

Ageing and the SDGs

Six steps to older people's inclusion



HelpAge supports the Sustainable Development Goals

Contents

- 3 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**
- 4 Six steps to age-inclusive SDG implementation**
- 4 Step 1: Understand the national picture**
- 5 Step 2: Define the change you want to achieve**
- 5 Step 3: Map relevant advocacy targets**
- 7 Step 4: Influence formal SDG processes**
- 10 Step 5: Take action**
- 13 Step 6: Review your progress**
- 14 Agenda 2030 action plan template**
- 19 Further reading**



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

This guide supports HelpAge staff and network members in using Agenda 2030 to advance older people's rights and inclusion. It sets out six key steps for integrating ageing and age-inclusive policies into national implementation of Agenda 2030 – from understanding existing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation, to mapping key advocacy stakeholders and identifying the main influencing opportunities in the SDG process.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the world's plan to end poverty, reduce inequalities and tackle climate change. Inclusion is at the heart of this agenda, with a key pledge to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first.

These ideals align with HelpAge's vision for 2030 of a world where every older person leads a dignified, healthy and secure life.

2020 marks the beginning of the decade of action to deliver on the SDGs. It also marks the launch of HelpAge's new ten-year strategy, which strives to ensure that by 2030 millions of older people will enjoy a better

quality of life through improved wellbeing, enhanced dignity and greater voice.

The 2030 Agenda gives HelpAge International and its network members and partners the opportunity to engage directly with governments on key issues for the wellbeing, dignity and voice of older people – be it secure incomes, healthcare for all, or an end to ageism – and to raise awareness of ageing within development debates. HelpAge believes that the SDGs will not be reached unless they address the needs and rights of each and every person – including those of older people.

This resource should be read alongside HelpAge International's *Ageing and the SDGs: Key messages to ensure age-inclusive policies* and *Agenda 2030: The Sustainable Development Goals and Global Ageing*, which set out the main links between Agenda 2030 and ageing, and help define key messages and asks.

This guide is for civil society organisations (CSOs) engaging with governments to bring attention to older men and women in policy making, and to ensure SDG implementation includes older people.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared global plan to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. It includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), linked to 169 targets and several indicators, which must be adapted by each country to their national contexts (see Annex 1 for a list of the SDGs and their related targets).

Measuring and reporting on progress towards the SDGs is voluntary, through Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), presented to a High-Level Political Forum convened by the UN every year. To date, 142 countries have reported on their progress. While 85 per cent of these reports have included some reference to ageing,¹ very few countries have included references to substantive policies on ageing and older people in their VNRs.



Six steps to age-inclusive SDG implementation

Step 1: Understand the national picture

While the SDGs are a global framework, action on SDG implementation takes place at the national level. Mapping your country's policy and political context to understand how the SDGs are being implemented – and whether current plans include older people – is an essential first step. Look for policy processes that may offer potential influencing opportunities, such as:

National development plans and sectoral policies

Governments may need to review or adopt relevant sectoral policies to ensure they meet each of the SDGs.

Conducting an analysis of existing national policies relevant to ageing and older people, in particular of those that are due for revision soon (such as on health, social protection, education, violence and abuse, among others), is a good way to identify potential areas that could be improved to meet the ambitions of the SDGs.

- **Suggested action:** Build relationships with civil servants and offer technical advice to increase their awareness of the needs and wishes of older people.
- **Suggested action:** Join a technical advisory group to provide advice on the best ways to include older people in SDG implementation.

Policy coherence mechanisms

Some countries have established mechanisms to ensure policy coherence between new policies or legislation and

their potential impact on the SDGs. In Germany, for example, Sustainability Impact Assessments are used to examine draft legislation against the National Sustainable Development Strategy in order to assess the impacts they may have on sustainable development.² In the Netherlands, CSOs are calling on the government to introduce an 'SDG check' to determine whether new regulations and policies are aligned with the SDGs,³ while in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is a legal obligation for the state to align all strategic documents with the 2030 Agenda.⁴ Stressing the positive or negative effects of a new policy or legislation on SDG progress could be a powerful way to support or critique government policy on relevant areas of work. Any discriminatory policies on the basis of age, for example, would be against the aim of SDG10 to reduce inequalities and would undermine a country's effort to achieve the SDGs and leave no one behind.

Alignment with human rights commitments

Agenda 2030 is expressly grounded in human rights and emphasises that the goals should be "implemented in a manner that is consistent with the rights and obligations of states under international law". That means national plans and implementation targets cannot fall below existing human rights standards, including countries' legally binding human rights obligations.

Case study

Influencing at national and provincial levels to raise awareness of ageing and older people, Pakistan

Pakistan's government acted swiftly to adopt the SDGs as the foundation for the country's national development plan in 2016, and established task forces in national and provincial parliaments to review progress and provide legislative support for implementation. SDG Support Units were created at federal level as well as in each province to help stakeholder coordination.

HelpAge colleagues in Pakistan decided to engage with this process at both federal and provincial levels. Limited capacity and resources meant they focused on one province (Sindh), while continuing high-level engagement at federal level to influence the country's 2019 Voluntary National Review (VNR). Sindh was selected partly because of its policy focus on health and social protection – also policy priorities for our network members. Local Older People's Associations (OPAs) had already been trained on advocacy and taken part in Age Demands Action (ADA) campaigns and other advocacy activities, providing extra capacity to engage with local government.

The SDG Unit in Sindh is supported by the United National Development Programme (UNDP) and HelpAge has coordinated with the unit's Project Manager to ensure involvement in consultations to provide input to their SDG plans and to the development of strategies on social protection and health. By focusing its limited resources in one strategic province, HelpAge can focus on building strong relationships with policy makers and build on the work of OPAs, allowing older people to have a voice in SDG processes.



Oscar Franklin/Age International

Step 2: Define the change you want to achieve

Mapping the current legal and policy framework in relation to the SDGs in your country (Step 1) makes it easier to establish your advocacy goal. For example, if the desired focus is SDG1 and a push for a more inclusive social protection system, it is important to understand the level of political will for such a call, and to tailor your messages accordingly. Messages should acknowledge

what is already in place and clearly articulate what needs to change, e.g. the expansion of a current social protection scheme or the urgent need to pilot one.

For guidance on messages around the inclusion of older people in SDG implementation and some of the key asks relating to specific SDGs and their Targets, please see *Ageing and the SDGs: Key messages to ensure age-inclusive policies*, which complements this guide.

Step 3: Map relevant advocacy targets

Each country has its own institutional structures for coordinating national efforts on the SDGs, so identifying the policy makers who can influence and make decisions on your policy area is an important step in advocacy efforts. Identify others who may be able to influence the opinion of your advocacy targets (e.g. community leaders, business people, celebrities, etc), and others who could help you make connections with decision makers. See Table 1 (starts below, continues over) for a list of potential stakeholders with whom you can engage.

Tailor your messages

To maximise your advocacy's impact, tailor your message to the individual you are trying to influence, as the same message will not have equal impact on different groups of people. In general, parliamentarians will prefer top-line, simple messages that appeal to their political affiliation. Meanwhile, civil servants are generally more receptive to more technical messages that are supported by good evidence. However, at more senior levels you will need to be brief, to the point and clear about the action you want your target to take.

Table 1: Potential stakeholders to engage

Government

Political leadership: Overall responsibility for SDG implementation lies with national government. SDG leadership will vary between countries. In some there is a coordination unit led by the President or Prime Minister's office, while in others, one ministry is responsible for overall SDG implementation or is tasked with national SDG coordination. In low- and middle-income countries this is usually the Ministry of Planning or Finance, and in developed countries it may be the Ministry for Environment, Development or International Cooperation.

Inter-ministerial coordinators: In some countries there is a formal cross-departmental coordination mechanism for coherent SDG implementation, or inter-ministerial committee. These could be important advocacy targets as they are usually responsible for reporting on SDG coordination and progress.

Ministries: Action around specific policy areas is often the responsibility of the relevant ministry, so the Ministry of Social Affairs would lead on SDG1, the Ministry of Health on SDG3, the Ministry of Education on SDG4 and so on. You should identify the relevant ministry for your focus area, keeping in mind that more than one ministry may be involved in that policy area.

Aid coordination mechanisms: Some countries have national structures or ministries responsible for overseeing aid spending and aid effectiveness, and may also be part of donor-led structures that coordinate aid spending. Given that aid will be essential in helping achieve the SDGs and that many donor countries want to see an alignment between their programmes and Agenda 2030, influencing these donor coordination structures can be a good way of ensuring older people are included in development plans and policies.



Parliament

Parliamentarians can be useful allies in holding the executive to account or influencing legislation. Building relationships with key members of parliament and raising their awareness of the needs and rights of older people can strengthen your advocacy. Parliamentarians may also ask the government direct questions, so sending them evidence and information about the importance of including older people in SDG implementation can be very helpful in advancing policies on ageing and the SDGs.

Parliamentary committees: In many countries there is a specific SDG committee that gathers evidence and holds government to account on SDG implementation, and which can play a key role in pushing for more inclusive implementation. There are often other thematic parliamentary committees on issues such as health, non-communicable diseases, poverty and other relevant SDG areas that can host parliamentary inquiries and look into how well the government is doing on different policy issues. Submitting evidence and engaging with these committees can be part of your advocacy strategy.

Local government

Cities and local authorities are closer to citizens than national government and may be more responsive to their needs. Often they are responsible for implementing the changes needed to achieve the SDGs. In many countries, devolved administrative responsibilities mean local authorities can make decisions and implement policies independently of federal government. Some cities are leading this process, making their own SDG commitments and reports – sometimes with more ambition than central government.⁵

Civil service

Civil service: Once you identify the most relevant department for the goal you wish to prioritise, it is important to identify the mechanisms that exist for civil society engagement. There is usually an SDG focal point in each department who could be a useful contact beyond your usual focal point on ageing.

Technical working groups or multi-stakeholder committees have been set up in some countries to deal with specific SDGs or to provide advice on elements of the agenda, such as on indicators or on partnerships for implementation. Engaging with or joining one of those working groups or committees would be a good way to influence government thinking on your policy areas.

National Statistics Offices

National Statistics Offices (NSOs) will be responsible for adapting global indicators to the national context, which means NSOs will have to establish national indicators against which progress will be measured. The national indicators will be guided by the ambitions of the global SDG indicators and targets but will take into account domestic circumstances. Ensuring data disaggregation by age and indicators that track progress for people of all ages are very concrete ways to ensure older people are monitored and included in SDG implementation.

United Nations bodies

UNDP is the main UN development organisation, and its country offices provide support to many governments to integrate the SDGs into the national agenda.

UN Resident Coordinators are present in many countries where they lead UN country teams, working closely with national governments on development issues. They often provide support for reviewing national plans so they align with the SDGs. Resident Coordinators can be useful allies in raising awareness of the SDGs with your government. Getting them on side to lobby for older people's inclusion in SDG implementation is a good way to indirectly push your government for change.

Other stakeholders

Civil society: Many organisations are working on the SDGs in order to influence government implementation. By making sure they understand the importance of including older people in their own work you can help them raise awareness of the issues faced by older people and amplify the message about the need for age-inclusive SDG implementation. This is particularly relevant for national platforms or umbrella organisations for civil society in your country. They often coordinate advocacy efforts and are likely to work jointly on the SDGs. A coordinated civil society position will have more traction with government, so ensuring older people are included in joint messages will strengthen your advocacy.

National human rights institutions (NHRIs) are independent from governments and can be instrumental in ensuring accountability and that SDG implementation is in line with human rights. Given the mutually reinforcing nature of the SDGs and human rights standards, NHRIs inevitably deal with issues of relevance to the SDGs and can play an important bridging role between stakeholders and government, generating data and promoting transparency and inclusion within the national implementation process to ensure no one is left behind.

Step 4: Influence formal SDG processes

SDG implementation provides specific process-oriented opportunities that could be entry points for advocacy on ageing and older people. Some of the opportunities that exist at country or regional level are listed below.

National follow-up and review mechanisms

Monitoring and reporting on progress around SDG implementation is key for accountability and to measure how well countries are progressing towards SDG targets. As part of their commitment to Agenda 2030, countries are encouraged to “conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels, which are country-led and country-driven. Such reviews should draw on contributions from indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders...”. These review processes should be “open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people” and “have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind”.⁶

This Commitment to participatory accountability allows us to call for governments to adopt national review and accountability mechanisms that are open to civil society

and marginalised groups. The specific mechanisms will vary in each country, but can include periodic reporting at the national level (such as government reports on indicators from the National Statistics Office, or from ministries to parliament, or through a specific SDG commission); parliamentary scrutiny; and monitoring by multi-stakeholder groups or other mechanisms that are entry points for CSO monitoring and engagement. Remind governments of their promise to leave no one behind and ensure national SDG implementation engages those at risk of being marginalised, including older people who are often invisible to policy makers.

- **Suggested action:** Identify existing parliamentary mechanisms for SDG accountability, including any public inquiries or consultations, and check if you can submit evidence on older people’s needs.
- **Suggested action:** review any domestic reports on SDG progress and analyse whether they include any policies or commitments that include older people.

Case study

Holding the government to account to ensure older people are not left behind, UK

The UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) leads on SDG implementation in the UK and has done great work to improve the inclusion of marginalised groups in its international development work (such as supporting the Titchfield City Group on Ageing, adopting a Disability Inclusion Strategy and a Data Disaggregation Action Plan, which includes disaggregation by sex, age, disability and location). However, there is a lack of strong, coordinated leadership on the SDGs in the UK and no national implementation plan. Moreover, ageing is not explicitly recognised in DFID’s plans and frameworks.

While central government has been slow to respond to the SDGs, the UK parliament has taken a greater interest on the goals, and network member Age International has used this opportunity to push ageing and the inclusion of older people up the development policy agenda. There have been several parliamentary inquiries on the SDGs to analyse UK progress and Age International has submitted evidence and used these opportunities to brief parliamentarians and raise awareness of the priorities for older people in development policies.

During the SDG negotiations, Age International crucially secured ministerial support in DFID for recognising older people as part of the ‘leave no one behind’ agenda. This resulted in ageing being added

to a DFID ministerial portfolio, and dedicated staff time being allocated to ageing issues within DFID.

Within parliament, Age International has used Parliamentary Questions (PQs) to help parliamentarians hold government to account on the inclusion of older people in its development programmes. The government’s responses highlighted the need to take the rights of older women and men into account within its work. Briefing parliamentarians to contribute to parliamentary debates has also helped boost the visibility of ageing issues as part of international development and delivering the SDGs. Despite these successes, the UK’s VNR in 2019 recognised that further work is needed to support an ageing population.





Engage with the Voluntary National Reviews

Beyond national monitoring processes, VNRs are the main agreed mechanism for tracking SDG progress and for reporting at the global level. Each country chooses when to present its VNR to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). While the reviews are presented at the global level, the actual review process is conducted at national level.

As part of VNR preparations, which are supposed to be participatory and inclusive, countries are likely to set up mechanisms to engage different stakeholders. Whatever the shape of this engagement – stakeholder meetings, online consultations, local dialogues or workshops – it presents excellent opportunities to directly influence what will be included in the VNR and raise awareness of issues faced by older people. It is important to engage with your government to ensure consultation opportunities are meaningful and truly inclusive of marginalised groups, as well as to share information about these opportunities so older people themselves and other relevant organisations can provide input.

If there is a national development platform or coalition working on the SDGs, they are likely to have information about engagement processes and may even work to produce a ‘shadow report’, which provides an alternative perspective to the government’s official narrative of how well the country is implementing the SDGs. Collaborating on this joint analysis to ensure ageing and older people are included in the shadow report is a great way to amplify your messages.

If your government is not organising stakeholder consultations, encourage them to do so by contacting the relevant focal point. Consider holding your own consultations with older people to gather their concerns and submit suggestions on how your government can implement the SDGs in a more age-inclusive way.

To find out whether your government is planning to or has already presented a VNR, check the official Voluntary National Reviews Database (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs>). To find out who in your government is responsible for this process, please check the listed Focal Point for SDGs on the official website (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates>).

There are several guides with more detailed advice on how to engage with VNR processes, and you can find relevant links under the Further Reading section.

- **Suggested action:** Find out who your national focal point on the SDGs is, and ask when your government is planning to conduct a VNR.
- **Suggested action:** Read your government’s latest VNR to understand your its approach to the SDGs and provide commentary on how they could have been more inclusive of older people.

Engage with the national indicators process

The SDGs started a global conversation on the need to improve the quality of data for monitoring implementation of the goals, and in particular around the need to better disaggregate data to monitor whether progress is being equally shared between different groups in society in order to leave no one behind.

Gathering data is the responsibility of National Statistics Offices (NSOs), which are the institutional bodies responsible for translating the SDG indicator framework to the national context and mapping data gaps. Ensuring national and sub-national indicators are ambitious and cover older people is a great step in enabling more inclusive SDG implementation that monitors progress for different age groups. A list of the most relevant indicators for older people that should be prioritised for data disaggregation is provided in Annex 2 of *Ageing and the SDGs: Key messages to ensure age-inclusive policies* and is a good guide for you to start a conversation with your NSO. Engaging with your NSO to understand what are the gaps in collection and analysis of data on ageing, and to ensure they disaggregate data at a minimum by age, sex and disability is therefore a very good concrete way to ensure older people are included in SDG implementation.

Encourage your NSO to engage with the Titchfield City Group on Ageing, which was set up to develop standardised tools and methods for producing data

disaggregated by age, and ageing-related data. City groups are voluntary groups of experts, primarily from national statistical agencies and UN bodies, established through the UN Statistical Commission.

- **Suggested action:** Contact your NSO and find out how they monitor SDG indicators and whether they disaggregate data by age, gender, disability and other relevant characteristics.

Engage at the regional level

In addition to the global review of SDG progress through the High-Level Political Forum in New York, each of the five UN Regional Commissions⁸ convenes a multi-stakeholder forum in their respective regions each year. These Regional Forums give member states an opportunity to share experiences and enable peer learning around SDG implementation as countries in the same region are likely to face similar challenges. The agendas of these meetings usually mirror the theme of the main HLPF and their outcome feeds into the international process.

The Regional Forums are a good opportunity to engage with others working on the SDGs in your region, and to have that engagement in a less crowded space than at the main HLPF. Find out more about forums in your region at: www.regionalcommissions.org.

Case study

Better data helps the push for universal social pensions, the Philippines⁷

In 2011 the Philippines introduced a means-tested social pension. Strict criteria meant that only those aged 77 or over, and who were frail or disabled with no income or family support, were eligible. This excluded millions of older Filipinos from the programme.

Four years into the social pension programme, network member Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE), HelpAge International, and the Demographic Research and Development Foundation conducted a feasibility study on expanding the programme into a universal social pension that would leave no one behind.

The study found that data on older people were insufficient to effectively study income in later life. They were not well disaggregated, and often related to only a single age cohort of 60+ or 65+. The organisations decided to improve existing datasets and produce more detailed analysis, disaggregated by age, gender, disability and location – which revealed, for example, that more than 70 per cent of older people did not receive a contributory pension and that most older people could not depend on their adult children as their main source of support. It also showed that by making the pension programme universal, the government could reduce the national poverty rate

by up to three percentage points (a nine per cent reduction) and lift over 3 million Filipinos out of poverty.

HelpAge and COSE used these findings to develop a campaign on universal social pensions, identifying champions within the Congress of the Philippines who were committed to amending the current policy. Lobbying with Congress and the Department of Social Welfare and Development has led to 200,000 additional people being added to the social pension programme in 2018, bringing the total to 3 million.



Sara Cuy/Age International

Step 5: Take action

Your strategies and tactics will depend on the national context, objectives, budget and other factors. Sometimes the most effective activities do not cost much and may have a big impact, such as meeting face-to-face relevant government contacts to raise awareness of ageing and older people's rights. Suggested ideas for you to maximise impact on your existing plans and priorities while influencing SDG implementation include the following activities.

Involve older people

It is important to involve older people in advocacy so they can have a say in how they would like the SDGs to be implemented in their country. Key messages should be built on the voices and priorities of older people, as should the design and implementation of activities.

Older people can be powerful voices in holding their governments to account and you should consider how best to support older activists. This can be done by raising awareness and understanding of Agenda 2030 and its importance to their lives, and building links between your work on the SDGs and planned Age Demands Action (ADA)⁹ campaign activities.

- **Suggested action:** Organise training sessions for older people to understand the SDGs and how they relate to their rights and priorities.
- **Suggested action:** Organise meetings for parliamentarians to meet older people and hear their concerns.

Case study

Localising the SDGs – how cities can show leadership on SDGs and human rights for older people, Costa Rica

Costa Rica's Gerontological Association (AGECO) ran a national contest for municipalities in December 2019 to raise SDG awareness at local level, highlight good practices, and encourage local leadership around inclusion of older people and compliance with the Inter-American Convention on the Protection of the Human Rights of Older Persons and Agenda 2030.

Fourteen cities received awards for their work towards SDG delivery and realising older people's rights.

Three were certified as friendly cities for the elderly in light of SDG11, while others were praised for their initiatives to reduce inequalities (SDG10) by ensuring inclusion, participation, and recognising the rights of their elderly population. In Turrialba, public spaces have been adapted to be more accessible for older people and it is now home to the 'House of the Elderly', which will provide multiple services to improve older residents' welfare. In Quesada, the local government is mapping the needs of older people and has identified over 12 organisations with which it will work to consult older people to develop a more age-friendly city. Two municipalities also signalled that they will start working on their own independent ageing policy.

Many of the changes needed to achieve the SDGs can only be generated by local governments, who are responsible for delivering global commitments at community level. By encouraging healthy competition on best practices, AGECO ensured leaders from different municipalities were inspired by the initiatives of others and encouraged them to work together with civil society to improve the lives of older people in Costa Rica. Through the competition, AGECO, also built relationships with relevant stakeholders and gathered evidence that will be used to inform AGECO's input to the 2020 Costa Rica VNR.



AGECO/Costa Rica

Connect your existing work to the SDGs

The SDGs are a very broad agenda covering many policy areas relevant to older people. Whether you work on health systems, social protection or combatting ageism, there are SDG commitments that are relevant to your work. Working on the SDGs means framing your messages in a strategic way to remind government of

their promises under Agenda 2030. The commitment to leave no one behind and reduce inequalities creates opportunities to discuss your priority issues with actors who have not engaged with ageing issues before.

- **Suggested action:** Connect your ADA ageism activities to the SDG promise to leave no one behind and SDG10 to reduce inequalities.

Case study

Older people use SDGs to speak out on inequality and strengthen work on ageism, Myanmar

Ageism is widespread in Myanmar and some older people may not even realise they are subject to it. To raise awareness of ageism and how it acts as a barrier to age equality, HelpAge International in Myanmar made the most of the theme of the 2019 International Day of Older People, ‘The Journey to age equality’, and linked their ADA ageism campaign with SDG10 to reduce inequalities (a target Myanmar committed to reaching by 2030). This theme drew attention to how countries are working to reduce the social, political and economic inequalities that grow as people age.

As part of the campaign, HelpAge International hosted consciousness-raising workshops in Yangon, where

older men and women had conversations about ageism, how they feel about getting older, and if there has been a time in their lives when they have been treated differently because of their age. Older people were encouraged to explore personal feelings of frustration or injustice that they may have previously dismissed as unimportant or the norm.¹⁰

By working to increase recognition of ageism across Myanmar and showing its very personal impact on older people, HelpAge made it clear that without addressing ageism, it will be impossible to ultimately achieve age equality and deliver the SDGs for older people.



Ben Small/HelpAge International

Build alliances

Never before have so many stakeholders been involved in a sustainable development agenda. This means there are several organisations similar to yours who may be trying to influence SDG implementation and who may be willing to work jointly to achieve common goals. There are also academics, think tanks, private sector organisations and many others who are conducting research and policy work to advance the 'leave no one behind' agenda. Identify who else is working on SDGs in your country and which of these organisations work with other marginalised groups who may be interested in collaborating with you to combat inequalities and ensure no one is left behind.

In many countries there is already an active network of CSOs working to push for SDG implementation. Ensuring the needs and wishes of older people are understood within these networks is a very good way to increase awareness of ageing issues. Lobbying for your priorities to be included in any 'shadow report' or commentary to government plans is an excellent approach to amplify your voice and ensure governments are aware that there is oversight over their actions and their inclusivity. Several voices coming together to coordinate messages are much more likely to have an impact in influencing government than different organisations competing for attention.

- **Suggested action:** Identify national allies and propose jointly writing a shadow report on national SDG implementation which includes the voices of older people.

Case study

Working with others for policy change for older people, Rwanda

In Rwanda, network member NSINDAGIZA mobilised 12 organizations working with vulnerable people to conduct local consultations to identify the most pressing community issues and those at higher risk of being left behind. The findings were presented to key decision makers and other stakeholders, including the concerned groups. Following the meetings, which identified multiple forms of inequality and discrimination faced by different groups, organisers created a formal Rwanda Leave no One Behind Network to coordinate work and represent marginalised groups in SDG conversations in Rwanda.

The Network allowed organisations to improve their understanding of each other's issues and coordinate joint actions. It also meant organisations could take the lead on their particular area of expertise. By moving from an individual mindset to partnership for inclusion, NSINDAGIZA increased solidarity with other groups and amplified its voice.

As a result of this joint advocacy, NSINDAGIZA was accepted as a member of the Civil Society Human Rights Forum and was appointed to the government's

social protection technical working group, which enabled it to influence the integration of older persons in the National Social Protection Policy. This engagement was an opportunity to advocate for a National Policy for the Rights of Older Persons which, following NSINDAGIZA'S advocacy, is now at validation stage. The Network also provided feedback on Rwanda's draft 2019 VNR, which resulted in a more inclusive report with clear mentions of older people.



NSINDAGIZA



Step 6: Review your progress

Tracking your progress is important, as it will help you assess your achievements and make any necessary adjustments to your plans as the external environment changes or your advocacy priorities evolve.

To review your progress:

1. Keep track of what happened

It is often hard to trace direct links between an organisation's advocacy work and changes in a government position or policy, but through tracking your interventions you may be able to show that they have made a contribution towards a particular outcome.

It would be useful to track government statements or positions on your area of advocacy to see if there have been any relevant changes over time that reflect your input. You should also have records of meetings and any submissions you make to official consultations or processes, as well as of any media coverage around your activities or the government's position on your particular area of work under the SDGs.

2. Assess progress towards your goals

Advocacy does not happen in a vacuum. Decision makers are influenced by political pressure, financial constraints and other external factors and it can take years for advocates to change the government's position on a particular issue. But sometimes we can celebrate smaller advocacy wins that occur due to our engagement. Ensuring a key contact in government understands the importance of engaging older people and then receiving an invite for a government consultation on SDG implementation may not be a final change in policy that will benefit older people, but is one step closer to ensuring their voices are heard and that government will eventually respond to it.

You could assess or your progress by:

- Comparing your country's first and second VNR to see whether your government's position on ageing has changed, and if older people feature more prominently following your input.
- Monitoring your government's statements and participation at the HLPF and regional sustainable development conferences. Check your government papers and positions on the HLPF website: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates>.
- Following up with decision makers you have met to see if they have acted on issues you raised.
- Checking if any plans for policy review will positively impact older people's wellbeing.
- Monitoring national media and other information sources, such as government websites, to see if ageing and older people are mentioned and included in government priorities.

3. Adjust your objectives and plan next steps

Advocacy tactics need to be adapted to the changing political environment – for example, you may need to build relationships with a whole new set of stakeholders if there is an election or changes in government staff. SDG implementation and monitoring are ongoing efforts that will continue to 2030 and beyond. This is a long-term process that will require sustained advocacy, which will need to evolve according to the external environment, as well as your priorities and capacity. As more and more countries report to the HLPF and civil society shares its shadow reports and experiences from around the world, you can monitor good practice and learn from the work of colleagues on what has successfully advanced age-inclusive policies and SDG implementation in other national contexts.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Agenda 2030 action plan template

The template on the following pages has been developed to support HelpAge network members, offices and ADA partners to review work to date on Agenda 2030, map the national context and develop an action plan to ensure older people are at the heart of countries' SDG policies and implementation.

Developing a written plan can help you:

- Think strategically about opportunities and prioritise targets and actions according to available resources.
- Gain input from different staff, older people and close partners, and ensure everyone has a sense of ownership and understands the direction of travel.
- Monitor advocacy success.
- Share information and coordinate work with HelpAge colleagues at regional and global level so that your national advocacy can be supported at those levels, enabling the network to work a joined up way.

Naturally, good advocacy requires us to be nimble and respond to changing circumstances. The plan you develop should be a living document that is reviewed and updated as things change.

Part 1: Actions taken since Agenda 2030 was launched

Please use this section to review and reflect on what you have done since Agenda 2030 was adopted in September 2015.

A. What progress you have made so far towards participation in SDG processes nationally, thinking about:

i. Progress at government level? e.g. engagement with the ministry/unit leading the SDGs, national statistical office, national human rights institutions or parliamentarians

ii. Progress within civil society? e.g. networks or platforms you have engaged with, events and partnerships of which you have been part

B. What are the major gaps or challenges? Please think about internal and external challenges.

C. If there are other network members, ADA partners or a HelpAge office in your country, how have you been coordinating or working together?

D. How have you involved older people?

Part 2: The national picture

Use this section to identify the main actors and map the current institutional picture. You may need to do some research to find out the answers to these questions.

A. Which body within government is leading SDG implementation? e.g. is a specific ministry leading? is there a cross-government committee or body that is overseeing implementation? is the President or Prime Minister's office overseeing the process?

B. How has the government cross referenced the SDGs with: **i.** National development plans? **ii.** National statistics?

C. Has it identified priorities for implementation? What are they?

D. How is the government implementing the pledge to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first?

E. What role is parliament playing in relation to Agenda 2030?

F. How is civil society engaging with government? Who are the main civil society actors and platforms?
Are you satisfied with how they are engaging with and consulting civil society?

G. Are there any major changes to be aware of over the next 12–24 months that may affect your advocacy?
e.g. elections, the government taking on a regional or global role, expiry of the national development plan etc?

Part 3: Action plan

Issue

What is the issue you would you like to address through engaging with the Agenda 2030 processes?

Advice: Think about your current work and priorities

Aim

What is the change you want to bring about through your actions?

Advice: Think about the next 3–5 years

Objectives

What set of smaller goals will help you to achieve your overall aim?

Advice: Think about what you want to achieve over the next 12–18 months. Try to limit your objectives to 2–3 and make sure they are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time bound

Stakeholders

Who are the main actors involved?

Advice: Think about decision makers, who influences them, your allies and your potential opponents. Think about what will persuade them to support the change you want to see.

Activities

What activities will you need to undertake in the next year to achieve your objectives?

Advice: Think about your objectives and stakeholders as well as resources as you plan your activities. Activities may be meetings, events, publications, mobilisations etc.

What is the action?	How will it contribute to your objectives?	When will this take place?	How will you measure success?

Involving older people

How will you make sure older people are included in your advocacy?

Further reading

SDG resources

SDG communications materials:

www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/

UN DESA Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews: The 2020 Edition, 2020, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25245Handbook_2020_EN.pdf (6 January 2020)

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International Disability and Development Consortium, *The 2030 Agenda – introductory toolkit for persons with disabilities*, International Disability and Development Consortium and International Disability Alliance, 2016, www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/documents/2030_agenda_introduutory_toolkit_for_persons_with_disabilities.pdf (2 January 2020)

International Disability and Development Consortium, *Toolkit for DPOs Voluntary National Reviews: How to review if the SDGs have been achieved for persons with disabilities in your country!*, International Disability Alliance and CBM, 2018, www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/documents/vnr_toolkit_finalmarch-18_1_0.pdf (2 January 2020)

Toolkits and guides on how to engage with Voluntary National Reviews

Action for Sustainable Development Coalition, *Action for Sustainable Development HLPF 2018 Civil Society Report Template: Guiding questions for a national report on CSO engagement in Voluntary National Reviews*, Action for Sustainable Development Coalition, 2018, https://action4sd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Bhutan-HLPF-VNR_CSO-Report_2018.pdf (2 January 2020)

Forus International, *Guidelines for CSO Shadow reports: monitoring the implementation of Agenda 2030 at the national level*, Forus International, 2018, <http://forus-international.org/en/resources/8> (2 January 2020)

CAFOD and Together 2030, *Voluntary National Reviews Engaging in national implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals – a civil society quick guide*, CAFOD and Together 2030, 2018, www.together2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Voluntary-National-Reviews-quick-guide-for-civil-society_Oct2018.pdf (2 January 2020)

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2. German Federal Government's 2016 VNR, p.7. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10686HLPF-Bericht_final_EN.pdf
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5. New York, Buenos Aires, Helsinki and other cities have committed to presenting their own 'Voluntary Local Reviews' of SDGs progress. See more here: <https://iges.or.jp/en/projects/vlr> and here: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg11/local>
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