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Department of
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Social Affairs

An Overview of SD2015: **Delivering on the promise of the SDGs**



DESA

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

A report on the implementation of a European Commission funded project, implemented by the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA 2016 - 2021)

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United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Sustainable Development Goals



About UN DESA

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas:

(i) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which Member States of the United Nations draw to review common problems and to take stock of policy options;

(ii) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint courses of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges;

(iii) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.

For more information: <https://sdgs.un.org/>

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Acronyms

2030 Agenda	The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
APFSD	Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
CoA	Communities of Ocean Action
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCO	United Nations Development Cooperation Office
DSDG	Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN DESA
ECLAC	United Nations Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EGM	Expert Group Meeting
ESCAP	United National Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EU	European Union
HLPF	United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
LOD	Linked Open Data
MGoS	Major Groups and other Stakeholders
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
OISC	UNDESA's Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDKP	Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UN Stats	UN Statistics Division
VCs	Voluntary Commitments
VNRs	Voluntary National Reviews

2. Executive Summary

This report tells the story of ‘SD2015: Delivering on the promise of the SDGs’, a EU funded project, implemented by the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). The project intended to make two key impacts, notably:

1. “Governments adopt more inclusive policies to achieve sustainable development, as a result of enhanced involvement of Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS); and
2. All types of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders work together to achieve full implementation of their sustainable development commitments”.

Activities were organized under three workstreams, notably:

- *Workstream A*: Training and Capacity Development
- *Workstream B*: Outreach, access to information and tools and knowledge-sharing
- *Workstream C*: Developing Support Networks and a “Community of Practice”

Under Workstream A, DESA organized 4 global workshops, 10 regional or sub-regional workshops and 8 national workshops, aiming to build capacity of governments and MGoS to enhance participation in processes related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Workshops were organized in collaboration with partners including UN Regional Commissions, UN Country Offices, and MGoS, and were planned in alignment with other major meetings like Regional Sustainable Development Forums. DESA supported **131 MGoS representatives from 50 countries** to participate in the HLPF and related meetings, and worked with the UN Development Cooperation Office in the elaboration of **11 national reports on stakeholder participation in SDG implementation** in each country.

Some activities under this Workstream were implemented in collaboration with UN DESA’s Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development (OISC).

Under Workstream B, DESA developed **regular Info Packages** to support the engagement of the MGoS in the HLPF, **6 technical papers** (including a detailed analysis of multi-stakeholder engagement in the 2030 Agenda implementation based on an assessment of the 158 VNRs submitted to the HLPF between 2016 and 2019), and ‘**Linked SDGs**’, an interactive tool to support the use of data produced by stakeholders to measure progress towards SDGs.

Under Workstream C, DESA created and supported nine thematic multi-stakeholder Communities of Ocean Action, **prepared 17 Ocean Action newsletters distributed regularly to a mailing list of around 2800 subscribers** and organized an **e-learning course on ‘Strengthening stakeholder engagement for the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda’** (in English and French) which has built the capacity of **1837 people from over 100 countries**. The course material was further developed into a publication currently available in English, Spanish and French.

DESA hopes to build on the experiences from this project to contribute to the UN’s Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs, and specifically the goal to ‘mobilize everyone, everywhere’ in favour of the SDGs. Follow up work must ensure dedicated funding lines to ensure the participation of MGoS from both the Global South and the Global North in SDG related global, regional and national meetings, recognising the universal nature of the SDGs and the recognized role of MGoS as active partners in the implementation and follow up of the 2030 Agenda. Links between the national, regional and global levels must be maintained by continuing with capacity building workshops at the three levels, and the success of the online course must be capitalised upon, including with the development of new capacity building tools and materials.



3. Introduction to the project and the context

The Project was designed as a 4-year long (Jan 2016 - Jan 2020) European Commission and UN DESA funded project, with the overall objective **"to promote a more inclusive mainstreaming and implementation of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (2030 Agenda) and other sustainable development commitments."** The project was extended for two years in order to facilitate its full implementation and came to an end in November 2021.

The Project aimed to raise awareness and strengthen the capacities of Major Groups and other Stakeholders to effectively engage in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the national, regional and global levels, and to contribute to work (monitoring, accountability and review) of the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

The Project builds on the previous programme '*Enhanced support to the UN system for follow-up to Rio +20*' (funded by the European Commission), which aimed at facilitating stakeholder inputs in the design of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs to strengthen implementation and monitoring, together with the ongoing work and knowledge undertaken by UN DESA since 2013.

Since the first UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 (the 'Earth Summit'), it has been recognized that achieving sustainable development would require the active participation of all sectors of society and all types of people.

Agenda 21, adopted at the Earth Summit, drew upon this sentiment and formalized nine sectors of society as the main channels through which broad participation would be facilitated in UN activities related to sustainable development. These are officially called "Major Groups" and include the following sectors: Women; Children and Youth; Indigenous Peoples; Non-Governmental Organizations; Local Authorities; Workers and Trade Unions; Business and Industry; Scientific and Technological Community; Farmers. Two decades after the Earth Summit, the importance of effectively engaging these nine sectors of society was reaffirmed by the Rio+20 Conference. Its outcome document "The Future We Want" highlights the role that Major Groups can play in pursuing sustainable societies for future generations. In addition, governments invited other stakeholders, including local communities, volunteer groups and foundations, migrants and families, as well as older persons and persons with disabilities, to also participate in UN processes related to sustainable development.

The Project had a budget of 2.455 million euros and is subject to a Grant Agreement between the European Union, represented by the European Commission (as contracting authority) and UN DESA. The Project's implementation was led by UN DESA, through its Division for Sustainable Development Goals - Outreach and Partnerships Branch.

The overall objective of the Project was to "*promote a more inclusive mainstreaming and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other sustainable development commitments... (and) to raise awareness and strengthen the capacities of MGoS to effectively engage in the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the national, regional and global levels, and to contribute to work (monitoring, accountability and review) of the HLPF.*"

The Project intended to make two key impacts, notably:

1. "*Governments adopt more inclusive policies to achieve sustainable development, as a result of enhanced involvement of MGoS; and*
2. "*All types of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders work together to achieve full implementation of their sustainable development commitments*".

4. An overview of the activities, outputs and impacts

The Project was divided into three main work streams:

- *Workstream A:* Training and Capacity Development
- *Workstream B:* Outreach, access to information and tools and knowledge-sharing
- *Workstream C:* Developing Support Networks and a "Community of Practice"

4.a. Workstream A: Training and Capacity Development

This workstream largely focused on 3 areas:

1. Organising Stakeholder Workshops at the national, regional and global level
2. Funding individuals from the MGoS system to participate in the HLPF
3. Creating national level reports in focus countries, looking at efforts to strengthen the multi-stakeholder dimension of national development planning and SDG mainstreaming.

This Workstream was impacted by COVID-19, with a number of activities planned for 2020 - 2021 unable to be implemented, including national, regional and global workshops, related technical assistance missions of DESA staff to support MGoS work, and support to the participation of MGoS representatives at the 2020 and 2021 HLPF and the 2020 UN Ocean Conference (postponed to 2022).

4.a.1 Global Stakeholder Workshops



Credit: UN DESA



Credit: UN DESA

SUCCESS STORY: 'GLOBAL STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP IN BOGOTA, COLOMBIA 25-26 MARCH 2017'

This Expert Group Meeting (EGM) focused on “Enhancing MGoS Engagement in National Level Reviews”. Approximately 50 representatives of MGoS participated in the meeting.

The grant provided travel funding to 9 representatives of MGoS who had been selected by the MGoS HLPF Coordination Mechanism. The EGM featured a number of facilitated discussions between the participating MGoS, including on their experiences of participating in VNRs at the country level, as well as a panel discussion with representatives of 6 Member States (Belize, Bhutan, Netherlands, Guatemala, Jordan and Uganda) who presented their efforts to date.

Participating MGoS prepared an ‘Outcome Document’ with key recommendations and suggestions for ways that stakeholder engagement in national level reviews could be enhanced by the VNR countries, including by making different information about their preparations available in a transparent manner, having inclusive national mechanisms in place that also ensure the engagement of different stakeholder groups (including the most vulnerable and marginalized groups), and ensuring that such engagement continues beyond the VNR preparations.

This document is available online [here](#). It was circulated to DESA’s Stakeholders mailing lists.

The project had planned to organize 4 global stakeholder workshops. By the end of the project, 4 global level workshops had been organized (2 in New York and 2 in Colombia), attended by around 230 participants. Three of these workshops were held in advance of the HLPF (2016, 2017 and 2018) with the specific aim of providing an opportunity for stakeholders to present inputs and recommendations to the HLPF, including on the format and scope of stakeholder reports on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and on how governments could engage stakeholders more effectively in the national level follow-up and review. In 2018, the global workshop was specifically designed to provide an opportunity for the MGoS Steering Committee to outline an action plan in preparation for the HLPF 2018, including activities, responsibilities, political leadership, and strategy to mobilize the broader Coordination Mechanism.

4.a.2 Regional Stakeholder Workshops

The project had planned to organize 10 regional and / or sub-regional stakeholder workshops. By the end of the project, 11 regional workshops had been organized, as well as 2 sub-regional workshops. These workshops were organized in partnership with the UN Regional Commissions and were connected to the regional Sustainable Development Forums, and aimed at enhancing the engagement and participation of MGoS in the various regions in the review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Organising in this way enabled MGoS to have wider exposure to governments from their regions, and promoted knowledge exchange between governments, MGoS and the UN Regional Commissions. The regional workshops (including decisions on the selection of participating MGoS) were always led by the UN Regional Commissions in collaboration with UN DESA, which increased the sense of shared ownership and leadership.

Table 1: Regional and Sub-Regional Workshops

Region	Country	Date
Asia & Pacific	Thailand	April 2016
Asia & Pacific	Thailand	March 2018
Asia & Pacific	Thailand	March 2019
Europe	Switzerland	April 2017
Africa	Egypt	May 2016
Africa	Ethiopia	May 2017
Africa	Senegal	May 2018
Africa	Morocco	April 2019
Africa	Zimbabwe	Feb 2020
Latin America & The Caribbean	Mexico	April 2017
Latin America & The Caribbean	Chile	April 2018
West Africa (sub-region)	Senegal	March 2018
Pacific (sub-region)	Fiji	Sep 2018



Credit: UN DESA

SUCCESS STORY: SUB-REGIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP FOR RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PACIFIC SMALL ISLANDS DEVELOPING STATES, FIJI, SEPTEMBER 2018

UN DESA, in collaboration with UN-ESCAP, organized a one day capacity building workshop for 40 participants entitled **“Strengthening Stakeholders Capacities to Contribute to the Implementation and Follow Up of the 2030 Agenda”**. The workshop was held just after the Pacific Preparatory Meeting for the 6th Asia- Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) (24-25 September) and the VNR Workshop for Pacific Small Islands Developing States (26-27 September), meaning that it actively benefitted from intergovernmental discussions and expanded the reach and diversity of participants.

40 representatives of MGoS and governments from across the Pacific region came together to discuss how they could organize their VNR processes, and how best to ensure stakeholder engagement in these processes. The workshop benefited from the active participation of representatives from governments throughout the region who had already prepared VNRs in previous years (and MGoS who had been involved), and could thus share their experiences with those who had yet to do so. MGoS representatives joined all sessions and dedicated one day for an internal workshop to review strategies and coordinate advocacy and contribution to VNR processes.



Alicia Barcena, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, opens the meeting with regional civil society organisations. Credit: UN ECLAC

SUCCESS STORY: CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP IN COLOMBIA AS PART OF THE REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FORUM IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, APRIL 2017

UN DESA, in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), organized a workshop to enhance the engagement of civil society and other stakeholders in Latin America and the Caribbean region in the review and implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The workshop was organized as part of the first Regional Sustainable Development Forum in Latin America and the Caribbean, which drew 789 participants: 208 delegates from 35 countries (31 from Latin America and the Caribbean and four observers from other regions); 288 representatives from 198 civil society organizations; 157 delegates from 39 intergovernmental bodies; 125 special guests and representatives of the private sector and academia; and 11 parliamentarians from eight countries.

Civil society organisations present at the Forum took the opportunity to meet together and draft a series of recommendations on the participation of civil society in the follow-up, implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region, in the hope that these recommendations would become the foundation for a discussion in preparation for the next meeting of the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Sustainable Development Forum. The recommendations can be found [here](#). These organisations also set out a more general position on Sustainable Development, urging Member States to increase their level of commitment in the implementation of the Agenda 2030 as guarantors of the development of peoples, and to guarantee an enabling environment for civil society organizations, including participation in the design, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. See [here](#).

4.a.3 National Stakeholder Workshops

The project had planned to organize 10 national stakeholder workshops. By the end of the project, 7 national workshops and 1 sub-national workshop had been organized. These workshops were designed to build the capacity of national stakeholders to engage with their governments in the preparations for their HLPF national voluntary presentations, as well as to support national efforts to strategize future stakeholder engagement with the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

Table 2: National Workshops

Country	Date	Estimated No. of participants
Jordan	Jan 2016	75
Costa Rica	Feb 2016	21
Belize	April 2016	25
Morocco	May 2016	100
Chile	April 2017	150
Botswana	April 2017	105
Lao PDR	Dec 2017	50
Tanzania (sub-national)	March 2019	65



Credit: Luisa Karst, United Nations



Credit: Luisa Karst, United Nations

SUCCESS STORY: 'SUB NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP IN TANZANIA, MARCH 2019'

DESA, in collaboration with UNDP Tanzania, the UN Resident Coordinator's office and the Government of Zanzibar, organized a sub-national stakeholder capacity development workshop in March 2019 in Zanzibar, Tanzania. The aim of the workshop was to build the capacity of civil society and other stakeholders to engage in SDG implementation and contribute to Tanzania's VNR, to be presented at the 2019 HLPF. It provided a platform for the Zanzibar Government to present a draft of their VNR report and consult with civil society about further input. Around 65 participants attended, including representatives from civil society from both Unguja and Pemba, local government, academia and youth. Local media covered the event, and snapshots of the event were featured on national television, together with interviews with the Executive Secretary of the Zanzibar Planning Commission and representatives of civil society. See [here](#) and [here](#).

Importantly, this workshop was also referenced during the Government of Tanzania's VNR presentation to the HLPF in 2019.

Feedback included recognition that **"the session was very important because it opens the door for CSOs to participate fully into further discussion on what is going on in the VNR report, also it engages them in the decision making on the zero-draft report."**

4.a.4 Technical Missions

UN DESA undertook a total of **nine technical missions** throughout the project, always in connection to a national or regional workshop. These missions took place in **Botswana, Chile, Fiji, Lao PDR, Morocco (twice), Senegal, Tanzania and Thailand**, and allowed for members of the UN DESA Secretariat to attend the various workshops and help participants understand the global political context around the SDGs, the HLPF and the VNRs.

4.a.5 MGoS participation in the HLPF

The project had planned to fund MGoS to participate in each meeting of the HLPF over the course of the project (2016 - 2019). Over the course of the four years, a total of **131** MGoS representatives from **50 countries** were supported to participate in the HLPF and related meetings - including the Oceans Conference (2017), the SDG Summit (2019) and capacity building sessions in advance of the HLPF.

Table 3: Country origins of MGoS representatives supported to participate in SDG focused global meetings

2016 HLPF	2017 HLPF	2018 HLPF	2019 HLPF	2019 SDG Summit
Argentina	Argentina	Benin	Azerbaijan	Argentina
Brazil	Botswana	Colombia	Cameroon	Benin
Colombia	Brazil	Congo	Chile	Brazil
India	Chile	Ecuador	Fiji	Indonesia
Indonesia	El Salvador	Egypt	India	Kenya
Lebanon	Ethiopia	Jamaica	Jordan	Mexico
Nepal	Honduras	Jordan	Kosovo	Nigeria
Philippines	India	Kiribati	Lebanon	Trinidad & Tobago
Senegal	Indonesia	Lao PDR	Mauritania	
Tanzania	Malaysia	Lebanon	Pakistan	
Uruguay	Nepal	Mali	Peru	
Venezuela	Nigeria	Mexico	Philippines	
Zambia	Peru	Senegal	Rwanda	
	Tajikistan	Sri Lanka	South Africa	
	Togo	Togo	Tanzania	
	Zimbabwe	Vietnam	Tonga	
			Uganda	
			United Kingdom	



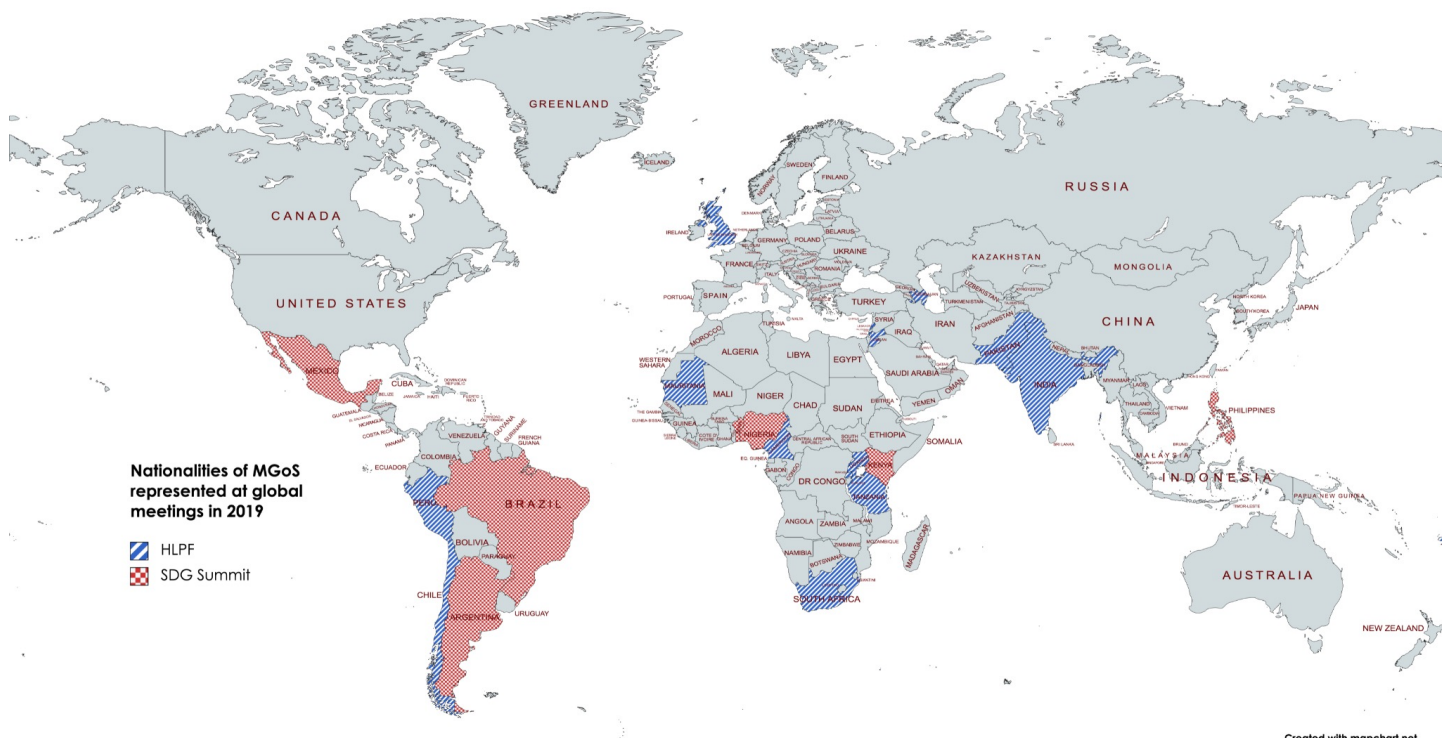
MGoS December 2019 Global Workshop Group, Credit: UN DESA

SUCCESS STORY: FUNDING MGoS TO PARTICIPATE IN GLOBAL MEETINGS IN 2019

In July 2019, DESA provided financial support for **23 representatives of the MGoS to participate in the HLPF** - 11 lead discussants and 12 participants. DESA also supported a further 12 MGoS representatives to speak and/or participate in the [SDG Summit in September 2019](#).

MGoS from the following countries participated in the 2019 HLPF: **Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Chile, Fiji, India, Jordan/Palestine, Kosovo, Lebanon, Mauritania, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Tonga, Uganda, and the United Kingdom.**

MGoS from the following countries participated in the 2019 SDG Summit: **Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Trinidad & Tobago.**



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4.a.6 Strengthening stakeholder engagement in SDG mainstreaming - the DESA / DCO project

The project added a focus on national level reports on efforts to strengthen the multi-stakeholder dimension of national development planning and SDG mainstreaming. DESA developed a particularly fruitful partnership with the United Nations Development Cooperation Office (UN DCO) and 11 UN Resident Coordinator Offices to support their efforts to strengthen the multi-stakeholder dimension of national development planning and SDG mainstreaming. Reports were developed to take stock of the current landscape of stakeholder participation in SDG implementation in each country and to provide forward-looking proposals that could be used in development and implementation of the United Nations Cooperation Frameworks, national SDG strategies and VNR processes, depending on the country's needs. The 11 countries involved in this project were **Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Namibia, Serbia, Sri Lanka, and Uzbekistan.**

The reports are available [here](#) and an analysis of the 11 national reviews and recommendations to support the multi-stakeholder dimension of national development planning and SDGs mainstreaming is forthcoming, expected by the end of 2021.






4.b Workstream B: Outreach, access to information and tools and knowledge-sharing

This workstream focused largely on **creating publications (technical papers and Info Packages)**, a website (Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform) and other **interactive tools and online programmes**, with the aim of providing MGoS and their government counterparts with relevant and useful tools, guidance, methodologies and knowledge products to facilitate efficient and constructive multi-stakeholder collaboration. The website will be highlighted in Section 5, Visibility and Communication.

4.b.1. Technical papers and Info Packages

Info Packages were prepared each year to support the engagement of the MGoS in the HLPF - for example, in 2016 DESA prepared an Info Package to guide the Expert Group Meeting of the MGoS (in New York) which aimed at ensuring MGoS effective participation and contribution to the review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the HLPF. In 2017 DESA prepared a further Info Package to guide the Expert Group Meeting of the MGoS (In Colombia), which aimed at discussing strategies and approaches for operationalizing the participation of national SDG implementation committees. Throughout the project DESA shared regular messages with MGoS in preparation for the HLPF.



SUCCESS STORY: MAXIMIZING THE IMPACT OF PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE SDGs

In 2019 DESA worked with The Partnering Initiative to create the Info Package entitled 'Maximizing the impact of partnerships for the SDGs', which supports organizations and partnerships to maximize the value created by collaboration towards the SDGs. It is a practical guide focused on maximizing the value of partnership, intended to complement and extend other more detailed accounts of the principles and practice of cross-sector partnerships.

This Info Package was launched during the 2019 HLPF and promoted in connection with the ECOSOC Partnership Forum.

Maximising the impact of partnerships for the SDGs

A practical guide to partnership value creation

Six Technical Papers were prepared over the course of the project:

Table 4: Technical Papers

Year	Title
2018	<u>How should civil society stakeholders report their contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?</u>
2019	<u>Stakeholders E-consultation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under review at the 2019 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development</u>
2019	<u>Multi-stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation: A review of Voluntary National Review Reports (2016-2019)</u>
2020	<u>Stakeholder Engagement and the 2030 Agenda: A Practical Guide</u>
2021	<u>What is Good Practice? A framework for the analysis of practices of stakeholder engagement in the implementation and follow up of the 2030 Agenda</u>
2021	<u>The Impacts of COVID-19 on Stakeholder Engagement for the SDGs</u>

SUCCESS STORY: THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR THE SDGS



This report presents new data on the **impacts that COVID-19 has had on stakeholder engagement for the implementation, follow up and review of the SDGs.**

The report draws on **survey answers from more than 500 respondents** from different sectors all over the world and catalogs effects, highlights challenges, and presents a number of good practices on **stakeholder engagement and partnerships connected to COVID-19 and SDG implementation.**

The publication link can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/COVID19-Stakeholders-Survey>

Multi-stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation: A review of Voluntary National Review Reports (2016-2019)



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SUCCESS STORY: A REVIEW OF VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW REPORTS (2016-2019)

This report provides a review of the status of multi-stakeholder engagement in the 2030 Agenda implementation based on an assessment of the 158 VNRs submitted to the HLPF between 2016 and 2019, and finds that countries tend to report on stakeholder engagement in five key ways:

- 1. Engagement through coordination and governance structures that support 2030 Agenda implementation;**
- 2. Awareness-raising;**
- 3. Through the development of national priorities for implementation;**
- 4. Consultations and engagement on VNRs;**
- 5. Engagement through partnerships with non-state actors.**

SUCCESS STORY: A COLLABORATION BETWEEN UN DESA AND UNDP TO CREATE 'WHAT IS A GOOD PRACTICE? A FRAMEWORK TO ANALYSE GOOD PRACTICE IN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT'



One of the central aspects of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs is the significant role that stakeholders have been assigned in the implementation, follow-up and review. However, several countries' strategies to engage stakeholders are still in the early stages. Many stakeholder engagement practices are strong in some ways but weak in others, with little guidance available for a systematic analysis. The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the challenges of engaging stakeholders in implementation efforts. Now, it is more important than ever to ensure that there is dialogue to guide government action and maintain social cohesion.

Against this backdrop, UN DESA and UNDP have developed an analytical framework to enable governments, stakeholders, and development partners alike to examine and strengthen the quality of their stakeholder engagement practices at different stages of the 2030 Agenda cycle, including considering the impact of COVID-19. This framework is a helpful tool to help improve stakeholder engagement practices, foster dialogue, and support the sharing of lessons learned and good practices.

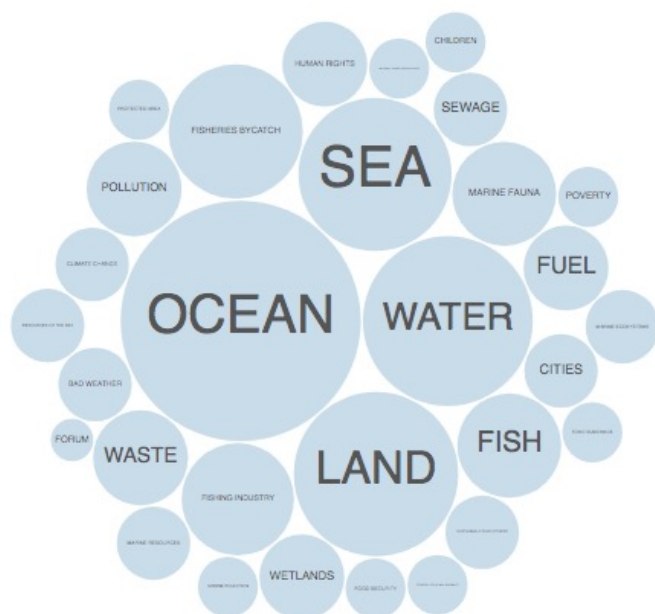
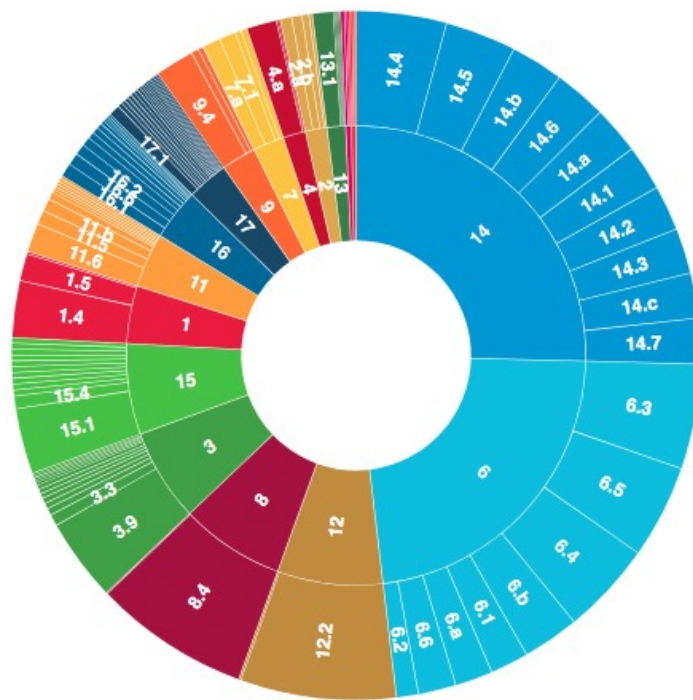
This framework is available in English, French and Spanish, [here](#).

4.b.2 Interactive Tools and online programmes to support engagement of MGoS: Linked SDGs

DESA, through DSDG and its Statistical Division, worked with UN's [Dag Hammarskjöld Library](#) to develop and promote the interactive tool "[Linked SDGs](#)" to support the use of data collected by MGoS to measure progress towards the SDGs. Linked SDGs provides a common framework and tools to improve the visibility, interoperability and usability of supplementary sources of data on sustainable development. Crucially, the tool is available in the 6 official languages of the UN. It uses semantic web technologies and Linked Open Data (LOD) principles for extracting SDG related metadata from documents and establishing the connections among various SDGs. Linked SDGs automatically discovers the semantic links between text documents, relevant SDG entities and the statistical data.

For example, an analysis of the article 'Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development' by the Retour Foundation highlights that the article focuses predominantly on SDGs 14 (Life Below Water) and 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). It also usefully highlights the most prominent concepts in the article.

This work was recognized by the UN Statistical Commission, which in its [decision 51/102 \(g\) on data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), **“took note of the common Internationalized Resource Identifiers for Sustainable Development Goals, targets indicators and related data series, and encouraged the dissemination of data in linked open data format”**. The UN Secretary General also recognised this project in his 2019 report entitled [‘Work for the review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals’](#), stating: ‘The project had the objective of showcasing the usefulness of adopting semantic web technologies and linked open data principles for extracting Goal-related metadata from documents and establishing the connections among various Goals. The application automatically discovers the semantic links between text documents, relevant Goal entities and statistical data. It is hosted under the infrastructure of the United Nations Global Platform for Official Statistics initiative’ (Para 29).



This quick data analysis demo app is proving useful for MGoS in researching a variety of materials in relation to their specific focus area. More investment would be needed to further improve the interoperability of the tool.

On top of these interactive tools, DESA has also organized **more than 220 webinars** over the course of the project, to share information with MGoS on topics including the 2030 Agenda, including its review and follow up mechanisms, the HLPF, the multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs, the Oceans Conference, partnerships for the SDGs, the Global Sustainable Transport Conference, and the impacts of COVID-19.

4.b.3 Events

In partnership with the Baha'i International Community, informal breakfast exchange meetings were organized in the lead-up to the 2019 HLPF, covering [SDG 4](#) (Education), [SDG 10](#) (Inequality), [SDG 13](#) (Climate) and [SDG 16](#) (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). The events engaged around 185 participants from MGoS, the UN System and Member States, both in person and online.



SDG 10 breakfast, Credit: UN DESA

4c. Workstream C, Developing Support Networks and a “Community of Action”

This workstream focused on developing and supporting nine ‘Communities of Action’ around the 2017 Oceans Summit and developing the online course ‘Strengthening stakeholder engagement for the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda’, and organising related webinars.

4.c.1. Nine Communities of Action

At the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 ([SDG 14](#)) - The 2017 Ocean Conference - close to 1,400 voluntary commitments for concrete action to advance implementation of SDG 14 were made by governments, the United Nations system, CSOs, academia, the scientific community, and the private sector. These commitments, together with the Conference outcome document ‘[Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action](#)’, mark a global breakthrough on the path to sustainable management and conservation of our oceans, seas and marine resources.



Credit: UN DESA

To follow-up on the implementation of these voluntary commitments; to catalyze and generate new voluntary commitments; and to facilitate collaboration and networking amongst different actors in support of SDG 14, the United Nations launched [nine thematic multi-stakeholder Communities of Ocean Action](#) (CoAs), supported by UN DESA. These CoAs serve a key role in maintaining momentum and focus on the many ambitious and wide-ranging Voluntary Commitments (VCs) announced in the context of the Conference.

They focus on **Coral Reefs, Implementation of International Law as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, Mangroves, Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Management, Marine Pollution, Ocean Acidification, Scientific knowledge, research capacity development and transfer of marine technology, Sustainable blue economy, and Sustainable fisheries.**

The CoAs are open to all stakeholders with registered voluntary commitments, made either at the Conference or subsequently. The CoAs help stakeholders to stay informed and take part in supporting activities, including workshops, webinars, expert discussions and networking. DESA specifically supports these CoAs through the Ocean Action Newsletter (17 editions have been prepared and circulated to 2800 subscribers), by organising events, webinars and discussions and by commissioning papers on the various commitments made at the 2017 conference. (See for example the 2019 Interim Assessment Report on the commitments made in relation to Marine and Coastal Systems Management [here](#)). The CoAs will be providing direct inputs to the organization of the [UN Ocean Conference](#), to be held in Lisbon, Portugal in 2022.

STRENGTHENING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF THE 2030 AGENDA



MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSE

ABOUT THE COURSE



- Understanding the need for stakeholder engagement in the 2030 Agenda at the national level
- Learning about approaches and tools for strengthening stakeholder engagement for the SDGs
- Designing successful strategies for stakeholder engagement in national implementation and review processes for the 2030 Agenda

UN CERTIFICATE

FREE OF CHARGE

REGISTER NOW:

<http://bit.ly/StakeholderEngagement-EN>

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/MOOCstakeholders>

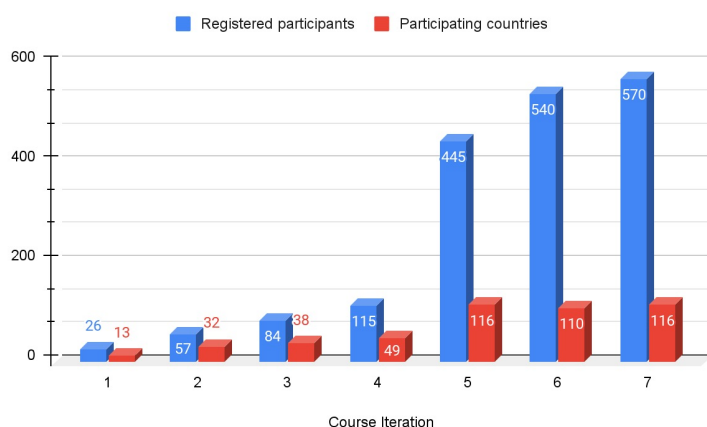


4.c.2. Online Learning Course: 'Strengthening stakeholder engagement for the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda'

In December 2016, UN DESA, in collaboration with UNITAR, created and facilitated an online training course on **"Strengthening stakeholder engagement for the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda"** to increase national level engagement of stakeholders in the 2030 Agenda follow-up and the HLPF VNR processes. The course was designed in the context of the preparations to the HLPF as part of an effort to strengthen the capacities of Governments to engage in an effective and meaningful way with MGoS as they implement and review progress towards the achievement of the SDGs, and included a variety of interactive components including quizzes and webinars.

A second session of the course was organized in 2017 (March - May), and a third in 2018 (Jan - Apr). A fourth edition was organized in 2019 (Feb - Apr). Given the success of the course, the material was developed into a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in 2020 and 2021, open to all interested stakeholders, and into a standalone publication in 2020 (Stakeholder Engagement and the 2030 Agenda: A Practical Guide). The latest session of the MOOC (available in both English and French) has attracted 570 participants from 116 countries. An additional module, focusing on concrete strategies to **'leave no one behind'** was launched in November 2021.

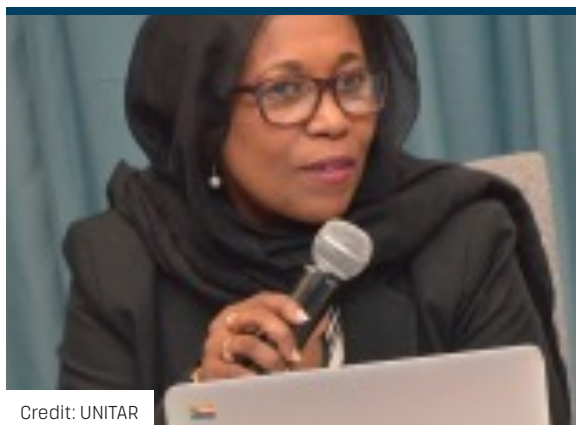
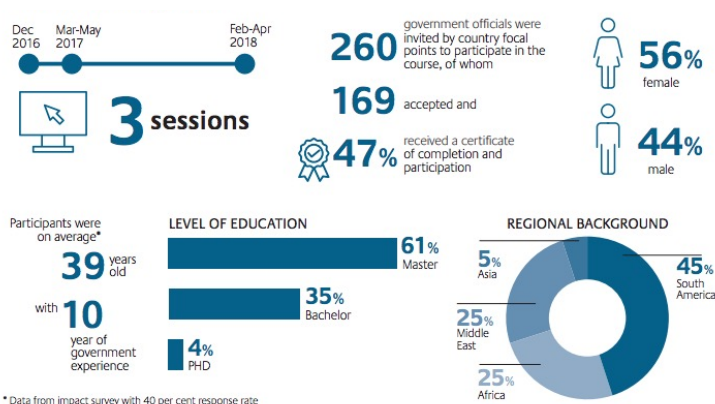
Table 6: Growth of participants in the e-course



According to an impact survey conducted after the 2018 iteration of the course, the average confidence to prepare a VNR Stakeholder Engagement Strategy before participating in the course was 30% and 83% afterwards, with respondents attributing 85% of this increase to their participation in the course. 65% of respondents had already applied three or more of the six approaches they learned in the course for stakeholder engagement and 91% of respondents "strongly agree" or "agree" that the course helped them to prepare a VNR that was more inclusive to vulnerable groups. The most recent iteration of the course saw 98% of participants report that their awareness of the subject matter increased and 91% say they would recommend the course to their colleagues.

SUCCESS STORY: USING ONLINE TRAINING TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENTS TO STRENGTHEN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF THE 2030 AGENDA

This online course has gone from strength to strength. The first three sessions drew a total of 169 participants, while the fourth alone drew 115. Turning the course into a MOOC has increased the reach of the course, attracting over 1500 participants.



Credit: UNITAR

IMPACT STORY

Ms. Fatouma Abdallah

Coordinator of the ANCAR II project
Directorate General of the Environment
and Forests (DGEF), Comoros

Ms. Fatouma Abdallah participated in the March-May 2017 session of the Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement course, representing Comoros. Following her participation, she started implementing trainings on the SDGs for civil society and other institutions.

"I knew when I familiarized myself with this new material, that it would be very useful since I [was] the head of the Sustainable Development department... Even though I have always worked on sustainable development, with the training, I feel much more confident talking about the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda."

Fatouma's confidence in preparing a VNR Stakeholder Engagement Strategy went from 5% before the course to 90% afterwards, which she attributes 90% to her participation. She applied what she learned in the course to the preparation of her country's VNR (2020), specifically knowledge related to the different modes of engagement with stakeholders.

Fatouma feels that she "understood a lot about the stakeholders and especially how to involve them" after following this course. She also became inspired to organize training for civil society organizations, NGOs and other institutions, reaching almost 500 individuals, to raise awareness and sensitize them on the SDGs.

Fatouma's most significant change since participating in the course would be how she used the newly acquired knowledge and increased confidence on the SDGs and Agenda 2030 when applying for a new position in December 2017. She attributes about 40-50% of her confidence growth to her participation in this course. Fatouma hopes that future sessions of the course will be held in French so that her colleagues nominated to partake would be able to follow the programme.

Quotes translated from French.

5. Visibility and Communication

5.a Websites

In the early days of the project, the [Sustainable Development Knowledge online Platform \(SDKP\)](#) maintained by DSDG was the main tool to provide visibility about the 2030 Agenda and SDGs and acted as an important information mechanism targeting sustainable development practitioners across different sectors of society, including governments, academia, civil society and others. In 2018 efforts were made to further increase the outreach and communication around the SDGs and how Member States and other actors are working towards them - this was done primarily by migrating the information from SDKP to a new platform - [sdgs.un.org](#) - which includes up to date information on all SDGs, details of the intergovernmental processes linked to Sustainable Development (including the HLPF, the Ocean Conference, the Global Sustainable Transport Conference), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as well as a focus on partnerships and engagement options (for MGoS and others). The site also hosts various SDG databases (SDG Good Practices, VNR database, SDG Acceleration Actions etc) and a regularly updated news section.

The new website has been particularly successful, already **registering almost 40 million page visits in 2020 from 6.8 million users - a 300% increase from the 10 million page visits in 2016**. The pages for the individual SDGs are proving particularly popular, especially with the younger generations, including students. The success of this website is a major achievement in terms of the UN's outreach on the SDGs.

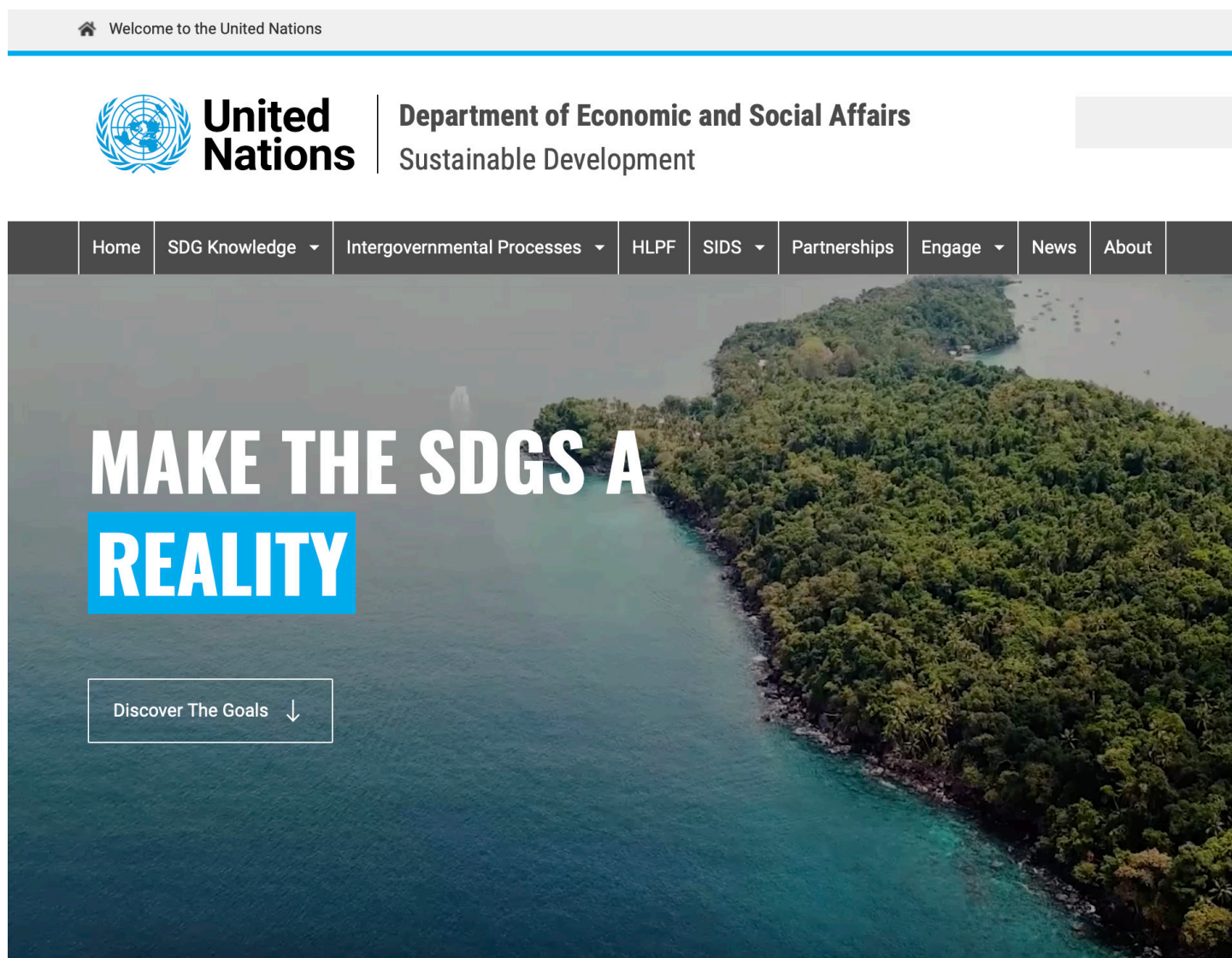


Table 7: Growth of sdgs.un.org

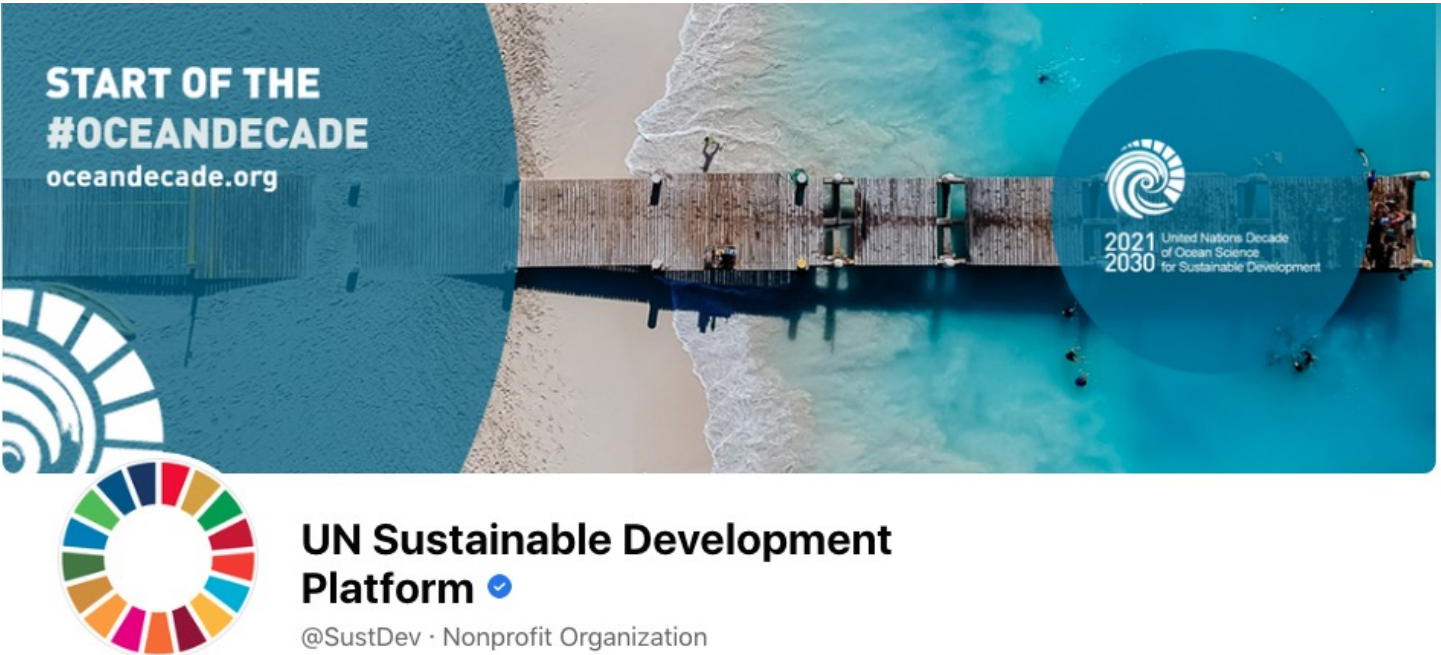
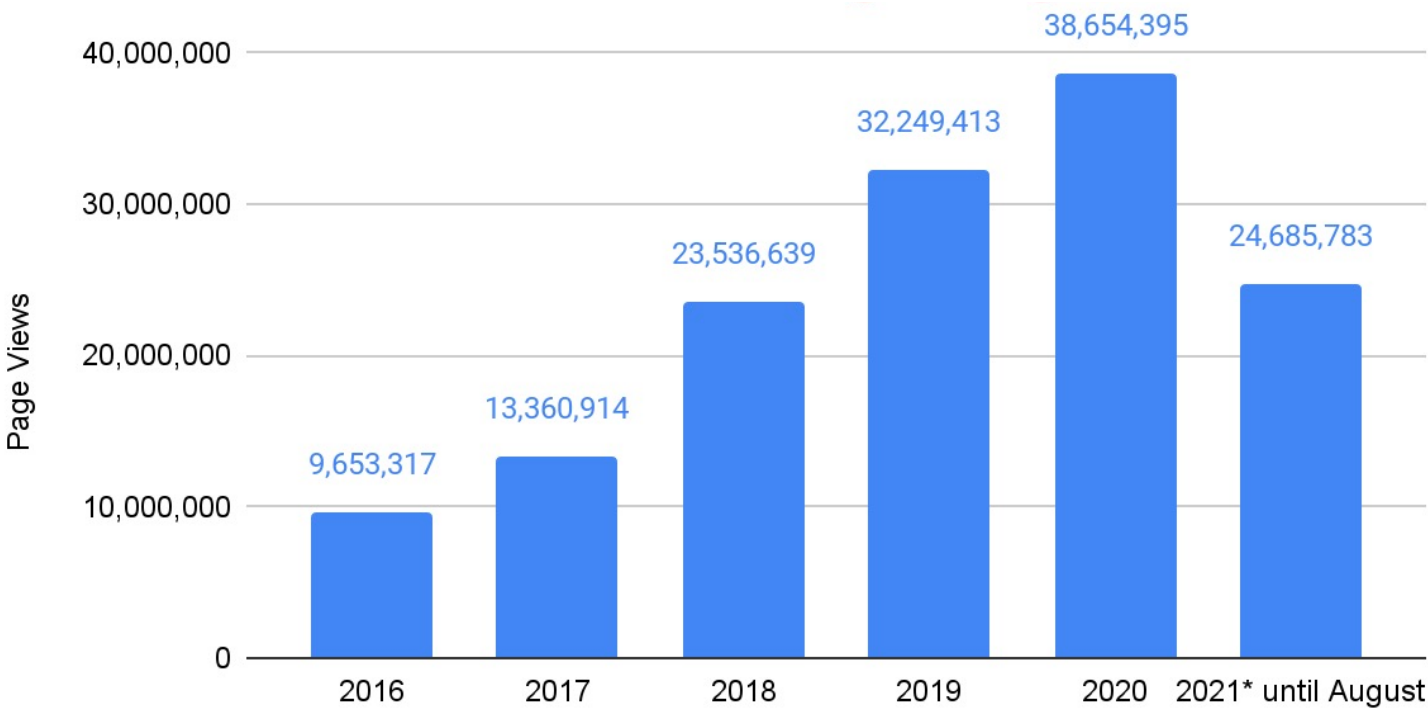
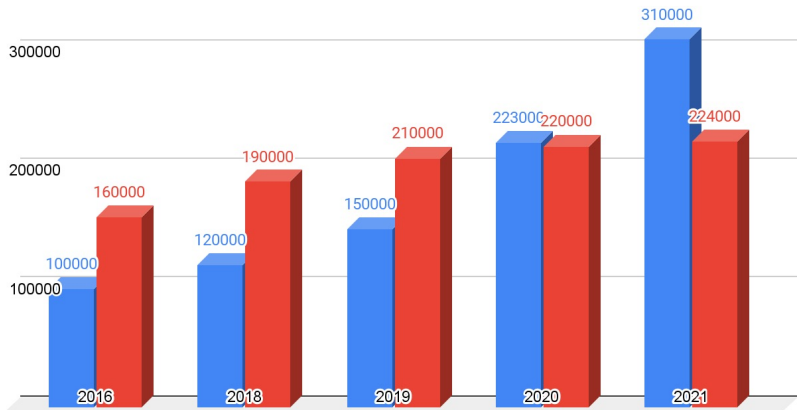


Table 8: Growth in followers on Facebook and Twitter



5.b. Social Media

The project has focused on social media outreach, specifically aiming to develop DSDG's Facebook and Twitter channels. There has been a steady year on year growth in both Facebook and Twitter followers.

5.c MGoS Mailing List

DESA created and manages a dedicated mailing list for all MGoS in order to facilitate information sharing and engagement opportunities related to the SDGs. This list, which has over 1600 members (as of September 2021), has proved an effective space for DESA (and other UN partners) to share relevant information on Sustainable Development and related processes with MGoS throughout the world. Information shared with this list is regularly related to further mailing lists by MGoS themselves, drastically increasing the reach of the original communications. The list, which was created in 2016, remains lively and active at the time of writing (September 2021).

6. Challenges encountered and their impact

A number of challenges have been encountered throughout the course of the project, notably:

CHALLENGE 1: ADJUSTING TO CHANGE



Throughout the course of the project DESA had to navigate many changes. Key personnel in governments and MGoS changed regularly, enhancing the need for ongoing capacity building for new staff. Changes in approaches from governments and MGoS and changes in the political realities meant that DESA needed to be flexible and make regular course adjustments in order to stay relevant.

Response: DESA reacted to the increasing importance of the VNRs by predicting this importance and focusing efforts there - notably by organising national and regional workshops around the VNRs and how best stakeholders could engage with them.

DESA has accepted the nature of focusing on supporting the engagement of MGoS in political processes, and has retained space, capacity and flexibility to adapt to the changing political realities.

CHALLENGE 2: LANGUAGE BARRIERS



As ever with international projects, language barriers were identified as an issue, most notably in the e-learning course organized in partnership with UNITAR, "Strengthening stakeholder engagement for the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda".

Evaluation questionnaires regularly pointed to the desire of non-anglophone participants to have other linguistic versions of the course, notably French, Spanish or Arabic. This is not just a challenge related to translating documents, but increasingly to ensuring simultaneous interpretation on webinars, or organising online training in other languages.

Response: Efforts were made to translate key documents into French and Spanish - this was notably true for the publication developed from the material for the e-learning course '[Stakeholder Engagement and the 2030 Agenda: A Practical Guide](#)' and '[A framework for the analysis of practices of stakeholder engagement in the implementation and follow up of the 2030 Agenda](#)'. The online application '[LinkedSDGs](#)' is also available in all six UN official languages.

Many webinars for MGoS have been organized in French and Spanish to cater for the language barrier, and in 2020 the e-learning course was translated into French to be delivered in a non-facilitated format in 2021. However, dedicated funding would be needed to run the facilitated course in other languages and this is being explored by DESA and UNITAR.

CHALLENGE 3: WHO CAN BE SUPPORTED TO PARTICIPATE?



The project was only able to support MGoS from the Global South to participate in global meetings related to the SDGs. The logic is that MGoS from the Global North should be able to source funding to participate without external support. However, this remains a particular challenge - Agenda 2030 and the SDGs are a universal, not simply aimed at the Global South. Restricting funding to MGoS from this part of the world has meant that many colleagues from the Global North have been unable to participate in the relevant global meetings. A balance may need to be found, respecting both historical imbalances in participation and financial realities of MGoS across the globe.

Response: UN DESA has amplified the space for virtual engagement and participation, organising over 220 webinars throughout the course of the project. This has complemented the physical participation of MGoS and has helped open up SDG related processes to more CSOs throughout the world, both in the Global North and Global South.

CHALLENGE 4: TIMING OF ACTIVITIES AND ORGANISATION

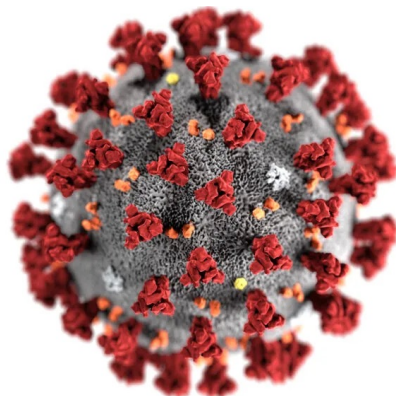


Organising activities at 'the right time' was a challenge encountered during the e-learning course, with some participants from governments feeling that the course was organized too late to enable them to put the learning into practice for their VNR. Some participants also felt that not enough time was provided to complete the course. This challenge was also felt when organising for the participation of stakeholders in global events like the HLPF. However, this is partly a result of the focus on ensuring participation in political processes - DESA needed to be reactive to changing political realities in order to ensure stakeholder engagement, and this reactive strategy sometimes meant that there were issues with timing.

Response: In 2016 the online course ran for 3 weeks. In 2016 and 2017, it ran for 8 weeks. In 2019, 10 weeks were made available for participants to complete the course, and some participants were given an extension on the basis of substantiated reasons for delay to complete course requirements. The self-paced MOOC is now available throughout the year and to all interested stakeholders, which can support in solving some of the issues related to timing and access to content.

DESA made efforts to start the process of selecting MGoS participants for the HLPF and other relevant global meetings as early as possible, recognising the time it takes to organize participatory processes and organize travel arrangements, visas etc.

CHALLENGE 5. COVID-19



The project has not been spared from the impacts of COVID-19. Staff members had to work remotely; project workshops had to be cancelled, postponed, or reorganized online; UN Conferences around which project work was organized have been cancelled, postponed or reorganized online, and the pandemic directly impacted on the capacity of delivering activities related to travel. While most governments throughout the world have modified their participation practices to enable online participation by MGoS, and while this online participation may have increased the engagement of certain sectors, this is not true for vulnerable and marginalised groups, who risk being 'left behind' by the move to online engagement.

Reponse: The immediate response to COVID-19 was to postpone a number of planned activities, including: 1 regional workshop (Asia-Pacific), 1 national workshop, 2 technical assistance missions of DESA staff to support MGoS work (in parallel to the postponed regional and national workshops), further technical assistance missions of DESA staff to Regional Sustainable Development Forums, financial support to the participation of MGoS representatives at the 2020 and 2021 HLPF and the 2020 UN Ocean Conference (currently postponed to 2022).

DESA also responded to the pandemic by changing the work programme of the project to include a survey reflected in the specific publication on '[The Impacts of COVID-19 on Stakeholder Engagement for the SDGs](#)'.

COVID-19 also led DESA to request a grant extension in order to provide extra time to complete activities relating to the grant, with unused funds related to MGoS travel and the organisation of events being reallocated to translations, learning events, communications material and consultants. Unfortunately, the project could not be extended beyond November 2021.

7. Lessons learned

1.



Dedicated funding for MGoS participation in global and regional meetings is indispensable if we are serious about stakeholder engagement and keeping the crucial link between the global, regional and national.

Efforts should be made to bring more MGoS representatives from both the Global South and Global North to global and regional meetings, recognising the global nature of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

2.

The need for capacity building shouldn't be underestimated - changes in civil society and government, changes in political realities mean that SDG related content needs to be updated, reworked and broadly shared in order to remain relevant and useful to people and to political realities.



3.



Working online is a good way to engage with more people at distance and at a reduced cost - the e-learning course and the webinars provide particularly strong evidence of this. For the future, dedicated funding will be needed to facilitate the engagement of non-English linguistic communities in such work streams - translations, interpretation and course facilitators with different linguistic backgrounds should form the backbone of such an approach.

4.

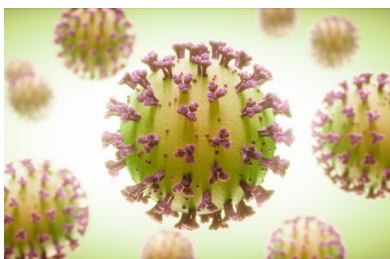
Linguistic diversity remains key to the success of global projects. Funds are needed for translation and interpretation of material, and efforts must be made to translate not just the text and the concepts but also the 'jargon' around the SDGs and related global processes.



Collaboration is crucial. The innovative approaches used by DESA, developing collaborations within its Divisions and with DCO, UNDP, UNITAR, UN Resident Coordinators, UN Regional Commissions and MGoS has helped ensure high energy levels, shared ownership, and leadership of the various workstreams, and has enabled various agencies to play to their strengths.

5.

6.



COVID-19 represents a serious threat to meaningful stakeholder engagement. Stakeholders need to be supported to ensure meaningful engagement during online working, recognising the lasting impacts of the global pandemic.

8. An eye to the future

We are in the early phases of the '[Decade of Action to Deliver the SDGs](#)' which aims to 'mobilize everyone, everywhere' in order to 'create an unstoppable force'. There are five areas from the EU funded project which should be built upon in order to meaningfully contribute to the Decade of Action's goal of mobilizing everyone, everywhere:



1

Dedicated funding lines to ensure the meaningful participation of MGoS from both the Global South and the Global North in global and regional meetings related to the SDGs is indispensable. The SDGs are universal, so it is crucial that voices from the Global South and the Global North are included.



2

The links between the national, regional and global levels are crucial. Capacity building workshops at these three levels are a great way to strengthen these links, and respond to the ongoing need of governments and MGoS for capacity building around the SDGs and related global processes. Workshops also recognise the importance of bringing people together. While much can be done online, the levels of engagement are simply stronger when it happens in person. In order to increase local ownership and participation, such workshops should always be organized in collaboration with partners - Regional Commissions, Country Offices etc.



3

Virtual connections (e-courses and webinars) must be strengthened, notably by offering webinars in different languages and/or with simultaneous interpretation.



4

The ability to provide solid evidence about the value of such engagement is crucial, as not everyone intuitively appreciates the value of stakeholder engagement. The experience of such research gleaned through this project (notably the report on the Impact of COVID-19 on stakeholder engagement for the SDGs) should be built upon in the future.



5

Sharing successes. Throughout the project it became evident that clear guidance based on what has worked well in other contexts has a strong impact. From governments sharing their stakeholder engagement strategies with other governments during the e-learning course or during face to face regional meetings, to compilations of good practices around stakeholder engagement, galvanising action by sharing relevant examples is a successful strategy to be replicated in the future.



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