

Governments and Civil Society Association for National Reviews

By Mabel Bianco

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Development Sustainable, adopted through a historic negotiation process among governments, Civil Society and others Stakeholders during the last three years, initiates in this HLPF the review process with the expectation that the commitments can become actions to transform the people's lives and their indivisible and integral goals and targets can be achieved. We are now in the first HLPF to in order to ensure the accountability of our commitments under the theme "Ensuring than no one is left behind". The theme strengths the need to recall the commitments based in actions to need be done, with special emphasis in how they are done. In this first HLPF, due to the short period of time given since the implementation date on the 1st of January of 2016 up to this day, accountability will be focused on strategies and processes developed by the countries for the implementation. Therefore, we pay more attention to how each country implements the Agenda than to the goals achieved. This is why the methodology and process used for the preparation of the review is a key element to understand how the promotion and involvement of stakeholders developed.

Although in future HLPFs national review reports must enable the assessment of progress, identification of achievements, pending challenges and successes, as well as every stakeholder's significant association, in this first HLPF the focus will be on the involvement of all stakeholders and their partnership. The process should be inclusive, allowing actors to participate according to their possibilities but in equal terms and in a transparent process.

This presentation focuses on the analysis of the process of preparation of the National Reviews as an indicator of the Agenda Implementation processes adopted in the countries. We analyze the promotion of meaningful participation and the involvement of the diversity of Civil Society's women's organizations and groups through the methodology used and the level of involvement reached. To carry out this analysis we studied the summaries of the National Review Reports presented by 21 out of 22 countries (95%), given that one of them was not available until the 8th of July. Apart from one country among the 21 (4,8%), none of the full reports were available up to this date, so our analysis is based in preliminary reports. We compared these summaries with the reports made by women's NGOs and group's members of the WMG from those countries through a monkey survey and more in depth questionnaires. We collected

answers from 18 of the 21 countries (85,7%) and from 29 women's groups, some of them networks/alliances including more than 10 NGOs in each one, so we have information from approximately 100 women's organizations including a diversity of them.

First of all, we need to clarify what “**meaningful participation**” means. When we use this expression, we make reference to the right to express our opinions and to discuss and exchange information; not only to attend meetings and listen to speeches, as happened in the case of many countries. This reflects what was stated by a women's NGO: “participation should not be superficial, and consultation should not be misunderstood by agreement”. In order to promote meaningful participation, Civil Society needs to be incorporated to the process of preparation of the National Reports since the very beginning. Therefore, the preparation of the Review Report should be considered as a part of the implementation process. However, we noticed that in most of the countries Civil Society groups were invited at the last minute when the report was almost finished or reaching its final stages of preparation.

FRANCE

In June 6 and 7 France launch "Agenda France 2030" initiative inviting Civil Society specially some networks or alliances of NGOs. A project of national report has been shared few times ahead with participants, among which there are no visible women's groups. There was no opportunity for participants to share feedback on this project of report during this event, and debates were only focusing on implementation of SDGs at a domestic level, without any international consideration.

Civil Society considered the call was late in order to allow to reach a coordinate feedback of CSOs allies towards the event, so they classified the process as a "superficial agreement" because Civil Society and others stakeholders couldn't really discuss and bring different perspective to produce a really agreement among government and all stakeholders. They said the government misunderstands agreement by consultation.

Also the lack of inclusion and consideration of Parliamentarians was considered by Civil Society as a great error and signal of feebleness of the implementation process developed by the State.

Another concerns of the Implementation process was the lack of references about how the State consider the actions developed as part of the international cooperation as well as the national, excluding the responsibility of external cooperation specially on women's issues.

VENEZUELA

The national Report of Venezuela mentioned "the Bolivarian Revolution has decided to eradicate the remain of Patriarchal State inherited by colonialism and neocolonialism, conceived for the submission and repression of women". However the governments rely on mainstreaming of the gender equality perspective regarding public policies. Besides, so far there seems to be no attempt in order to efficiently declare it. The actions executed by the Venezuelan State regarding the matters of women's rights and gender equality are carried out with assistencialist and paternalistic intentions, associating women mainly with maternal roles. The methodology of participation of Civil Society goes through cooptation of communal organizations inviting social movements and discriminating NGOs and civil society groups due to political reasons. Social movements replaced Civil Society participation. The lack of NGOs participation is due to the State's ideology that only non-state social movements are legitimated to participate. Independent NGOs consider this attitude obstructs the development of an authentic participation that, through the exercise of an effective social public spending watchdog, may contribute to guaranteeing democracy and social justice. The assessment of the goals of SDGs must be carried out with a real participation of civil society in which the current critical situation of the country can be assessed.

Unfortunately, based in the reports presented by the governments and the information provided by women's organizations, very few countries have incorporated Civil Society, especially women's organizations and other main actors, since the beginning of the process (9,5%). Some of them symbolically invited to a meeting a reduced number of organizations that were selected following restrictive criteria (23,8%). Some others requested comments after presentation of the nearly final document and they asked for contributions made by Civil Society, but they invited only few of them and most (52.4%) of them did not take into account civil society neither based on larger groups nor on similar patterns. In one case, base social movements' participation was promoted, but they were quantitatively large and qualitatively worthless, given they do not have both the objective and the institutional ability to monitor and make

contributions to information's analysis. Social movements are important to disseminate the Agenda and its implementation, but they cannot replace NGOs and specific interest groups because they contribute with the needs of those groups and have an active participation in the monitoring process, something very important in women's case. The methodology that eliminates NGOs based on ideological reasons cannot be accepted, given it opposes the principles of the 2030 Agenda.

In this sense, the process did not stand out by including activities aimed to promote the development of abilities of the NGOs and civil society's groups for their participation in the monitoring. Some countries invited national organizations that they considered to be able to meaningfully participate, but they left out other organizations and groups with

local representation and more specific but less known groups with fewer possibilities of national interaction, thus leaving behind important stakeholders.

Even less relevant was the financial support provided by governmental areas and given to NGOs and groups so that they could participate in the process. This is not something to be overlooked, since both technical as well as financial support are generally necessary so that civil society's organizations can assign staff to develop the activities that are not financially and technically supported by regular donors. This happens before the participation of stakeholders of Civil Society is considered to be the mere assistance to informative meetings and not as partnerships in which the partners actually make contributions to the implementation. Therefore, it is convenient in the Recommendations of this HLPF to include in the governments and donor's recommendations that they should commit to financing and supporting Civil Society's groups when needed so that they can accomplish an inclusive and effective inclusion without leaving anyone behind. Also, developed countries and private donors should incorporate the financing of activities developed by Civil Society and contribute to the accomplishment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

PHILIPPINES

The Executive Summary didn't specifically mention SDG5 and there are few references to gender equality and progress in women's issues.

Some of the few references to women's and girls are mentioned about trafficking as a crosscutting issue in SDG2, women aged 15-49 years access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education, but no mention of restrictive laws about access to safe and legal abortion, one big problem in the country as was recommended by the CEDAW Committee. SOGI is also suggested in generating desegregated statistics.

Two technical workshops were organized and some Civil Society networks were invited but not all women NGOs or groups. Those attending the workshops varied because the invitations were not to the same groups for the two workshops, at least in case of women's NGOs. In the Workshops for consideration of the different SDGs they constitutes groups and only one civil society used to be participating in each group, so the Civil Society participation was not substantive and specifically for women's NGOs. The workshops were Technical, so most of the time was devoted to accessibility of data, sources and assigning of data gathering rather than assessing the applicability of the indicator. No discussion about the concrete data and the meaning of those data for people's life and specifically women's and girls' occurred.

In relation to the collection of data and information available in countries to trace a base line and then assess the improvements made from that point, it is a priority that the countries improve the existence and quality of the data. In most of the countries' reports

SIERRA LEONE

Womens groups form the capital were invited to the two meetings at the beginning and at the end of the preparation of the National Report. One of the challenges during the preparation of the national report was the limited time provided to submit the final draft which could not permit engagement with all relevant organisations.

Limited funds to coordinate engagement with relevant organization was also a challenge. Increasing the amount of available funds could help increase capacity to efficiently engage women organizations during report preparation.

Accessing women organization was difficult. Creating a website or information portal on women organization in the country could easy access for future engagement.

No references to SFSDG5 were incorporated to the report, but sets of Sierra Leone Priority Indicators on Goal 5 were developed by women organizations and present during the report preparation and are included in the final report submitted to the HLPF.

Women's groups have the opportunity to impact at least in the report meanwhile this needs to be increased and improve by allowing more time and funds to women's groups to make broader consultations and prepare reports.

it can be seen that there was a lack of disaggregated by sex data, which was appointed as a restrictive element. To this, we have to add the lack of access to information the organizations have. Therefore, most of the governmental reports could not be validated by Civil Society's organizations, particularly women's organizations, given ONGs and women's groups did not have access to the information. We think it is very important to include in the HLPF recommendations to countries the need to have disaggregated data that are available to the entire population, given these reviews serve as indicators of how to improve the implementation in order to accomplish the 2030 Agenda. The monitoring based on indicators is essential for this task.

Another requisite is the convenience of using quantitative and qualitative information. The latter complements the

first and is generally provided by Civil Society's organizations. In order to accomplish this, civil society's organizations (both academic and the ones mentioned here) are the most suitable for the task. Hence the importance of them being groups with abilities and studies' records that gather the perspective from different interest groups these organizations represent.

Another aspect that was not included nor taken into account by the National Reports is the mechanism of consultation to different actors and their organizations, and specifically, to specify how the difference of opinions are solved. Clearly, a meaningful participation refers to the analytical ability and the skills required to obtain valid information of the interest groups they represent. However, there has to be clarity regarding how the mechanism to solve differences between governments and Civil Society develops in order to prevent confusions and misunderstandings that, in the case

of Civil Society's organizations, cause disappointment and frustration that discourage continuity of participation, something that should be avoided at all cost. It is necessary that every participant (government, Civil Society, and other stakeholders) know how the differences and their grounding will be referenced to in the National Report. Even though what most parts agreed is the main opinion that will be included within the report, differences must be stated.

KOREA

The report did not include the government's comprehensive plans to achieve SDGs, which reflect the Korea's economic, social and cultural contexts. There is no mention of gender mainstreaming policies or the government's effort to integrate a gender-sensitive perspective in Korea's ODA plans. In terms of national policy for the Goal 5, the report mentioned superficially the issues of Korea's low birth rate and aging society, career-interrupted women, and low proportion of women in decision-making positions. However, there are no detailed analysis on and practical plans to address those issues in the report.

Women's issues were addressed in relation to the maximization of economic resources. It is likely that the Korean Government focuses on increasing female labor forces' economic participation as a means to implement the Government's economic growth plan, rather than enhancing gender equality and women's rights. The Korean Government's policy for increasing women's economic participation has the limitations in that it pays primary attention to creating non-regular, part-time jobs, contrary to the target of decent job in SDGs.

Income gap was mentioned as a social issue in Korea. The Government has responsibility to suggest practical plans to address the income gap between men and women in the reporting. Furthermore, the Government needs to recognize gender gaps in various areas of the society and develop policy measures to overcome this issue. Based on the principle of 'leave no one behind', we suggest that the Government make comprehensive and integrated national plans to overcome various gender gaps in Korean society. In Korean society, structural discrimination against women and gender-based violence are pervasive and tolerated. Particularly, women in Korea are exposed to different forms of misogyny-based crimes, including gender-based murders of women. Moreover, the report does not mention the status of and policies for migrant women, women farmers and LGBT people, which are in vulnerable positions in Korea.

In the thematic analysis it is fundamental that the different actors focus in the themes they specialize in. However, even though women's empowerment is their independent goal, the distinctive traits of the differences between men and women should be mainstreamed in every SDG. There are only 7 countries among the 21 (33,3%), that specifically address the SDG 5. In general referred to the improvements made regarding gender equality but also acknowledge that there are other aspects to be improved, and they mention them. Other reports are not as clear as the previous ones. For instance, Sierra Leona shows the progress made regarding Maternal Mortality but does not specify nor prioritize any SDG. Others five from the 21 (23,8%), specially prioritize

everything connected to the need to improve women's working conditions and their access to economic resources. Turkey acknowledges that it did not reach the intended progress regarding the SDG 5. However, in the last Development Plan presented women were only considered in family matters, what puts a restriction regarding the accomplishment of SDG 5.

Another group of countries did not include nor prioritize the consideration of SDG 5 and its goals. This was the case for 11 of the 21 countries (52,3%) In some cases unspecific mentions were made; others acknowledge that it is a goal that needs to be improved, and others do not mention it at all.

TURKEY

The summary of the presentation starts with an overview of progress made on the MDGs. The summary report states that "[...] progress on some goals as gender equality was not adequate [...]". However, this acceptance unfortunately does not translate into necessary enthusiasm and hard work on the establishment of mechanisms and processes to utilize the SDGs for achieving "gender equality" instead.

The political will for establishing gender equality and women's empowerment in Turkey is very weak. The issues related to women and gender equality are mainly undertaken under the heading of "Family and Woman." This has been an increasing trend in Turkey, to consider women not as individuals, but a part and a caretaker of the family unit. Also, the lack of reliable data on many issues, and especially issues related to women and girls present an important challenge to formulate necessary and effective implementation strategies and methodologies for SDGs.

Another thing to take into account is that in Turkey's summary report, civil society is only mentioned and planned to be partnered with within the scope of "Public Awareness and Ownership of the SDGs." Civil society, especially women's organizations, should be an integral partner not only in creating public awareness, but also in planning, implementation, monitoring and review phases of the Agenda. Unfortunately, such an inclusive, transparent and meaningful participation by civil society in state's SDG Coordination mechanisms is not facilitated by state, as of the date of HLPF 2016.

In this sense, a lot of the reports have a strong impact in the recent events that gain all of the activity in the development of the report. Such is the case of Colombia, with the recently signed peace agreement, or Togo, with the Ebola's outbreak in 2015 and the serious flooding that affected some areas. In Colombia's case it is noteworthy that there is no mention of women's groups' participation, given they worked in order to achieve peace and made worthy contributions to it. In Togo, even though women's organizations were involved in the process of development and presentation of the report, they acknowledged that the Ebola outbreak was a serious problem, and the impact produced by the number of deaths it caused concentrated most of the implementation's attention,

which was evidenced in the National Review Report, as well as the problems deriving from natural disasters like the serious floods affecting the country.

Regarding the role of larger actors' groups in the monitoring after HLPF, there are references about how important this is, but it is not clearly specified how it will be developed nor how civil society will participate in most of the cases. This shows that we need to include in the Government Declaration and the HLPF recommendations to countries the fact that we need to insist not only in the importance of the inclusion, but on the improvement of the inclusion's characteristics so it can be appropriately executed. In the National Reports it is recorded that there are large population groups that suffer from serious scarcity and whose human right are neither protected nor guaranteed. Therefore, the inclusion of larger actors' groups in national processes of monitoring is essential, but it must be institutionalized so that it cannot be left to the free will of those running the process in each country. It should also have specific traits and methods, as the ones mentioned in this presentation, so that every country can accomplish it and NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND.

The value of women's organizations, which is acknowledged in some countries, is not expressed in future plans regarding the monitoring of national implementation. This means that during the confectioning of the report they were cast aside, and that they will be marginalized in the following monitoring that will be carried out after the HLPF's presentation. This is concerning, and it contrasts with the progress that has been made regarding the monitoring of some International Conferences and in the CSW in most of the countries and regions. This must be the core idea of the recommendations and the Government Declaration of the HLPF in order to prevents its reiteration and to ensure the goals of the SDG 5 and its impact on others SDGs. Otherwise, we will have to face the fact that we are leaving behind no less than 50% of the population, which worsens if we considerate the populations' diversity that encompasses female gender: indigenous women, young women, women with disabilities, women that have HIV, women of African descent, migrant women, and so on and so forth. The addition of risks based in the different traits of women's diversity shows how SDG 5 deserves special consideration, given it strengthens with the addition of discriminations that affect women worldwide.

In order to change this, a clear orientation of the Member States is required, as well as a strong presence in the countries of UN's 2030 Agenda that spread this responsibility and keep track of it. Also, countries should technically and economically support women's

groups and organizations so that they can get involved and be strengthened in order to play their roles appropriately.

With the special collaboration of:

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