

# PROGRESSING NATIONAL SDG IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2023

## III. IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA IN PARTNERSHIP

### Chapter 6: Leave no one behind



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### Introduction

Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. It is also one of the nine guiding principles for the review and follow up of the SDGs, calling for processes that are “people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind.” The Voluntary National Review (VNR) guidelines further encourage countries to report on how the most excluded or vulnerable groups have been engaged and contributed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and how direct engagement of people has been facilitated.

While all countries mention this principle, and 33% of reports (12 countries and the EU) include a dedicated and relatively comprehensive LNOB chapter or section, even the best policy intentions cannot easily break through entrenched structural barriers, sociocultural biases and institutional blindness that allow some of the most vulnerable to fall through the cracks. Efforts to leave no one behind require deliberate, persistent, mainstreamed and long-term policies and programmes..

While the country reports produce a rich tapestry of policies, strategies and legislative measures, as well as practical actions to leave no one behind, empirical results are scarce. Around 44% of countries do not provide any results from the actions taken, while several focus on only a few SDGs, or provide an overview of findings in a statistical annex. This chapter aims to not only provide a snapshot of how countries reported on their efforts to leave no one behind, but also highlight specific examples that point to countries’ “self-awareness” about the depth of the challenge and need to continually evolve social protection programmes and other measures to genuinely ensure that no one is left behind.



# 1. Context Matters: Understanding who is left behind

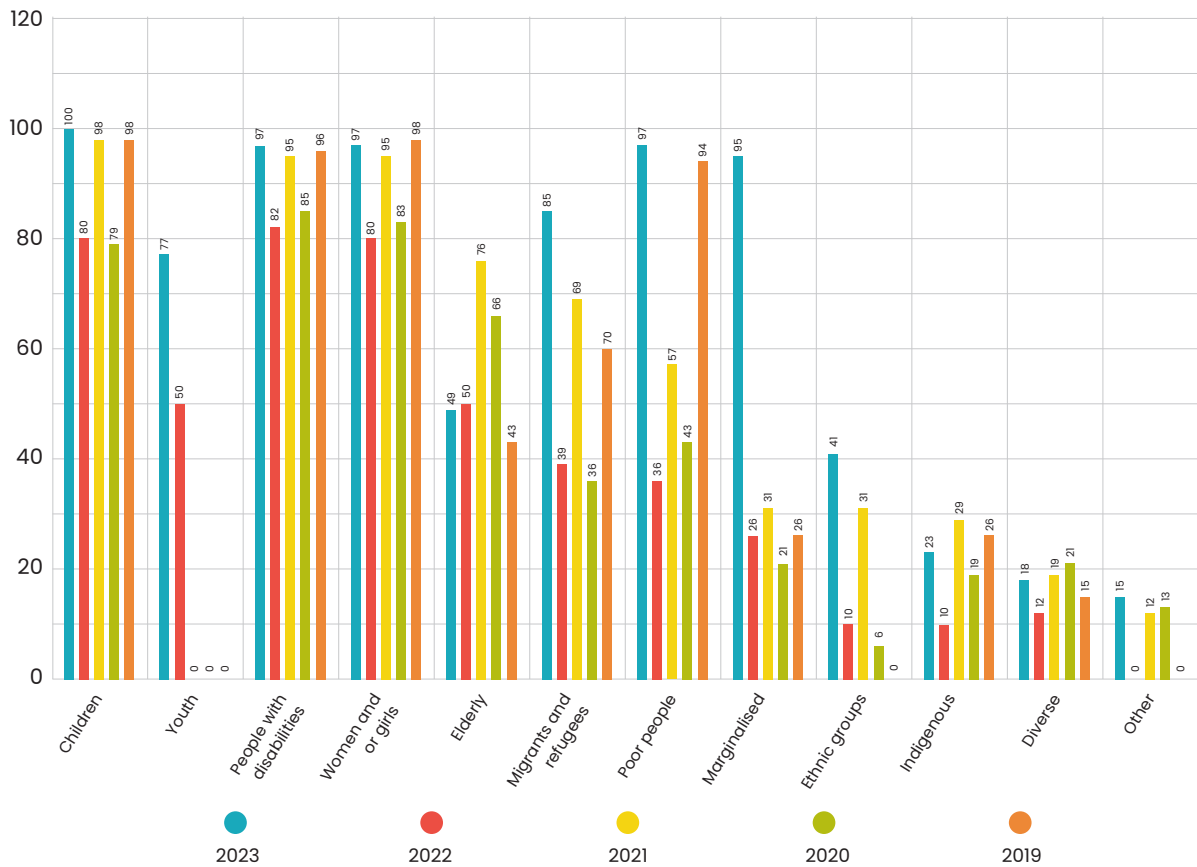
As the sections on data availability show (see Chapter 5), many countries do not have an adequate foundation for identifying and taking action on those left behind. Approximately 43% (17 out of 39 reporting countries) state that they make use of available baseline studies to establish who is left behind, with 17 countries noting the need for additional data (see Figure 5). While this modestly continues a trend of steady improvement over the past few years (in 2022 only 39% of reports indicated that efforts to LNOB were informed by existing data), overall availability of disaggregated data remains low, with a majority of the reports either not articulating data-disaggregation (30% of countries), or including only minimal disaggregated data. Regarding gender, only three countries (**Liechtenstein, Iceland and Canada**) and the **EU** incorporate gender disaggregated data throughout their VNR, while roughly one-third of countries display gender disaggregated data “most of the time.”

Moreover, only a handful of countries specifically mention the involvement of disadvantaged or excluded groups in SDG review or strategy-formulation processes. **Ireland** reports on its “collaborative and inclusive dialogue to explore the concept of Leave No One Behind, a core commitment of Agenda 2030, and what it means in an Irish context,” as well as contribution of its National Disability Authority to the VNR report. **Burkina Faso** highlights the “remarkable” contribution of the Organization of Disabled People throughout the VNR process “as evidenced by the relevance of their analyses relating to SDGs 6, 7, 9 and 11.”

**Figure 7:** Progress in collecting LNOB data

Reports drawing on available data (including disaggregated data where available)	EU, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Timor-Leste, Tajikistan, Saudi Arabia, Rwanda, Romania, Portugal, Mongolia, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Ireland, Iceland, Fiji, Chile, Canada, Cambodia
Additional data required	Slovakia, St. Kitts, Poland, Maldives, Kuwait, Guyana, DRC, Comoros, CAR, Croatia, Burkina Faso, Brunei, Bosnia, Belgium
Not articulated	Tanzania, Singapore, France, Bahrain, Barbados

**Figure 8:** Groups most commonly identified as vulnerable



**CSO Check: LNOB dialogues in Ireland**



**Ireland** reports on its “collaborative and inclusive dialogue to explore the concept of Leave No One Behind, a core commitment of Agenda 2030, and what it means in an Irish context,” in the context of the Second National Implementation Plan.

For Irish CSOs gathered within Coalition 2030, it is definitely a strength of the Second National Implementation Plan that a dialogue about leaving no one behind will be organized. However Irish CSOs would welcome further clarity regarding which communities and constituencies that dialogue would include.

Additionally, Coalition 2030 asserts that it is positive to see policies that already exist linked in as this demonstrates a commitment to joined-up policy making, but queries persist around how meaningful this element will be in fostering integrated policy making. In general, the governance and accountability elements around mainstreaming the LNOB principle need to be strengthened. An absence of strengthened governance and accountability, including clear timelines and indicators, has the potential to affect deliverability.

Coalition 2030 also regrets that older voices, workers and trade unions were not meaningfully included in the plan.

Source: Adapted from Coalition 2030’s recommendations on the Second National Implementation Plan

For countries that reported on some LNOB indicators, the bulk focus on specific SDGs, notably on gender equality and focus SDGs that were under review at the HLPF in 2023. As noted in **Viet Nam's** report, the overall lack of disaggregated data, especially by criteria and target groups, hampers the multi-dimensional evaluation of SDG implementation and is an "inevitable limitation in the process of developing the VNR." **Belgium** notes the need for further disaggregation of available data by age, gender or neighbourhood, which also requires better coordination and harmonization of decentralized data sources such as at the municipality and provincial levels to enrich national indicators.

Several countries do highlight specific efforts made to improve disaggregated collection that fed into the current review process. **Mongolia** reports that its 2021 household socio-economic survey in 2021 included an analysis of "inequality of opportunity." **Fiji** highlights a LNOB analysis by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific that was based on the country's 2021 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, which provided insights on the size and composition of the furthest left-behind groups. **Portugal** reports that its annual statistical report on the SDGs is being continually improved "to increase the level of data breakdown at territorial level and by socio-demographic variables in order to better describe the more vulnerable groups." In particular, the report notes that evaluation of each of the SDGs was disaggregated by age range (0-17, 18-64, and 65 and over). **Lithuania** highlights the use of two indicators to monitor progress in implementing the horizontal principle of "equal opportunities for all": the gender equality index and the quality-of-life index for people with disabilities (page 27).

The LNOB categories covered by almost all reports include gender, poverty, children, and persons with disabilities. Many countries also highlight efforts to reduce domestic inequalities. **The DRC's** report, for example, analyzes the territorial dimension of widening inequality (with a Gini coefficient of 0.51 in 2020 compared to 0.4 in 2014), and concludes that "20 provinces out of the 25 for which data are available, experiencing an increase in the index."

Reporting on other "left behind" categories, such as migrants, indigenous groups or ethnic minorities, does appear to reflect national circumstances or political considerations. For example, several European countries, and the EU, explicitly mention efforts to support Roma communities, and nearly 80% of reports address their migrant and refugee situations, but only a small proportion of reports systematically address efforts to reach out to Indigenous Peoples (20%), ethnic minorities (30%) or people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (Diverse SOGIESC).

An important element in understanding those at risk of being left behind is recognizing that exclusion is complex and multilayered. For example, women from ethnic minorities are also more likely to experience poverty, gender discrimination and limited access to education, health and other basic services. Especially in the wake of multiple global crises, fully understanding the intersecting nature of vulnerabilities requires adapting indicators to further fine tune interventions and ensure no new groups are being left behind. **Iceland** highlights the importance of arriving at a comprehensive overview of prosperity and quality of life (see box, page 6) by considering factors beyond economics, such as environmental and social factors that affect people's daily lives. The report notes that while many countries and international organizations have developed such collections of measures to focus on the main pillars of sustainable development, they do not provide a detailed description of all aspects of prosperity, nor undertake impact assessments of adopted policies.

Applying its LNOB commitments at the global level, **Ireland** reports that it uses “several levels of targeting” in its international development programmes. The report notes, for instance, that among OECD members, Ireland stands out for the highest share of bilateral official development assistance (ODA) provided to fragile contexts (52.7% in 2020) with priority given to countries and contexts that are furthest behind, for example least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS) and the most severe humanitarian crises. The report further notes that within these contexts, “there is a further level of targeting” of the most vulnerable communities or areas as well as individuals most in need.

### GOOD PRACTICE: Well-being indicators in Iceland



Iceland has developed national wellbeing indicators through a collaboration among the Prime Minister’s Office, Statistics Iceland, and other parties. These indicators are grouped into three sub-components: social indicators, economic metrics, and environmental metrics, with 40 indicators in total, including one that was added in 2022 to report domestic violence. The indicators are further divided into subcategories and specific measurements. This set of measures is the first set of national indicators that shed light on both prosperity and sustainable development in Iceland, although it is important to continue developing them with measurements in key issues for international comparison.

## 2. Approaches to targeting those left behind

Approximately 49% of VNR reports refer to the creation of new programmes for specific vulnerable or excluded groups. Examples include **Saudi Arabia**, which has created specialized healthcare facilities for the elderly and people living with disabilities, and highlights advances in telemedicine and digital health solutions for people in rural and remote areas. **Timor-Leste** discusses its comprehensive gender-based violence and child protection programmes, noting that to overcome implementation challenges requires refining beneficiary identification, registration, payment, and monitoring systems, as well as enhancing civil registration systems and developing a social registry. Emphasizing that LNOB requires combining targeted measures with strong social services, as well as “breaking the intergenerational cycles of disadvantage,” the **EU** has adopted diverse strategies aimed at combatting racism, promoting Roma equality, inclusion and participation, promoting gender and diverse SOGIESC equality, and guaranteeing the rights of persons with disability.

Another category of countries, note that they focus on improving overall social protection and assistance programmes. However, almost all countries with universal social programmes also note that these are complemented by specific actions for certain vulnerable or excluded groups. For example, **France** highlights efforts to reach out to certain categories of the population that do not, or are unable to, make use of their right to social support. Other countries discuss their approaches to reduce regional inequalities. **Croatia**, for example, reports that its National Plan for the Development of Social Services for the period 2021–2027 aims to eliminate and reduce regional inequalities in providing social services, with the twin objectives of “Increasing the availability of social services and creation of new services (social innovations).”

Several countries highlight institutional arrangements to leave no one behind. **Uzbekistan** mentions its Mahalla (traditional self-governance) model as a core LNOB strategy. **The EU** provides comprehensive overviews of policy frameworks, binding legislation and other robust measures to enforce commitments to leave no one behind, notably proposed legislation to strengthen the independence, resources and powers of equality bodies, the national bodies which assist victims of discrimination and promote equality. **Iceland** reports it has introduced a “clear statutory ban on discrimination,” to promote everyone’s active participation in society, regardless of gender, race, and ethnic origin, “and to prevent the social isolation of individuals for the same reasons.”

A number of high-income countries, including **Ireland, Iceland and Saudi Arabia**, also highlight efforts to reduce inequalities globally through their ODA programmes. **Ireland** reports that 48.6% of its bilateral ODA in 2020 went to least developed countries (LDCs) well above the OECD average of 24.4%.

## Examples of intersectional approaches to leave no one behind

There are specific approaches to tackling gender inequality (SDG 5), poverty (SDG 1) and domestic inequality (SDG 10) and VNR reports address each of these, as well as other LNOB categories, in turn as highlighted in this chapter. However, the reports also reveal the many parallels across these efforts. This section provides some examples of how countries identify entry points for tackling multidimensional areas of exclusion.

**St. Kitts and Nevis:** Poverty is concentrated in female-headed households and in households with higher numbers of children. Female-headed households comprised over 40% of all households but represent 57% of all households living in poverty. Further, children are over represented among those living in poverty. Poverty is also noted to disproportionately affect the elderly, despite targeted social transfers. Irrespective of the geographic regions, the incidence of poverty is higher among the urban population. *We are making special efforts to address the feminization of poverty.*

**Canada:** “In the spirit of leaving no one behind,” Canada is updating funding programmes to expand access to underserved communities while pursuing action on anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion so that everyone can participate in, contribute to, and benefit from sustainable development.

**Portugal:** An instrument designed to combat energy poverty for the climate transition directly incorporates the LNOB principle and reflects the integration of issues of inclusion, accessibility and combating energy poverty into public policies.

**Guyana:** Bridging the gaps between the hinterland and the coastal populations is a driving priority for national initiatives across both social and economic spheres.

**Iceland:** Our main objective in international development cooperation is to “reduce poverty and hunger and to promote general welfare based on gender equality, human rights, and sustainable development.” Particular attention is paid to children’s rights and to giving them opportunities to thrive and develop their abilities.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** In 2022, the country adopted a number of legal arrangements aimed at reducing poverty and mitigating the gender pay gap. By addressing various macro-level arrangements, such as improving public administrations, fostering income growth and employment, and enhancing social and healthcare systems, the country aims to provide better protection for those who face higher poverty and vulnerability risks.

**Belgium:** The French-speaking Wallonia Region has developed the “Plan Wallon de sortie de la pauvreté” that is designed to provide all inhabitants with the progressive means to escape poverty, through a focus on social-professional integration, housing and welfare for all.

### GOOD PRACTICE: Fiji – Harnessing the energy transition to reduce inequalities



**Fiji's** transition from diesel-based energy to clean and green energy is expected to result in electricity savings of up to 30% compared to their current expenses. The country plans to harness this windfall towards initiatives focused on poverty alleviation and reducing inequalities. An example is SPAN, an organization led by female sex workers, dedicated to advocating for the promotion and protection of the health and human rights of sex workers. Another beneficiary is the Rainbow Pride Foundation (RPF), a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for the human rights of diverse SOGIESC persons, striving to ensure that they are respected and able to live with dignity, free from discrimination, persecution, and violence. RPF works closely with legislators, policymakers, and service providers to help them understand and address the needs of diverse SOGIESC individuals and those with HIV. Furthermore, the organization promotes and supports research on HIV and diverse SOGIESC health in the Fiji and the Pacific region.



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### 3. Guaranteeing gender equality

Gender inclusion is one of the most fundamental gaps in 2030 Agenda achievement, and all VNR reports devote considerable attention to examining what countries are doing right as well as what still needs to happen to accelerate action on this front. The overall tone in most reports is that despite some gains, gender imbalances persist, especially in the workplace, persistence of gender-based violence, and specific sociocultural contexts. Many reports also highlight intersections between gender exclusion and other vulnerabilities, including entrenched poverty, access to education and other basic rights, and women's social, economic and political empowerment. **Croatia**, for example, characterizes gender equality as a "horizontal" issue, and has adopted a national action plan to enhance better coordination to achieve the priorities outlined in the National Development Strategy 2030.

#### CSO Check: Realizing gender equality in Chile



***Chile** observes that the historical and cultural factors that reproduce inequality mean that this objective remains a "permanent" challenge for society as a whole. Initiatives, whether legislative or programmatic, must therefore advance equality on multiple fronts: physical, political and economic for women and girls, and also for generic sex diversity.*

According to Chilean CSO platform ACCION's spotlight report, the weight of historical and cultural factors in entrenching gender inequalities is firstly reflected by the fact that the female employment rate in Chile is nearly 20 percentage points lower than that of males. This gap is much larger than the OECD average, and results from an unequal distribution of domestic work and caregiving tasks between men and women. Motherhood significantly affects employment, with mothers of young children often temporarily leaving the workforce or returning to part-time or informal work, with policy efforts still far from producing results.

From a sexual and reproductive rights standpoint, emphasis is placed on the state's failure to ensure safe abortion rights and provide comprehensive sexual education in educational institutions.

Source: Adapted from ACCION's Spotlight report

While gender-based budgeting is an important mechanism to track progress towards gender equality, only a handful of countries mention explicit strategies towards this end. Among the few countries that do, **Iceland** cites its gender-based budgeting and equal pay certification frameworks as evidence of its "relatively high legislative equality." **Cambodia** reports on efforts to develop a gender budgeting approach that integrates a clear gender perspective in the overall context of the budget process using analytical tools aimed at promoting gender-responsive policies. In another example, **Belgium** notes that the concept

of gender budgeting is included in the budget circular sent to municipalities each year to encourage them to analyze their budgets from a gender perspective.

Considering the central role that international development cooperation plays in advancing the 2030 Agenda, there is surprisingly little mention of strategies to promote gender equality in official development assistance (ODA) source countries. One of the few exceptions is **Poland**, which notes that gender equality, along with climate protection, is a cross-cutting priority in its development cooperation policy, with a focus on creating equal education opportunities, and strengthening the representation of marginalized social groups in decision-making processes at all levels.

### CSO View: Mainstreaming gender in public financial management in Tanzania



***Tanzania** states that it has developed integrated gender targets for the first time in its Public Financial Management Reform Programme, covering three of the five strategic objectives of the Strategic Plan for 2022–2027.*

According to the United Nations Association of Tanzania (UNA Tanzania), the Public Financial Management Reform Programme 2022/23–2026/27 indeed aims to improve and consolidate Public Finance Management systems to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in managing public resources at all levels of Government. Under the PFMRP VI, Cross-cutting issues which are considered are Gender, Climate Change and Green Procurement. However, the recently launched 2022 Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) supplementary framework for assessing gender responsive public financial management (GRPFM) has not yet been implemented.

In the programme, there's a recognition of gender challenges in public budgeting decisions and the public financial management (PFM) systems affecting economic and social outcomes of men, women and special groups differently. This necessitated the programme to develop gender responsive budgeting (GRB), as an approach to budgeting that explicitly considers the impact of fiscal policy, PFM and public administration on gender equality, girls' and boys' development, and specific groups of people (for example, women, elders, small traders and miners, low income earners, people with disabilities, minorities).

That said, there currently is no National PFM Strategy to provide guidance on how to coordinate PFM actions across sectors. This shows how difficult it is to develop the actionable policies needed for the transformation.

Source: Adapted from email exchanges with UNA Tanzania

## Gender-based violence: A litmus test for progress on SDG 5?



Many reports also identify specific SDG 5 targets and indicators that are worryingly off track, with gender-based violence consistently mentioned as one of the most difficult areas. While characterizing itself as a strong promoter of gender equality with significant progress in the last decades, the **EU** concedes that gender pay gaps remain significant, and gender-based violence “is still a fact of life.” Despite being ranked at the top of the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index for thirteen consecutive years, **Iceland** acknowledges that gender still affects an individual’s opportunities to express themselves freely, and violence against women “persists.”

**Tanzania** points out that efforts towards eliminating gender-based violence “are both a cause and consequence of gender inequality, access to economic assets, and improving women’s leadership and participation.” **Tajikistan** reports it is intensifying the activities of interdepartmental working groups to focus on tackling gender stereotypes, protecting women’s rights and preventing domestic violence. **Romania** has updated several integrated policy frameworks in 2021 and 2022 to ensure a more robust approach to protecting victims of domestic violence, including through requiring the police to issue and enforce provisional protection orders and monitor protection orders issued by the courts.

### CSO View: Gender-based violence in Timor Leste



***Timor-Leste** reports that its commitment to gender equality and ending violence against women and girls has been hindered by the lack of a holistic approach, limited coordination between different groups of actors, “and low levels of consistent and sustained investment and support for institutional change.”*

According to the spotlight report from Timorese civil society (FONGTIL), the country has twice implemented the National Action Plan of Gender-Based Violence (NAP GBV) from 2012–2016 and 2017–2021, with discussions ongoing for the third NAP GBV. The primary goal of the 2017–2021 NAP GBV was to enhance service quality from municipality to village level. The Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion coordinated with government entities and civil society for NAP GBV implementation, with a focus on victim protection. The NAP is structured around four pillars: prevention, victim support/counseling, access to justice, and coordination/monitoring/evaluation.

Despite these policy initiatives, violence against women and girls persists, particularly within family units, according to participants in constituency-based consultations. Challenges include the financial costs of justice, lack of criminalization of sexual harassment, insufficient income-generating training for women/girls, male-dominated household incomes, and the prevalence of customary justice over formal justice.

Recommendations formulated by timorese civil society include legislative approval for comprehensive definitions of discrimination, awareness campaigns involving

youth, increased investment in poverty reduction and rural women’s empowerment, and a review of laws/policies regarding diverse SOGIESC individuals.

Ultimately, education is highlighted as crucial for gender equality, empowering women beyond traditional roles and breaking the cycle of male dominance.

Source: Adapted from FONGTIL’s Spotlight report

**Liechtenstein’s** report concedes that despite economic prosperity and advances in legal protection against gender discrimination, efforts to stem gender-based violence have not achieved the intended results. The report highlights some public awareness campaigns to this end, including low-threshold services such as the multi-language emergency card “Hilfe bei Gewalt in Ehe und Partnerschaft” (Help in the event of domestic violence). **Croatia** has adopted the National Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period until 2027, which includes a strategy targeting particularly vulnerable victim groups, such as disabled women or victims exposed to discrimination on multiple grounds. **Cambodia** has established a multi-sectoral response mechanism for gender-based violence in eight provinces, involving service providers from relevant government institutions, civil society, and the private sector. **Barbados’** Police Service works with “a high degree of confidentiality” with perpetrators, victims, and the wider community, to bring awareness to the issue of domestic violence. By issuing emergency protection orders and warnings to the perpetrators, this approach has boosted the confidence of victims to report violations.

**Figure 9:** Availability of gender-disaggregated data

Consistently available throughout the VNR report	EU, Liechtenstein, Iceland, Canada
Available “most of the time”	Zambia, Uzbekistan, Timor-Leste, Saudi Arabia, Portugal, Mongolia, Maldives, Kuwait, France, Fiji, Comoros, Chile, Cambodia
Not available or rarely available	Viet Nam, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Singapore, Rwanda, Lithuania, Ireland, Guyana, CAR, Croatia/Bosnia (mostly SDG5), Brunei, Bahrain, Barbados
Not articulated	Tanzania, Slovakia, St. Kitts, Romania, DRC, Burkina Faso, Belgium



## Mainstreaming gender equality: Some country examples

**Zambia:** A focus on increased opportunities for girls' education and training, swift measures against discrimination concerning land ownership and inheritance, violence against women and girls, and "an intensified voice against archaic cultural biases against women." Gender Focal Points attached to all local authorities to promote women's participation in local governance structures and processes.

**Singapore:** The White Paper on Singapore Women's Development, unanimously endorsed by Parliament, sets out 25 forward-looking and Whole-of-Nation action plans towards a fairer and more inclusive society, and is informed by insights gained from a year-long, nationwide "Conversations on Singapore Women's Development" at which Singaporeans from various walks of life participated.

**Portugal** has strengthened its legislative frameworks and created policy measures to promote equality and non-discrimination against women in recent years, including: the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 (ENIND) which seeks to eliminate gender stereotypes and achieve the full realization of human rights; and the Sustainable Employment Commitment - a transitional measure that aims to stimulate employment for people from vulnerable groups (single parent families, beneficiaries of the Social Insertion Allowance, domestic violence victims and disabled persons, among others).

**Lithuania and Croatia** pursue gender equality and the empowerment of women through incorporating the horizontal principle of "equal opportunities for all" in their national policy frameworks.

**Iceland** has issued a Sovereign Sustainable Financing Framework along with an annex on financing for gender equality.

**The EU** report highlights a number of action areas contained in the EU Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025, including: new binding pay transparency measures to provide for more transparency and effective enforcement of the equal pay principle; new rules to ensure gender parity on the boards of listed companies; and proposed EU-wide rules to end gender-based violence against women and domestic violence that would also criminalize rape based on lack of consent, female genital mutilation and cyber violence, and strengthen victims' access to justice.

**Timor-Leste's** Gender Equality and Social Inclusion programme is the third largest programme by the total amount in the budget and represents 8.2% of the total General State Budget (Government of Timor-Leste, 2023). The country has also established a gender equality architecture, supported by an Interministerial Gender Working Group and sector-specific Gender Working Groups.



## CSO check: Mainstreaming gender-equality in Bahrain



***Bahrain** reports that its National Strategy for the advancement of Bahraini Women is the first qualitative strategy concerned with women's affairs to be adopted by a head of state in the Arab world. The plan includes five pillars that seek to "ensure family stability within the framework of family interdependence" and enable women to meet the requirements of competitive participation in national development, based on a principle of equal opportunities.*

According to the Arab NGO Network for Development's (ANND) spotlight report for Bahrain, while the Bahraini constitution grants men and women many rights, including the right to participate in elections, aspects of legislation still contain discriminatory elements that have not been aligned with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)..

Despite Bahrain's ratification of the Convention in 2002, it has not implemented monitoring mechanisms to address discrimination in laws and practices, nor has it lifted reservations to key articles of the Convention. This lack of alignment hampers the Convention's full implementation, despite successful experiences in other countries with similar cultural and legal backgrounds. National legislation also lacks explicit measures to combat discrimination against women in various spheres, including political, economic, and social domains, as outlined in articles 1 and 2 of the CEDAW.

Source: Adapted from ANND's Spotlight report for Bahrain

## CSO check: Mainstreaming gender-equality in Burkina Faso



*In addition to adopting the National Gender Strategy (2020-2024), **Burkina Faso** is implementing specific policies and strategies to tackle entrenched challenges, notably the elimination of female genital mutilation, prevention and elimination of child marriages, and promoting decent employment for women and young girls to strengthen their political and economic empowerment.*

According to the spotlight report from Secretariat Permanent des ONG (SPONG), despite notable advancements in regulatory and institutional frameworks to promote gender equality, the progress made remains modest. At the midway point of the 2030 Agenda, indicators related to women's participation in decision-making processes at all levels, especially in politics and the economy, as well as efforts to combat violence against women and girls, highlight challenges.

Women's political and economic participation falls short of targets despite efforts to create favorable conditions. Analysis indicates that only 50% of the targeted objectives may be achieved by 2025, particularly in terms of the proportion of women in parliament. Progress in addressing violence against women and girls appears slightly more promising, as evidenced by the increasing proportion of resolved cases of family conflicts. This proportion has risen from 47% in 2015 to 56% in 2019, with an expected increase to 74% by 2025.

More broadly, while it's true that legislative frameworks have been strengthened, awareness-raising efforts intensified, and gender issues mainstreamed in various government policies, progress is incremental, and challenges persist.

Source: Adapted from SPONG's Spotlight report

## GOOD PRACTICE: Civil society engagement to advance gender inclusion



**Liechtenstein** has undertaken a dialogue with the business community to improve the reconciliation of work and family life; and the further development of family policy based on the results of a nationwide survey of families. In 2022, the Government launched a consultation process on the introduction of paid parental leave, paid paternity leave, and the right to caregiver leave that attracted widespread interest from civil society and the private sector. Review of submissions from the consultation was underway with a view to introduce new laws or amend existing laws before the end of 2023.

**Chile's** report summarizes the outcome of multi-stakeholder consultations with state agencies, civil society, academia and the private sector on some of the central challenges to achieving gender equality.

In relation to physical autonomy:

- Finalizing legislative procedures for the promulgation of the Bill on the right of women to a life free of violence, is of utmost urgency. This normative base will allow us to address in a manner comprehensive gender violence, which is a central concern raised in the review process. It is imperative to intervene on the determinants and reparation in cases of extreme violence, such as femicides.
- Incorporation of the intersectional view of violence against women, where conditions such as disability, older people, belonging to indigenous peoples or LGBTIQ+ groups come together.

In relation to economic autonomy:

- Promoting cultural changes that recognize and value work domestic and care while also encouraging the incorporation of women into decent jobs. In this sense, it is critical to improve regulations regarding wage gaps, through legislative initiatives for wage equity.
- Advancing towards equal conditions in the economic and labor sphere requires establishing a regulatory support system to reconcile work, personal life and family life, as well as the installation of a system of comprehensive high-coverage care.
- Incorporating the gender perspective in all productive and industrial projections, recognizing that women are a significant contribution to the development of sustainable economies.

Finally, the consultations identified challenges relating to the political dimension that underscore the need to strengthen the implementation of mechanisms for inclusive participation and parity in every decision-making instance where women and diverse SOGIESC are underrepresented.

## RESULTS HIGHLIGHTS



**Gender inequality index: Singapore** was ranked 7th worldwide on the 2021 UN Gender Inequality Index. Lithuania ranks highest (11th in the EU) in the area of work, with a score of 73.9. However, this score in the area of work has decreased by 0.3 points since 2019. Gender inequality remains pronounced in the area of money (+70.4 points), where the country's ranking remains stubbornly low (24th among EU Member States) with progress in this area stagnating at +0.5 points since 2019. Although Lithuania's highest score is in health (82.7 points), it still ranks low among EU Member States (24th). **Rwanda** was ranked 6th in the Global Gender Gap Index 2022, also marking an upward rise in its performance, compared to 2020. Despite the favourable advances and the legal framework in force, **Portugal** "is still far from achieving gender parity." There are still disparities in terms of equality and participation in public and political office, access to leadership and senior positions, salary levels and ownership of agricultural property.

## CSO view: Gender equality in Rwanda



*According to **Rwanda's** VNR, the country was ranked 6th in the Global Gender Gap Index 2022, also marking an upward rise in its performance, compared to 2020.*

According to the Spotlight report of the Rwanda Women Network (RWN), access to safe water is a key factor hindering gender equality in the country, given that in Rwanda, about 63% of working females are in agriculture-related occupations, compared to only 43% among working males. Women are thus the most affected by low access to domestic water sources especially in rural areas.

Although there have been some important policy initiatives aiming to achieve universal access to safe water, large gaps persist, mainly regarding limited funding, unequal access to safe drinking water between rural and urban areas, as well as low inclusion of women and people with disabilities in water management. UNICEF estimates that only 57% of the Rwandan population has access to safe drinking water within 30 minutes of their homes (UNICEF, 2022) which means there is still a significant percentage (43%) of the Rwandan population in need of safe drinking water within 30 minutes.

Long walking distances for women and children to collect water, often keeps children out of school and women out of economic activities. In the context of Rwanda, girls and women are often perceived to take on the majority of household tasks, therefore the ones to suffer the most from limited access to water (Action Aid Unpaid Care Report, 2020).

Source: Adapted from the Rwandan Women's Network Spotlight Report



**Women’s political leadership: Tanzania** has made notable progress towards advancing gender equality in leadership and decision making at all levels, having appointed its first female President. The Speaker and Clerk of the National Assembly, and 35% of cabinet ministers being women. For the first time in history, the Chief Secretary, Deputy Speaker and Clerk of Zanzibar are also women. One third of local council seats and 33% of cabinet ministers in the **Maldives** are women. **Uzbekistan:** A direct result of the establishment of the Republican Commission on Enhancing the Role of Women in Society, Gender Equality and the Family, has been a rise in the number of female senators by nearly 25%, and women deputies by 33.3%.



CREDIT: SEBASTIAN BARROS, FORUS

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## 4. Tackling multidimensional poverty (SDG 1)



Nearly all VNR reports acknowledge that poverty persists despite overall economic growth. **Mongolia**, for example, reports that while its multidimensional poverty index is relatively low, “indicating that absolute poverty is close to zero and human capital development is high,” one in five people “is deprived on at least one of the dimensions.” Further disaggregation of urban and rural populations reveals that while 95% of the population in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, “is not poor,” three out of four people in rural areas are poor “on at least one dimension ... and 42% of the rural population is poor on more than two dimensions.”

Countries are implementing a broad range of social security and safety net programmes to bridge such gaps. **Tajikistan** explains that it allocates almost 85% of its social funding to social insurance and pension programmes, with 15% going to funding the social protection of children and other vulnerable segments of the population.” **Viet Nam** focuses on both macro-level policy reforms as well as specific initiatives to reduce risks for identified vulnerable groups, including “the poor, near poor and other disadvantaged groups.” Interventions include gradually reducing and abolishing the subsidy policies, increasing repayable support with binding conditions on beneficiaries, geographical locations and benefit duration, and increasing support to collectives such as groups, teams and cooperatives). **Chile’s** housing emergency plan is bundled with other social benefits or monetary transfers intended for lower-income families, “which contribute to reducing situations of precariousness.” **Singapore** has adopted a progressive wage model to reduce income inequality by increasing wages of workers in sectors and occupations that may require more help through upgrading skills and improving productivity. While it implements a range of social protection measures, **Fiji** reports that its poverty benefits scheme is “the only programme specifically designed to address poverty.” **Brunei’s** Poverty Eradication Action Plan aims to support low income and vulnerable families and individuals, especially dependent children, and break the cycle of poverty. Efforts are also underway to integrate the country’s welfare programmes to enable a broader range of support for low-income families, the elderly, PWDs, and other vulnerable groups.

For several high-income countries with low poverty rates, the focus is on preventing more vulnerable segments of the population from sliding into poverty. Noting that “poverty can only be kept at a low level in the long term through regular earned income,” **Liechtenstein** highlights initiatives to reduce dependence on social assistance for the long-term (re-) integration of all people into the labour market. **Kuwait** reports it is implementing “all-inclusive social support and protection programmes.” **Lithuania** states that poverty eradication is at the heart of the country’s 2021–2030 Development Framework for Reducing Income Inequalities. Specific measures under the plan include increased spending on social protection, and poverty among people of retirement age, as well as people with disabilities, lone parents, and people in employment. The **EU** notes that addressing multidimensional poverty and basic needs is among the main priorities of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan, with “headline targets” on employment, skills and poverty reduction for the EU to reach by 2030”

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*Spending on social protection has declined between 2020 and 2022, indicating that since the first VNR, “public spending is still not pro-poor.”*

[Voluntary National Review, DRC]

## GOOD PRACTICE



**St Kitts and Nevis** recognizes that the multidimensional nature of poverty requires that it be addressed “on a wide range of fronts,” by combining actions to expand economic opportunities and improving livelihoods (responding to economic vulnerabilities), extending social services to cover all persons and expanding social protection coverage (responding to social vulnerabilities), and reaching those who are socially excluded (responding to those who are especially vulnerable, including the elderly, unemployed youth, persons with disabilities and persons with compromised health conditions). An example of this approach was the launch of two pilot cash transfer programmes as part of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy: MEND (Mould, Empower, Nurture, Direct) in St. Kitts; and RISE (Restore, Inspire, Secure, Empower) in Nevis. The aim was to help indigent families to become more resilient and break the cycle of poverty by investing in human capital development and connecting them to a wide range of social services. Moreover, cash transfers were complemented by several services: from psychosocial support to health assistance, counselling at school, assistance to accessing housing policies and courses related to employment and disaster preparedness.

## RESULTS HIGHLIGHTS



**Saudi Arabia** has made “significant progress” in the eradication of poverty, achieving national poverty headcount rates of 0% when measured against the international poverty lines of US\$2.15 and US\$3.65 per day per capita (based on 2017 purchasing power parities). The report also touches on the country’s contribution to poverty reduction in developing countries, citing OECD-DAC data for 2021 that ranked Saudi Arabia first in the world in providing official development assistance “as a percentage of its gross national income.”

**Mongolia** has seen a narrowing of poverty rates between regions. With the highest poverty levels, the Eastern region showed the highest reduction of 4.1 percentage points between 2018 and 2020. Tajikistan reports that poverty has fallen by 6.4 percentage points over the past six years to 23.4%, albeit with disparities between regions and between urban and rural areas.

**Viet Nam** reports a sharp fall in its multidimensional poverty rate (from 9.2% in 2016 to 4.3% in 2022), which it attributes to effective implementation of the general poverty reduction mechanisms and policies to comprehensively support the poor, such as the National Target Program on Sustainable Poverty Reduction. The multidimensional poverty rate among children declined from 19.1% in 2016 to 11.7% in 2020”

**Cambodia** reports that “all national indicators and sub-indicators” for SDG 10 are on track. The report cites a recent poverty assessment by the World Bank, indicating that Cambodia’s poverty rate fell by “almost half between 2009 and 2020, from 33.8% to 17.8%. While overall living standards have improved across most economic and social indicators, the report notes that low-income and rural households still lag behind in access to basic services and earning opportunities.



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The Spotlight report by LNOB Vietnam acknowledges that the country has made significant progress in SDG 1, as it indeed continues to show remarkable results with reducing multidimensional poverty, as stated in the VNR. Vietnam has thus achieved significant progress in improving livelihoods and quality of life for vulnerable groups. Examples include policies to improve public health, access to healthcare, education, social protection, labor market competitiveness, etc.

However, the opportunities for marginalized groups to engage in setting national priorities within policymaking and review processes remain limited, despite gradual progress. The government has taken steps to promote the representation of the marginalized groups in public participation by, for example, involving CSOs as the intermediaries to facilitate dialogue and collect data from marginalized groups. However, the mechanisms for feedback and engagement are not yet well-defined or transparent.

Source: Adapted from LNOB Vietnam’s Spotlight report



CREDIT: SEBASTIAN BARRO, FORUS



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## 5. Reducing domestic inequalities (SDG 10)



Almost all reporting countries, and the EU, provide information on how they are tackling various forms of economic and social exclusion. Many reports assert that countries are making efforts to guarantee equal opportunities for all citizens, including through inclusive social security, social safety nets and labour sector policies.

Approaches to tackling inequalities vary across countries, with one group of reports focusing on overall efforts to achieve universal social security and other cross-cutting measures to leave no one behind. **Viet Nam**, emphasizes its commitment to “boosting measures that promote the political, economic, and social participation of all, regardless of age, sex, disability status, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic conditions, or any other conditions.” **Singapore** focuses on promoting social mobility for low-income and vulnerable groups by “ensuring access to affordable basic services, creating opportunities for growth, and providing institutional support for individuals to look after themselves and their families, with help from the community.” **Turkmenistan** notes that one of the main goals of ongoing social reforms “is the comprehensive development of the social protection system of the population and the creation of a cost-effective pension system.” The **Central African Republic** states that adopts a transversal approach to reducing inequalities that spans efforts to ensure universal access to social services and social protection, creation of decent jobs, and tackling discrimination.

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*We do not rely narrowly on redistribution to reduce inequality, but also seek to maximize opportunities for all Singaporeans to secure their own success.*

[Voluntary National Review, Singapore]

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Other countries focus on specific sectors or LNOB target groups as entry points for strengthening social security systems. **Tajikistan** highlights its targeted social assistance for low-income families.

Many countries, including **Turkmenistan, St. Kitts and Nevis, Comoros and Brunei** are exploring, or have introduced higher minimum wage and other labour sector reforms to reduce income inequality. **Barbados** aims to reduce intersecting social, economic, and environmental inequalities by focusing on lower-income households in its social policies. **Bahrain** reports on efforts to promote the values and principles of pluralism and religious tolerance, citing the contribution of the King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence to international initiatives such as the EU-GCC project on religious harmony. **Rwanda** explains that revisions to its social protection policy in response to the Covid-19 pandemic has helped create an emergency response framework for providing rapid assistance to vulnerable households in the face of natural disasters and other shocks.

Other reports highlight efforts to tackle regional disparities and a growing rural-urban divides. **Romania**, for example, has leveraged EU funding to stimulate integrated territorial development in identified “microregions” impacted by the green transition, investing in skills upgrading for at-risk categories including young people, older workers, women, single-

parent families, members of ethnic minorities, and severely disadvantaged workers and workers with disabilities.

**Comoros** highlights efforts to increase resilience to climate-related shocks, such as the “Mayendeleyo Project” which aims to increase access to social safety net services productivity and nutrition in the most poor and those affected by natural disasters.

### GOOD PRACTICE: Strengthening universal social protection



**Croatia:** The National Plan for the Development of Social Services for the period 2021–2027 sets the goals of “Increasing the availability of social services” and “Creation of new services” (social innovations). The Plan entails a multipronged approach that includes increasing the scope of non-institutional services in areas where these services are insufficient and continuing the process of “deinstitutionalization” and transformation of social welfare providers. In addition, attention is focused on improving the overall management of social services by improving the legislative framework, standardizing and harmonizing professional procedures, establishing information systems for exchanging, monitoring and analyzing information related to beneficiaries and social services.

**Rwanda:** Rwanda has scaled-up social protection interventions by putting in place a multi-sectoral plan for eradication of poverty. In addition, priority is also given to use of “home-grown solutions” in the delivery of social protection including: One Cow per Poor Family (Girinka) Programme; Community-Based Health Insurance (covering around 93% of the population); and Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme that includes cash transfers through direct support, public works and other financial services to vulnerable households.

### RESULTS HIGHLIGHTS



**Viet Nam** reports that effective support policies for the most vulnerable groups during the Covid-19 pandemic helped stabilize income growth for the bottom 40% of the population, which is “almost the same as the national average rate. **Iceland** credits its comprehensive welfare system with ensuring that “no one in Iceland lives in extreme poverty.”

**Tanzania** highlights positive results from economic empowerment interventions that benefitted 8,420 entrepreneurs (around 40% women) over the period 2021 – 2023. Additionally, loans issued to 2.2 million entrepreneurs (nearly 55% women) helped create 3.1 million jobs, equally distributed between men and women.

**Mongolia** reports that the percentage of people who have personally felt discriminated against, or who have experienced discrimination prohibited by international human rights law in the past 12 months is on a *downward trend*, from

18.7% in 2020 to 16.5% in 2021. However, discrimination on the basis of socio-economic status, age, ethnicity, and geographical location remains high.

**Croatia:** According to the 2022 data of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, the proportion of persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion in Croatia has decreased to 19.9%. Furthermore, the proportion of employed persons over the age of 18 at risk of poverty decreased to 4.7% in 2022, compared to 5.1% in 2019, before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Belgium:** The 'Coup de Boost' that aims to reactivate, accompany and offer a future to young people in the Wallonia region "who are very far removed from the labour market," is producing positive results: after six months, almost one in two young people (47.5%) have found a job, resumed studies or entered job training programmes. After one year, this percentage rises to nearly 3 in 4 young people involved (71%).

**Romania:** The implementation of social inclusion policies has resulted in a marked rise in the number of Roma children graduating from primary and secondary education, from 28% in 2016 to 51% in 2021. However, this is still much lower than national average, with only 22% of the Roma youth aged between 18 and 24 graduating high school, compared to a national average 83.3% of the entire population.

**Timor-Leste:** According to national data, 30.6% of the population was covered by at least one social protection benefit between 2020 and 2022: 21.6% of the population was effectively covered by disability cash benefits, marking a slight increase since 2019; 38.2% of children were covered by cash benefits in 2020, up from 30.7% in 2016; and 100% of elderly received a form of elderly pension (contributory and non-contributory)

## Tackling systemic inequalities based on race and other forms of systemic discrimination

A number of European countries elaborate on measures to counter rising inequality based on race and marginalized ethnic minorities.

**Portugal** is implementing the National Plan to Combat Racism and Discrimination 2021-2025 to tackle human rights violations ranging from derogatory speech and hatred to the incitement and perpetration of aggression on racist, xenophobic, sexist, homophobic or transphobic grounds. A central feature of the plan is the "democratization of access to higher education" through expanded scholarship schemes for disadvantaged students.

**Lithuania** describes its fight against inequality as "going beyond the economic dimension to include other forms of inequality such as discrimination." The Action Plan for the Promotion of Non Discrimination 2021-2023 aims to promote respect for human beings, ensure the implementation of the provisions of legislation establishing the

principles of nondiscrimination and equal opportunities, raise public legal awareness, increase public understanding of discrimination, inform the public about the measures taken to promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and strengthen interinstitutional cooperation in the field of equal opportunities. The Social Mobilization Development Programme 2021–2030 also addresses the challenges of discrimination, gender inequality and domestic violence.

**Liechtenstein:** On Anti-Racism Day 2023, a consortium of government, human rights organizations and other actors launched a nationwide awareness campaign, “Discrimination is a crime – Tolerance is your right.” Part of the country’s Integration Strategy, the campaign aims to prevent discrimination and encourage those affected to press charges. Related measures that are being implemented or are currently under consideration include language courses, including for adults with learning difficulties, early learning programmes as a basis for equal educational opportunities, promoting dialogue between and with different religious communities, and strengthening intercultural competence within municipal administrations and public agencies.

**Belgium** reports that the Federal government has revised “its already robust anti-discrimination laws” to include, among others, “a definition of intersectional discrimination”. Underscoring both rights and responsibilities of marginalized groups, this approach aims to reduce segregation and enhance understanding of “the multi-layered identities” in a diverse society. Regional governments have translated this overarching guidance into diverse policy measures, including: ensuring proportional political participation of disadvantaged groups; reducing social inequalities in health and well-being; pursuing language proficiency for all long-term residents; and tackling discrimination in access to housing, including a new draft degree allowing for “mystery checks” in cases of suspected discrimination.

**The EU** outlines a wide range of policies in place addressing different aspects of SDG 10, including several mechanisms that seek to promote economic and social convergence among and within Member States. An example is the European Pillar of Social Rights, which puts forward a holistic approach for upward social convergence among Member States towards better working and living conditions. Established in 2017, the Pillar sets out 20 key principles to support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems and to tackle inequalities. It serves as a new “social rulebook” that ensures solidarity between generations and creates opportunities for all. Specific programmes launched under the Pillar include the European Child Guarantee, adopted in June 2021, to ensure that in Europe every child in need has equal access to quality early childhood education and care, education, healthcare, housing and nutrition.



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## 6. Reaching out to specific LNOB groups

While several reports mention a focus on universal social protection and other efforts to mainstream disadvantaged groups most reports also highlight sector-specific policy interventions and other measures to target particular excluded groups.

### a) Children

Almost all reporting countries detail a range of specific strategies and programmes aimed at children, with many highlighting broader policy initiatives to tackle interrelated gaps, including access to quality food and nutrition, education, violence prevention, healthcare and other child-related social protection initiatives. **Liechtenstein** reports on the wide range of educational options to ensure that “all children, young people and adults can develop their potential, also aided by integrated and inclusive support.” The report further notes that all educational facilities are designed to meet the needs of children, disabled people and with a focus on gender equality. **Mongolia** notes that while “consistent efforts” are being made to improve access to education for all, especially for national and linguistic minorities, people with disabilities, children and youth from low-income, remote and herder families, the changes “are not enough. **Brunei** is implementing “Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life,” a strategic initiative based on the World Health Organization’s global targets for identifying priority areas in maternal, infant and young child nutrition. **Barbados** has adopted school feeding as an integral tool in the facilitation of learning and as a much-needed safety net for a nation’s poor and disadvantaged families.

#### *Other examples of child-focused policies*

- National Plan for Children’s Rights (2022–2026) with a specific objective to combat discrimination and social exclusion of children (Croatia)
- Optional Protocols attached to the Convention on the Rights of the Child” on the participation of children in armed conflicts, the sale of children, and the exploitation of children in prostitution and pornography (Kuwait)
- Accelerating birth certification programmes (Timor-Leste)
- Addressing violence against children, including forced labour (Slovakia, Timor-Leste, France, Burkina Faso, Cambodia)
- Digitalization approaches to enhance access to education (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain)
- Cash transfers and access to financial services for poor households aimed at improving the status of children (Zambia, Timor-Leste)
- Every Child in Kindergarten Programme (Romania)
- Programmes for children in conflict areas (DRC)

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*Feeling ‘left behind’ is also a common sentiment among the 7 in 10 young people aged 18–24 that are considering moving abroad for a better quality of life elsewhere. This is a testament to the severe impact of the cost-of-living crisis on young people with almost 1 in 2 of those surveyed saying they are struggling to make ends meet.*

[Voluntary National Review, Ireland]



## GOOD PRACTICE: Strengthening universal social protection



In 2019, more than 22% (18 million) of children in Europe were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. In May 2022, **Belgium** submitted its national action plan relating to the EU Child Guarantee to the European Commission. The plan is the result of a coordinated collaboration between all responsible policy levels around children's rights and the fight against poverty, as well as civil society organizations familiar with this issue. The Flanders government has joined the European Child Guarantee, in which children up to age 18 in vulnerable situations receive a number of minimum guarantees, such as free access to education, care, housing, health care and at least one meal per school day. The French Community has its Action Plan on the Rights of the Child 2020–2024, which gives concrete form to the rights recognized in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

**Singapore's** KidSTART programme has supported more than 6,200 children aged 6 and below to date, with overall positive outcomes. Parents in KidSTART families who received home visits showed improvements in their confidence and ability to interact well with their children and reduced parenting stress. Their children also improved in their socioemotional and daily living skills, such as their ability to cooperate with others, as well as manage their emotions and self-control. There are plans to expand KidSTART nationwide to support about 80% of children from eligible lower-income families, beginning with those born in 2023.

### b) Persons with disabilities (PWDs)

Almost all reporting countries distinguish programmes specifically targeted at PWDs, with a number of countries (including **Ireland, Slovakia, Poland, Comoros, Croatia, Burkina Faso, Belgium** and the **EU**) mentioning they have adopted global instruments, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRDP) into their legislative framework. **Belgium**, for example, notes that its 10-point action plan, “DG Inklusiv 2025” containing specific measures and principles for implementation of the UNCRPD in the German-speaking community that resulted from “extensive consultations with persons with disabilities, thereby meeting their needs.” The **EU** highlights the establishment of the Disability Platform expert group in 2021 as a flagship initiative of the European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2021–2030). **Slovakia** mentions the development of a comprehensive programming document based on the UNCRPD that defines the obligations of society towards PWDs. **Uzbekistan** states it has introduced a more flexible procedure for assigning disability status to minimize eligible persons from being left behind.

The bulk of country reports, however, focus on integration of PWDs within specific sectors. **Viet Nam** and **Brunei** focus on efforts to provide vocational training for workers with disabilities and integrate them in the labour market. **Portugal** highlights a new programme to support independent living by PWDs through the provision of personal assistance. **Singapore, Rwanda, Maldives, France, Cambodia, Barbados**, among others, highlight efforts to ensure access to full education opportunities for children with disabilities or special education needs. **Saudi Arabia** and **Bosnia and Herzegovina** outline their use of digital technologies to enhance accessibility of healthcare and other services for PWDs.

**Portugal, Fiji and Chile, Canada**, among others, focus on special benefits to access services and other efforts to support independent living for PWDs. An example is **Canada's** new Disability Benefit Act aims to reduce poverty and improve the financial security of working-age PWDs, including through support programmes addressing physical, communication, and attitudinal barriers that prevent PWDs from fully participating in communities and the economy.

Several reports also highlight continuing challenges in protecting the rights of PWDs and ensuring their full integration in society. **Iceland** notes that while it completely revised the disability pension system, "the system providing food assistance is unregulated and data is lacking." **Mongolia** reports that while "consistent efforts" are being made to improve access to education for all, especially for national and linguistic minorities, people with disabilities, children and youth from low-income, remote and herder families, "the changes are not enough." **Burkina Faso** cites problems with rolling out its disability card, which aims to enable all PWDs to benefit from appropriate services and to live with dignity in society.

#### GOOD PRACTICE



**Lithuania's** Quality of Life Index measures the totality of areas that are important for the quality of life of people with disabilities – meeting the needs of people with disabilities, accessibility of the physical and information environment, employment of people with disabilities in cultural and sports activities, and protection of the rights of people with disabilities and their social participation. The growth dynamics of this index has been insignificant since 2018, increasing from 49.26 points in 2018 to 52.44 points in 2022. It should be noted that the Strategic Agenda sets a target of 55 points in 2025 and 60 points in 2030. In order to fulfill this strategic goal, it is necessary to continue paying attention to practical interventions that help implement the principle of "Equal opportunities for all."

### c) Indigenous Peoples

Only five countries (**Zambia, Guyana, Canada, Cambodia** and **Brunei**) provide information on specific efforts targeted at Indigenous People, which indicates that the rest (79%) of reporting countries do not adopt this category for varying reasons.

**Zambia** highlights its policies to promote the participation of local communities and indigenous peoples in the management and conservation of natural resources. The report notes the importance of ensuring that such traditional knowledge is recognized in decision-making processes related to the utilization of genetic resources.

**Guyana** reports that 15% of payments received under carbon credit schemes have been earmarked for community-led programmes for indigenous peoples and local communities as set out in Village Sustainability Plans. **Cambodia** outlines a number of environmental protection, agricultural production, and livelihood projects undertaken in indigenous communities. **Brunei** highlights outreach to under-represented and minority groups such as

indigenous women to raise awareness of their rights and how to access justice. The report further notes the value of these engagements for providing more disaggregated data for policymaking.

**Canada** highlights its “distinctions-based approaches” to ensure that the unique cultures, rights and interests of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities are recognized and incorporated in 2030 Agenda implementation. The report provides examples of systematic engagement with Indigenous partners to “ensure that reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is considered across all 17 SDGs.” Among areas where such co-developed approaches are: Indigenous post-secondary education, as well as early learning and child care (SDG 4); health and wellness (SDG 3); infrastructure (SDGs 9 and 11); and, new clean growth and climate change initiatives (SDG 13). “

## d) Migrants/refugees

Most countries reported on this category, with the exception of **Turkmenistan, Guyana, France, Fiji, Bahrain and Barbados**.

A number of countries with large refugee populations, including **Zambia, DRC and Tanzania** highlight efforts to integrate them through providing access to basic services and integrating them into host communities. Several countries also note the intersection with protecting women’s rights and other human rights violations, such as gender-based violence, human trafficking, or exclusion from the labour sector. **Kuwait** outlines policy and regulatory initiatives to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for migrant workers, “in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.” **Chile** notes support for migrant women in vulnerable situations through training them for integration into the labour market. With a large number of internally displaced persons following years of insurgency, **Burkina Faso** notes the role of citizen-led efforts to complement humanitarian assistance.

Various European countries, including **Slovakia, Ireland, Romania, Poland, Lithuania and Belgium**, specifically note diverse forms of support – including cash assistance, housing, transport cards and other social services – provided to Ukrainian refugees arriving in their territories.

**Tajikistan** and **Portugal** report that they have adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration within their national policy frameworks. Noting that “migrants and asylum seekers often constitute a particularly vulnerable group,” the **EU** mentions its New Pact on Migration and Asylum, adopted in September 2020, which aims to create faster migration processes and stronger governance of migration and border policies. **Liechtenstein** highlights its new integration strategy, adopted in 2021, noting it recognizes that integration is a complex and cross-cutting task that must involve the host society and that requires both “supporting and challenging” migrants. The report further notes that strategy’s objectives are divided into six areas: information, communication and counselling; language; education and work; living together; law and state; and equal treatment, anti-racism and anti-discrimination.

**Iceland** reports that while its immigration system and services for migrants “are generally good” the fast-growing number of refugees and immigrants in recent years has placed

pressure on the service infrastructure. The report notes efforts to prioritize and support immigrants' rights to education, employment, health, and safety and provide help to refugees and immigrants to adapt to a new society in Iceland "in the manner and at the pace that suits them best." **Belgium** outlines a range of integration measures, including language support, access to education, and "socio-professional" inclusion.

## e) Ethnic groups

Roughly one-third of countries reported on this category. The **EU** highlights the adoption of the EU Roma Strategic Framework as a specific strategy to address the needs of Roma populations, with six EU countries (**Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belgium, Romania, Croatia, Slovakia** and **Lithuania**) also highlighting dedicated programmes for Roma communities.

**Viet Nam** highlights the high poverty rates among ethnic minorities, noting that poverty gaps between different regions and population groups have not been narrowed "which require the regulation of a comprehensive and synchronous system of policies." **Croatia** cites data from its 2021 Ombudsperson's Report, which finds that national origin, together with race, ethnicity or skin colour are the most common grounds for discrimination according to registered complaints, particularly in the field of work and employment. **Turkmenistan** reports that its National Human Rights Action Plan, 2021–2025 ensures access to education for stateless persons, also in the languages of ethnic minorities.

Describing itself as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society that strives with equal opportunity enshrined as a fundamental principle in governance, **Singapore** reports on a provision requiring that at least one Member of Parliament in each of the larger electoral constituencies must be from an ethnic minority. **Canada** highlights its Social Innovation and Social Finance (SI/SF) Strategy, launched in 2019, which includes a funding window for Social Purpose Organizations (SPOs)—charities, non-profits, social enterprises, co-operatives, and businesses with a social mission — that work with diverse, underserved and equity deserving Canadian populations, including Black Canadians and other racialized peoples, official language minority communities and recent immigrants and refugees.

### GOOD PRACTICE: Policy initiatives to combat exclusion of Roma Communities



**Slovakia** adopted the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma by 2030 (the 2030 Roma Strategy) in 2019. Through this strategic framework, the government makes a commitment to promote equality and inclusion of Roma and defines the direction of public policies to achieve "visible changes" in this field. The Strategy represents a set of starting points and goals to stop the segregation of Roma communities and achieve non-discrimination in the priority areas of education, housing, employment and health. Particular emphasis is placed on stepping up interventions to combat anti-Roma racism and promote Roma inclusion.

**Romania's** Strategy on Stimulating Participation of Roma Children and Youth in Education Programmes supports early schooling, after-school and teachers' training programmes to improve the access of Roma children to education

In 2021, **Croatia** adopted the National Roma Inclusion Plan for the period 2021–2027 based on the recognition that to ultimately realize the vision of a prosperous and sustainable Croatian society by 2030, no part of its population should be left aside.

The “Flamenquitos de Santiago Project” in Setúbal, **Portugal**, combats school dropouts and absenteeism in the Roma community and promotes the inclusion of Roma students through arts, music and dance.

## f) Other groups

Approximately 50% of the reporting countries also identify other vulnerable groups, of which more than half (including **Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Brunei, Romania, Portugal, St. Kitts and Nevis, Guyana, Poland, Lithuania, Ireland**, and the **EU**) highlight youth as a priority area of focus. The **EU** notes that following the European Year of Youth in 2022, 2023 is the European Year of Skills, with the aim of promoting increased investments in training and upskilling, ensuring that skills are relevant for labour market needs, and by matching people’s aspirations and skills with opportunities.

**Viet Nam, Mongolia, Ireland** and the **DRC** identify rural and remote populations such as ethnic minority areas and people living in mountainous regions, requiring specific attention. **St. Kitts and Nevis** reports that it has adapted the “Prevention and Intervention Family Systems Model” created by the Los Angeles Mayor’s Office to target young persons who are assessed as having four or more risk factors for delinquent behavior. **Poland** mentions its strong support activities related to the UN Agenda – Youth, Peace, Security, noting it highlights the positive role that may be played by young people in negotiating and implementing the peace agreements and preventing conflicts as well as emphasizes the importance of taking the voice of the youth into account.

**Liechtenstein, Ireland, Canada, Fiji** and **Burkina Faso**, identify pensioners and elderly persons as a focus group for supplementary benefits.

Other LNOB categories identified by countries include: single parent families (**Maldives** and **Ireland**); former combatants (**Central African Republic**); people living with long-term health issues, including HIV and AIDS, the homeless, people with mental health issues and/or affected by addiction, traveler communities, victims of human trafficking, and disconnected communities (**Ireland**).