

Workshop on Data and Statistics for Evidence-based Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)

9-12 December 2019, Vienna, Austria

Concept Note

I. Introduction

The effective follow-up and review of the progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets is essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. One of the critical follow-up and review mechanisms is the Voluntary National Reviews prepared by Member States to be presented at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). These reviews, prepared through a country-led process, are expected to facilitate sharing of experiences—both successes and challenges—among Member States, with a view towards accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. An essential feature of the VNRs includes data and statistics to gauge and measure progress and address the vast scope of the 2030 Agenda and to fulfil the ambition of leaving no one behind by the inclusion of disaggregated data.

Even for countries with advanced statistical systems, the amount of data needed for the SDGs can be challenging and without timely, accurate and disaggregated data, meaningful reviews of implementation of the agenda cannot be made. It is therefore important to examine the specific role data plays in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the preparation of VNRs—including, for example, how data is currently used, and how data and statistical capacity could be strengthened to support evidence-based VNRs.

One important step for the effective usage of data in VNRs is to strengthen the dialogue between data producers – the national statistical system – and data users, who are mainly represented by policy makers in this context. Improved collaboration between national statisticians and policy makers—an understanding of each other’s needs and capabilities—is essential in the context of a complex, interdisciplinary, multi stakeholder process such as the preparation of VNRs.

II. Objective and Target Audience

The workshop on Data and Statistics for Evidence-based Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) is organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in collaboration with many international agencies. This workshop will be hosted by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Vienna, Austria from 9-12 December 2019. The objective of the workshop is to bring together representatives from national statistical offices (NSOs) engaged in work on the SDGs and the national VNR focal points engaged in policy-making to discuss and share best practices on how data and statistics can support a data-driven and evidence-based VNR process.

The training workshop aims to accomplish this objective through:

- a) Improved knowledge sharing and discussion on addressing data gaps and use of data to inform evidence-based policy decisions on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- b) Partnerships built among different data producers and data users to strengthen statistical capacity and improve data availability on vulnerable population groups.

The target audience for the workshop includes 34 participants from 17 countries that will participate in the 2020 VNRs. Each country will have one representative from its national statistics office and one representative of the VNR focal point engaged in policy-making and involved in the preparation of the countries' upcoming VNR.

Resource persons and experts will be available from international organizations and regional organizations that focus on SDG monitoring and tools.

III. Workshop Topics

The workshop will be organized around the following broad themes:

a) National SDG monitoring mechanisms and processes

When the 2030 Agenda was adopted, countries began putting in place the localization of the agenda with relation to national development priorities at a policy level as well as for their measurement frameworks. This topic will focus on those national monitoring mechanisms and processes – how countries have developed their national SDG indicator frameworks and the multi-stakeholder consultation processes for national SDG monitoring and the preparation of the VNR. This session will include an introduction to the VNR process at the global level, and best practices and lessons learned from national coordination mechanisms for SDG monitoring, data sharing and data flow arrangements, and inclusive national SDG review processes being carried out by countries.

b) Thematic sessions on measuring and assessing progress towards specific Goals and targets

In order to fully track progress on the SDGs, many areas of economic, social and environmental dimensions are included in the global and national monitoring frameworks. This topic will provide an opportunity to review selected Goals and targets of these different sustainable development dimensions to highlight how they are measured and assessed. Resource persons and experts from international and regional organizations will provide training on processes to collect, produce, report and use SDG indicators to review these Goals and targets under their specific domain.

c) Data disaggregation to 'leave no one behind'

The guiding principle to 'leave no one behind' of the 2030 Agenda comes with opportunities and challenges for countries to better incorporate disaggregated data in monitoring SDG implementation and address the situations of vulnerable populations. This session will focus on how countries identify national data disaggregation priorities; tools and practices to improve the collection of disaggregated data as well as how to analyze and use these data.

d) Using non-traditional data sources in the VNRs

To develop a VNR, many countries collaborate with actors outside government and therefore rely on the use of non-traditional data sources to fully describe the progress of SDG implementation at the national level. This can include citizen-generated data, mobile phone data, geo-spatial data and remote sensing data, among others. The session will focus on best practices and experiences with using new and non-traditional data sources as well as processes for incorporating alternative data sources in the VNR.

e) How to use and present data in SDG monitoring and VNRs

Data and statistics play the main role in providing evidence of progress towards achieving the SDGs. Without the effective communication of data and statistics, it can be difficult to convey key messages and analysis of progress in SDG implementation. To this end, many countries have developed national reporting platforms and other tools and solutions to incorporate data in policy-making and reporting. This session will highlight those tools and also cover what works best for presenting and incorporating data in VNRs. This session will also focus on how to use data to advocate the VNRs.