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CDP Background Papers are available at [www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/cdp-background-papers/](http://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/cdp-background-papers/). The views and opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those

# I What did the 2021 Voluntary National Reviews (still) not tell us?

## I.1 Introduction and Overview

All VNRs report on the severe impact of the pandemic on SDG progress, with most reports putting more emphasis on socio-economic impacts than on health impacts. Many reports describe the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on marginalized and disadvantaged groups but do not reflect on why this is the case. Most reports detail the health response and social protection support, but a number of reports leave out any mention of vaccine access. Only about a third of the reports refer to target 3.d on pandemic preparedness.

The Committee is encouraged by the increasing attention given to the pledge to leave no one behind, which is mentioned in all reports. However, the focus of policy response, such as on the effects of the pandemic on vulnerable groups, is mostly on social protection measures for the vulnerable and marginalized groups with less reflection on structural issues. Furthermore, only two reports mention reaching the furthest behind first and none refer to actions to avoid pushing people further behind. When identifying marginalized and disadvantaged groups, disabled persons, women and girls, the elderly and children are widely recognized, while references to indigenous people, religious or ethnic groups, LGBTIQ and people living with HIV/AIDS are rarer.

A welcome trend of increasing attention given to income inequality in the VNRs continues. However, there is under

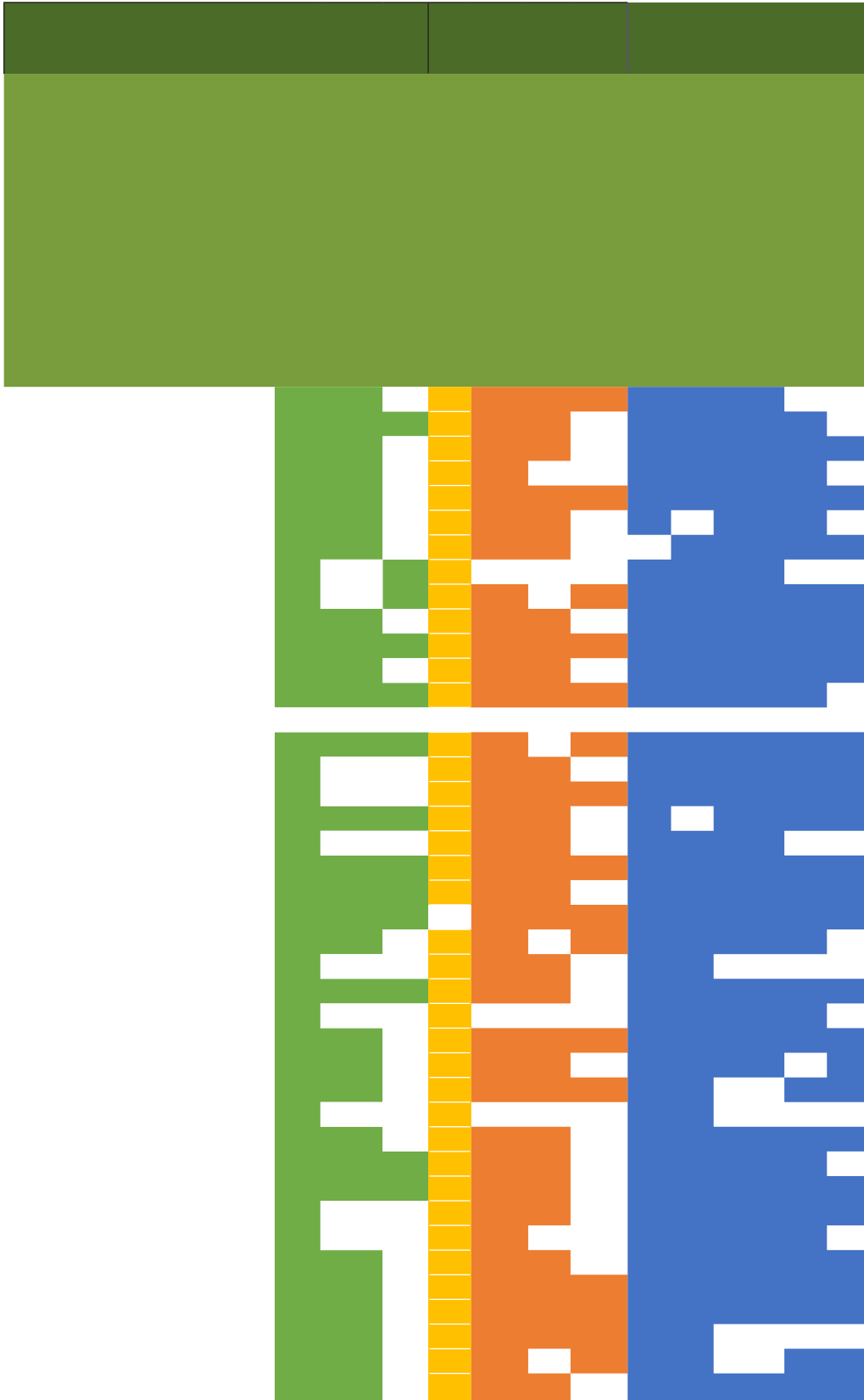
















### III.3 How is the concept of leaving no one behind understood?



## References

Elson, Diane (2018). "Push No One Behind", *Journal of Globalization and Development*, 2018, vol. 9, issue 2, 12

World Bank Group (January 2021). "Updated estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty: Looking

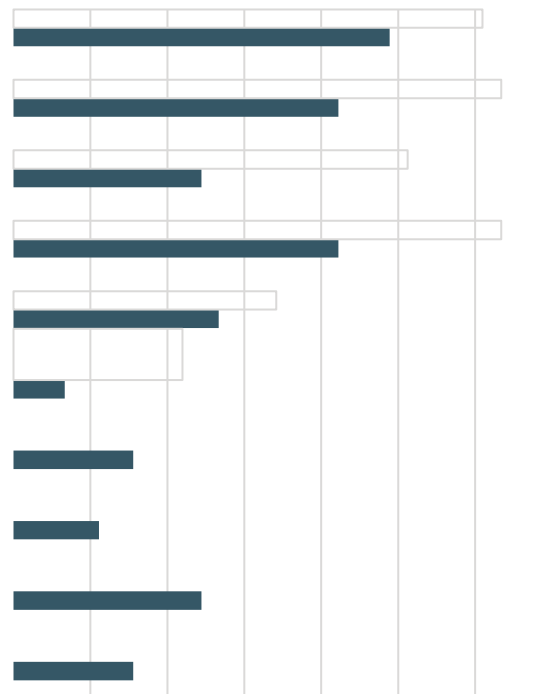


<sup>12</sup> However, analyzing the 2020 batch and 2021 VNRs shows that fortunately attention to SDG10 has moved up from its bottom position to a lower middle position: 38 out of 40 2021 VNRs report on SDG10 as compared to 40 out of 45 2020 VNRs.

Nevertheless, reporting on the specific targets of SDG10 remains grossly insufficient. Only five of the 2021 VNRs report on all 11 targets, another 6 on 8-10 targets. The share of VNR's reporting on target 10.1 (which is already a weak target) in 2021 was similar to the reporting in 2020, while the share reporting on domestic (10.4c5,3(50.28 (i)0.7 (n4<598 (0 o.o.o.o.o.

Figure 6

Reporting on specific targets of SDG10 (2020 vs 2021)



since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. An example of clear analysis and of policy proposals is the Indonesian 2021 report (Box 3).

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/voluntary-national-reviews-reports-what-do-they-not-tell-us/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/CDP-Reflections-2021-VNRs.pdf>





**Box 3****SDG10 in 2021 VNR of Indonesia**

Indonesia's VNR has systematic presentation on SDG10, including effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic (2019-2020). A first part focuses on the level of inequality, a second on leaving nobody behind, a third on challenges, a fourth on actions and

debt levels, unaffordable out-of-pocket payments for healthcare services, and reduced access to public healthcare and education. In other words, the crisis hit low-income households disproportionately hard.

The importance of structural change with redistributive measures has recently been demonstrated by UN DESA which carried out an alternative scenario analysis<sup>16</sup> showing how different combinations of economic growth (SDG8) and reduction in income inequality (SDG10) can help the world reach or get closer to achieving reducing poverty SDG target 1.1 by 2030<sup>17</sup>. UN DESA constructed six possible scenarios to 2030 based on different assumptions of GDP growth and income inequality. Their baseline scenario assumes continuation of the most recent UN DESA forecast of 4.7 per cent average annual growth in GDP per capita from 2022 to 2030 in developing countries with no change in income inequality. In this scenario, about 9.2 per cent of the world's population—or 785 million people—would remain in extreme poverty by 2030<sup>18</sup>. Figure 7. The second 'only-growth remain in

unchanged. In this scenario, the share of the world population living in extreme poverty by 2030 would decline to 7.3 per cent, to 625 million people. Two only-inequality reducing scenarios (keeping the baseline GDP per capita growth at 4.7%) demonstrate the impact of inequality reduction on the eradication of extreme poverty. Under the 'modest-inequality reduction of 1 per cent per annum' scenario, the extreme poverty rate would decline to 7.8 per cent by 2030



As low-income countries have a lower level of redistribution (i.e the percentage change between inequality after taxes and before taxes) it is so much the more important that low income countries step up efforts and report on specific policies to increase their redistribution capabilities, so as to counteract the growing income inequality resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing policy measures and also increase capacity to change pretax income inequality as discussed the 2020 VNR review

to achieve universal, nationally appropriate social protection floors; making social protection systems shock-proof and utilizing efficiently the new digital technologies to overcome resource constraints. Furthermore, gender main(r)-11.5 (m)

education and health systems, and consider solutions previously considered too difficult to implement.

WIR 2022 underscores that while the large stimulus packages implemented by richer countries were both essential and successful in preventing a sharp rise in poverty and inequality at the bottom of the distribution, it should be noted, that

## V SDG5 Gender inequality

This chapter examines how SDG 5 has been treated in the 2021 VNR reports, by mapping how they have addressed, or failed to address various aspects of gender inequality. 46 specific topics organized into 11 themes capturing relevant dimensions and issues of gender inequality have been identified and the reports have been reviewed to determine the extent to which they capture and discuss these issues. The themes and topics are listed in appendix 5.1.

The most comprehensive treatment of gender inequality, measured by the range of topics discussed, was found in the report presented by Laos which addressed 33 of the 46 topics. At the other end of the scale, we find the reports submitted by China, Niger and Uruguay, which discuss only one. The median country report discusses 18 topics, while the average number of topics discussed is 19.

30 reports contain a chapter devoted to SDG5, 9 reports mention all SDG 5 subgoals and 26 mention some of them. The

Absence of law that ensures women's rights to inheritance and ownership or employment is mentioned	34
Fair representation of women in public and government bodies is mentioned	33
Actions to protect women from violence and domestic abuse are mentioned	33
Human trafficking is mentioned	32
Actions to improve economic empowerment of women and girls	34



However, there are four countries that submitted VNR twice in three-year period: Indonesia, Iraq and Sierra Leona published reports both in 2021 and 2019 and Niger did so in 2021 and 2020. For these countries we can ascertain how their reporting priorities changed between reports.



To test the relation between economic development and the intensity of reporting on gender inequality we analyzed the correlation between the number of topics covered in reports and the level of economic development. As a proxy for economic development we use the logarithm of GDP per capita. The regression of the number of topics discussed in 2021 VNRs and GDP per capita indicates the positive correlation.

Then we divided countries which submitted reports in 2021 in three groups based on the values of GDP per capita – the



Box 3  
Title



- Absence of law that ensures women's rights to inheritance and ownership or employment is mentioned
- Amendment or adoption of laws that are aimed to decrease discrimination in labor market or education is mentioned
- Social norms which prevent gender equality mentioned
- Actions towards social norms which prevent gender equality mentioned are discussed
- Online gender-based abuse is mentioned

- Actions to protect women from violence, domestic abuse are mentioned
- Actions to protect women from violence on job, schools, sexual harassment are mentioned
- Prostitution is mentioned or is a concern
- Actions against human trafficking are mentioned
- Actions to protect women in prostitution are mentioned
- Forced early marriages of women are mentioned
- Actions to deal with early marriages of women are mentioned
- Human trafficking as a concern is mentioned

- Fair representation of women in public and government (enormous) 18.8 5ione d

## References

- 1 UNICEF. (2019).



### VI.3 What are countries not reporting on?

The CDP is particularly concerned with the lack of attention provided to SDGs that target LDCs specifically, such as providing duty free, quota free market access for LDCs (17.12) and investment promotion for LDCs (17.5). These targets remain among the least reported as has also been observed in earlier reports. Similarly, increasing developing country exports (17.11) is also comparatively under-reported.

Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development (17.15) is another target that continues to be under-reported as observed in previous assessments.

A final noteworthy absence is the comparatively low reporting on enhancing policy coherence (17.4). Given the integrated and indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda and the SDG that most reports acknowledge and highlight the lack of attention to improve mutually reinforcing policy actions is both surprising and worrying.



## VII Under-reported goals and targets

As in previous analyses, an assessment of under-reported goals and targets (i.e., those that receive few mentions and little discussion) was undertaken to ascertain which topics and issues of the 2030 Agenda are not prioritized in the VNRs. Among the 41 reports submitted in 2020, 22 reports include specific references to all goals, while a further 10 cover 15 or 16 goals, indicating that most countries reported broadly on progress towards achievement of the 2030 agenda (refer to Figure 14). A few countries have prioritized a smaller number of goals and focused their reporting on those.

Figure 15 shows the reporting of goals and targets. The goals least reported on were SDGs 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions).





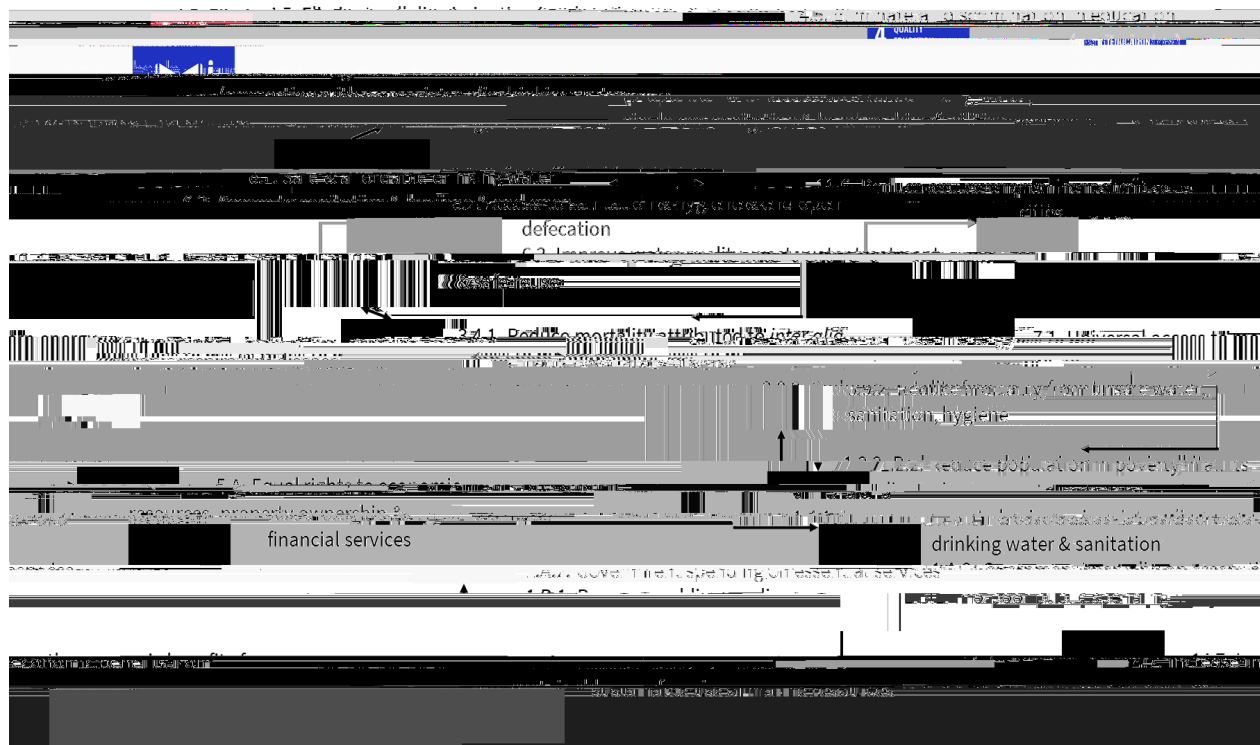
VII





Figure 20

## Interconnectedness between a subset of environmentally related SDGs



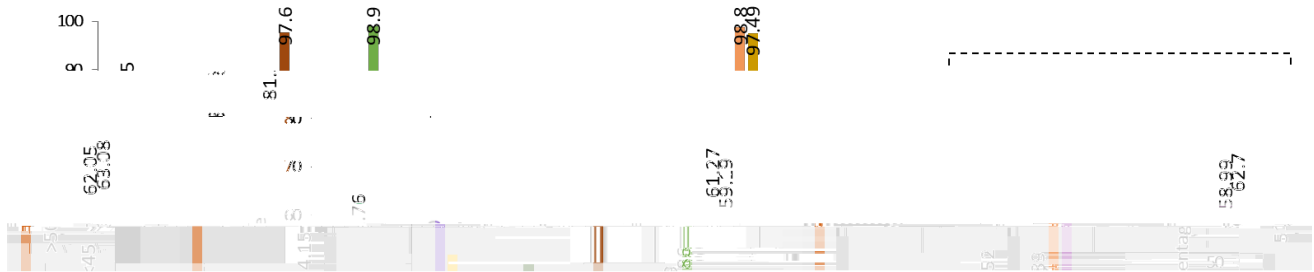
Key to overcoming poverty is the provision of basic services, including clean water and sanitation facilities. The provision of safe water is dependent on a number of environmental protection measures. One example, ~~highlighted~~ in Figure 20 is the need to ensure that urban areas have a low environmental impact to avoid pollution that can damage safe water supplies (SDG 11.6).

### VII.3 Access to safe water in schools in African countries

Access to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6) in schools, which supports inclusive and safe schools (SDG 4), allows students to pursue their education in a comfortable, safe, and hygienic environment. The sample of reporting African countries with data on schools with access to ~~water~~ <sup>Water</sup> (Reference source not found) provides some evidence that access to clean water and sanitation in schools is quite variable. Reliable and comprehensive data is lacking. For Angola 81.5 per cent of primary and 51.76 per cent of secondary schools in 2019 had no access to drinking water. This is in contrast to Zimbabwe, where only 13.87 per cent of primary and 12.24 per cent of secondary schools in 2019 had no access to drinking water.

Across sub-Saharan Africa in 2019, on average 44.15 per cent of primary and 35.15 per cent of secondary schools do not have access to safe drinking water. Notably, Cabo Verde records high access to sanitation at 98.9 per cent and 97.6 per cent access to drinking water among all schools in 2021.

In addition to the evident disparities between primary and secondary school water access, 2019 data also indicates a large disparity between urban and rural schools' access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. For Sub-Saharan Africa, the urban coverage, compared to the rural coverage, was found to be 9 percentage points higher for basic water, 19 points higher for basic sanitation and 38 points higher for basic hygiene. In rural sub-Saharan Africa, only one in nine schools (11 per cent) had a basic hygiene service. These disparities indicate that primary schools in rural areas are in particular need of basic water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.



Note: Malawi and Nigeria did not submit VNRs

Source: [Washdata](#) (2022) and VNRs (2021)

Access to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), how it is related to quality education (SDG4), and how this relationship is connected to other SDGs illustrates the close link between environmental and other social and economic outcomes. This case highlights the importance of tracking and reporting on environmental targets for achieving outcomes like quality education for all. Notable, however, are the differences, depicted in

Figure 21