

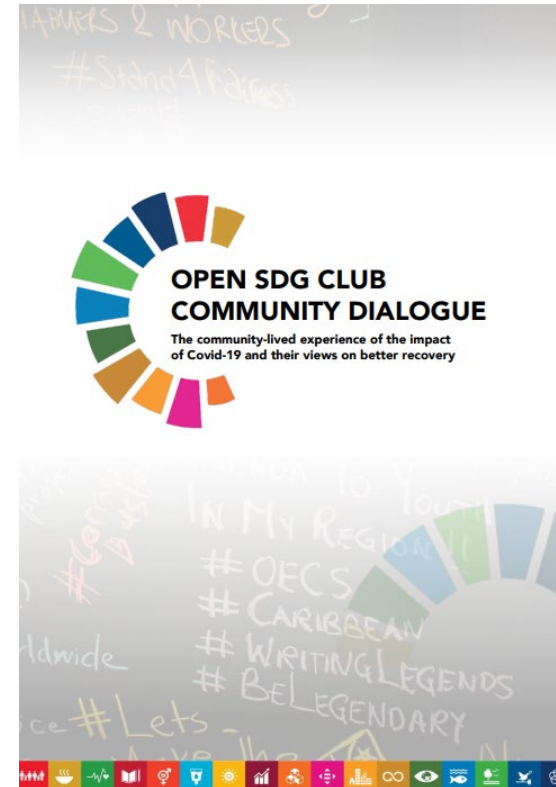
CITIZENS' REPORT SOUTH AFRICA



ENSURING AN INCLUSIVE REPORTING PROCESS FOR HLPF 2019

SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY WORKING GROUP ON THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

JULY 2019



The South African CSOs Working Group on SDGs (SAWG- SDGs)

South Africa CSOs Working Group on SDGs (SAWG)

- The South African CSO Working Group consists over 20 Civil Society Organizations from different provinces that have been actively engaging with the South African government on the development and formulation of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The SAWG Objectives: **To assess the domestication and mainstreaming of SDGs in national development plans by applying the Leave No One Behind principle; To consolidate the voices of marginalised and excluded groups; To collaboratively devise a CSO's road map that will enable collective action by key stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring of SDGS**
- Organised various Multi-stakeholder conversations were organized between 2016 and 2022 to ensure COS participation on the SDGS
- It has developed CSO positions and made inputs to the intergovernmental negotiations and engaged periodically with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, the Department of Social Development and Statistics South Africa.
- It also hosted consultations in its early years to develop a structure and a road map for CSOs participation in the implementation of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.



Few successful stories include among others

- With the support of UNDP South Africa in 2016 in Johannesburg we brought together CSOs from different sectors, national and provincial government representatives, Chapter 9 institutions, and the UN agencies in South Africa to reconstitute the Working Group.
- The aim was to assess the domestication and mainstreaming of SDGs in national development plans by applying the Leave No One Behind principle; To consolidate the voices of marginalised and excluded groups; To collaboratively devise a CSO's road map that will enable collective action by key stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring of SDGs
- Developed a Roadmap for enhanced CSO participation at local, provincial, and national level; and further establish a core group to drive the implementation of the road map.
- We also confirmed South African Civil society commitment towards the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The South African social movement has adopted SDGs as an advocacy tool and continues to seek accountability.
- The SAWG is the co-Convenor of the Annual Open SDGs Symposium and community dialogues which provide an opportunity for civil society and other non-state actors in South Africa to review the SDGs and share perspectives in an open, inclusive, and collaborative platform. They are designed to showcase and encourage the transformative nature of the SDGs.



The Open SDG Club South Africa: An Inclusive National Voluntary Review Processes

- When South Africa started the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process in 2019, as the Civil Society we felt there was no inclusive institutional mechanism for consultation.
- We felt that there is not enough commitment to the SDGs;
- and that there was little effort to proactively engage with civil society around the implementation of the SDG agenda.
- CSO and CBOs had limited awareness of SDGs and only a few have adopted SDGs as advocacy too
- Building Stakeholder and alliances
- African Monitor, partnered with major Civil Society and Grassroots organisations including CSVN, Sonke Gender Justice and the Human Rights Institute of South Africa(HURISA); we formed an alliance with The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) , and Human Rights Commission.
- South African Civil society is committed towards the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The South African social movements have adopted SDGs as an advocacy tool and continues to seek accountability.
- The labour movement led by the Congress of South African Labor Unions (Cosatu) has demonstrated its commitment to the Agenda.
- We have benefited from support and guidance from Statistics SA and the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (DPME) and namely the Planning Commission Secretariat .



The Open SDG Club South Africa 2019-2023

- Inspired by the Open SDGs Germany, we adopted the Open SDG Symposium
- The Symposium is designed to showcase and encourage the transformative nature of the SDGs, especially ensuring that civil society actors are able to engage with decision-makers. It can promote multi-stakeholder approaches and joint initiatives.
- The approach enables the development a common cause among stakeholders lending to SDG's "whole Society approach"
- In 2019 we convened the first Open SDGs Symposium that validated the CSO VNR Report 2019
- In 2020 the hybrid Open SDGs Symposium was convened under the theme "Inclusive and Transformative Recovery: Delivering on the SDGs Decade of Action" from the 24th – 26th November 2020 The main aim of the Open SDG Club Symposium South Africa 2020 was to build a common cause, share transformative solutions and constructive advice on critical interventions to end poverty, reduce inequality and protect the environment, and formulate building blocks for inclusive and transformative recovery.
- In 2023 the Open SDGs Symposium was convened under theme e "Mobilising action for accelerated delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" with more than 120 participants. The Open SDG Club South Africa 2023 Symposium aimed to start a dialogue in response to the call of HLPF 2022 of "a new phase of accelerated progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals" and chart a pathway for accelerated progress and full implementation of the SDGs.
- This was preceded by community consultation on the New Social Compact in three provinces which sought to collect perspectives of civil society, rights holders, and grassroots communities to build a new social compact for a peaceful, inclusive, and resilient society as a response to the President of the Republic call.



Citizen's Participation

- It is essential to position citizens and civil society as rights holders, using a rights-based framework to participate in the review process and to demand accountability from the state.
- This right to participate is already enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa but also, we do agree that accelerating the progress on the SDG targets requires innovation around citizen's participation and engagement in monitoring the implementation of the SDGs.
- The SAWG was founded on the principle, that when citizens effectively hold their governments accountable for delivery, democracy is strengthened, development outcomes improve significantly for the poor, and citizens gain confidence to claim their rights and solve local problems.
- However, more significant investment is required to build the capacity of citizens to present their experiences by creating an enabling environment for participation.
- As the SAWG we have been capacitating members of the Civil Society so that they can make informed contributions to various processes of monitoring the implementation of the SDGs including the SDG report done by Statistics South Africa and the VNR processes being led by the DPME.
- In the past we found that the processes that sought to involve CSOs were rather complicated and difficult for CSO to contribute. Without capacity building, the involvement of CSO is seen as bullet ticking.
- Just this year we organised so far two Workshops with CSOs members on SDGs and initial planning of the VNR 2024



Open SDG Club South Africa

- In preparation of the symposium in 2019 the network worked and published the shadow report on South Africa's implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the report brought citizens' voice and agency to the process of SDG review in South Africa.
- The Citizens Report (shadow report) was written with direct contributions from civil society through research that focused on citizen's voices and experiences.
- The CSOs also participated on the VNR 2019 and sent a delegation as part of the official South African delegation to the HLPF 2019. The Voluntary National Review (VNR) report 2019 noted that despite efforts to "Leave No One Behind" with extensive social assistance programmes reaching 17.5 million South Africans at a cost equivalent to 3.3 per cent of GDP, many South African continued to be excluded.
- SAWG has been championing the establishment of the NSDF; we conducted a research project and produced a proposal on key principles and modalities for the NDSF (MSP) roadmap for the institutionalisation of the NSDF through a consultative approach. We conduct Advocacy and engagement with key stakeholders, including parliamentarians, to secure political buy-in for the institutionalisation of the NDSF and to strengthen multi-stakeholder approaches to SDGs in the country and we are now working on a business case for the NDSF.
- The national VNR report 2019 affirms the government's commitment to the multi-stakeholder approach and notes that "this approach has laid the foundation for building strong alliances and collaboration for the SDGs implementation between the governments and their social partners".



Bottlenecks

- CSO and CBOs had limited awareness on SDGs and only a few have adopted SDGs as an advocacy tool
- There was an observation that in other countries multi-stakeholder platforms have been created to facilitate the domestication and localization of Agenda 2030, and various models of engagement exist.
- The idea was to establish the SAWG as a national umbrella body to coordinate and monitor progress at provincial and national levels, through the provincial structures. Focal points at local level were to link with municipalities but these did not happen because of resources. We managed to mobilise selected provinces.
- A key focus /mandate of the SAWG was to advocating for the establishment of a National Multi-stakeholder platform (that includes Government, CSO, Business and Chapter 9 institutions); though there is little progress the NDSF has not materialised despite Cabinet approval about four years ago.
- Covid19 has weakened many SAWG members; we are rebuilding the Network and organise the working groups



Priority Action

The priority Action from the SAWG included

- The institutionalisation of the mechanism for multi-stakeholder engagement and the institutionalization of the national development stakeholder forum (NDSF) adopted by the government of South Africa where civil society will have a clear role.
- Key stakeholders and political support of the NDSF in its formation phase and to ensure commitment maintained.
- It is important that Government expedites the formation of NDSF and ensures ongoing support and resourcing
- Advocacy and engagement to maintain the political support for MSP's institutionalisation as SDG advisory council.
- Continuous capacity building to CSOs so that they can engage meaningfully in monitoring the implementation of the SDGs



Are VLR useful?

- This is so important as the VLR will show how local government plays a role in achieving Sustainable Development Goals. This also can enhance the SDGs principle of “leave no one behind”.in our context this will help us to amplify the voices of the voiceless; those at grassroots level. E.g of our Citizen Consultations
- Implementation takes place at the local level. Monitoring should also be taken seriously at this level. The SAWG is excited by the VLRs because they are going to provide a response to how SDGs are implemented at the local level. We will need to provide more capacity-building support to CSO for effective participation in local and national voluntary reviews.
- Finally, the South Africa is participating in the Voluntary National Review 2024; we hope that it will be informed by VRLs.





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