

10 July 2019 VNR lab 3

Contribution of Stakeholder Group on Ageing (SGA) given by Sylvia Beales

sylvia@bealesgelberconsult.com sylvia.bealesgelber@gmail.com

Guiding questions 1: In your country, who are those left behind, and are there any institutional mechanisms or processes to involve them in the SDG implementation?

Guiding questions 2: In your country, what is the process of preparing the Voluntary National Review? Is there any space for those vulnerable groups to be included in the VNR preparation process?

Guiding questions 3: What are the roles of the international organizations and the civil society to ensure that no one is left behind, and the specific needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are not only heard, but also reflected in decision-making processes, including VNR preparation and reporting processes?

By way of introduction ageing affects all countries. The speed and scale of the growth in numbers of people 65 plus is a global phenomenon equivalent to climate change. Whatever our view of ageing – whether we embrace it as a fact of the future or block it out as a crisis and a problem - the fact is the SDGs and the human rights framework should and do apply to all people at all ages. In all countries ageing has clear implications for the SDGs.

Put another way unless older people are reached by SDG implementation the project has failed.

Reflections on LNOB and inclusion are:

- For those in the VNR process inclusion, to include, is challenging and requires commitment to change - it means seeing, giving visibility to, to count in. Serious investment in data and evidence to fill the gaps is indispensable. For ageing governments can use the Multiple Indicator Survey on Ageing (MISA) survey tool. How many know about this tool, and are resources available for its use?
- Alongside the growing acceptance of the need for investment in data are we reflecting honestly whether we know whether the people of 65 plus in most countries of the world know about the SDG process, and the specific promises that have been made to older people within Agenda 2030 – for example in goal one, the social protection floor, goal 2, ending the hunger of older persons and so on. This is not an academic point but one of accountability. My guess is no. So what should be done about that and by whom?
- Surveys are showing the telling the SGA and its members that while there may be VNR coordination mechanisms at country - bringing together civil society and government - it is not at all certain that older people, alongside traditionally marginalised people – PWD for example, indigenous people, LGBTQI people – will want to and can participate in them. Inclusion is still the exception rather than the norm. For LNOB to have meaning special efforts have to be made to reach out and include.

- We may be more at the beginning of the checking process on inclusion 4 years into implementation. We must improve and use and test tools. An example of this is the Action for Sustainable Development's 'VNR peoples score card' project – to check who knows about the SDGS, and who is included in VNR processes, and to put forward with civil society and government improved mechanisms to ensure that diverse and comprehensive views on the goals and policies under review are taken on board.
- After 4 years of the VNR process it is time to make more of a special effort to reflect on and report back to citizens and political actors on the effectiveness of current inclusion mechanisms used for consultations. This will give guidance on what has to be done. We will no doubt find that much more investment in capacity, outreach, language, accessibility, relevance is needed to ensure inclusion.

There is some good experience of course. There are some civil society and government mechanisms that are inclusive of older people and that specifically seek their inputs. But at a global level this is not the norm. A key reflection therefore is to learn from and use good practice when it exists.

This brings into focus the roles of international organizations. The UN and civil society in its different guises can be specially mindful to reach out to different constituency groups including older people, and be a conduit to share this good practice with Member States and civil society.

Partnerships for sharing practice to shed light on inclusive decision-making processes, including VNR preparation, better data, and reporting processes are critical levers for change at the country regional and global level.

Some key recommendations

- Resource SDG knowledge and information sharing, and resource inclusive processes for surveys, with attention to participation, voice and accessible meetings.
- Ensure that there is enough research and data on ageing and its intersect with the SDG agenda. Goal 17 target 18 gives clear guidance on the scope needed for this – including financial and technical advice to government and other stakeholders
- Replicate and resource good practice - ie on data the global 'Titchfield' City group process underway to support governments on age related data and ageing statistics
- For UN agencies use of and monitoring of results of use of the recent UNDSG country guide, and to get behind and make functional the UN informal interagency group on ageing
- Accountability of the all the agencies to member states that the LNOB principle applies to all international organizations working on SDGS – and monitor it and make policies accordingly
- Enact and resource universal policies as global goods essential to LNOB
- Use and develop further the 'peoples score card with reporting back, including to parliament of the results of the consultations.