Supporting a “Decade of Accountability” for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

A Campaign led by the Transparency, Accountability & Participation (TAP) Network, the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), Forus and Together 2030

Supported by: Action Aid, AfroLeadership, CIVICUS, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD), Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), UN Global Compact, UN SDG Action Campaign, VSO International, the WINGS Network/SDG Philanthropy Platform, and World Vision

I. Background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) is envisioned to be a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership — one that will free humanity from the tyranny of poverty and want and heal and secure the planet for future generations. While significant efforts have been made at all levels to realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda, overall the global community is behind schedule on achieving the ambitious targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In fact, the world faces the pressing reality that, in many countries and communities, progress towards sustainable development is backsliding.

In an effort to reverse such trends and accelerate implementation of the SDGs, Member States pledged in their July 2019 Political Declaration on the SDG Summit to make the coming decade one of action and delivery. To do this, countries committed to the following ten principles: leaving no one behind; mobilizing adequate and well-directed financing; enhancing national implementation; strengthening institutions for more integrated solutions; bolstering local action to accelerate implementation; building resilience; solving challenges through international cooperation and enhancing the global partnership; harnessing science, technology, and innovation; investing in data; and strengthening the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF).
Equally important to ensuring enhanced action and delivery of the 2030, is the accountability of duty-bearers to these ambitious commitments to the SDGs and to Leaving No One Behind. This lies at the core of the commitment to launching a complementary “Decade of Accountability for the SDGs”, led by the TAP Network and its partners.

Civil society and a wide range of stakeholder groups have important roles to play in bringing about action and delivery on the SDGs — particularly in terms of holding governments accountable to their promises to provide basic goods and services and to secure and preserve fundamental human rights and dignity for all people. On this front, a civil society-led “Decade of Accountability” for the 2030 Agenda and SDGs has the potential to help better guarantee that meaningful “follow-up and review” on accelerated actions and delivery occur — through monitoring progress, highlighting gaps, preventing backsliding, and by safeguarding civic space, in all contexts. Moreover, civil society’s involvement in leading monitoring and accountability processes over the next ten years will help to ensure that implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs is open, inclusive, participatory and transparent — principles which are the heart and foundation of this global sustainable development framework.

II. Approach

The “Decade of Accountability” will build on the work that the TAP Network and other civil society organizations (CSOs), coalitions and other constituencies have undertaken since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs in 2015. This “call-to-accountability” — and the initiatives, partnerships, and investments that will blossom from it — aims to help strengthen the capacity of civil society stakeholders to work with governments and other partners to make meaningful progress on the SDGs overall, and to foster an enabling environment that supports robust accountability, in partnership with many stakeholder groups engaging with the SDGs.

The “Decade of Accountability” campaign will seek to mobilize development stakeholders to deliver on efforts to help foster more robust accountability for the SDGs and related commitments by governments and other stakeholders. By focusing on such efforts, the “Decade of Accountability” is envisioned to:

- Raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda amongst a wide range of stakeholders, and the importance of civil society engagement in follow up, monitoring and accountability for the SDGs and Accelerator Actions;
- Raise awareness about the critical prerequisites for national-level SDG accountability, as well as various approaches to holding governments accountable, including through engagement in VNRs, public outreach campaigns, independent civil society spotlight reports, CSO work around data and indicators, and working with press and parliaments, and outreach to provide detailed guidance on how national-level CSOs can apply these approaches to SDG accountability;
- Showcase and build upon existing work done by civil society around accountability for the SDGs, Accelerator Actions, and other international commitments;
• Develop further tools to help CSOs plan their tactics around SDG accountability at the national level, highlight challenges to SDG accountability, and showcase case studies where similar CSOs have run successful accountability campaigns and initiatives;
• Further map out and provide an overview of various government or institutional actors or processes that CSOs can typically engage with, such as national or local government ministries or authorities, National Statistical Offices, National Human Rights Institutions, inter-ministerial SDG mechanisms, or other accountability institutions;
• Explore and create additional entry points at the “global” and “regional” levels for work around SDG accountability, particularly through the HLPF reform process;
• Help CSOs hold governments accountable to meet their commitments to “leaving no one behind,” and ensuring the participation and inclusion of all marginalized groups in various accountability processes, building upon existing work.

To achieve these objectives, the TAP Network will look to draw from civil society expertise in the social accountability and the SDGs to help guide the strategic planning process and implementation of the “Decade of Accountability” campaign, and the experiences of many other stakeholder groups that remain critical to true and lasting SDG accountability.

The campaign for a Decade of Accountability for the SDGs will be implemented in the following phases:

**Phase I: Conceptualization and Partnership Building (September 2019 to December 2019)**
- Internal conceptualization from the TAP Network and its partners, including in consultation with the Advisory Committee for the SDG Accountability Handbook
- Outreach to potential partners from civil society and other stakeholder constituencies, to gather commitments to partner on the Decade of Accountability
- In consultation with all partners signing on to the Decade of Accountability, finalize plans the conceptualization of the campaign, and begin planning for consultation process to begin in early 2020.

**Phase II: Consultations, Planning and Launch (January 2020 to December 2020)**
- Drafting of consultation plan for the Decade of Accountability for the SDGs, which will include an online survey, online consultation opportunities, and in-person consultations, to take place between January 2020 and July 2020
- Drafting of online survey to be broadly disseminated to civil society and other stakeholder constituencies between January 2020 and July 2020
- Outreach and consultation by all partners with their own constituencies and networks, concluding by June 2020, including through online webinar and in-person opportunities
- Drafting of a synthesis report from these consultations in June 2020, which will be presented at the 2020 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2020
- Drafting of “Declaration” for Decade of Accountability, and preparing Declaration for “endorsements” by civil society and other stakeholders
- Ongoing work to **identify government “champions”** to support the Decade of Accountability campaign, and secure commitments by governments
- Ongoing **preparation for launch event** for Decade of Accountability at 2020 UN General Assembly
- **Online Video Campaign** to solicit short videos from civil society and other stakeholders to showcase how they are working to hold governments accountable to the SDGs
- **Twitter campaign** around #SDGAccountability
- “**Big splash**” high-level launch event at the 2020 UN General Assembly for the Decade of Accountability for the SDGs

**Phase III: Implementation and Follow-up Engagement and Coordination (January 2021 – December 2022, ongoing)**

- Launch of priority work streams and opportunities for engagement, and establishment of engagement mechanisms with broader civil society and stakeholder constituencies in these work streams
- Begin soliciting “endorsements” to the campaign from broader civil society and stakeholder groups, through the **launch of the “Declaration” for the Decade of Accountability** at the 2020 UN General Assembly
- Development of an **online platform for the Decade of Accountability**, to help maximize outreach and promotional opportunities, and for further work together for Affinity Groups
- Ongoing work with **Affinity Groups around priority work streams – at the global level and national level**
- Ongoing national workshops with civil society and other stakeholder groups to help support ongoing work set forth by priority work streams
- Review of work around Decade of Accountability, including a report and further development of Decade of Accountability website
- Exploration of other potential priority work streams and Affinity Groups, and other opportunities for engagement and promotion
- Delivery of work programmes set forth by the Decade of Accountability launch, in partnership with leading organizations around these issue areas.

While final priority engagement areas for the Decade of Accountability will be based on the insights drawn from the consultation process, potential work streams for the “Decade of Accountability” could include:

**1) Civil Society Spotlight Reporting on the SDGs:**
   - Exploring work programs around independent civil society reporting on national level implementation of the SDGs, with the aim to improve the content, frequency, and inclusion of reports into official reporting processes.
   - Further development of capacity building resources supporting Spotlight Reporting, and supporting national CSO workshops to help civil society in-country to develop these reports.
   - Developing an official portal to showcase civil society reports.
o Analyzing trends, including best practices and challenges, based on the findings from reports.

2) **Capacity building:**
   o Supporting existing efforts of various stakeholder groups around capacity building and coordination, particularly around issues related to SDG accountability and the Voluntary National Review processes at the national and global levels.
   o Further development of capacity building resources, such as the SDG Accountability Handbook, VNR and Post-VNR engagement guides and other existing tools, and coordination of national and local workshops on SDG accountability, the VNRs, and post-VNR follow-up.
   o Development of online training modules, and further translation of existing capacity building resources.
   o Hosting of national workshops to help various stakeholder constituencies advance SDG accountability, and feed inputs into global-level work of the campaign.

3) **Global and Regional policy engagement:**
   o Engagement with Regional Commissions and regional HLPF meetings, and strengthen existing regional civil society and stakeholder networks working around SDG accountability.
   o Further development of new or existing innovative spaces at the global, regional and national levels to facilitate the sharing of best practices, including around VNR processes.

4) **Data and Research:**
   o Collecting and aggregating official and non-official data on SDG implementation, building on existing work.
   o Expanding the scope of SDG indicators used to measure and monitor SDG implementation.
   o Capacity-building around data literacy for the SDGs, as well as around use of citizen-generated data, building on existing work.

5) **Awareness Raising and Outreach:**
   o Raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda, the importance of civil society engagement in follow up, monitoring and accountability for the SDGs and Accelerator Actions, and the critical prerequisites for national-level SDG accountability.

6) **Commitments to Accelerated Action and Delivery:** Collecting civil society commitments to accelerating action and delivery on the 2030 Agendas and SDGs. Developing an official platform to collect and showcase commitments, building on existing work.

7) **Accountability for VNR Reports and Presentations:**
   o Development of an assessment mechanism for VNRs, including their processes, presentation, and substance, in collaboration with existing efforts that provide analyses of VNRs.
III. **Timeline:**

The initiative will be rolled-out in three phases: 1) Conceptualization and Partnership Building, 2) Consultations, Planning and Launch, and 3) Implementation and Follow-up Engagement and Coordination.

Below is an overview of the expected timeline and key moments for each phase of work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase I: Conceptualization and Partnership Building</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Launch of the conceptualization and partnership building process for the “Decade of Accountability” for the 2030 Agenda and SDGs at the SDG Summit</td>
<td>September 2019, ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of governance structure for partnerships and joint work on the various projects for the “Decade of Accountability” for the 2030 Agenda and SDGs at the SDG Summit</td>
<td>September 2019, ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Begin recruitment of civil society organizations and stakeholders to endorse the commitment to a decade of accountability for the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, beginning at the SDG Summit</td>
<td>September 2019, ongoing</td>
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<th>Phase II: Consultations, Planning and Launch</th>
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<tr>
<td>Online and in-person consultations with broader SDG civil society and stakeholder communities</td>
<td>January 2020 – June 2020</td>
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<td>Drafting of synthesis report of findings from consultations, to be presented at 2020 HLPF</td>
<td>June 2020 – September 2020</td>
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<td>Formal launch of Consultation Synthesis Report and broader “Decade of Accountability for the SDGs” at 2020 UN General Assembly</td>
<td>September 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formalization of partnerships, work streams/priority areas and Affinity Groups for the “Decade of Accountability”, based on the findings from the consultations</td>
<td>July 2020 – December 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation of initiatives and work streams for the “Decade of Accountability”</td>
<td>September 2020, ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongoing outreach and promotion of opportunities for engagement through various work streams</td>
<td>September 2020, ongoing</td>
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<th>Phase III: Implementation and Follow-up Engagement and Coordination</th>
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<tr>
<td>Review workstreams of the “Decade of Accountability” campaign on annual basis, including following-up and reviewing on Member States’ commitments around the “Decade of Action and Delivery”</td>
<td>September 2021, ongoing</td>
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IV. **Partners and Engagement:**

The campaign will seek to bring together partners and donors with existing expertise and programmes working to advance accountability for the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. The campaign will bolster concerted action and amplify efforts to hold duty bearers to account for their commitments to sustainable development in a coordinated manner. To do this, the campaign will look engage a wide range of stakeholder communities – all of whom serve as a critical piece of the accountability puzzle for the SDGs. This includes involving organizations or networks coordinating stakeholder groups such as civil society, the private sector, academia, foundations, parliamentarians, local authorities, national human rights institutions, supreme audit institutions and the media.

The campaign will also look to identify countries to serve as “Champions” of SDG Accountability, who will help ensure that broader buy-in and commitments to SDG accountability are secured both within government, and the UN system. Governments looking to identify themselves as

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“Champions” will be expected to make concrete commitments outlining what they will do to enhance SDG accountability in their own country, and endorse a “declaration” for this Decade of Accountability for the SDGs, that will be developed in the initial phases of the campaign.

Finally, the campaign will also seek to engage the UN system and other multilateral partners. Capitalizing on the special message of endorsement for the SDG Accountability Handbook from Deputy-Secretary General Amina Mohammed, the campaign will look to engage the UN and other institutions at the highest level, to build and sustain momentum for this campaign from a wider range of institutional partners.

The campaign will take an inclusive and consultative approach to its work, bringing on board a diverse variety of partners and donors to support the achievement of its objectives. This includes a “Core Group” of the driving implementing partners for the campaign, as well as an “Advisory Group” of organizations that will play an advisory role to the campaign, and will help engage and consult with various constituency groups that they represent.

Currently, the Campaign for a Decade of Accountability for the SDGs includes the following organizations as members of the “Core Group”:
- TAP Network
- Together 2030
- Forus International
- Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP)

Currently, the Campaign for a Decade of Accountability for the SDGs includes the following organizations as members of the “Advisory Group”:
Action Aid (Civil Society)
AfroLeadership (Civil Society)
CIVICUS (Civil Society)
Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) (National Human Rights Institutions)
Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) (Media)
Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) (Academia)
UN Global Compact (Private Sector)
UN SDG Action Campaign
VSO International (Civil Society)
WINGS Network/SDG Philanthropy Platform (Philanthropy)
World Vision (Civil Society)

V. Organization and Coordination
The TAP Network will provide staffing and budgetary support to this campaign. While additional support from partners is appreciated, other partners, including organizations represented on the Core Group, Advisory Group or Affinity Groups can contribute staffing and funding support to this campaign on a voluntary basis.
While no funding or staff time allocation to support the campaign will be expected of partners, all organizations involved in the campaign could agree to one of more of the following, *inter alia*:
- Identify one or more focal points from their organization to engage with the campaign on an ongoing basis, including through participating in regular planning and coordination calls (frequency of such calls TBD)
- Share their organization’s logo to be included on outreach materials to promote their partnership in the Decade of Accountability for the SDGs
- Engage with their stakeholder constituencies around various consultations for the campaign in its initial phase, and to promote the work and engagement opportunities for stakeholders in all stages of the campaign’s ongoing activities, as necessary
- Engagement in any relevant affinity groups around priority work streams for the campaign (work streams TBD through consultations)
- When necessary, represent the campaign to promote the opportunities and objectives for the campaign at various promotional opportunities

**Coordination Mechanisms:**
The Decade of Accountability Campaign will look to engage these various partners through the following structures:

**“Core Group”:**
- A group of civil society networks, that have engaged deeply in mobilizing and coordinating civil society efforts around advocacy, implementation, reporting and accountability for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
- These organizations will bear the primary responsibility for driving and steering the work of the campaign, and will be expected to take decisions on behalf of the collective campaign whenever necessary.

**“Advisory Committee”:**
- A group of organizations and networks, representing various stakeholder constituencies that are critical to accountability for the SDGs.
- These advisory group members will be a critical part of the strategic design of the campaign, and will feed in to the establishment of the key priorities for the campaign in its implementation phase. This will include the establishment of affinity groups, where Advisory Group members will have the opportunity to lead the campaign’s work on a particular priority/work stream
- Advisory Group members will also be responsible for consulting with their constituency groups to collect inputs for priorities that feed into the campaign’s overall strategy and design, and will look to promote other engagement opportunities with their constituencies that arise throughout the campaign.
- These Advisory Group Members would have the opportunity to provide guidance on the various stages of the conceptualization, implementation, and monitoring processes.

**Work stream “Affinity Groups”:**
- Affinity Groups will be established around key priority areas that are identified through the consultation and strategic planning process in Phase I of the campaign.
- Core Group or Advisory Group members will have the opportunity to serve as the lead/focal point for coordinating each Affinity Group, to ensure broader ownership and accountability of all campaign partners.

- Affinity Groups will eventually be opened to engagement by a wider range of stakeholders, beyond the partners of the campaign, in order to foster broader buy-in from communities engaging around these particular priority areas. Where applicable, the partners will develop concept notes and agree on work plans for activities carried out under the partnerships and will monitor the implementation of agreed activities. Regular communication will take place between organizations to ensure the timeliness of implementation and to discuss next steps in the implementation processes.