing data duplication. Countries also highlighted the need for enhancing national statistical systems, capacity of statistical bodies or offices and developing online data platforms for SDG monitoring. Some of the countries highlighted the need for decentralizing data collection and inter-agency data coordination gaps which have been discussed in the previous section under institutional capacity. The need to identify ways to establish or generate data from business communities/private sector was also currently absent as per the reports. The specific capacity requirements include technical expertise in developing data collection instruments, training of statisticians, researchers and other officials in statistical offices as well as those in line ministries and local authorities, financial support to strengthen statistical systems and to fund online platforms. The technological support required by countries to support data systems is further elaborated in the section below.

The challenges related to measurement include problems with defining national targets, developing methodologies for indicator measurement, harmonizing existing methodologies and national indicators with SDG indicators using guidance from IAEG-SDGS. Some countries highlighted the need for improved global guidance on developing methodologies and identifying innovative methods of measurement. Specific examples stated in the VNRs include guidance for indicator measurement of sustainability related indicators such as 'material foot print' or 'food loss' indicators. The specific capacity requirement highlighted by countries to address these gaps include mostly technical assistance and financial assistance. The need for technical support on measurement of Tier 3 indicators was specifically mentioned.

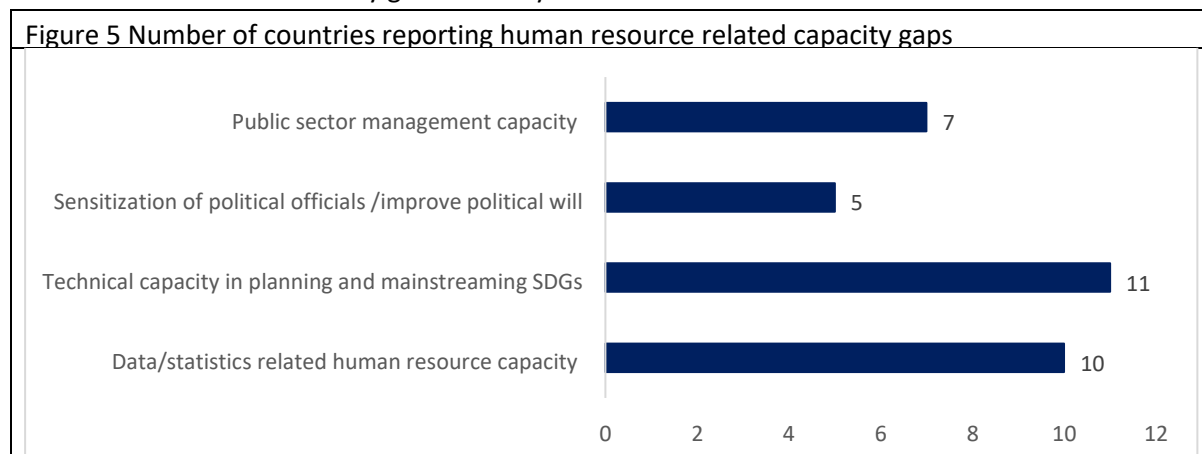
Challenges associated with the overall monitoring and reporting systems in the VNRs include the lack of data utilization in policy making, the lack of an overall monitoring system or mechanism for tracking SDG progress at national level. Few countries referred to the need for institutionalizing VNR reporting and or the need to introduce periodic SDG progress reporting at national level. As for specific capacity requirement or input, the most commonly referred support is to improve awareness and address 'phobia' against data amongst policy makers in order to strengthen the culture of evidence-based reporting and decision making. One country mentioned the need for technical support to enhance data analytical capacity. No other specific capacity requirements were mentioned to address these gaps.

Human resources and leadership capacity

This capacity area relates to specific reference made to human resource gaps including technical and managerial skills/abilities, leadership and the need for sensitizing policy makers/decision makers to support the Agenda 2030 implementation.

As mentioned previously, some of these human resource needs overlap with capacity areas discussed above. Figure 5 shows that majority of countries highlighted gaps related to technical capacity in planning and mainstreaming SDGs (11) and in data and statistics related skill gaps (10). Few countries stated the challenges of overall public sector management capacity (7) and the need for sensitizing policy makers/political officials on SDGs (5).

Human resource challenges in technical areas exist amongst government personnel at management and administrative levels according to the VNRs. These technical areas specified range from statistics and data analytics, planning and mainstreaming SDGs, gender mainstreaming, undertaking innovating financing and resource mobilisation and overall knowledge of SDGs. Weak public sector human resource capacity also encompassed lack of motivation and competency in the civil service. The need for sensitizing political officials was emphasized by countries to improve political commitments to SDGs and to address continuity given their cyclic turnover.



Few countries specified the type of human resource inputs needed to address these gaps. Reference was mostly made to hiring of new personnel, upgrading skills of existing staff and mobilisation of experts in specialised areas. Some of skills desired skills include results-based management, report writing, use of coordination tools, and research and analytics. Other proposed inputs to address gaps include development of training material and certifications, establishing a 'national certified team of trainers who are able to deliver training on the SDGs including raising awareness, supporting mainstreaming work in national plans and sub- national plans, and monitoring and tracking their progress. Other countries highlighted the need for a more general orientation programme for public sector officials as well as representatives of NGOs and private sector on Agenda 2030. Spain has set a target to include SDG content in the government's civil service exam which is a strategic intervention to build SDG awareness across the public sector. Proposed inputs to address weak civil service capacity include developing a comprehensive salary policy for a 'fair, transparent and merit-based salary scheme in public institutions' and introduction of human resource management information systems.

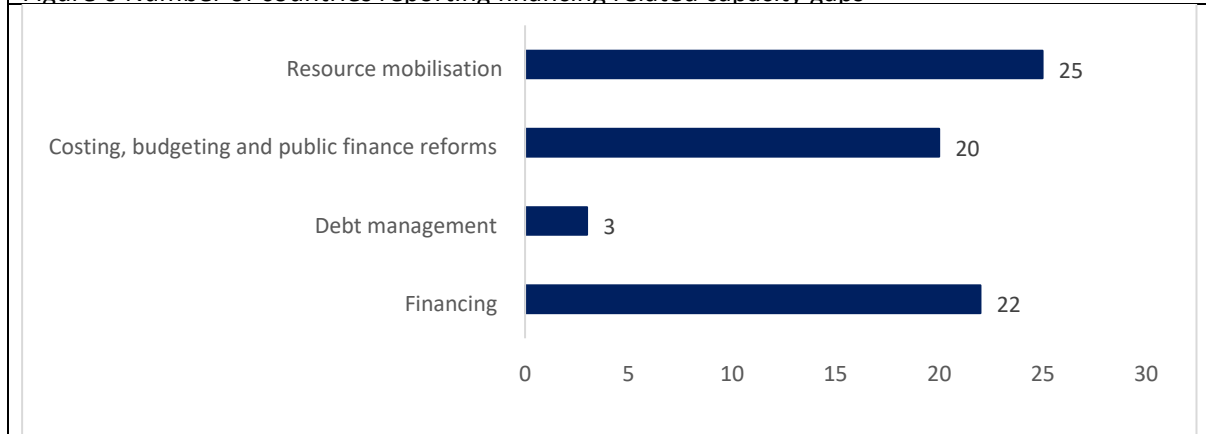
Financing capacity

This capacity area relates to the challenges in financing SDG implementation. The need for resources to finance the SDGs was widely recognized in the VNRs given the ambitious scope of the Agenda 2030. The need to improve the 'predictability and sustainability of financing' was often stated although not

always elaborated. Figure 6 shows that majority of countries reported challenges in resource mobilisation capacity (25) while a smaller proportion of countries highlighted the need for capacity in budgeting and public finance (20) while countries also made reference to the general need for financing or reported shortage of resources (22). A total of three countries emphasized the need for debt management capacity and debt sustainability which reduced scope of investments in the SDGs.

Some of the reasons for shortage of resources reported in the VNRs include fall in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) due to graduation to middle income status, ODA dependency in countries with protracted crises, debt financing as mentioned, budget austerity measures, fall in government revenues and lack of focus and targeting in government expenditures.

Figure 6 Number of countries reporting financing related capacity gaps



To address these gaps, countries have proposed a range of inputs and strategies in the VNRs some of which are already under implementation by countries. This includes developing a resource mobilisation/financing strategy backed by a financing needs assessment estimating the cost of SDG implementation. Beyond national governments, reference was made to strengthening resource mobilisation capacity of NGOs, local governments, and academic institutions.

In general, findings of the VNR review show a shift in priority to boost domestic resource mobilisation capacities. A commonly stated approach was to improve tax collection through introduction of tax policies, tax legislation, strengthening tax collection institutions and promoting incentives for voluntary compliance. Other actions include leveraging national budget and ODA to mobilise private capital. Examples of strategies reported in the VNRs for enhancing domestic resource mobilisation include encouraging public-private partnerships (PPP), tapping philanthropy, crowd financing, corporate social responsibility, social enterprise and leveraging greater remittance flows by reducing the cost of remittances services. Emphasis was often made to improving the overall investment climate for both local and foreign investors through regulatory measures, reducing red tape through administrative reforms, improving legal environments and credit worthiness. Other reforms mentioned include the need for overall strengthening of public finance transparency, combating of illicit financial flows, strengthening asset recovery measures and the enforcement of whistle-blower policy to fight against corruption. For addressing debt servicing, more focussed debt management capacities were required by countries. Although the VNRs did not specify what type of capacity building is required to implement these actions, some reports highlighted the need for technical assistance, tools and knowledge transfer.

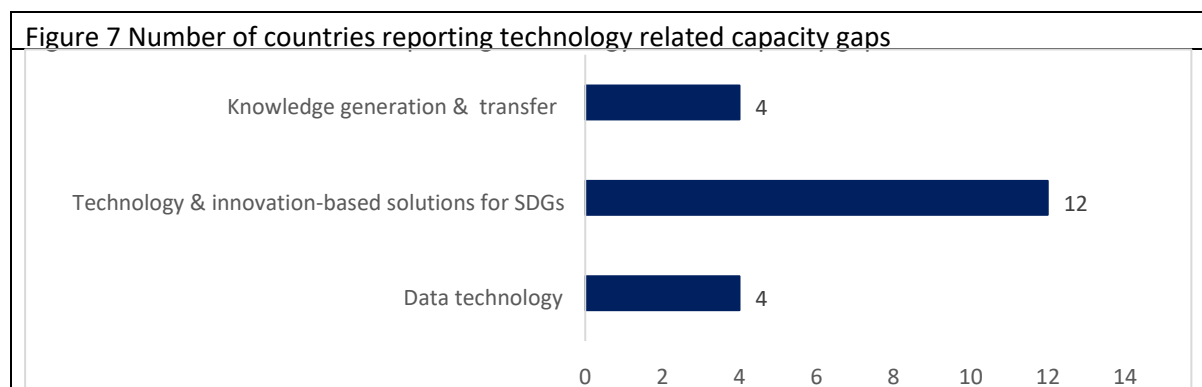
With respect to improving budgeting, challenges highlighted include conducting expenditure analysis (for example assessing spending on gender, water and environmental protection), carrying out budget allocation, and budget prioritisation and budget alignment with SDG based plans. Several references

were made to introduction of programme budgeting, the need for costing SDGs and introducing robust systems to achieve budgetary effectiveness and targeting. Specific inputs needed to address this as reported include developing capacities in costing (including gender responsive costing) at the national and sub-national levels and institutionalization the activity within national planning mechanisms.

Information, knowledge and technological capacity

This capacity area focusses on information generation, knowledge sharing, technology and innovation for SDG implementation.

Figure 7 shows that majority of countries discussed the need for technology and innovation-based solutions for SDGs although they were not elaborated. An example stated was to mobilise technology-based solutions on renewable energy. Amongst the twelve, only one country stated scientific research capacity needs. Few countries stated the need for data technology all of which made reference to big data (4) and the need for knowledge generation and sharing but detailed information on these points were not available in the VNRs (4).



II.b Capacities specific to SDG 1-16

This section summarizes capacity relevant information reported under each goal in the VNRs. Content reported under SDG 17 is covered in the previous sections. It is noted that the VNRs mainly reported progress against each goal and to some extent the challenges of implementation. However, these challenges were not assessed through a capacity lens and most of the content referred to issue based challenges or constraints. This review included any challenge or constraint reported for each goal that broadly fits the six capacity areas. Given that only few countries reported constraints relevant to each of the six capacity areas for each goal, this section is primarily a qualitative analysis.

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

- Policy and legislative capacity:** Under this goal, policy relevant capacity challenges were mostly reported on social protection systems and programmes that countries are implementing. Commonly reported issues include the need for strengthening targeting of the programmes, addressing overlapping of beneficiaries, high cost of implementation, lack of adaptability of programmes to changing contexts (for example responding to rising urban poor), improving sustainability of social protection funds and automating social services to improve efficiency. Other challenges in policy making stated in the VNRs include identifying ways to address overlapping vulnerabilities (for example disabled elderly), designing policy interventions based on

evidence, building on ‘what works’. Countries further emphasized legislative action for strengthening social protection and to facilitate labour market reforms.

- **Institutional capacity:** Countries that reported institutional gaps mostly highlighted the importance of multi-sector coordination to address poverty issues given that it overlaps with a range of sectors. The Bangladesh VNR highlighted that a mapping of ministries for various SDG targets indicating that 44 Ministries/Divisions were relevant to the goal, thus emphasizing the need for effective coordination. Countries further highlighted the need for coordinated implementation of social protection and poverty reduction programmes which are multi-sector in nature.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity.** The most commonly reported capacity challenge include developing methodologies and data collection to address multi-dimensional nature of poverty including calculation of a Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MDPI), the need for overall data management and data collection for monitoring poverty, developing a database on social protection indicators and strengthening data analysis and research on emerging trends such as urban poverty. One country explicitly stated the need for strengthening capacity of the national statistics body to monitor goal 1.
- **Human resources and leadership capacity:** No human resource related gaps specific to this goal were reported in the VNRs.
- **Financing capacity:** Several countries highlighted challenges in financing poverty reduction interventions. This includes insufficient allocation of national budget for such programmes, lack of capacity of national and local governments to facilitate PPPs, leverage private sector investments and promote trade and export competitiveness to create employment.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** No gaps specific to this goal were reported in the VNRs.

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Policy related challenges under this goal were not extensively reported in the VNRs. Selected issues mentioned include the need for harmonizing national strategies on food security and nutrition to cover the scope of Goal 2 and to enhance existing social protection schemes to cover food security aspects of Goal 2. Legislative actions reported include the need for facilitating easier land acquisition.
- **Institutional capacity:** Institutional challenges reported by countries relevant to this goal include weak coordination between sectors to address food security and nutrition both at central and local level, recognizing and prioritizing cross sector linkages between priorities of the goal with health goal that of the water and sanitation goal, building partnerships with NGOs and businesses to promote nutrition and building capacity of local groups such as farmer’s associations.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity:** Few countries identified challenges under this goal. This includes lack of baseline data on food security and to measure progress on reducing hunger, lack of data on food consumption patterns, both overall and by population groups. Other challenges stated include the fragmented data collection tools, approaches and systems among sectors and ministries making it difficult to get an accurate overview of the sector, lack of data at subnational levels, challenges in developing indicators to assess school feeding and limited market information to support agriculture development in geographically remote areas.
- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** One country stated the need for strengthening human resource capacity (technical and managerial) at national and local levels of government to design, resource and monitor programs relevant to this goal.

- **Financing capacity:** Few countries reported financing challenges such as the low level of spending on agriculture from national budget allocation and the need for mobilizing resources. One country highlighted the need for a resource mobilization strategy for its national nutrition programme.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** Several countries highlighted the need for technology and research relevant to this goal. This includes the need for mechanization of agriculture, the need for technological solutions to preserve environment and biodiversity, innovative financial instruments including credit for farmers and agri-businesses, research to support agriculture extension and improving quality of agricultural products with technology.

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Policy related challenges under this goal were mostly reported with respect to national health care and social care systems. Challenges stated include developing models that integrate provision of personal and public health care services, expanding and diversifying health services to respond to emerging needs, addressing fragmented systems particularly divide between health and social services and addressing universal health coverage. Some countries stated specific policy and regulatory action such as the need for a comprehensive national Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy, the need for standards for narcotic treatment centres and guidelines to manage illnesses and deaths resulting from chemicals and contaminants.
- **Institutional capacity:** Few countries specifically reported institutional challenges relevant to this goal. This includes the need for multi-sector coordination to address health issues, the need for coordination with external partners to address transboundary health problems associated with migration and the importance of partnership with international actors to certify and regulate imported pharmaceuticals.

Monitoring and reporting capacity: challenges reported in the VNRs under this goal include unavailability of up-to-information on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) to inform programming, the need for systems that deliver timely, accurate and reliable epidemiological surveillance intelligence for public health security and emergency response, lack of pollution data to identify health implications, collection of child-focused NCD data, lack of data on neglected tropical diseases and limited availability of health related research including understanding the share of diseases and death caused by air pollution.

- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** Human resource capacity gaps were commonly reported under this goal. This included shortage of health care workers, increasing the quality of health workforce, exodus of local medical professionals, low motivation amongst health professionals and the need for human resource allocation to geographically remote/rural areas.
- **Financing capacity:** Many countries highlighted financing challenges which include lack of fiscal space to allocate resources for health sector, low funding capacity of local governments, achieving cost effectiveness and sustainable funding of health systems, the need for increased investments in health infrastructure, increasing health expenditures to deliver services in rural areas and increasing costs associated with emerging health problems associated with an ageing population (e.g. dementia), NCD prevalence and HIV prevention.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** Technology interventions relevant to this goal include the need for mobile health services, digitizing and automating health sector administration.

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** The most commonly stated policy relevant challenge is to address gaps in curriculum including the need for modernizing the curriculum. Other policy level changes identified include the need for increasing inclusivity in education (regardless of social background,

disability or nationality/ethnicity), strengthening TVET programs to meet international and regional standards, adapting school systems to demographic changes such as that resulting from migration/urbanization, introducing national accessibility standards for physical environment, learning materials, communication of information (eg. sign language, braille, large print, easy read and pictorial information) in line with universal design principles and legislative action to introduce mandatory pre-primary education.

- **Institutional capacity:** Few countries reported institutional challenges. One country highlighted the need for intra-sectoral coordination between the different stages and tracks in education such as coordination between schools and universities or general education and vocational training. Another challenge stated was to strengthen multi-sector response to early childhood development.
- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** Several countries highlighted human resource challenges under this goal. This includes shortage of trained teachers particularly in remote/rural areas, the need to upgrade teachers' skills and quality, strengthening teacher training programs and availability of qualified staff in early child hood and tertiary education. One country reported conducting a human resource needs assessment for the sector up to 2030 to inform interventions.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity:** One country addressed gaps relevant to this goal comprehensively. Gaps included availability of timely data on diagnostic tests at the early childhood, primary and secondary levels, evidence-based planning and Lack of a comprehensive and fully integrated data management system.
- **Financing capacity:** Some of the challenges reported on financing include the shortage of financial resources, high dependency on donor funded resources, financial burden of educational benefits such as free schooling/school material, equitable funding i.e. channelling investments to geographically remote areas and marginalized communities.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** One of the countries reported that digital technology can strengthen education reach to remote areas/communities. Limited reference was made to application of technology and information under the goal.

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Several countries reported challenges with policy and legislation under this goal. Countries emphasized the need to carry out gender mainstreaming across government policies, projects and actions, strengthen implementation of gender equality policies and identified the need for better enforcement of gender equality relevant laws including familiarization of rights enabled by laws by the public. Other challenges stated weak programming that is not backed by gender statistics, the inability to influence policy through initiatives such as capturing economic value of domestic work.
- **Institutional capacity:** Challenges on institutional aspects stated in the VNRs include weak national machinery to steer the gender equality agenda, the need for strengthening systems for following up on resources earmarked for gender equality, engaging civil society to advocate gender issues, coordinating with institutions to facilitate gender-based budgeting.
- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** One country explicitly stated the need for awareness raising of public sector officials on gender issues and the need for conducting specialized training of relevant professionals on gender mainstreaming.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity:** challenges stated in the VNRs include the need for strengthening national statistical capacity to generate gender disaggregated data, the need for developing and or strengthening gender database, developing a methodology that standardizes the data collected on femicides, the need for data on various gender related areas including gender based violence, trafficking, impacts of climate change on women.

- **Financial capacity:** Many countries highlighted the need for gender-based budgeting. Other financing options reported include increasing access to finance for women and identifying innovative methods such as social impact investment for promoting women’s empowerment.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** No specific reference to this capacity was made under this goal.

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Three countries referred to policy related challenges in the VNRs. One country stated the need for introducing water law and regulations at the local/municipal level and two countries stated the need for developing an integrated water resource management framework including necessary laws and policies. One country highlighted the need for necessary policies to support transboundary management of groundwater.
- **Institutional capacity.** Institutional challenges reported in the VNRs include the need for improving the institutional framework/governance of water resources management through the establishment of water basin committees and water basin agencies, the lack of coordination amongst stakeholders (for example, those involved in drinking water supply versus drainage) and between and national and sub national actors.
- **Human resource and leadership capacity.** Few countries mentioned the need for human resource capacity to manage the water sector although this was not elaborated. One country highlighted the need for training and awareness raising about water efficiency, freshwater ecosystems and ambient water quality.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity.** Some of the challenges stated in the VNR include weak data collection in both water and sanitation sectors, the need for developing a methodology for collecting agricultural, industrial and household water usage data and lack of research and data on the impact of climate change on the water sector. One country highlighted that data collected on the water sector was insufficient to inform decision making.
- **Financing capacity:** Countries highlighted the need for adequate budgetary resources for financing the water sector and identifying sustainable financing mechanisms.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity.** One country highlighted the need for financial and regulatory mechanisms conducive to implementation of water-saving technologies.

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Very few countries referred to policy aspects relevant to the goal. One country highlighted the need for adherence to the European 2030 framework dedicated to ‘Clean Energy for All’ while another country highlighted the need for establishing an energy strategy beyond the 2030 timeline. Other policy requirements include the need for a strategy on energy diversification.
- **Institutional capacity:** Countries reported weak cross sectoral linkages in the energy sector, the need for strengthening institutions on various aspects of the sector including renewable energy and energy efficiency, and improve energy demand-side management, energy auditing, and regulatory interventions. Other countries highlighted the need for synergy between public and private sector stakeholders of the sector. One country emphasized public engagement, raising awareness of the value of energy and promoting more public participation in energy management, with the overall aim of increasing sustainable energy consumption.

- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** Three countries highlighted the need for human resource capacity development in the renewable energy field.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity:** countries highlighted the challenge of target setting for the sector particularly on renewable energy application and measurement challenges in areas such as energy consumption.
- **Financing capacity:** Financing challenges reported on this goal include slow pace of investment in renewable energy, legislative action to guarantee budget allocation for energy transition and identifying sustainable financing models for renewable energy.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** Several countries highlighted the need for research and development in the renewable energy field and the transfer of technology for generating renewable energy, storage systems, as well as expanding the scope of customs and taxation exemptions to cover all energy-saving systems.

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** A wide range of policy interventions were covered in the VNRs due to the broad scope of this goal. The most frequent reference to policy gaps was reported in two areas. One, policies to boost private sector investment including export and business opportunities. Second, policies related to labour market including addressing employment and social protection for unemployed. One country stated the need for strengthening national policy on addressing child labour.
- **Institutional capacity:** Only two countries made generic reference to the lack of institutional coordination under this goal although this was not elaborated in the respective VNRs.
- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** No specific human resource challenge was mentioned in the VNRs under this goal.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity:** Two countries reported on the need for strengthened labour market information systems, one of which also highlighted the need for data on investment opportunities in the country.
- **Financing capacity:** Only one country referred to access to finance as a challenge under this goal which was affecting private sector investment and job creation.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** One country stated the low expenditures on research and development which according to the VNR, hinders innovation and industrial growth.

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Few countries reported policy related challenges under this goal. Most of these countries highlighted the need for regulatory reforms to promote industrial growth. One country highlighted the importance of developing a harmonized industrial strategy aligning with national and European policies promoting industry. Two countries highlighted the need for transport policies, one of which emphasized the importance of integrating transport policy into broader industrial growth strategy. One country highlighted the weak project planning capacity to implement industrial policies and another country highlighted the need to extend infrastructure programmes to rural communities.
- **Institutional capacity:** One country reported relevant challenge under this goal, the lack of a robust network consisting of government institutions, regulators, research institutes, universities, enterprises, consulting firms and professional/ business groups to promote innovation and industrialization.

- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** Few countries emphasized the lack of human resource capacity and the need for ‘human capital development for economic transformation’. Another country highlighted its strategic focus on education and skills development to support advanced research, innovation and the uptake of new technologies.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity:** Few countries stated challenges under this goal mainly with respect to data. One country highlighted the need for research to identify and foster innovative business platforms. Another country referred to the importance of monitoring progress on industrial growth targets including its ranking in the Global Competitiveness Report.
- **Financing capacity:** Many countries highlighted the funding shortages to meet infrastructure needs and lack of funding for research and innovation. Reasons for this include high debt levels and lack of fiscal space due to high level of spending on recurrent expenditure, the need to boost private sector investment. Countries emphasized the importance of alternative and innovative financing required to achieve this goal such as setting up equity facilities, co-investment mechanisms and innovative financial instruments from banking facilities.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** Countries highlighted the technology potential for a range of areas relevant to the goal including technology for greening the economy, promoting capacity for technology adoption by businesses, as well as a culture of innovation and tapping technology for delivering transportation infrastructure. One country highlighted the need for strengthening the research and innovation capacity of its universities under this goal.

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Under this goal countries highlighted several policy and regulatory aspects including recognizing the rights of migrant and indigenous communities through legislative measures. One country referred to broader policy approach of reviewing its legal framework, with a focus on vulnerabilities and inequalities. Countries referenced broad policies and programmes that focus on access to education and health for targeted groups.
- **Institutional capacity:** No specific reference to institutional gaps were reported under this goal.
- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** Only one country made a relevant point under this goal i.e. the need to strengthen capacities within the civil service, civil society organizations and government bodies to address issues of vulnerability.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity.** A few countries highlighted the need for strengthening data on vulnerabilities and inequalities. Several countries discussed relevant data gaps in the ‘leave no one behind’ sections of the VNRs most of it focusing on lack of disaggregated data (see discussion in the next section).
- **Financing capacity:** A few countries highlighted the need for having a sustainable financing model for social protection programmes while other countries generally discussed the lack of finance for expanding education, health and land reforms to reduce wealth-based inequalities.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** No relevant information was available in the VNRs under this goal.

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Under this goal, countries made generic reference for the need to improve policies and legislations to support urbanization and infrastructure development. Countries mostly discussed programmes already underway. One country emphasized the need for capacity to conduct territorial planning while another country highlighted the need for mainstreaming climate change risks into urban planning policy and addressing urban mobility.
- **Institutional capacity:** Countries mostly emphasized the need to build capacity of local actors such as municipal offices or strengthen ‘city governance’ under this goal. One country mentioned the

need for strengthening the country's urban planning institutions including capacity to coordinate urban infrastructure projects with multiple stakeholders. Reference was also made to strengthening stakeholder capacity on project management 'to carry out prioritization, estimate accurate size of investments required and manage demand expectations of urban projects'.

- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** Only one country referred to the need for developing technical capacities of staff although this was not elaborated.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity:** Generic reference on the lack of data and challenges on methodologies for indicators under this goal were made although not elaborated.
- **Financing capacity:** A few countries discussed the high cost of urban infrastructure development including housing, drainage and solid waste management infrastructure required to meet this goal. One country highlighted the weak financial capacity of local governing bodies.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** Some of the technology needs reported under this goal include the need for technology on environmental aspects of productive sectors and facilitating emission control systems.

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Several countries highlighted the role of public procurement as an important intervention for promoting principles of sustainability. These countries discussed the need for developing and or revising existing legislation and public procurement policies with a shift from least cost approach to reducing negative environmental and social impacts of government transactions. Countries also highlighted the lack of a national policy on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), the need for a policy to minimize food waste and the lack of recognized labels and standards as a key barrier to enabling consumers and public administration to make informed decisions when choosing goods or services. Other policy gaps include the need to harmonise policies on green economy and SCP rather than implementing these as disparate policies. Two countries made specific reference to reform policies on solid waste management and hazardous waste.
- **Institutional capacity:** A few countries reported relevant points under this goal. This includes identifying and or establishing national bodies on SCP and existing lack of coordination efforts between different levels of government including with local authorities to implement SCP policy. Many countries emphasized the role of public and the need for public awareness to promote this goal.
- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** One country highlighted the need for adequate staff and skill enhancement to monitor sustainability and environment management indicator performance of the country. Clear assignment of roles and leadership responsibilities for monitoring progress in sustainable practices were also mentioned. One country highlighted its initiative with UNDP to develop a tailor-made training course on environmental protection for civil servants and municipality authorities which according to the report has potential to be extended to businesses and NGOs.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity:** Reference was made to the challenge of introducing sustainability reporting and in generating statistical data and monitoring progress on material footprints and domestic material consumptions. One country reported on the challenge of monitoring indicators under this goal due to lack of capacity to develop methodologies for data collection.
- **Financing capacity:** A few countries discussed the challenge of funding particularly for environment management interventions.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** Several countries highlighted the lack of research and innovation capacity to promote sustainable practices such as environmental

protection, eco-innovation, and application of technology for waste recycling primarily due to lack of funding and investments in the research and development sector.

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Majority of countries reported progress on developing and implementing national level policies and mainstreaming climate change and disaster risk reduction in development plans and sector policies. Very few countries stated relevant challenges. One such challenge reported was the absence of a national public awareness strategy on disaster risk reduction, the need to review and analyse current legislation on disaster risk reduction and the National Emergency Plan, updating and consolidating instruments and regulations to meet the country's commitments in terms of mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change and policies to institutionalize environmental protection in all levels of government. One country highlighted the delay in the Paris Agreement ratification and in having the needed legal decrees to operationalize the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) implementation and another country highlighted the challenge of mainstreaming climate change in national development planning.
- **Institutional capacity:** Several countries highlighted capacity limitation in terms of lack of coordination and involvement of sectors to implement climate change actions. Several countries highlighted lack of effective arrangements to coordinate line ministries, international stakeholders, and development partners at national and local levels to facilitate implementation of the NDC. One country highlighted the need for strengthening national institutions to establish direct access to climate finance and another emphasized the need to strengthen management systems for climate finance projects. Another country highlighted the partnership needed with private sector to address climate impacts.
- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** Few countries highlighted the need for human resource capacity including strengthening technical capacity in mitigation and adaptation fields.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity:** Some of the relevant challenges stated under this goal include the need for strengthening monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) of the NDC, lack of spatial data, reliable data and baselines on climate impacts, environmental protection, lack of sea level and climate monitoring capacity and low investments in climate research.
- **Financing capacity:** Many countries highlighted the financing gap for delivering climate resilience. Specific reference was made to the challenge of leveraging investments to remain carbon neutral, valuation of environmental resources such as marine resources, ensuring that domestic and international finance is successfully acquired, utilized, and accounted for, conducting needs assessments, identification of financing sources and access routes and formulation of projects, programmes.

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Many countries reported that work is in progress to develop necessary laws and policies relevant to this goal. Few countries reported policy gaps such as lack of regulatory and legal frameworks to ensure appropriate planning, management, and governance of marine resources, lack of enforcement of existing laws and the need for a general law on the comprehensive management of coastal and marine areas and a regulation for the general law on sustainable fishing and aquaculture. One country highlighted the need for an integrated coastal and ocean management policy while another emphasized the integration of social and economic dimensions into marine resource management.
- **Institutional capacity:** A few countries highlighted challenges under this goal. This includes the lack of multi-sector coordination, inherent weaknesses of governance including the need for

surveillance and enforcement capacities in general and the need for cooperation between government and non-state actors.

- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** Only two countries highlighted human resource specific needs. One country reported the need for conducting inspections and ensuring compliance with the law on industrial pollution. The other country highlighted the need for human resource personnel on fisheries management.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity:** Gaps reported in the VNR relevant to the goal include the need for scientific research and information on health of the oceans to inform decision making, establishing a permanent system to evaluate the management of marine Natural Protected Areas, limited availability of data on the water ecosystems, lack of baseline data on marine life and environment management, data gaps on catches and aquaculture, the need to strengthen data to facilitate scientific based decision making and lack of valuation of fisheries sector.
- **Financing capacity:** Funding gaps for implementing protecting marine habitats were mentioned. One country specifically highlighted the need for resource mobilization capacity particularly to diversify income streams and tap private sector.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** Generic reference was made on the need for technologies on environment management and the need for enhancing knowledge on marine resources.

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Most countries reported progress on development of policies and laws relevant to the goal. A few countries highlighted gaps such as the need for integrating community participatory approach for forest management, the need for legislation on biodiversity conservation and wetlands protection and evaluation of policies in light of climate change impacts.
- **Institutional capacity:** Countries highlighted the need for strengthening the governance of the natural resource sectors including that required for reversing deforestation and forest degradation and reversing biodiversity loss, lack of collaboration and coordination among the line agencies, lack of participatory coordination frameworks in land and forestry management which allow joint planning, monitoring and reporting by key stakeholders, the need for strengthening partnerships with indigenous and local communities.
- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** Only one country made specific reference to human resource gap, the need for skills and knowledge on ecosystem services valuation and modelling.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity:** A general lack of data regarding natural resource management was stated by few countries.
- **Financing capacity:** Countries made general reference to the lack of funding to implement the goal. One specific funding shortage was noted for research on biodiversity and ecosystems and financing needed for Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM).
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** Some of the relevant gaps include recognizing the role of technology needed for the sector.

Goal 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

- **Policy and legislative capacity:** Given the broad scope of the goal, policies and regulatory measures relevant to a wide range of issues and target groups were covered in the VNRs. This includes strengthening mechanisms to defend the rights of groups that are especially vulnerable

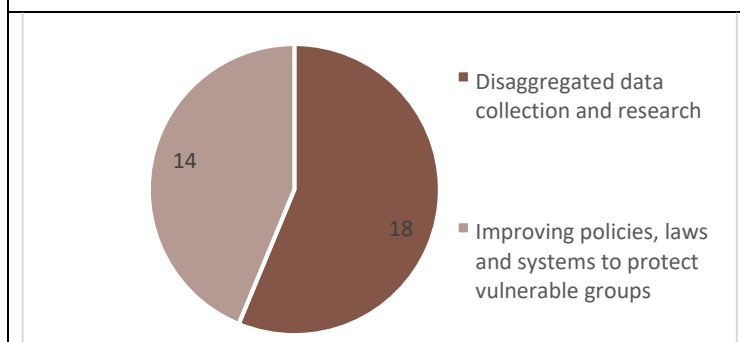
to inadequate access to justice and violations of human rights and freedom, addressing gender-based violence, prevention of money laundering and drug trafficking. One country emphasized the need for strengthening government’s overall decision-making processes to better deliver results.

- **Institutional capacity:** Various types of institutional strengthening were reported under the goal. This include enhancing the public service’s capacity to execute programmes, address the weak capacity of CSOs to fulfil roles such as promoting rights-based approach, improving services, and encouraging participation and accountability, strengthening parliamentary capacity and judicial system. Other institutional challenges include collaborating with other countries/governments to combat transnational crime.
- **Human resource and leadership capacity:** No specific human resource challenges were reported.
- **Monitoring and reporting capacity:** Under this goal, reference was made to the importance of monitoring indicators of the goal including establishing baselines and the need for strengthening national birth registration systems through better data management and the need for building public awareness to encourage birth registration.
- **Financing capacity:** No substantive reporting financial capacities were reported under this goal.
- **Information, knowledge and technological capacity:** Areas for technological input to achieve the goal was to apply technology to increase the investigative capacity of agencies and platforms to enhance citizen participation in governance.

II.c Capacities relevant to achieving ‘Leave no one behind’ objectives

The review found that a majority (18) of countries reporting capacity needs highlighted the need for disaggregated data collection and research, while the remaining countries (14) reported the need for improving policies, laws and systems to address vulnerabilities and inequalities (see Figure 8). A few countries highlighted both.

Figure 8 Countries reporting capacity needs to achieve 'leave no one behind' objective.



According to the VNRs, data needs were considered important to assist

with identifying the needs of vulnerable groups and targeting programmes and policies. The data would also support countries to monitor progress on inequalities. VNRs stated a range of data disaggregation levels such as age, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), geographic location/spatial data, migrant status, minority status (religious groups, ethnic groups, and indigenous communities) etc. Data disaggregation at local levels were reported as an additional challenge.

The challenges related to policies, laws and systems primarily centred on social protection reforms, income policies and labour market reforms as reported under goal on addressing inequality, above. This includes minimum income initiatives and social benefit schemes. Legislative requirements include laws to recognize rights of vulnerable groups and guarantee protection. One country highlighted the importance of implementing policies to achieve intergenerational environmental equity so that a generation will not be ‘left behind’ or marginalized in the future due to current environmental practices.

As for capacity needs to address these gaps, the VNR mentioned the need for policy reform, institutional coordination, financial and human resources and a strong emphasis was made by several countries on the importance of partnerships particularly tapping the role of CSOs to advocate for the rights of marginalized groups.

II. Summary of capacity development experiences

The following summarizes some of the capacity building initiatives relevant to the Agenda 2030 as reported in the VNRs. This includes examples of North-South, South-South and multilateral initiatives.

North-South Cooperation

- **Canada** – Through IDRC, Canada supports the ‘Harnessing of Big Data for Sustainable Development Network’ which aims to apply big data to development innovations by strengthening researcher capacities and augmenting existing capacities while considering issues such as ethics, privacy, rights and competition.
- **Australia** has supported the development of the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development for the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the SDGs. Australia’s funding to the UNDP Pacific Office has supported technical assistance on statistics work in the Pacific. Other assistance includes technical assistance and statistical leadership support across economic, social, environmental and governance statistics to National Statistics Offices in Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Pacific region. In the Indo-Pacific, Australia contributes funding to UNDP’s Asia-Pacific Development Effectiveness Facility, which is assisting countries to better map, manage and target all financial flows to national sustainable development priorities.
- **Germany** addresses international structural issues in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda in international institutions such as the IMF and WTO and in the G20 and G7 groups of states. To support the Addis Tax Initiative (ATI), Germany will double its support for the mobilisation and effective use of national domestic income in developing countries by 2020.
- **Ireland** is a supporter of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) 2030 movement led by the WHO and World Bank. Ireland supports strengthening of national health systems.
- The **Belgian** SDG Charter for International Development aims to support countries on renewable energy, agriculture and nutrition and health and access to medicines. The Affordable Renewable Energy for All (AREA) multi-stakeholder network, under the SDG Charter has brought together 35 Belgian actors to bridge the gap between existing innovations and regular financing tools and stimulate the proliferation of concrete pilot projects. An investment fund for renewable energy solutions would be established. Belgium joined the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, through which it committed itself to support countries in acquiring and processing SDG related data.
- **The Netherlands** exports knowledge and products in the domain of life sciences and health to partner countries like Brazil, China, India, Kenya, the UAE and the US. A task force on innovative finance is looking for new ways to increase the private sector’s financial contribution and add new donors to the SDG agenda. It is also trying to develop instruments to guarantee open access for low- and middle-income countries to knowledge and technology that are currently protected by intellectual property rights.
- In Indonesia, **Japan** has through JICA supported the efforts of the government to set national targets and indicators for the SDGs, action plans to achieve the SDGs and a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating their achievement. JICA has also assisted in formulating an action plan for a non-profit international organization in Rwanda to enhance efforts towards achieving the

SDGs by 54 African nations. In Africa, Japan will provide policy recommendations, research, capacity development, training and the promotion of science and technology and innovation. In Asia, Japan supports ASEAN to formulate and implement programs regarding the environmental aspects of the SDGs. Japan has partnered with Kenya, Senegal and Ghana as model countries to extend cooperation on UHC in the areas of policy and institutional reform, as well as human resources development in individual policy priorities, so that such measures may spread throughout the entire continent. Japan also supports a regional mechanism to support the achievement of the in Africa, which aims at sharing information and experiences of appropriate waste management practices including the 3Rs in Africa, enhancing monitoring on the SDGs targets, building capacities of human resources and institutions as well as developing and applying good practice guidance.

- **Denmark** assists developing countries by supporting them to mobilise their own resources through strengthening and enhancing the effectiveness of the national and local tax systems, combatting tax havens. Denmark has in partnership with Danish pension funds and other institutional investors established a Danish Climate Investment Fund (DCIF) and an Agribusiness Investment Fund as innovative public-private partnerships. The DCIF offers risk capital and advice for climate investments in developing countries. The government is also preparing to launch a SDG Fund which will be a public-private partnership platform similar to DCIF.
- **France** supports the UHC 2030 project at the highest level in the multilateral organisations. France takes part in think tanks to improve global governance of the water sector to achieve the 2030 Agenda goal. France has long been a contributor to the work of the Intergovernmental Group on Climate Change (IGCC) to raise awareness of and anticipate climate change. France is assisting developing countries in reforming their tax systems. As well as the ATI, France is strongly involved in international initiatives such as Tax Inspectors Without Borders and the OECD's inclusive framework for the implementation of the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting project. France also supports a centre of excellence in statistics by contributing to the Economic and Statistic Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa and assists three Africa statistics schools.
- **Slovakia** supports countries in the Western Balkans region to increase public sector effectiveness for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by utilizing new technologies, open data and alternative finance mechanisms in the framework of the Transformative Governance and Finance Facility.
- **Slovenia** pays special attention to middle-income countries in its neighbourhood and addresses their development needs through technical assistance, green infrastructure projects, and projects for the empowerment of women. Slovenia also provides capacity building support to NGOs in Transnistria, Găgăuzia, and Ocnîța regions and the south of Moldova to independently conduct activities to empower the most vulnerable groups of society, raise the awareness of the public and decision-makers and influence policies. During extensive training, they will acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to promote and advocate for human rights.
- In autumn 2014, the Government of **Sweden** launched its feminist foreign policy. This means that Sweden is also globally intensifying its work for gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls. Sweden also provides capacity building on strengthening tax systems. The support includes information exchange to enable developing countries to detect and counteract tax evasion and to collect taxes in accordance with their national tax legislations. Sweden supports this work, partly through aid-financed interventions undertaken by the Swedish Tax Agency in, for example, Kenya, Mozambique, Cambodia and Moldova.
- The objective of **Norwegian** support internationally is to increase access to renewable energy. Norway supports 15 African and Asian countries in promoting sustainable energy. A key strategy is to use ODA to trigger investments from the private sector.

South-South Cooperation

- **Andorra** - welcomes its accession to the Ibero-American Programme for the Strengthening of South-South Cooperation (PIFCSS) which will provide it with opportunities to participate in triangular cooperation projects.
- **China** – is currently supporting financing, technology and capacity building. China will operationalise the Assistance Fund for South-South Cooperation and has established the Academy of South-South Cooperation and Development which will provide developing countries with opportunities for doctor's degree and master's degree education and short-term training. China's Belt and Road Initiative, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank initiatives contribute to global development.
- **Republic of Korea**, under its development cooperation programme, The Better Life for Girls Initiative focuses on girls' education and health in developing countries. Through both bilateral and multilateral partnerships, the Korea's new strategy contributes to leaving no one behind by forging global partnerships for the SDGs. Its key initiatives focus on the most marginalized and vulnerable groups, long-term approaches for capacity building in partner countries and creation of national and local ownership for the SDG implementation process.
- **Malaysia** is facilitating sharing of experiences and technical knowledge in implementing the SDGs through the United Nations System, ASEAN and through South-South Cooperation.
- **Indonesia** is committed to increase its role in South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) to pursue the common interests of the southern countries. Knowledge sharing is one of Indonesia's main modalities in providing assistance to Southern countries. In 2012, Indonesia has declared itself as a Country-Led Knowledge Hub (CLKH) focusing on three flagship areas, namely development issues, good governance and peace-building, as well as economic issues.
- At the regional level, **Brazil** participates in the Statistical Coordination Group for the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean, whose objective is to coordinate the process of developing and implementing the SDGs monitoring indicators and to foster the construction of the necessary statistical capacity in the region.
- **Thailand** provides technical assistance, focusing on capacity building, knowledge and experience sharing in fields which the country has the expertise, such as public health, food security, environmental conservation and sustainable development based on the Sufficiency Economy Policy (SEP). Thailand cooperated with neighbouring countries in knowledge and technology sharing with regards to air quality measurement, pollution management, and the reduction of greenhouse gas. Thailand launched the "SEP for SDGs Partnership" initiative which supports the implementation of SDGs in various countries.
- In support of the 2030 Agenda, **Singapore** launched the Sustainable Development Programme which aims to support capacity building at three levels – leadership, city, and community and is tailored for developing countries, in particular SIDS and LDCs with a variety of courses on SDG-specific areas, such as water and sanitation, sustainable cities and climate change. Singapore partners with UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence to conduct the "Transformational Leadership for the 2030 Agenda (TL2030)" programme. Under Singapore's ASEAN Chairmanship, ASEAN Smart Cities Network was established which aims to synergise each member state's ongoing efforts to develop smart cities through a collaborative platform.
- **Bangladesh** collaborated with Nepal, Bhutan and India to establish a regional information highway through South Asian Sub-regional Economic Cooperation in order to ensure broadband information communication, information related knowledge exchange and access to ICT in inaccessible areas.
- **Samoa** has been a key participant and supporter of the peer review and peer learning processes facilitated under the Pacific Forum Compact. Samoa to date has led the process of capacity

building through offering its institutions for attachments of Pacific country officials particularly for public finance management reforms.

- **Saudi Arabia** provides financial support to several economic and social programs, as well as programs related to public institutions and structural adjustment programs that are carried out by developing countries in cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. A multilateral partnership between Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Islamic Development Bank, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has contributed USD 100 million to the Lives and Livelihoods Fund which focuses on combating poverty and on providing livelihoods over the next five years in 32 countries, including 26 LDCs.
- **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** supports mostly humanitarian response and development projects in middle-east and MENA region including direct budget support to implement country's plans.
- **Qatar** Foundation has developed and implemented the Silatech Foundation initiative to foster the ambitions of Arab and international youth in decent work.
- Al Baraka Banking Group, through its head office in **Bahrain** and its banking units in 16 countries, is implementing a program on sustainability and social responsibility based on linking the objectives of "Sustainability and Social Responsibility" of Al Baraka Group to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Priority targets were selected in the areas of poverty, health, education, gender equality, energy, labour, economic growth, industry, innovation, and infrastructure.
- The Commonwealth Small States Centre of Excellence (SSCOE) is a joint initiative of the Government of **Malta** and the Commonwealth Secretariat, launched in 2018 to assist the 32 Small States of the Commonwealth, and SIDS, with attaining their SDGs in the priority areas of SDG 3 – Health & Well-Being; SDG 14 – Life below Water; SDG 13 – Climate Actions; and SDG 17 – Partnerships. The SSCOE offers capacity-building courses, one of which targets specifically practical applications for Blue Growth. Another capacity-building initiative will be targeting strategic negotiations skills for Small States. The SSCOE website will act as a host facility to link interested stakeholders to engage and work with each other, matching providers with recipients. The SSCOE acts as a focal point, specialising as a repository for such knowledge and expertise with several databases relevant to the needs of Small States. The SSCOE website will carry information on examples of Best Practice and Case Studies of capacity-building in the priority SDG areas.
- **Mexico** – In 2017, Mexico carried out 595 international development cooperation projects in fields connected to the SDGs, such as climate action, education, health and energy, among others. Another tool that contributes to reaching the SDGs is the Catalogue of Mexican Capacities to provide information on best practices. Mexico has also created alliances with Central American and Caribbean countries, particularly on issues such as climate change and resilience. Mexico belongs to the Forum of Latin American and Caribbean Countries on Sustainable Development (FPALCDS), a regional mechanism for following up on the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Within the framework of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Mexico has promoted the establishment of a network to share experiences and strengthen institutional and technical capacities of governments.

Multilateral cooperation

- **Thailand** collaborates with United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) to increase capacity of the government and other stakeholders in monitoring material footprints and domestic material consumption.
- **Sri Lanka** received technical and financial support from the UN country team, ESCAP and IAP2, to carry out policy mapping and integration of SDGs into national policies, to prepare the VNR

supporting national consultation process and sharing international experiences and in setting up of an online stakeholder engagement platform for the 2030 Agenda implementation.

- **Nigeria** expects to receive training for its national statistics office with support from the African Development Bank.
- **Azerbaijan** received support from UNDP on monitoring and evaluation of the alignment of SDGs with national priorities, policy support for adapting SDGs to national policies and selecting key priorities (SDG Accelerators) and capacity building related to SDGs in local and international levels. The work has been initiated as part of the "Acceleration of activities related to SDGs" instrument in the search for potential opportunities for issues such as clarification of sources of resources, as well as strengthening interdisciplinary efforts and cooperation, increasing funding and improving assessment in order to channel the opportunities and resources available in the country towards the priority areas identified. The "Policy Support" instrument allows the least expensive and fastest possible use of the opportunities and experiences available in the UN development system as support for activities and policies related to SDGs. Within the framework of this instrument, the Government of Azerbaijan and the UN Office are working to determine which opportunities and experiences available in the UN System are needed in the country.
- In **Belize** institutional reforms and capacity building on statistics is supported in part through partnerships with the Inter-American Development Bank and the UN System. The NSS is an important opportunity for improving the gaps in data management. The enhanced methodology of the Caribbean Development Bank (COB) has supported country poverty assessment will allow Belize to measure poverty using a national multidimensional definition.
- In **Cabo Verde** the Single Social Registry—implemented with the partnership between the United Nations (ILO) and the World Bank—is a permanent instrument for the mapping of vulnerable families; for monitoring the situation of families and will be the only reference for social transfers, social school action, social pension, social inclusion income, social rates for water and energy, the moderating fee for health services, among others.
- In **Ethiopia** support from the UN System involves needs assessment for implementing the SDGs including financial needs.
- In **Albania** the UN agencies supports engagement in the areas of their activity, such as UNESCO with Goal 4, UN Women with Goal 5, and FAO with Goals 2 and 5.
- In **Bahamas** UNDP has supported the RIA exercise to facilitate the alignment of SDGs to the national plan while Inter-American Development Bank is supporting national statistical capacity building. The Organization of American States will assist in the monitoring and evaluation process.
- In **Armenia** UNFPA supported the establishment of the National SDG Statistical Platform which is based on SDG targets and indicators. UNICEF and UNDP jointly supported the development of child-related SDG baseline indicators with appropriate levels of disaggregation. UNICEF Armenia has been supporting the Government of Armenia to achieve SDG goal 16, focusing on how justice and human rights institutions can better serve, protect and monitor the rights of all children.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

This section draws conclusions from the review and puts forward recommendations for capacity building approaches.

Policy making capacity

- **Support integrated policy making:** A large proportion of countries reported challenges in integrated policy making, particularly considering the social, economic and environmental dimensions. This is an area where technical capacity building of planning professionals in terms of

designing policies that promote growth, redistribution and sustainability are needed. Sharing of best practice and policy making tools are necessary to equip countries to fully commit to the principles of the Agenda 2030.

- **Aligning SDGs into planning and policies is not enough:** While majority of countries reported that alignment or mainstreaming of SDGs in various development plans and sectoral plans are underway, many highlighted the challenge of operationalizing these SDG based plans. Tools and orientation packages could be developed to support countries to take this process a step further to translate ‘SDG based plans’ into operational plans with links to budgeting and financing processes, as well as meeting the necessary institutional and human resource capacities needed for implementation.
- **Support is needed to mainstream the ‘leave no one behind’ approach:** Majority of the countries reported steps taken to put in place targeted policies and regulatory measures to address the needs and provide protection to vulnerable groups or marginalized groups. Beyond this, it is important that governments are equipped with necessary tools to conduct policy and system-wide assessments to understand vulnerabilities and how they could be addressed as a central theme across all development and programming sectors of a country.
- **Promote the culture of evidence-based planning:** Many countries identified the need for strengthening evidence-based planning. This requires strengthening of monitoring and reporting capacities discussed below. Furthermore, a culture of strengthening data utilization and data informed decision making needs to be reinforced. This requires technical tools, practical guidance material and best practice sharing between countries to increase both knowledge and awareness of policy makers and planners.

Institutional capacity

- **Develop guidance material for local actors/sub-national actors:** It is important to develop guidance material and provide necessary training to central government policy and planning relevant staff to support those at the local level. This guidance should include how-to guidance on downscaling national targets to local levels and guidance on operationalizing SDG based plans at the local level to facilitate effective implementation.
- **Develop best practice material on multi-sector partnerships:** This includes documenting existing creative platforms for both dialogue and action with civil society and public which was found to exist in countries as per this review, to advocate on and influence SDG based decision making.

Monitoring and reporting capacity

- **Data collection support should be streamlined:** Many countries identified the need for bridging the data availability gaps. The review found the need for strengthening overall national statistical systems/data platforms and providing technical support to data gathering in specialized sectors where gaps exist such as in gathering data to determine multidimensional poverty, data for water and sanitation sector and data relevant to environmental management and collecting disaggregated data. Therefore, it is recommended that future support to countries are streamlined and prioritized to bridge these specific gaps.
- **Strengthen VNR reporting:** Many countries highlighted the benefits of the VNR reporting which is not just considered as a reporting exercise, but also a platform for understanding challenges to SDG implementation, to increase participation of various stakeholders including civil society in the consultation process which also contributes to enhancing local ownership of the Agenda 2030. Since majority of the VNRs reviewed in this study were the first VNR of countries, it was frequently referred as a stock-taking exercise to determine the countries status on SDG implementation. Additional technical guidance will be required for countries to undertake more analytical reporting. This guidance should also introduce a systematic approach to identify and monitor capacity gaps

for implementing the Agenda given that current identification of capacity gaps VNRs is not carried out in a structured manner.

Human resource and leadership capacity

- **Create training of trainer opportunities and certification:** The section on international cooperation highlights various types of training programmes that are offered to strengthen capacity of staff to implement SDGs. To motivate governments to tap these opportunities and to facilitate continuous training within the country, it is important to introduce training of trainer opportunities so that a pool of trainers can be established in each country. Certification processes and long-term training opportunities will further add value in terms of gauging staff commitment and will allow continuous learning and re-learning in an environment of staff turnover.

Financing capacity

- **Facilitate resource mobilization for data collection:** The section on international cooperation highlights many capacity building and support facilities/networks available on addressing data issues including big data technology. It is important that governments are fully informed of the types of data collection support and capacity building that they could tap through the development of a directory of service providers and capacity building programmes available.
- **Develop resource mobilization and aid coordination strategies:** While some countries are undertaking this exercise, it is important that all countries are provided with training and expertise to conduct SDG needs assessment and develop resource mobilization and aid coordination strategies. This should look at available and prospective donors, both traditional and non-traditional, and tapping north-south, south-south and multilateral cooperation.
- **Provide technical support and knowledge development on innovative financing:** Many countries highlighted the need for tapping innovative financing to implement the ambitious development agenda particularly the goals related to infrastructure (Goal 8, 9, 11). It is important for countries to learn about some of these innovative financing methods, tools and instruments and reforms that should be undertaken to set up innovating financing facilities such as PPP facilities or social impact enterprise.

Technology capacity

- **Develop match making platform for countries to tap technology and innovative tools for implementing SDGs:** The review found that a large number of technology-based and highly innovative initiatives are being undertaken by countries to provide solutions for specific SDGs and to foster overall improvements in systems and data gathering. It is important that a match-making platform exists for countries to identify appropriate technology solutions to the problems they face and be informed of channels for transferring the technology to their country/government.

Appendices

List of countries and year of VNR included in the review

1	Afghanistan	2017
2	Albania	2018
3	Andorra	2018
4	Argentina	2017
5	Armenia	2018
6	Australia	2018
7	Azerbaijan	2017
8	Bahamas	2018
9	Bahrain	2018
10	Bangladesh	2017
11	Belarus	2017
12	Belgium	2017
13	Belize	2017
14	Benin	2017 and 2018
15	Bhutan	2018
16	Brazil	2017
17	Botswana	2017
18	Cabo Verde	2018
19	Canada	2018
20	Chile	2017
21	China	2016
22	Costa Rica	2017
23	Colombia	2018
24	Cyprus	2017
25	Czech Republic	2017
26	Denmark	2017
27	Ecuador	2018
28	Egypt	2016 and 2018
29	El Salvador	2017
30	Estonia	2017
31	Ethiopia	2017
32	Finland	2016
33	France	2016
34	Georgia	2016
35	Germany	2016
36	Greece	2018
37	Guatemala	2017
38	Guinea	2018
39	Honduras	2017
40	Hungary	2018
41	India	2017
42	Indonesia	2018

43	Ireland	2018
44	Italy	2017
45	Jamaica	2018
46	Japan	2017
47	Jordan	2017
48	Kenya	2017
49	Kiribati	2018
50	Lao PDR	2018
51	Latvia	2018
52	Lebanon	2018
53	Lithuania	2018
54	Luxembourg	2017
55	Malaysia	2017
56	Maldives	2017
57	Mali	2018
58	Malta	2018
59	Mexico	2018
60	Monaco	2017
61	Montenegro	2016
62	Namibia	2018
63	Netherlands	2017
64	Nepal	2017
65	Nigeria	2017
66	Niger	2018
67	Norway	2016
68	Panama	2017
69	Peru	2017
70	Philippines	2016
71	Poland	2018
72	Portugal	2017
73	Qatar	2017 and 2018
74	Republic of Korea	2016
75	Romania	2018
76	Samoa	2016
77	Saudi Arabia	2018
78	Senegal	2018
79	Sierra Leone	2016
80	Singapore	2018
81	Slovakia	2018
82	Slovenia	2017
83	Spain	2018
84	Sri Lanka	2018
85	State of Palestine	2018
86	Sudan	2018
87	Sweden	2017
88	Switzerland	2016 and 2018

89	Tajikistan	2017
90	Thailand	2017
91	Togo	2017 and 2018
92	Turkey	2016
93	UAE	2017
94	Uganda	2016
95	Uruguay	2017 and 2018
96	Vietnam	2018
97	Zimbabwe	2017

List of countries and year of VNR not included in the review due to unavailability of English translation

1	Colombia	2016
2	Dominican Republic	2018
3	Madagascar	2016
4	Mexico	2016
5	Morocco	2016
6	Paraguay	2018
7	Venezuela	2016
8	Togo	2016