

**SDG 16+ and VNR National Workshops (2019)**  
**Narrative Report**  
**Transparency, Accountability, and Participation Network for the 2030 Agenda**

A TAP Network project that strengthens the meaningful participation of civil society in Voluntary National Review processes and awareness for SDG 16+ and the 2030 Agenda.

Executed in partnership with CSPPS and a range of other partners, with the financial support of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

## **Acknowledgements**

*The Transparency, Accountability and Participation Network for the 2030 Agenda (TAP Network) would like to sincerely thank the partners with whom the Network has worked and collaborated on its SDG 16+ and VNR national workshops in 2019:*

*The Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS)*

*The TAP Network's member and partner organizations in the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Timor-Leste, including: AfroLeadership, CAFSO-WRAG FOR DEVELOPMENT, ChildHelp Sierra Leone, Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development, FONGTIL, and Human Rights First Rwanda Association (HRFRA).*

*The TAP Network's Regional Focal Points in Africa and Asia, including: Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development and the Asia Development Alliance (ADA).*

*Coordination SUD, the Cordaid's Global Headquarter and Country Office based in The Hague, CSPPS's national office in the Central African Republic, and the representatives of local civil society who make up the CSPPS Country Teams.*

*The United National Development Programme Headquarters, based in New York, as well as its National Office.*

*The FORUS Network*

*The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)*

*The Ministry of Economy, Planning and Cooperation of the Central African Republic*

*Saferworld*

*UNOY*

*World Vision International and their office in Central Africa*

*The TAP Network would also express its gratitude and sincere thanks to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for its financial support.*

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## I. Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>TAP Network</b>	Transparency, Accountability, and Participation Network for the 2030 Agenda
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil society organizations
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-governmental organizations
<b>2030 Agenda</b>	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
<b>VNRs</b>	Voluntary National Review
<b>HLPF</b>	High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>CSPPS</b>	Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
<b>Cordaid</b>	Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>P4R</b>	Partners 4 Review
<b>FCAS</b>	Fragile and conflict-affected situations
<b>GPPAC</b>	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
<b>ADA</b>	Asia Development Alliance
<b>GFMD</b>	Global Forum for Media Development
<b>TI</b>	Transparency International
<b>Global Alliance</b>	Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies
<b>Pathfinders</b>	Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>CAR</b>	Central African Republic
<b>GERDDES</b>	Group for Studies and Research on Democracy and Economic and Social Development in Africa
<b>CEPSEDA</b>	Centre for Peace, Security and Development Studies in Africa
<b>FNDP</b>	National Forum on Debt and Poverty
<b>ISC/SDG-CI</b>	(FNDP) and Civil Society Initiative for the MDGs in Côte d'Ivoire
<b>CSCSD</b>	Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development
<b>CSDEA</b>	Centre for Sustainable Development and Education in Africa
<b>ADIN</b>	Africa Development Interchange Network
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>IPCR</b>	Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution
<b>UNDESA</b>	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

## **II. About the TAP Network**

### **a. Who We Are:**

The Transparency, Accountability, and Participation Network for the 2030 Agenda (TAP Network) is a broad international coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs) working together to advance SDG16+ to promote peace, justice, and inclusive societies, and to help enhance accountability for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Founded in 2014 during the negotiations on the 2030 Agenda, the TAP Network led the clarion call from civil society for the SDGs to recognize the nexus between sustainable development, peace, governance and accountability with the establishment of SDG16 to *'promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'*. Today, the TAP Network has grown to include hundreds of civil society organizations operating in every region of the world, with TAP's work evolving to not only coordinate collective global advocacy on behalf of its members, but to also provide indirect or direct support its members advance SDG16+ and SDG accountability in their own contexts.

The TAP Network engages some of the foremost expert organizations working to advance SDG16+ and social accountability at all levels. TAP's membership includes a diverse range of organizations, including local and grassroots groups, national, regional and thematic CSO networks, and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and independent think tanks. TAP benefits from the invaluable expertise, experiences and unique perspectives of its members, all of whom come together to collaborate on joint work and common positions under the TAP Network umbrella. This work is underpinned by recognition that we maximize reach and influence when many stakeholders speak with a unified voice.

The TAP Network is united by the conviction that advancing SDG16+ is a critical prerequisite to achieving the commitments in the 2030 Agenda and for leaving no one behind, and that SDG16+ is linked with all other SDGs. TAP's work also reinforces the assertion that SDG16+ and accountability for the 2030 are inextricably linked, and that efforts to deliver on the SDGs require participatory and inclusive institutions that are accountable to the very people that the 2030 Agenda pledges to "leave no one behind."

### **b. Our Objectives:**

TAP's ultimate ambition is to help transform people, institutions and societies to support lasting change for a more peaceful, just, inclusive, accountable and sustainable world. To do this, the TAP Network works to support, contribute to and strengthen capacity of civil society stakeholders to localize and report on the SDGs and SDG16+ in their own contexts, and to provide a platform for collaboration, collective advocacy and peer-learning around SDG16+ issues and accountability for the 2030 Agenda more broadly.

Through this work, the TAP Network aims to concretely:

1. Work to ensure that duty-bearers are held accountable for their commitments to the SDGs and Leaving No One Behind in the upcoming decade until 2030
2. Support capacity building of local and national stakeholders, primarily civil society, to engage in VNR processes and in other related efforts to advance SDG accountability
3. Support and empower civil society at that local and national level to localize and report on SDG16+, and support sharing, collaboration and coordination between these organizations at all levels

### **c. Our Vision**

TAP's vision for the 2030 Agenda is framed by notions of rule of law and the TAP principles of transparency, accountability and citizen participation, as well as respect for human rights. Effective governance and sustained peace in a post-2015 world require transparent, participatory and inclusive institutions that are accountable to the very people that the 2030 Agenda has committed to engage.

The TAP Network is united in the belief that open, inclusive, accountable and effective governance and peaceful societies are both outcomes and enablers of sustainable and equitable development. The 2030 Agenda must promote openness, accountability and effective public institutions, build trust between states and their citizens, lay the foundation for peaceful and just societies and empower civil society to engage in the design, implementation and accountability of public policies at all levels.

TAP's work also reflects the will and impetus of the millions of citizens from around the world who voted for 'an honest and responsive government' as one of their top priorities in the MY World survey—a theme echoed in consultations around the world throughout the 2030 Agenda negotiation process.

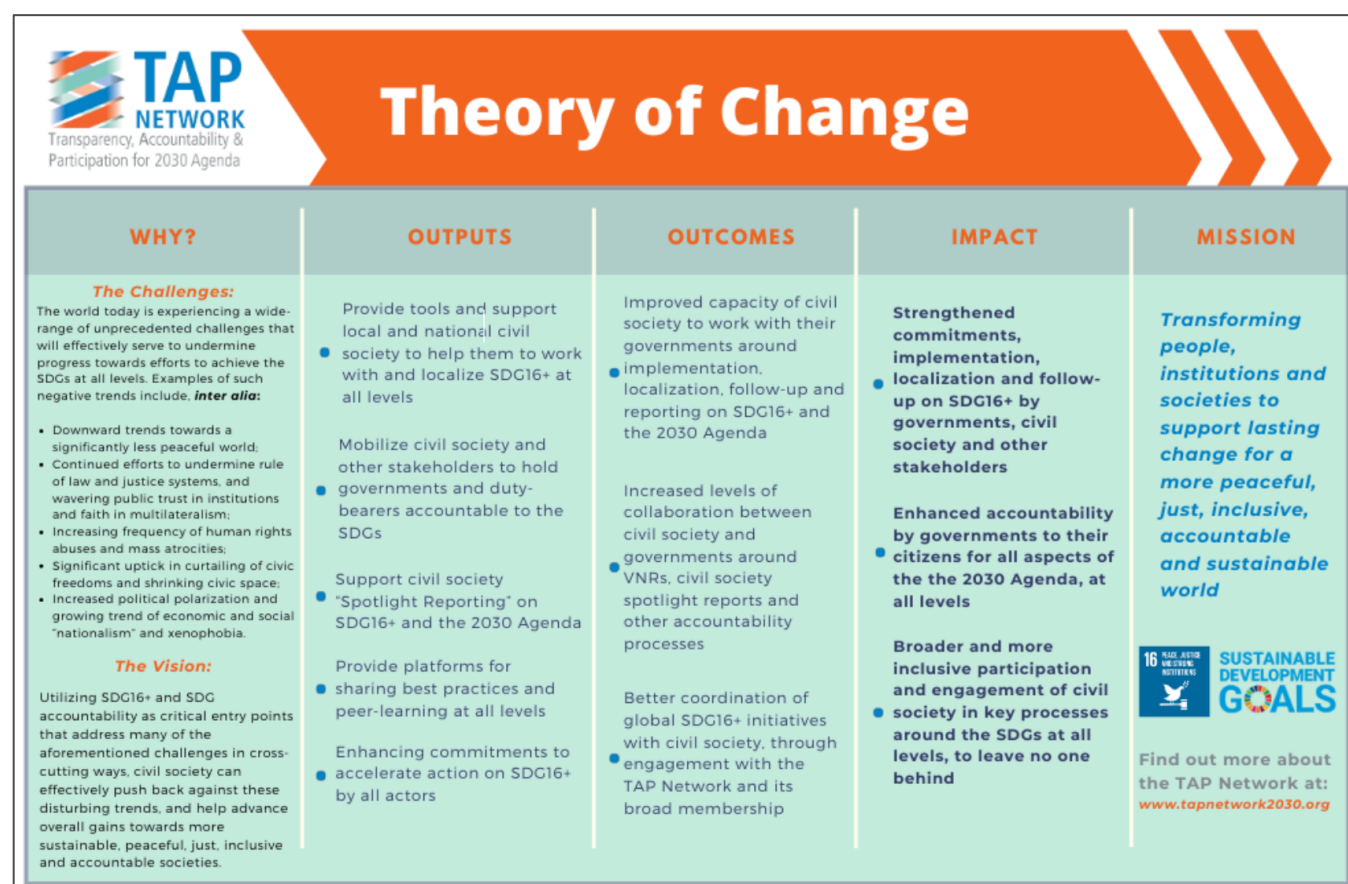
### **d. Our Theory of Change**

TAP's vision for the 2030 Agenda is framed by notions of rule-of-law and the TAP principles of transparency, accountability, and citizen participation, as well as respect for human rights. Effective governance and sustained peace in a Post-2015 world requires transparent, participatory and inclusive institutions that are accountable to the very people that the 2030 Agenda has committed to engage.

The TAP Network is united in the belief that open, inclusive, accountable and effective governance and peaceful societies are both outcomes and enablers of sustainable and equitable development. The 2030 Agenda must promote openness, accountability and effective public institutions, build trust between states and its citizens, lay the foundation for peaceful and just societies, and empower civil society to engage in the design, implementation and accountability

of public policies, at all levels. TAP's work also looks to reinforce the assertion that SDG16 underpins the entire 2030 Agenda and that SDG16 is linked with all other SDGs.

TAP's work also reflects the will and impetus of the millions of citizens from around the world who voted for 'an honest and responsive government' as one of their top priorities in the My World survey – a theme echoed in consultations with people around the world throughout the Post-2015 negotiation process.



## e. Our Workstreams and Activities

The TAP Network's overall goal is to enhance the transparency, accountability and participation for global 2030 Agenda follow-up and review and within countries undertaking voluntary national reviews and strengthen engagement and capacity of civil society to engage in these and SDG 16-related processes at all levels. The TAP Network's theory of change for its work centers around the belief that empowering independent civil society groups to engage in this work around SDG 16, and providing spaces for collaboration with other, will help ensure that SDG 16 is not only high on political agendas around the UN, but is being adequately implemented within the countries that are meant to take ownership of these SDG 16 outcomes. While global-level coordination and facilitation is needed to support collective work and outcomes, success in



implementing SDG16 in any meaningful way relies on national action, and therefore national-level civil society advocacy and mobilization is critical.

To achieve this over-arching objective, the TAP Network works on the following issue areas:

1. **Mobilizing for a “Decade of Accountability for the SDGs:** *Objective: Work to ensure that duty-bearers are held accountable for their commitments to the SDGs and Leaving No One Behind in the upcoming decade until 2030*
2. **Capacity Building Support and engagement in Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes and other relevant accountability processes:** *Objective: Support capacity building of local and national stakeholders, primarily civil society, to engage in VNR processes and in other related efforts to advance SDG accountability*
3. **SDG16+ Civil Society Coordination: Localization, Reporting and Global Advocacy:** *Objective: Support and empower civil society at that local and national level to localize and report on SDG16+, and support sharing, collaboration and coordination between these organizations at all levels*
4. **Monitoring, Data and Accountability:** *Objective: Strengthen SDG16 Civil Society Spotlight Reporting and independent monitoring and data collection for SDG16, and enhance accountability for SDG16 and the 2030 Agenda*
5. **HLPF Reform:** *Objective: Influence Reform Processes related to the UN’s High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and other related processes*

Given the voluntary nature of the 2030 Agenda, and the immense challenge of mainstreaming and implementing the SDGs at the national level, national governments and the global SDG community have largely left the topic of accountability for these SDG commitments relatively untouched up to this point. With only 10 years left for governments and duty-bearers to deliver on these ambitious commitments, *the time is now* to lay the foundation for fostering an enabling environment that supports true SDG accountability, with this global campaign to support a “Decade of Accountability” serving as a critical launch pad opportunity for the international community.

Additionally, advancing progress on SDG16+ issues around fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies and transparent and participatory institutions serves as a critical prerequisite for SDG accountability, the TAP Network also works to help advance SDG16+ localization and reporting with its partners at the local and national levels. This intrinsic link between SDG16+ and SDG accountability underpins all of TAP’s core work, with the strength and unique added value of TAP lying in its global leadership to mobilize, coordinate and empower civil society stakeholders around the convergence of these issues at all levels.

## **f. Our Organizational Structure and Governance**

The TAP Network is led by a dedicated Secretariat, which helps coordinate activities and advocacy for the network and its members. The Secretariat is responsive to the TAP Network Steering Committee which provides strategic guidance and oversight of the Secretariat and the Network's work. The TAP Network Steering Committee is comprised of 5 member organizations – including 2 from the “global north” (OECD countries), and 3 from the “global south” (non-OECD countries).

The TAP Network Steering Committee for 2018-2019 included the following organizations:

- Namati, (co-chair, Global “North” for 2019)
- SDG Kenya Forum, (co-chair, Global “South” for 2019)
- Saferworld
- Asia Development Alliance
- Human Rights First Rwanda Association (HRFRA)

The TAP Network Steering Committee for 2020-2021 include the following organizations:

- Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS)
- Accountability Lab
- SDG Kenya Forum
- Asia Development Alliance (ADA)
- Poverty Reduction Forum Trust

The Steering Committee has a multi-faceted role in leading the TAP Network's work. It has an advisory role to provide overall guidance on TAP's advocacy and strategy priorities and played an instrumental role in facilitating an inclusive and consultative strategic planning process for TAP's Strategic Plan. This advisory role also includes taking decisions regarding allocation of funding for various TAP activities, particularly as it relates to opportunities that are presented for TAP Network members to engage with. Going forward, the Steering Committee will also have an oversight role for the TAP Secretariat's work as well, with the co-chairs spearheading this oversight and management role.

## **The TAP Network’s Funding and Hosting Model**

Currently, the TAP Network receives funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to cover core costs, with a project-based grant through the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Going forward, the TAP Network will prioritize fundraising to improve the overall level of support for TAP’s core work, as well as diversity of its donor base.

The TAP Network – being a network of organizations and not a legal entity in itself – is hosted through a fiscal sponsorship arrangement with the 501(c)(3) organization Proteus Fund. As a specialist fiscal sponsorship organization, Proteus Fund provides the HR/admin/finance support for TAP, with the Steering Committee and Secretariat leading on the substantive work of the network.

**Proteus Fund** - “Proteus Fund is a public foundation that advances democracy, human rights and peace. Founded in 1994, Proteus and its aligned organizations have awarded nearly \$200 million in grants toward the realization of a just, equitable and democratic world. To fulfill its mission, Proteus:

- Convenes and facilitates donor collaboratives that strategically focus and maximize philanthropic resources and impact;
- Partners with other social justice initiatives through fiscal sponsorship;
- Offers Donor Advised Funds and manages family foundations aligned with Proteus Fund’s vision and mission; and
- Provides further philanthropic support for social justice organizations and movements through lobbying grants via Proteus Action League, its 501 c4 sister organization.

The Proteus model is built on an efficient and customized framework of financial, compliance, human resources and other services. Clients and partners benefit from our flexible, responsive, high-quality grantmaking capacity and our deep experience in facilitating collaborative social justice philanthropy.

Proteus Fund is based in Amherst, MA, with additional offices in New York, NY and Washington, DC.”

### **III. About the National Workshops**

#### **a. Background**

Meaningful civil society participation in encouraging positive implementation and inclusive follow-up and review and accountability for the SDGs will be critical to ensuring that governments live up to their ambitious commitments outlined in the 2030 Agenda. In many ways, the meaningful engagement of CSOs in the VNR processes will be an important opportunity to strengthen collaboration and trust between governments and civil society around the 2030 Agenda and is a prerequisite to achieving governments' commitments to "leaving no one behind."

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in 2015, the focus of the TAP Network has turned to ensuring robust monitoring and accountability for these commitments at all levels – including the global, regional and national levels – and particularly for the implementation of SDG 16. While global processes around the 2030 Agenda to date have seen unprecedented levels of engagement by civil society, a significant gap still remains in overall awareness and action from many countries on the SDGs. This is particularly true at the national level, where action and follow-up by civil society with their governments will be most critical.

The annual High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in New York serves as the central follow-up and review mechanism for the SDGs and 2030 Agenda, which is largely based on Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). These reviews are government led and aimed to track progress on a country's respective SDG implementation. Governments are encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews, drawing on contributions from civil society, the private sector, academia and other stakeholders.

At the meeting of the HLPF in 2019, SDG 16 on "Peace, Justice, and Inclusive Societies" was reviewed for the first time since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. While governments had a leading role to play in reviewing progress on SDG 16, the achievement of this goal and the entire sustainable development framework depends on a 'whole of society' approach that engages all relevant stakeholders across and at all levels of government.

To this end, the TAP Network joined forces with the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) in preparation for 2019 reviews on a project to host national workshops aimed at strengthening the capacity of CSOs to be included and meaningfully engage in the processes within their own countries. These workshops were held in seven selected countries going for review in 2019 – many of them fragile states – including Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste.

## About the HLPF and VNR Process

**HLPF 2019** — The High-Level Policy Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development. It plays a central role in the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Agenda to 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level. It takes place every year in New York in July.

**VNR Process** — VNR reports form a fundamental part of the follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda encourages countries to *‘conduct regular and inclusive review of progress at the national and subnational levels, which are country-led and country driven’ and states that reviews are ‘state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders’* (RES/A/70/155 79, 84).

A set of common reporting guidelines and a handbook for the preparation of VNR reports provided by the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and other UN agencies seek to support countries in conducting VNR review processes according to the guiding principles that govern the follow-up and review process at all levels (Box 2). These guidelines are voluntary in nature, meaning reports are not uniform or inherently comparable in terms of contents or format. Central to the reviews are the core principles of the 2030 Agenda such as universality, LNOB, integration, inclusiveness, and ownership. The review processes allow countries to map implementation efforts undertaken and review progress made, as well as planning appropriate policies, structures, and processes to follow-up efforts, and revising or putting in place new national development plans for achieving the SDGs. Apart from making a vital contribution to the implementation of the SDGs, the follow-up and review framework is intended to promote accountability to citizens, support active international cooperation and foster exchange, best practices and mutual learning. (Critical milestones toward coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level, Report of the Secretary General, A/70/684, United Nations, 2016)

## **SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**

Peaceful societies: Marked by low or no incidence of all forms of violence (target 16.1), violence against children (target 16.2) and arms flows (target 16.4).

Just societies: Based on rule of law and access to justice (target 16.3), fighting illicit financial flows (target 16.4), and corruption and bribery (target 16.5).

Inclusive societies: Based on effective, accountable and transparent institutions (target 16.6), inclusive participatory decision-making (target 16.7), participation in global governance (target 16.8), public access to information (target 16.10) and violence and prevention (target 16a).

### Targets

- 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
- 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
- 16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
- 16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
- 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
- 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
- 16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
- 16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration
- 16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements
- 16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime
- 16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

## **b. Objectives and Activities**

The TAP Network receives financial support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (Mott Foundation) to implement its 2016-2020 strategy and activities from January 2018 through December 2019.

In November 2018, the TAP Network and CSPPS – having been introduced for the first-time at the 2018 Partners 4 Review (P4R) meeting in Berlin, Germany – initiated a year-long partnership to execute seven national workshops in the context of both organizations' involvement in VNR-related activities and other relevant actions leading up to the 2019 HLPF in New York.

The partnership between the TAP Network and CSPPS was framed within TAP's 2020 Strategic Plan, particular the component of helping to strengthen the capacity of civil society partners to effectively engage in VNR processes and to hold governments accountable for the SDGs at the national level, with particular emphasis on SDG 16. It was also framed within the work of CSPPS to support the meaningful and ongoing engagement of Civil Society in VNR-processes embarked in fragile and conflict-affected (FCAS) countries, in particular the g7+ member countries going for review in 2019.

It was envisioned that the workshops associated with this joint project would serve as an important opportunity to provide a space for country-level CSOs to come together to strategize around collective advocacy priorities, particularly in regard to engagement with their government around the drafting of their 2019 VNR reports and help enable these CSO groups to engage constructively in the VNR processes themselves. Additionally, these workshops would also contribute to awareness raising and knowledge of SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda more broadly amongst civil society and other relevant stakeholders.

Moreover, this joint project served as an important opportunity to provide a space for country-level CSOs to come together to strategize around collective advocacy priorities, particularly in regard to engagement with their government around the drafting of their 2019 VNR reports and help enable these CSO groups to engage constructively in the VNR processes themselves. Additionally, these workshops can also contribute to awareness raising and knowledge of SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda more broadly amongst civil society and other relevant stakeholders.

### The TAP Network's Prior National Workshops (2016-2018)

Prior to its partnership with CSPPS, the TAP Network organized SDG 16 national workshops independently between 2016 to 2018 with local and national level partners, such as CIVICUS, African Platform, Partners-Jordan, and NGO Federation Nepal.

**Objectives and Methodology** - Similar to the 2019 workshops with CSPPS, the objectives of TAP's previous workshops aimed to provide a space for national-level CSOs to strategize and develop common advocacy priorities and action plans around the SDGs, particularly for SDG 16. In addition, the workshops sought to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda in general. As SDG 16 was not under review by the HLPF in these years, training to strengthen the capacity of country-level CSOs to engage in national VNR processes was incorporated into these workshops but not highlighted as a primary objective.

These workshops lasted between a half-day and three days. Facilitators utilized the TAP Network's *Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit* and its companion resources to implement the workshops.

**Outcomes** – Facilitators reported positive feedback on the workshops, including content and implementation methodology. The surprising issue of lack of awareness of the SDGs was noted by all facilitator. Though next steps and action plans were created in each context, concrete follow-up remains a common challenge. Key recommendations from the workshops include: 1) improving and strengthening TAP's capacity building resources, 2) creating an online best practices and lessons learned platform, and 3) increased funding to support follow-up activities.

*Assessment of TAP workshops on Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit (February 2017) - Maria Molde, Training Manager and Advisor, Civil Society in Development*

Through these national workshops, the TAP Network and CSPPS looked to:

- Strengthen the capacity of CSOs working at the national level to understand and engage in VNR processes, particularly in the context of SDG 16
- Provide a space for national-level CSOs to strategize and develop common advocacy priorities and action plans around the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, particularly in regard to utilizing the VNRs as an accountability tool
- Help CSOs collectively strategize around national-level SDG accountability, including consideration of coordinating and drafting of a national civil society Spotlight Report
- Help facilitate the engagement of national-level CSOs in the global SDGs and VNR processes, including the 2019 HLPF
- Strengthen or develop national CSO coalitions working on the SDGs, to enable stronger and more coordinated engagement with their government and VNR processes

#### Activities

The TAP Network and CSPPS worked with local partner organizations to plan, organize, and host seven joint workshops in the following countries in the lead-up to the HLPF in July 2019:

- Côte d'Ivoire
- Central African Republic (CAR)
- Chad
- Timor-Leste
- Nigeria
- Rwanda
- Sierra Leone

Following these workshops, the TAP Network and CSPPS also collaborated on opportunities for enhanced and strengthened partnership and joint activities carried out in context of the presentation of VNR-reports and participation and coordination of side events at the 2019 HLPF in New York.

### *Coordination and Financing*

After meeting and developing shared ideas at the Berlin P4R meeting, the TAP Network and CSPPS worked together to plan, organize, and host their joint national CSO workshops. The TAP and CSPPS partnership provided strong country-level connections with existing regional and national NGO coalitions. Their collaborative approach to these activities was underpinned by the recognition that both organizations could maximize their reach and influence when the collective capacities and resources of global civil society networks are harnessed and coordinated.

The TAP Network and CSPPS organized each national workshop independently as follows:

Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and Nigeria: The TAP Network and CSPPS and their local partner organizations agreed to plan, co-organize and co-host joint workshops in these countries. Both organizations coordinated together to organize these workshops, including jointly agreeing on the details (including local partners, agenda, budget, outputs) of the workshops.

CAR, Chad, and Cote d'Ivoire: The TAP Network and CSPPS agreed to co-host joint workshop in these countries, for which CSPPS coordinated directly with local partners on details for the workshops. The TAP Network sought to identify and make available a designated resource person and /or facilitator.

Rwanda: The TAP Network and CSPPS agreed to co-host joint workshop in these countries, for which the TAP Network coordinated directly with local partners on details for the workshops.

The TAP Network and CSPPS allocated financial resources to support joint activities for each workshop independently.

### **c. Workshop Implementation**

#### *i. Planning*

It was an essential shared principle of the TAP Network and CSPPS that regional and national coalitions be prioritized through this work, and that the programming of the workshops be locally owned. To this end, the national CSO coalitions facilitating each workshop had the primary responsibility of developing their own content and agendas, in consultation with TAP and CSPPS. Additionally, these national CSO partners had the primary responsibility of determining priorities for outcomes from these workshops, as well as any follow-up activities resulting from the workshop. This flexible and decentralized approach was taken to maximize buy-in and



commitment to the workshop planning and follow-up processes by these engaged national CSO partners.

CSPPS and the TAP Network utilized their respective regional focal points and country teams to help the facilitators coordinate these workshops. These points of contact were expected to facilitate the engagement of the network members and partners in their regions, to identify partners for these national workshops, and to help facilitate the planning and hosting of these workshops. Each of these contacts dedicated national or regional platforms of CSOs in their respective countries, which allowed for stronger coordination amongst partners.

Below is the draft timeline for workshop implementation and follow-up activities:

#### Project Timeline:

##### **2018-2019**

Activity	2018		2019											
	Quarter 4		Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4		
	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Strategy and Preparation for National Workshops									HLPF 2019					
Hosting of National Workshops														
Hosting of Side Events at HLPFs														
Drafting of Impact Assessment of National Workshops														
Collection of National Civil Society Reports														
Analysis of National Civil Society Reports														

##### **2020:**

Activity	2020											
	Quarter 1			Quarter 2			Quarter 3			Quarter 4		
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Strategy and Preparation for National Workshops							HLPF 2020					
Hosting of National Workshops												
Hosting of Side Events at HLPFs												
Drafting of Impact Assessment of National Workshops												
Collection of National Civil Society Reports												
Analysis of National Civil Society Reports												

Each workshop facilitator was encouraged to utilize the TAP Network's capacity building tools, as well as other relevant resources from CSPPS, as primary guides for developing their workshop programs. These tools included:

- [\*\*SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society\*\*](#)

The *SDG Accountability Handbook* is a capacity development source designed to help national-level civil society drive government accountability for the SDGs and guide them through the practical steps to improved accountability for the 2030 Agenda in their country. It features a chapter on publishing civil society spotlight reports, including information of its importance and recommended approaches and methodologies that can be utilized.

- [Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit](#)

The *Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit* provides guidance and tips on contextualizing Goal 16, as well as engaging with Goal 16 at national level in e.g. preparing gap analyses and supporting planning efforts, as well as supporting follow-up and monitoring for Goal 16.

- [Advocacy: Justice and the SDGs](#)

*Advocacy: Justice and the SDGs* is a toolkit is for civil society, activists, and policy practitioners who are working to promote legal empowerment and access to justice. It provides a step by step guide to steer you through the entire process: from broadening your understanding of the SDGs and how they can help your advocacy, to how you can hold your government accountable to the justice commitments it has made.

- [Guidelines for Civil Society Spotlight Reporting on the SDGs](#)

*Guidelines for Civil Society Spotlight Reporting on the SDGs* includes an example structure of civil society spotlight reports and key tips to follow when preparing and producing a civil society SDG spotlight report.

## ii. *Expected Outputs*

In addition to the hosting of national workshops, facilitators were expected to produce key outputs from the events. These outputs were intended to not only summarize and detail the activities and discussions from the workshops but would also to outline key challenges encountered by national-level partners in engaging with their governments and their VNR processes. Additionally, these outputs were to identify opportunities and key recommendations from partners on what they feel is needed to improve VNR processes, particularly related to SDG 16 monitoring and implementation, going forward.

The TAP Network, CSPPS, and national partners worked to provide a common national workshop reporting structure to allow for cross-comparability between analyses received back from facilitators. The following expected outputs resulting from the workshops were asked for by the TAP Network and CSPPS from the facilitators, along with recommendations on some optional outputs to be considered:

### Required Outputs:

- **A Workshop Report (both written and financial)**, to be shared with CSPPS and the TAP Network, as well as the participants.

This written report on the workshop was to include: 1) Detailed notes of each session and the workshop overall, 2) Reflections on some of the key practical and operational challenges in the planning and implementation of the workshop, and 3) lessons learned from this

experience. Facilitators were also asked to include information about how they overcame these challenges.

In addition, facilitators were asked to outline the outcomes from the workshop, along with action plans and timelines for follow-up activities from the workshop, including but not limited to: 1) Follow up meetings from the workshop to further develop advocacy plans and advocacy messaging together, 2) Advocacy priorities and activities towards target stakeholders, 3) Communications plans or media outreach based on the key messages from the workshop, 4) Sharing of the report of the meeting with the relevant government department and UN country teams, or any other relevant follow-up meetings planned with target stakeholders, 5) Any relevant advocacy papers or documents produced by the workshop, and 6) Any information regarding follow-up coordination activities from workshop participants or civil society more broadly, including establishment of national SDG16 civil society coalitions.

Lastly, facilitators were required to submit a financial report, with a breakdown of the actual costs and expenditures for the workshop, compared to the original proposed budget.

- **Produce and submit a video to the ‘*Voices of SDG16+: Stories of Global Action*’ campaign**, in the context of your workshop.

Facilitators were then asked to produce and submit a video to the ‘*Voices of SDG16+: Stories of Global Action*’ campaign, in the context of the workshop.

*Voices of SDG16* is a collaborative campaign to bring the work of civil society on SDG16+ to the 2019 HLPF. Individuals and partners from around the world will have the opportunity to submit short videos telling their “stories” of best practices and extraordinary efforts being undertaken towards SDG16+ at the national and local levels. A selection of video submissions will be collated to feature during a full or half-day event at the 2019 HLPF. Some individuals will be sponsored to attend the HLPF in person and share their work with the UN community and policymakers. (See [www.VoicesofSDG16plus.org](http://www.VoicesofSDG16plus.org) for full details on the campaign and ‘how-to’ guidelines for video submissions).

- **Share photos and/or other forms of media** from the workshop to CSPPS and the TAP Network for communications and other promotional materials.

Finally, facilitators were required to share photos and/or other forms of media from the workshop to CSPPS and the TAP Network for communications and other promotional materials. Also included in this ask was the drafting of a press release with synthesized information about the workshop for TAP and CSPPS to share on our media channels.

Optional Outputs (but highly recommended):

- **Drafting (or beginning stages of drafting) of a civil society “spotlight report”**, either collectively or as individual organizations, and follow-up so they submit the reports.

In an effort to promote accountability for SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda more broadly, the TAP Network and its partners launched a portal to start collecting and showcasing civil society SDG16 spotlight reports. (See [www.tapnetwork2030.org/sdg16reporting](http://www.tapnetwork2030.org/sdg16reporting) for guidance and ‘how-to’ resources to support spotlight reporting).

- **Encouraging participants to make commitments for SDG16**, and follow-up so they submit the commitments.

The TAP Network and its partners also launched a portal to collect civil society commitments to implementing SDG16 and to accountability for the 2030 Agenda. These commitments were to be showcased on an online platform and at an event during the 2019 HLPF.

- **Promote the workshop through communication and outreach channels**, including social media.

The above expectations, reporting requirements, and background materials were provided to each facilitator in the form of a guidance note in advance of the national workshops. Numerous coordination calls and correspondence communications were also conducted between the TAP Network, CSPPS, and the country-level partners to ensure the timely, efficient, and effective implementation of workshop activities in advance of the 2019 HLPF in July.

### *iii. Execution*

#### Preparatory Activities

The TAP Network and CSPPS identified lead focal point organizations to oversee the direct coordination of each national workshop, as well as to facilitate the workshops’ programming. These focal point organizations included: Group for Studies and Research on Democracy and Economic and Social Development in Africa (GERDDES) (**CAR**), Centre for Peace, Security and Development Studies in Africa (CEPSEDA) (**Chad**), National Forum on Debt and Poverty (FNDP) and Civil Society Initiative for the MDGs in Côte d'Ivoire (ISC/SDG-CI) (**Côte D’Ivoire**), Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development (CSCSD) and Centre for Sustainable Development and Education in Africa (CSDEA) (**Nigeria**), Human Rights First (**Rwanda**), ChildHelp Sierra Leone (**Sierra Leone**), and FONGTIL (**Timor-Leste**).

Following initial recruitment and planning conversations in the first quarter of 2019, the TAP Network and CSPPS largely left each facilitator alone to execute their national workshops independently (unless additional assistance was otherwise requested). From the start, facilitators were each provided with guiding background materials, workshop funding, and, where

applicable, contact information for TAP Network regional focal points (**Nigeria, Rwanda, and Timor-Leste**), CSPPS/Cordaid country teams (**CAR, Côte D'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone**) and other relevant national partners such as UNDP country teams (**Côte D'Ivoire and Chad**), European Union (EU) delegations (**Chad**), and national offices for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In the case of the three countries in francophone Africa (**CAR, Côte D'Ivoire, and Chad**), the TAP Network and CSPPS identified an expert regional consultant from the Africa Development Interchange Network (ADIN) to help guide the lead focal point organizations in their workshop design, facilitation, and follow-up. Likewise, in **Timor-Leste**, the lead focal point organization also received additional facilitation and coordination support for its workshops from another expert regional partner: the Asia Development Alliance (ADA).

Planning processes for the workshops varied from country to country. With financial and technical support confirmed, some countries immediately began focusing on awareness raising for the workshop themselves and/or around the topics to be address within the workshops' programming. In the case of **CAR**, for example, CSPPS/Cordaid and the lead focal points hosted an orientation workshop to educate national civil society about the VNRs and specific issues related to SDG 16 implementation (i.e. shrinking civic space, etc.). **Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Sierra Leone** and **Timor-Leste** also hosted their own orientation and/or awareness-raising events in advance of the more technical-level capacity-building workshops later in the year. Facilitators of these events noted that these initial steps enabled them to personally gage their own civil society's general level of knowledge of the anticipated content for the later workshops, thus giving themselves a chance to better understand what the expectations of participants would be in terms of lesson learning and desired take-aways. In addition, these orientations helped some facilitators begin to address disinformation issues around the 2030 Agenda and its related processes – as in the case of **CAR** where the purpose and system of the VNRs were found to be quite misunderstood. Finally, facilitators used these orientations to contextualize the specific targets and indicators of the SDGs for their local communities.

In **Sierra Leone**, the facilitator developed a program schedule well in advance of the workshop and conducted other preparatory activities such as stakeholder dialogues and media engagements. Other focal point organizations began their planning processes by outlining specific national objectives for the events. In **CAR, Côte D'Ivoire, and Chad**, for example, the ADIN regional focal point worked with local partners to identify three primary goals to guide their workshop programming. These goals included: 1) Strengthening civil society capacity to engage in VNR processes and implement and monitor the SDGs, 2) Providing a space for civil society to come together to strategize and develop advocacy and action points, and 3) Coordinating civil society on the national level around accountability mechanisms for the 2030 Agenda, including spotlight reporting.

### Programming Content

The above preparatory activities fed into and helped to strengthen the later workshop programming for many of the selected countries. Overall, the programming content for all

workshops maintained a central focus on preparing civil society to engage in the VNRs. However, many facilitators also incorporated other topics that were deemed to be more pressing and/or more relevant to the sustainable development opportunities and challenges faced their unique country contexts.

For example, a few workshop facilitators narrowed the focus of their programming to SDG 16 implementation and monitoring specifically, and thus relied heavily on the TAP Network's *Global 16 Advocacy Toolkit* and other thematic area-focused capacity building resources (**Rwanda** and **Timor-Leste**). In Rwanda, facilitators took this approach with an eye towards getting workshop attendees "up-to-speed" on global SDG 16 advocacy messaging and to share other national experiences around how to best monitor and implement peace, justice, and inclusion/strong institutions. Given Timor-Leste's plans to host the SDG 16+ Forum's 2019 Annual Showcase in their capitol, the Timorese workshop facilitators made the decisions to also focus heavily on SDG 16 in its event programming. Additionally, Timor-Leste's workshop specially focused on topics such as strengthen international partnerships and harnessing global finances to support national sustainable development efforts.

For **Nigeria**, though its government did not conduct a VNR in 2019, civil society participants sought to utilize this workshop as an evaluation exercise to assess Nigerian activities, successes, and challenges for SDG 16 implementation to date, and to strategize together on a way to accelerate progress on these issues going forward. Specifically, the workshop participants set out to achieve the following four goals through its programming: 1) Continue to strengthen awareness and understanding of the SDGs with a particular focus on SDG 16, 2) Create an advocacy theme around each of the SDG 16 targets as an additional tool for CSO engagement with governments, 3) Assess the country's track record in implementing sustainable development objectives in relation to the 2019 HLPF, and 4) Identify and develop strategies for Goal 16 advocacy champions for the monitoring and implementation of Goal 16 and alternative reporting.

The theme of the workshop in **Sierra Leone** was "Raising Civil Society Awareness, Capacity and Influence on SDG 16", with the main objectives being similar to those in Nigeria, including to: 1) Enhance the knowledge on SDG 16/VNR in the country, 2) Provide an opportunity and platform for objective and critical review on Sierra Leone's progress towards the implementation of the SDGs/VNR process, 3) Build consensus on good practices, lessons learned and challenges, and 4) Build consensus on what support Sierra Leonean CSOs need to fast track the achievement of SDGs.

In the countries where prior awareness-raising efforts had not been conducted, the national workshops still often started with overview discussions of the SDGs and 2030 Agenda, VNRs processes, and the HLPF – and in a few instances the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (**CAR**, **Côte D'Ivoire**, and **Chad**). Other workshops began by delving into global frameworks beyond the 2030 Agenda, such as those on Peace and Human Security, Child Security and Legal Identity, Democratic Governance and inclusion, Corruption Control and Transparency, and Right

to Access Information and Fundamental Freedom (**Sierra Leone**). Still others moved straight into discussions of SDG 16 and its related targets (**Rwanda**).

All of the workshops dedicated a majority of their agendas to in-depth technical discussions. Specific topics addressed during these deep dives included data collection and aggregation (**Rwanda**), HLPF reform and Spotlight Reporting (**Sierra Leone**), and specific SDGs, targets and indicators (including SDG 4, 8, 10, 13, 16.17) (**Côte D'Ivoire**). Sierra Leone used its technical sessions to undertake a gap analysis and stakeholder mapping. From these, workshop participants formulated civil society advocacy strategies for such things as specific policy reforms or the incorporation of national indicators into the country's development plan. In **Nigeria**, facilitators led discussions around engagement opportunities and entry points for civil society into national and global monitoring processes, including via spotlight reporting, civil society commitments to SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda, the *Voices of SDG 16+* video campaign, and engaging more actively with global civil society coalitions like the TAP Network or CSPPS.

In **Côte D'Ivoire**, **Chad**, and **CAR**, the technical portion of the workshops focused on deepening participants reflections on the issues and challenges for achieving transformation through the SDGs, including civil society actors in official development efforts, assessing levels of government accountability to their commitments to the 2030 Agenda, and collecting recommendations for how civil society and government can work in tandem.

#### Programming Structure and Participation Rates

Just as local ownership led to differing programming content, so too did this empower facilitators to identify different workshop structures – in terms duration, timing, and locations – and different audiences to participate in events. For example, in **Côte D'Ivoire**, workshop activities were organized at two levels: national and local. This meant hosting two separate events, each taking place over the course of two-days. The workshops in **Rwanda**, **Timor-Leste**, **Sierra Leone** **CAR** and **Chad**, on the other hand, were organized only on the national level. CAR's activities were consolidated into one full day, but activities in Rwanda, Timor-Leste, Chad and Sierra Leone were spread out over two. Overall, most workshops were hosted in the capital cities of the selected countries, but others, namely **Côte D'Ivoire**, prioritized engagement with non-capital-based civil society by hosting at least one event in a less central location.

All workshops included civil society participants, however, many also included other relevant stakeholders such as officials from national governments and local authorities. In the African francophone countries, both civil society and government participants received invitations to attend the workshops, though government officials were only afforded limited participation in the sessions. This meant government served in more of an observer role for the dialogues in order to encourage civil society voices.

Participation rates in the workshops ranged from just under 40 individuals (in the smallest workshop) to upwards of 140 (in the largest). **CAR** brought together 45 attendees, whereas more than 105 CSO representatives attended the workshop activities in **Côte D'Ivoire** – not including

the additional representatives from national and local government who also attended. In **Chad**, the workshop included 38 participants from civil society organizations, CSO alliances, academic institutions, and media. These organizations and coalitions worked on thematic issues including peace building, access to justice, institutional capacity development, public service monitoring, good governance and corruption control. There were a total 130 participants in **Sierra Leone**'s first day – including officials of the Government Planning Office, CSOs SDG Coordinating Group, New Deal CSO country members, and the TAP Network and CSPPS – 98 participants on its second day of activities. In **Nigeria**, the workshop, which was hosted in collaboration with the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saw a total of 42 participants. Participants were not recorded in Timor-Leste or Rwanda, however, facilitators expressed satisfaction in the number of attendees they were able to recruit.

#### *iv. Results*

Facilitators were encouraged to deliver on a comprehensive list of required and optional outputs from the workshops, including, for example, a workshop report to TAP and CSPPS, a national spotlight report, and a video for the *Voice of SDG16+* campaign. These outputs were intended to be accountability tools for the focal point organizations but, more importantly, to help maintain momentum around sustainable development actions following the closing of the formal workshop activities. In many countries, facilitators and participants went further, developing their other outputs to meet the unique development needs of their local contexts and communities. Others, however, provided much less detailed information.

In **Rwanda**, the workshop culminated in the development of a civil society declaration on SDG 16, which outlined the national participants' values and principles to sustainable development, Goal 16 commitments, and plans for collaboration amongst themselves and with other stakeholders going forward. In **Nigeria**, participants outlined key questions for their government around national SDGs implementation and monitoring efforts and scheduled follow-up meeting with officials where these could be addressed. Additionally, Nigerian participants inaugurated an annual "SDG 16 Advocacy Champions" award program intended to encourage and strengthen actions on work related to Goal 16. Participants in **Sierra Leone** concluded their workshop by drafting a formal advocacy plan, which included proposals for national SDG 16 indicators, and also formed a national SDG 16 Working Group to lead follow-up activities.

In **Chad**, a roadmap was developed to structure participants' collective commitment to playing a more leading role in monitoring sustainable development efforts within the country going forward. Workshop participants stated that they sought to use the roadmap to also ensure a wide dissemination of information around the national VNR process and of the SDGs so as to further strengthen local ownership of implementation and accountability efforts. The results of the Chadian workshop were widely shared in both public and private media. The country's National Radio, as well as smaller private radio stations, featured stories the workshop in their programs and two print media outlets wrote articles on the workshop's events.



In **Côte D'Ivoire**, recommendations for the effective implementation of SDGs by CSOs and government were collected at the end of the workshop. In **CAR**, civil society submitted formal contributions to the VNR report via the National Committee for the Monitoring of the Implementation of the SDGs. Finally, in **Timor-Leste**, participants committed to attending the upcoming SDG 16+ Annual Showcase in October 2019 and continuing their own capacity building efforts in a subsequent workshop hosted prior to the Showcase itself.

#### **IV. High-Level Political Forum**

The TAP Network and CSPPS facilitated a number of unique opportunities for participants of the national workshops to engage in the side events and official proceedings around the 2019 HLPF. Participation in these expert panels, training workshops, and thematic reviews enabled national level stakeholders to further amplify their voices and learnings around sustainable development processes, and also provided them with a platform to share their personal experiences and best practices on a global stage.

Due to funding constraints, not all participants were guaranteed the opportunity to attend the 2019 HLPF via a TAP Network and/or CSPPS sponsorship. As such, workshop participants from the national workshops accessed these opportunities at the New York through a few channels promoted or directly sponsored by the TAP Network and CSPPS. These included: 1) participation in the official government led VNR processes 2) self-funded attendance, or 3) sponsorship by the TAP Network, CSPPS, and campaign partners through *Voices of SDG 16+*.

At the HLPF, the TAP Network and CSPPS went to great lengths to provide opportunities for workshop participants engage in official and unofficial events, specifically by:

- **Encouraging and supporting the participation of national workshop participants and facilitators in the official VNR presentations at the 2019 HLPF** and related events and activities in New York.
- **Providing a platform for civil society participants and facilitators from the national workshops to showcase their work to advance SDG16 in their own contexts at the 2019 HLPF side event: *Showcasing Best Practices: Civil Society Driving Progress on SDG16+*.** This event, organized by the TAP Network, CSPPS, Namati, and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), took place on Wednesday, 10 July 2019 at the United Nations Church Center. It featured an opportunity for participants to share reflections on where some of the gaps in implementation or capacities might be around SDG16, and where additional support may be needed
- **Highlighting a selection of video submissions from the national workshops at *Voices of SDG16+: Stories of Global Action* event**, which took place over the course of two days on Wednesday, 10 July to Thursday, 11 July 2019 at the International Peace Institute (IPI). This collaborate video campaign, organized in partnership with twelve civil society organizations, including the TAP Network and CSPPS, sought to showcase local experiences of SDG16+ implementation and monitoring. The campaign received over 200 video submissions from leaders and change-makers around the world and selected

participants from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Canada, Guatemala, India, Kenya, Nepal, Philippines, Somaliland, Uganda, and Yemen to attend and represent civil society at the 2019 HLPF this July.

- **Presenting a selection of case studies from the national workshops at the launch event for the *Empowering Civil Society for National Reporting and Action on SDG 16* report** on Friday, 12 July 2019 at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the UN. This report was published in partnership by the TAP Network, Asia Development Alliance (ADA), and Forus, with contributions from CIVICUS, CSPPS, Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD), GPPAC, Namati, Saferworld, and Transparency International (TI).
- **Organizing an opportunity for national workshop participants and facilitators to participate in a further capacity building and advocacy training workshop: *Holding Duty-Bearers Accountable to the SDGs: A Workshop for Civil Society*.** This event, organized by the TAP Network and A4SD on Monday, 15 July 2019 at the UN Church Center, focused on SDG accountability more broadly and provided another opportunity for peer-to-peer exchange to reflect on the experiences and achievements of CSOs that were involved in this year's VNR process.
- **Sharing experiences from the national workshops and broader SDG16 monitoring and implementation efforts at the official SDG16 multi-stakeholder side event and reception of the 2019 HLPF: *SDG16+ and the Future We Want*.** This event was organized by the 16+ Forum, the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies (Global Alliance), and the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies (Pathfinders), in partnership with LexisNexis, the TAP Network, and the United Kingdom Permanent Mission to the United Nations (UN), and supported by a coalition of SDG 16+ Champions.
- **Providing an exhibition space at the UN Headquarters to feature outcomes and outputs from the national workshops.** This display was open for multi-stakeholders to visit and engage with throughout the duration of the 2019 HLPF.

## V. Highlights

The partnership between the TAP Network and CSPPS on these national workshops was framed within the central strategic goal of helping to strengthen the capacity of civil society partners to effectively engage in VNR processes and hold their governments accountable for the SDGs at the national level – with particular emphasis on SDG 16. The national workshops (and HLPF activities) served as important opportunities to provide a space for country-level CSOs to come together to strategize around collective advocacy priorities, particularly in regard to engagement with their government in the drafting of their countries' 2019 VNR reports. In addition, these convenings helped to enable these CSO groups to engage constructively in the VNR processes themselves and contribute to overall awareness raising and knowledge of SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda more broadly.

## *Coordination Achievements*

The TAP Network's collaboration with CSPPS on the 2019 national workshops greatly expanded the overall scope and impact of the two networks' global capacity building efforts around VNR- and SDG 16-related activities. The combined financial support, technical expertise, and connections of these networks enabled better coordination on multiple levels and, at the same time, further empowered partners on-the-ground.

The TAP Network's and CSPPS's partnership with the civil society focal point organizations, UNDP country teams, UN Resident Coordinator's offices, EU delegations, and national offices of the French Foreign Ministry also contributed significantly to a strengthened scope and impact of the workshop activities overall. Moreover, the country level knowledge that these partners brought to the coordination processes assisted the TAP Network and CSPPS in ensuring that workshops were indeed locally owned and driven. The contributions of these nationally based partners cannot be understated, especially with regard to identifying entry points with communities and recruiting stakeholders to participate. Overall, these partners were instrumental in helping to guarantee an enabling environment where meaningful dialogues and in-depth learning could flourish.

Partnering with local and regional focal point organizations also proved instrumental to executing effect awareness raising. As mentioned previously, the general knowledge of the 2030 Agenda in local and national-level partners in these countries was much lower than anticipated. As such, the central focus of many of our workshops ended up being on educating and training participants about the SDGs framework. Without the focal points' unique cultural understandings, language capabilities, and other local sensitivities, it is likely that the learnings in these particular areas would have been lessened – thus hindering achievement of many of the intended objectives of the workshops on a whole.

## *Achieving Objectives*

In terms of accomplishing our direct project objectives for these seven national workshops, the TAP Network and CSPPS were pleased at the following highlights reported by the focal point organizations:

- **Strengthen the capacity of CSOs working at the national level to understand and engage in VNR processes, particularly in the context of SDG 16**

All focal point organizations concluded that the workshops did in fact help them to foster a tangible improvement in their participants' understandings of national VNR processes. In fact, every facilitator reported that the workshop had helped to not only improve understandings of review processes, but that of the entire the 2030 Agenda itself. This was an unforeseen outcome for the facilitators, as well as for the TAP Network and CSPPS, who again generally believed country-level CSOs to have at least a foundational knowledge of the SDGs. However,

this proved not to be the case, and therefore learnings in this area greatly exceeded the organizers' expectations.

Though the workshops aimed to strengthen civil society's capacity to engage in the VNRs, the TAP Network and CSPPS did not establish a formal mechanism to assess these changes. Nevertheless, numerous facilitators reported having outputs from their workshops feed directly into the country's official VNR (**CAR, Côte D'Ivoire, Chad, and Sierra Leone**). This occurred in a few ways, including as a result by direct government participation in the workshops or through the submission of civil society contributions to relevant government bodies thereafter. In CAR, workshop participants requested and were subsequently granted an invitation by their government to be a part of the official validation process of the country's VNR report. During this process, civil society had the opportunity to share their unique non-governmental perspectives on sustainable development progress to date and to also engage in debate on the overall work of the government's SDG committee, including on their practices around public information sharing.

Other highlights related to awareness raising and increased engagement came after the VNR processes and HLPF. For example, the workshop in **Timor-Leste** served as a launching point for Timorese civil society to engage with its government on sustainable development efforts in increasingly meaningful ways, including through participation in the SDG 16+ Forum's Annual Showcase in October 2019.

- **Provide a space for national-level CSOs to strategize and develop common advocacy priorities and action plans around the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, particularly in regard to utilizing the VNRs as an accountability tool**

All focal points also reported that the workshops provided an enabling environment for civil society in their countries to come together to create collective messages and commitments to action for sustainable development. The civil society declaration on SDG 16 developed in **Rwanda** was an important advocacy tool at the national level, as were the collective messages prepared by workshop participants in **Nigeria** and **Sierra Leone**. Other multi-stakeholder workshops provided civil society with a platform to share common messages around opportunities, challenges, and recommendations related to SDG 16 implementation directly with government officials participating in the events. Through these multi-stakeholder dialogues, civil society were also afforded the opportunity to learn best practices for SDGs advocacy via the use of resources such as the *SDG Accountability Handbook* and the *Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit*. Going forward, we hope that the knowledge of and access to these types of capacity building resources will help to further improve work to strategize around common advocacy messages.

- **Help CSOs collectively strategize around national-level SDG accountability, including consideration of coordinating and drafting of a national "Civil Society Report"**

The workshops in **Nigeria** and **Sierra Leone** included specific break-out sessions to build civil society capacity around planning, developing, and disseminating spotlight reports on SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda. Other break-out sessions, such as those which took place in **Rwanda**, focused on training participants around data collection and aggregation opportunities and challenges, thus empowering national civil society actors to be able to better use non-official data sources as accountability tools. Though only a handful of spotlight reports were subsequently created after our 2019 workshops, many participants expressed interest in collecting developing reports for future HLPFs and thus fill a much-needed gap in the HLPF reporting realm.

Beyond spotlight reporting, nearly all workshop facilitators reported submissions of one or more videos by their participants to the *Voices of SDG 16+* campaign. In fact, the regional focal point who oversaw the workshops in **Sierra Leone** and **Nigeria** was one of the twelve civil society representatives selected by this campaign to attend the 2019 HLPF in New York. Other workshop participants had the opportunity to have their videos featured on the campaign's website and social media channels, which serve as a global platform to elevate civil society's perspectives and experiences.

- **Help facilitate the engagement of national-level CSOs in the global SDGs and VNR processes, including the 2019 HLPF**

The workshops helped facilitate the direct participation of civil society in national VNR processes, including in **Timor-Leste, Sierra Leone, CAR, Chad, and Cote D'Ivoire**. Such access provided these actors with the opportunity to share unique experiences and perspectives around their community's experience with peace, just, and inclusion issues, and to speak to the challenges and gaps that require further investments and commitments to be effectively addressed in the future.

In addition to engaging in the VNR processes themselves, these workshops empowered civil society to begin engaging in more longer-term SDG implementation processes as well (**Nigeria**), which plan to carry-on in the follow-up to the VNRs, with the intention of guiding the mainstreaming processes around SDG 16 as well as processes for reporting in future years. This is an especially important development towards ensuring inclusive "reporting for action".

- **Strengthen or develop national CSO coalitions working on the SDGs, to enable stronger and more coordinated engagement with their government and VNR processes**

All facilitators reported that their workshops greatly contributed to the development and /or strengthening of national civil society coalitions around the SDGs in their countries. Focal points stated that these workshops served as opportunities for CSOs to come together around concerted, concrete actions, such as engaging in the VNR processes, and/or deliverables like civil society reports or common advocacy plans, which in turn directly contributed to more successful coalition building.

In some countries, national civil society coalitions had existed prior to our workshops and these activities offered a vehicle for strengthen cooperation and coordination (**Rwanda**). In other instances, however, the workshops served as a first step for civil society (**Timor-Leste**) to either a) work collectively on SDG implementation and monitoring efforts or b) form initial connection between various peace, justice, and inclusion efforts around the country and align these within the broader global framework of the 2030 Agenda. Nearly all workshops reported interest from participants in maintaining and growing these coalitions going forward.

The TAP Network and CSPPS hope and plan to be involved in helping to further strengthen these coalitions in the coming decade.

## **VI. Challenges and Lessons Learned**

### *Coordination Challenges*

Though the TAP Network's and CSPPS's coordination efforts were made easier by way of working collaboratively with one another, as well as with the various country level partners, a number of key challenges nonetheless arose.

The TAP Network and CSPPS began conversations around coordinating national workshops in in November of 2018 and subsequently began discussions with country level focal points, UNDP teams, EU delegations, and French Foreign Ministry offices in December 2018 into the early months of 2019. Though seemingly an early start given the timelines governments often stick to for the consultation and drafting processes of VNRs, the two networks would have done well to begin their coordination efforts even earlier in the year, so as to further the scope and impact of their activities overall. In some instances, this condensed timeframe for coordination meant that the national workshops did not take place into the late spring or summer months of 2019. This late execution period in turn meant that participants of the workshop, particularly those from civil society, had less an opportunity to input into VNR consultations and reports, as many of these activities had already begun and subsequently been completed at that point in the year.

The TAP Network and CSPPS had originally discussed the coordination of more than seven workshops in 2019. However, the burden in terms of their Secretariats' staff time for coordinating even seven events proved to be quite large, despite delegating many of duties to the local and regional focal points. The staff from the Secretariats of both networks expressed concern that "activities weren't implemented to one hundred percent satisfaction" and as a result "they would be hesitant to make the same level of investments in the future without more resource mobilization".

From a resource provision standpoint, results were mixed for the workshops, with some countries being more than satisfied with the amount of funding and technical assistance provided and others stating that funding was insufficient. In the end, both the TAP Network and CSPPS felt that more funds would have done well to further improve the quality of all activities.

The background materials and facilitation guide was appreciated in most countries from a process standpoint for the workshops, as well as in relation to preparatory awareness raising and orientation activities. Many of the focal points utilized the *Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit* and other TAP and CSPPS resources that get participants up-to-speed on the 2030 Agenda and SDGs before then diving into capacity building more comprehensively.

Another major challenge in coordinating the national workshops lay in the political realities and gameplays of within each country, which influenced the extent to which stakeholders, particularly civil society, were able to engage in the VNR processes. Workshop or not, some of the country contexts proved to be less conducive to meaningful engagement for stakeholders outside of government, or even for local authorities not a part of national institutions. These realities ultimately proved frustrating to the TAP Network, CSPPS, and our focal points alike and limited the overall impact of the planned activities. Nevertheless, these realities also forced organizers to be more innovative in their approaches around amplifying the voices of participants and many new best practices arose out of the challenges of these sensitive situations.

Collecting data from the workshops proved to be a difficult task as well. Though the TAP Network and CSPPS defined clear guidelines for facilitators to report back on the results of their events, few provided quantitative data or analysis around impact. While all provided figures such as participation numbers and qualitative assessments of successes and challenges, which were quite insightful, in future work the TAP Network and CSPPS will look to better ensure that workshop guidelines provide clear requirements and instructions around evaluating the impact of the events in a more useable manner. At the same time, the TAP Network and CSPPS will be sure to keep in mind the limitations of facilitators to conduct very extensive impact assessments as well as the extent to which these numbers paint an accurate picture. Still, it will be beneficial to all to encourage the collection informative evaluations, such as through participation satisfaction surveys or other mediums. More funding for the workshops will be necessary to conduct such data collection.

Finally, more support was needed for the workshops to ensure sustained follow-up and engagement with facilitators and participants after events ended. This includes support to help with mainstreaming activities post-VNR and to help maintain the relationships that blossomed out of the 2019 events.

## **VII. Follow-Up and Next Steps**

Nearly all facilitators outlined country specific follow-up activities and next steps following their national workshops. These varied, ranging from recommendations for improving and/or accelerating action around SDG 16 implementation and monitoring to plans for continued consultations and participation in VNR or national sustainable development processes amongst workshop participants.

From a global coordination level, the TAP Network and CSPPS identified its own next steps and follow-up actions to continue work around mainstreaming SDG 16 and encouraging greater civil society participation in follow-up review mechanisms for the 2030 Agenda.

There is an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning and trainings-of-trainers led by those who either facilitated or participated in the 2019 workshops or by other civil society around the global interested in engaging in the SDGs going forward. The TAP Network and CSPPS plan to conduct future workshops in the years ahead and utilize the expertise of past attendees to inform and improve these efforts in other countries and communities.

However, the HLPF system is currently under review at the global level and has the potential to change significantly in 2020. This presents uncertainty for the TAP Network and CSPPS in determining how best to proceed with work in countries where workshops have taken place, as well as in those where we hope to work in the future. At this time, the TAP Network and CSPPS are continuing to engage with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), UNDP, and other relevant UN agencies to determine their priorities for the VNRs in 2020, as well as their plans to support local and country level capacity building activities, particularly with regard to FCAS, so as not to lose the momentum built in 2019.

Facilitators and participants of the workshops in **Cote D'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and Timor-Leste** have continued dialogue with the TAP Network and CSPPS directly and noted concrete plans for follow-up activities, including knowledge exchange with civil society in other countries (such as **Burundi** and the **DRC**) and involvement in advising on national development planning (**Timor-Leste**), but further support is needed to help guide these activities in the post-VNR period. To meet these demands – and thus promote reporting for action – the TAP Network is partnering with UNCDP to create a new resource for stakeholders involved in VNR follow-up activities: the "Post-VNR Best Practices on SDG16" Guide. This guidance will be piloted in select number of countries via national workshops similar to those in conducted in 2019. This guidance and related workshops will serve as an important opportunity to realize the potential of the VNR process, including its follow-up and review, and in doing so put SDG16 into action and drive progress.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

The TAP Network and CSPPS workshops in 2019 helped to strengthen the voice and capacity of civil society to engage and influence peacebuilding and state-building as an essential contribution to the prevention of crisis and conflict, and the maintenance of sustainable peace and development for all. It did this by providing a space for national-level CSOs to strategize and develop common advocacy priorities and action plans around the SDGs, particularly for SDG 16, and to common together to learn about national VNR processes and how to engage in them. In addition, the workshops provided unexpected opportunities to significantly raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda in general.



## Recommendations

Going forward, the 2019 national workshops will serve as the foundation for follow-up work aimed at empowering national civil society to engage in sustainable development activities around the world. On this front, the TAP Network recommends the following next steps:

- **There is a need for future workshops that focus on VNR follow-up activities.**

VNR processes are merely an entry point into official sustainable development efforts for civil society and other relevant stakeholders. These reviews are useful for mobilizing partners and entering into government processes and bodies, but they are by no means an end of themselves. Hence, there is a need to ensure sustained action beyond the HLPF and its reviews, and this work may require more support on organizations such as the TAP Network and CSPPS. The creation of resources such as the upcoming post-VNRs guide, which the TAP Network committed to producing in partnership with UNDP, will be imperative to sustain momentum for the work of civil society and governments alike.

- **Continuing to assist in bridging connections between civil society, governments, local authorities, UN agencies, development organizations, and other relevant stakeholders must also be prioritized if peer-to-peer exchanges and collaboration are to blossom and grow in years ahead.**

The support of the TAP Network and CSPPS going forward will need to focus on bridging engagement with governments to create new and more meaningful entry points for civil society at the national and local levels, but also specifically with the UN Missions in New York. These connections, which have been under emphasized in past years, are critical at this time, especially given the nature of global review processes.

The *Voices of SDG 16+* helped to demonstrate this gap at the 2019 HLPF and helped to begin to build better connections and understanding between different stakeholders at various levels of implementation processes – particularly between the local and global. The videos and events of the *Voices* campaign laid bare the reality that organizations and coalitions operating at the global level need to be more directly connected and in-the-know about the work local partners are doing in their communities so that stronger, more workable connections can be formulated with the VNR processes.

- **Encouraging early civil society engagement in VNR processes and Spotlight Reporting.**

The timeline related to the HLPF's VNR processes is itself a major challenge to ensuring meaningful participation of non-state actors. There is a very short window of time for civil society and other actors – including local authorities – to engage in the review processes within countries giving time constraints for report consultations and drafting. The TAP Network and CSPPS can help to address this issue of time by encouraging civil society to begin its own work to engage in the VNRs and develop spotlight reporting earlier and earlier each

year. By starting to engage with each other and with governments on VNRs and Spotlight Reports sooner rather than later, civil society might be better able to challenge discrepancies and ensure that its insights are included in official review and follow-up activities.

- **Civil society engagement to advocate for HLPF reform.**

The current review of the HLPF poses another major risk to the engagement of civil society in reporting mechanisms in 2020 and beyond. At this point, there is a lack of clarity around what the future entry points will be in the years ahead. There is a chance that the HLPF negotiation processes will lead to even less inclusive processes if governments push back on existing voluntary reporting requirements. Even worse, indecision amongst governments on how to move forward with the HLPF may cause the entire process to lose what momentum it has gained since 2016, and therefore become less important to stakeholders even without major mandate changes. This will inevitably lead to the disengagement of governments and other actors in existing global and regional fora and then most surely backsliding at the national and local levels sustainable development gains.

The TAP Network has published a principles paper on the HLPF review process based on consultations with its members and partners that will continue to help guide its global advocacy messaging in the months ahead.

- **Strengthening capacity building resources and workshops.**

The TAP Network recognizes the above challenges and is doing its part to address the risks they pose. In the year ahead, the TAP Network will strengthen its existing capacity building resources and workshops. It will revise the *Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit* and expand its companion resources with thematic issue-specific modules. It will also create new resources, including the previously mentioned post-VNR best practices guide on SDG16, and will look to support more national-level workshops in countries undertaking VNRs in 2020, or those following-up on past reviews. Through these efforts, the TAP Network aims to continue to forward the principle for “reporting for action”.

- **Translating global commitment to peaceful, just and inclusive societies into action in different contexts around the world through localization efforts.**

The TAP Network will also continue to strengthen its partnerships and national work with other civil society organizations and coalitions working to advance SDG 16, specifically CSPPS. Localization will be at the center of these efforts.

Four years after the advent of Agenda 2030, the Sustainability Goals Report 2019 makes a global call for action on SDG16+ that we cannot ignore. The status quo will not suffice. This has prompted four organizations and platforms working on SDG16+, in particular on elements of peaceful and inclusive societies, to form the SDG16+ Localisation Consortium to accelerate and expand the achievement of SDG16+ goals at the national level.

This consortium, which brings together the TAP Network, CSPPS, GPPAC, and Saferworld, will work to translate the global commitment to peaceful, just and inclusive societies into action in different contexts around the world to enable the realization of SDG16+ through: 1) Capacity Building and Awareness Raising, 2) Anchoring SDG16+ in local contexts, 3) Localizing SDG16+ with governments, 4) Leverage and influence policies, and 5) SDG 16+ Accountability.

- **Promoting broad accountability as the spearhead for inclusive reporting by Member States and the facilitation of independent reporting by civil society to achieve this.**

The “Decade of Accountability” campaign, in the context of spotlight reporting and more meaningful civil society engagement in the VNRs, will also be prioritized in TAP’s work for 2020 and beyond. Out of this campaign, the TAP Network will look to develop further resources and guides for civil society to strengthen their independent reporting efforts for SDG16 and the 203 Agenda more broadly and will also work through the negotiations on the HLPF review to ensure greater opportunities for engagement in follow-up and monitoring mechanisms.

The partnership established with the TAP Network and CSPPS for the 2019 national workshops enabled these two-broad international coalitions of civil society organizations to maximize the impact of their financial investments and the expertise of members within the networks to empower civil society in monitoring and implementation processes around the 2030 Agenda. The results of these consultation processes have helped to amplify the voice of civil society in VNR processes in some countries and to accelerate progress on the SDGs, particularly SDG 16.

The TAP Network hopes that the lessons-learned and best practices highlighted this evaluation of the 2019 national workshops will be used to inform subsequent capacity building opportunities. The VNR processes for the HLPF are a strategic entry point for civil society to continue its dialogue and coordination with governments around the next steps in implementing 2030 Agenda at the national level and the TAP Network looks forward to continuing to support these activities.