

Evaluation and Voluntary National Reviews



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VNRs and Evaluation



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The EVALSDGs papers: an international collaboration

- The 6th Briefing and the 8th EVALSDGS' briefing papers are co-authored by several evaluation professionals
- The papers have analyzed all 65 Reviews submitted to the HLPF in 2016, and 2017.
- The full series can be downloaded at:
<https://www.iied.org/effective-evaluation-for-sustainable-development-goals>



Voluntary National Reviews



Voluntary National Reviews, one piece of the jigsaw

- Every country is encouraged to submit VNRs to the High Level Political Forum – however the process is voluntary
- **VNR to the HLPF is only one piece** of the jigsaw - Agenda 2030 encourages all countries to conduct **regular reviews, assessments and evaluations** to accelerate implementation of the SDGs



Voluntary National Reviews

Voluntary National Reviews, the other pieces of the jigsaw

- The real change will happen only when reviews **will used locally** to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. Data should be co-produced and used by different stakeholders at the national level.
- But data and evidence are very difficult to be handled. Without proper processes they could lead to inconsistent or conflicting findings and judgements.



Source: <https://grassrootsfund.org/groups/gala-global-awareness-local-action>

Evaluation and VNRs

The role of evaluation in VNRs

Evaluation can serve Agenda2030 by facilitating the co-generation of value judgements. These must be based on **varied sources of rigorous evidence**. Equally, they **must be based on processes** that enable different stakeholders to interpret data and unpack the complexity of the real world.



Evaluation and VNRs

The role of evaluators in VNRs

Evaluators have a responsibility to **challenge monopolies** of problem definition, of issue formulation, of data control, of information utilisation. For example, the interaction of the SDGs often implies clashes between conservation policies and economic growth. Evaluators must **mediate different interests in the processes of value definition.**



Agenda 2030 and complexity



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Digesting complexity

Agenda 2030 is a massive step forward because it recognises the inter-relationships between human, economic development and the environment. However, in its complexity, **it can become a huge burden for national governments**



Agenda 2030 and complexity



Digesting complexity

We need to find ways to **digest the Agenda** by developing simple messages **around its key principles:**

- Country ownership
- Universality
- Sustainability
- Partnerships, and
- No one left behind





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Assessment of the role of evaluation in the 65 VNRs submitted between 2016 (22) and 2017 (43)

Use of evaluation and M&E in VNRs



The role of evaluation

In almost all national reports, it was not entirely clear how the proposed M&E system would support implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

There appears to be very little awareness about just what evaluation is and how it could be used to support the 2030 Agenda

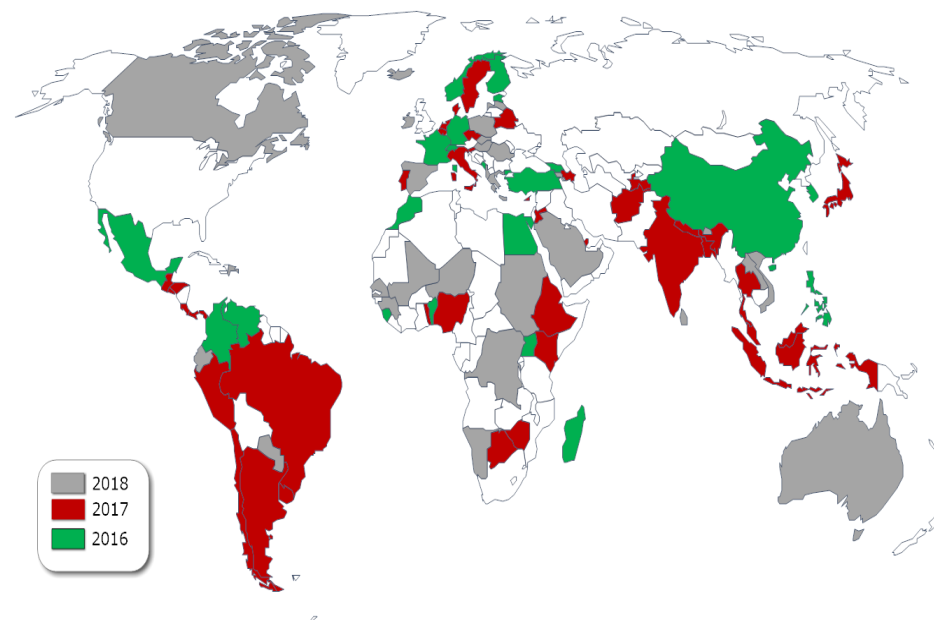
Most of the Reviews lack detail about how evaluation could be used to inform the reporting processes

Country ownership

Reporting countries are taking ownership

- **Almost all 64 reporting countries** implemented a governance structure for the 2030 Agenda and the SDG-reporting at the top level of government.
- M&E responsibilities are usually located in:
 - Presidential/prime minister offices
 - National planning ministry,
 - The environmental ministry, or
 - The budget/finance ministry.
 - National bureau of statistics

Countries with Voluntary National Reviews 2016, 2017 and 2018

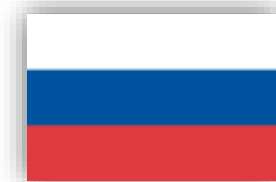


Universality

Agenda 2030 is everybody's concern! Though not yet...

- Some countries are reporting multiple times: **Benin, Qatar, Uruguay, Colombia, Egypt, Mexico, Switzerland and Togo (three times).**
- While, some important states, including **Russia, South Africa, UK and the USA, have not** yet announced any plans for reporting on their VNRs.
- Apart from Finland, reflection on evaluation as a tool for the 2030 Agenda is poor in the reporting countries from Western Europe.

MISSING



Sustainability



Adapting M&E systems without forgetting sustainability

Voluntary reports and national M&E systems should assess the interactions and interconnectedness of the 17 goals

in 2017 almost all countries (41 out of 43) have reported that they are conducting / have conducted a gap analysis of their current monitoring systems to assess how they can be adapted to the SDGs.

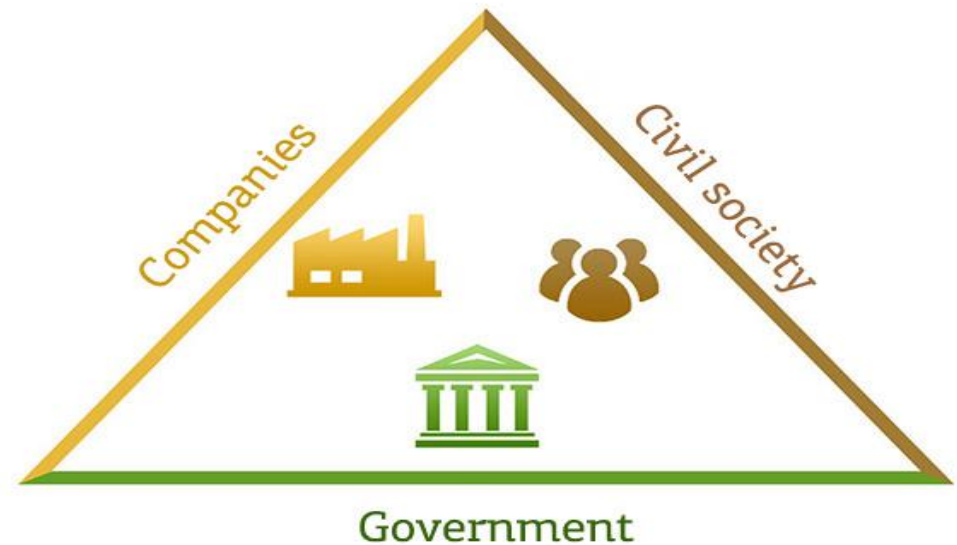


Partnerships



Partnerships to oversee the agenda at national level

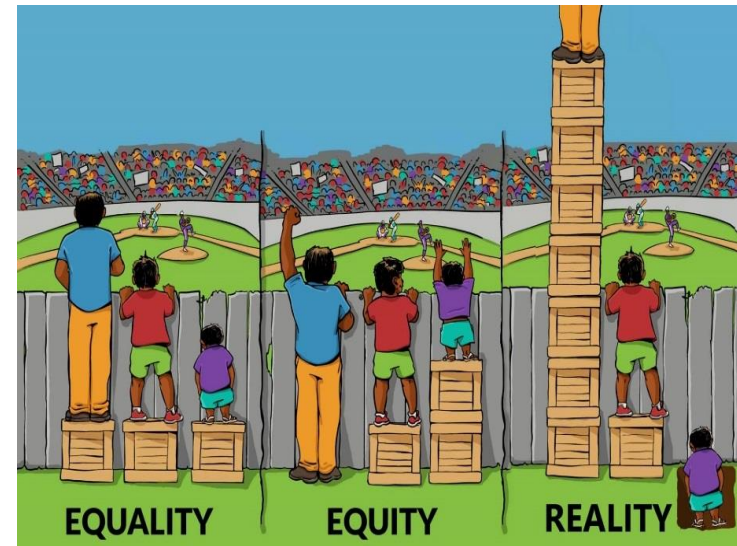
Many of the 64 countries have implemented **Special Committees to consult, guide or oversee their SDGs** national processes. These institutions often include civil society organisations and people from the private sector.



No one left behind

Which data to understand equity and equality?

- During both rounds, several reports have **highlighted the lack of statistical data** as a key challenge
- **Only 10 countries out of 64 have mentioned the** inclusion of qualitative data in their reports.
- Lack of other sources of evidence is a **challenge for assessing no-one left behind** because the more data get disaggregated the more it becomes unreliable



Made by Andrew a facebook user in Canada

Recommendations



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Recommendations from EVALSDGs' briefings

- **High-level political dialogue** is needed in most of the countries reporting to the HLPF **to include evaluation** in national follow up and review of the SDGs. In others, evaluation is recognised as important but it **needs to be coordinated and fully embedded** into national reporting processes.
- VNRs should make clear that macro indicators have limits. **VNRs should also be clear on evaluation's role** as an essential complement to indicators when judging the effects of policies and attributing these to implemented measures.
- **VNRs should complement the focus on quantitative indicators with more qualitative methodologies.** This is an opportunity to include different data sources and tools for analysing and reporting progress.

Recommendations

Recommendations from EVALSDGs' briefings

- Countries should focus on three main aspects:
 - a) Assessing **causes and effects** in **complex and interdependent** systems by looking at what has changed, for whom, under what conditions, how and why
 - b) Paying attention **to vulnerable populations and the environment**
 - c) Assessing **the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders** through a 'co-responsibility lens', i.e. taking an approach that expects sustainable development strategies to be co-designed and co-implemented by all stakeholders (public, private, NGOs and citizens).

Recommendations

Recommendations from EVALSDGs' briefings

- There should be a **standard requirement for all countries to explain in their VNR what role their M&E system plays** in reviewing progress towards the SDGs. UNEG could help develop this.
- As the SDGS are strongly interlinked, it is crucial to both **avoid counterproductive interactions** between different objectives and targets (ie ensure internal coherence), and to **reinforce synergies between stakeholders** (external coherence). VNRs should strongly focus **on building an interlinked picture** at national and local levels..

Recommendations



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Recommendations from EVALSDGs' briefings

- **Add a supplement to the Guidelines to support country reporting on the SDGs on the use of evaluation for follow up and review:** We suggest to add a chapter on what evaluation is, and how it should be linked to monitoring. This should be prepared in collaboration with Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluations (VOPEs) and their global representative bodies, i.e. EVALPARTNERS, IDEAS, and International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE).