

# Raising awareness and promoting global citizenship to realize the 2030 Agenda

Socializing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development among citizens, parliamentarians, government institutions, civil society, academia, the private sector, trade unions and others provides a basis for stakeholders to identify their priorities and contribute to sustainable development as global citizens. Based on a review of good practices emerging from around the world, this policy brief offers recommendations on how governments can raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and support global citizenship.

## Key messages

- While awareness raising during national priority setting and in reporting on progress to the United Nations appears to be a widespread standard practice, there is a need for countries to ensure long-term efforts to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and promote global citizenship, in line with commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education.
- Governments should establish a plan for inclusive and long-term awareness raising and global citizenship promotion that includes multiple approaches and initiatives to reach all demographics and generations throughout the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- Governments should partner with local governments, civil society and other organizations well positioned to raise awareness and promote global citizenship. Their efforts should be iterative, move beyond business as usual, innovative, and inclusive and participatory.



This policy brief is part of the Good Practice in 2030 Agenda Implementation Series produced by the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC) and Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) and funded in part by the Government of Canada's Sustainable Development Goals Program.

Produced in collaboration with:



## Introduction

In 2015, world leaders adopted the United Nations' [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). The 2030 Agenda, which introduced 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sets out a transformative plan for people and planet. It aims to promote shared prosperity, environmental sustainability and progress on sustainable development that leaves no one behind. Realizing the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda requires a whole-of-society approach. Governments, citizens, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector all have roles to play in contributing to sustainable development outcomes.

Nearly four years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, many countries have put in place building blocks for its implementation as shown by reviews of government reporting to the [United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) in [2016](#), [2017](#) and [2018](#). Many countries have integrated the SDGs into policy frameworks. Institutional and governance mechanisms have been established to oversee and evaluate progress on implementation. Partnerships across sectors are forming, while systems for monitoring and evaluation are being put in place. However, progress has been mixed across countries, particularly in terms of the extent to which countries have localized implementation of the 2030 Agenda, integrated its transformative elements into policies and practices, and developed enabling environments that promote whole-of-society contributions to sustainable development.

Raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda is a critical first step and ongoing aspect of implementation. Socializing the agenda among citizens, parliamentarians, government institutions, civil society, academia, the private sector, trade unions and others builds the necessary understanding of global, national and sub-national sustainable development challenges, providing a basis for stakeholders to identify their priorities and potential contributions. Awareness raising is also an initial step for promoting global citizenship and promoting ownership of 2030 Agenda implementation. Whole-of-society approaches to implementation that work to leave no one behind begin with inclusive, whole-of-society approaches to awareness raising. Ongoing engagement to continue building support and promoting actions and partnerships that contribute to sustainable development is equally important. Awareness raising is not a one-off event that occurs at the start of SDG implementation, but rather an iterative process.

Governments have also committed to promoting global citizenship<sup>1</sup> under SDG 4 on quality education. [Target 4.7](#) focuses on ensuring that all learners have the necessary knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, measured by the extent to which global citizenship education and education for sustainable development have been integrated into education systems.

This policy brief outlines emerging standards and good practices to raise awareness and promote global citizenship on the 2030 Agenda. It is based on a review of countries reporting to the [United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) over the 2016–18 period through [Voluntary National Review \(VNR\)](#) reports, which collectively serve as a key element of international follow-up and review of 2030 Agenda implementation. Also, interviews were conducted with 10 civil society organizations from nine countries<sup>2</sup> to validate information presented in VNR reports. The brief provides an overview of emerging practices, along with recommendations on how governments can improve their efforts. An annex with detailed information on the specific good practices highlighted in this brief serves as a useful resource for governments and other stakeholders that are keen to adopt and promote good practices for 2030 Agenda implementation.

## What is a good practice?

### TRANSFORMATIVE ELEMENTS OF THE 2030 AGENDA

A good practice is an activity or approach that demonstrates incorporation of one or more of the transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda. The agenda is human rights-based and focuses on the inclusion of, and change for, the poorest and most vulnerable by promoting their inherent dignity and human rights through efforts to leave no one behind. Efforts are informed by inclusivity, solidarity and participation. The 2030 Agenda is universal in that it applies to all countries and people. The economic, social and environmental pillars of the 2030 Agenda are of equal importance, with the SDGs being integrated and indivisible—achievements under any one goal are linked to progress on others. Implementation of the agenda should occur with respect for planetary boundaries and inter-generational responsibility, recognizing the need to protect the planet's resources now and for future generations. Importantly, good practices respect the aspirational nature of the 2030 Agenda, demonstrably moving beyond standard practices or business-as-usual approaches. Finally, the 2030 Agenda is grounded in commitments to transparency and accountability.

1 The UN [defines global citizenship](#) as “the umbrella term for social, political, environmental, and economic actions of globally minded individuals and communities on a worldwide scale. The term can refer to the belief that individuals are members of multiple, diverse, local and non-local networks rather than single actors affecting isolated societies.”

2 Interviews were carried out with civil society organizations from the following countries: Bangladesh, Belgium, Denmark, Finland (two interviewees), Latvia, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway and South Korea. This brief also includes a number of good practices based on VNR reports for other countries, but it should be noted that information for these countries could not be validated beyond additional Web-based searches.

**HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH****LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND****INTEGRATED AND INDIVISIBLE****INCLUSIVITY AND PARTICIPATION****PROGRESS WITHIN PLANETARY BOUNDARIES****INTERGENERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY****ASPIRATIONAL****TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

The transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda translate into several key actions with respect to raising awareness and promoting global citizenship.

**ITERATIVE**

Good practices are iterative with engagement occurring over the longer term rather than only the initial adoption of the 2030 Agenda, setting of national priorities or development of VNR reports. Long-term efforts are required to support collective ownership and impact. Promoting global citizenship is also a long-term process that includes education initiatives and opportunities for citizens and local communities to engage in the world as global citizens. Good practices are iterative approaches in these areas.

**BEYOND BUSINESS AS USUAL**

Examples of good practice move beyond business as usual. While ad hoc events and initiatives can raise awareness and promote global citizenship, good practices strengthen institutions and build capacity of all levels of government and a range of stakeholders.

**INNOVATIVE**

Good practices are innovative. They take new approaches to awareness raising and global citizenship, moving beyond consultations to incorporate technologies, creative endeavors and partnerships. With respect to the latter, good practices work through partnerships with local organizations, recognizing their close connections with communities and ability to directly engage with citizens and other stakeholders in ways that resonate at local levels. Working with a range of stakeholders also promotes a whole-of-society approach to 2030 Agenda implementation.

**INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY**

Awareness raising and global citizenship promotion should be both inclusive and participatory. In other words, efforts should be taken to reach all members of a society. In addition to harnessing partnerships, good practice also means being inclusive of different partners, including working with sub-national governments, civil society, academia, business associations and other capable groups. Good practice for raising awareness should focus on leaving no one behind, especially those who have been historically marginalized. Good practice should also consider intergenerational equity, meaning awareness raising and global citizenship efforts for all generations in formats that work for them. What works for one generation may not work for another and all generations need to participate in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

**Standard practices**

Civil society reviews of VNR reports from 2016, 2017 and 2018 have identified a number of emerging standard practices to raise awareness and promote global citizenship for the 2030 Agenda. The most commonly cited standard practice is awareness raising during the VNR process or national priority setting. Many countries have recognized that awareness raising requires ongoing efforts, with several highlighting the need for more action. While initial efforts to raise awareness are welcome, there is a need for long-term planning.

In terms of activities, the standard practices emerging from VNR reports include awareness-raising campaigns both in person and online by government, as well as efforts by civil society organizations (most frequently) and in some instances business associations. Another commonly cited form of awareness raising is the translation of the 2030 Agenda into local languages. Some countries have claimed that such translation is an important part of raising public awareness, but it does not actively promote engagement, though it does improve accessibility, moving towards good practice. Efforts to promote global citizenship tend to include education initiatives, award programs and volunteerism. While VNR reports show that

many countries have begun to raise awareness and promote global citizenship for 2030 Agenda implementation, several have not and there is a need for such efforts to begin with urgency.

## Good Practices

The VNR reports and interviews with civil society organizations highlight established good practices around raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda. These good practices include establishing plans for raising awareness and promoting global citizenship that reach all segments of society. Good practice also includes partnering with specific groups and organizations that are well placed to engage different segments of society. In this context, working with the media is a good practice, as is introducing the 2030 Agenda in formal education curricula. Innovative approaches include developing mobile applications to raise awareness of the SDGs, making use of competitions and the arts to engage citizens (including youth) and organizations, and supporting a variety of partners to contribute to sustainable development. Finally, a good practice is establishing long-term mechanisms for raising awareness and promoting global citizenship. As 2030 Agenda implementation progresses, there is a need for new and innovative ways to continue to raise awareness and promote global citizenship to keep up with the changing world.

### ITERATIVE

Rather than only raising awareness during the most visible SDG implementation stages—the VNR process and establishment of national priorities—government institutions and non-state actors must raise awareness and promote global citizenship during all stages of implementation. **Finland, Paraguay** and **Uganda** have all created communication plans that detail when and how raising awareness will be done throughout the timeline of the 2030 Agenda. Acknowledging this timeline and having a plan moves beyond the typical awareness-raising periods around VNR reporting time.

Education programs and curricula are also popular in many countries. **Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Paraguay** and **South Korea** all use education to increase awareness of the 2030 Agenda and promote global citizenship. In **Denmark**, the Green Generation project involves public awareness initiatives and the development of green curricula. Cooperation between government institutions is also occurring to increase awareness of the SDGs. **Greece's** Institute of Training of the National School of Public Administration and Local Government provides a recurring three-day seminar on the SDGs. The seminar includes multiple stakeholders, such as representatives of ministries, local and regional governmental institutions, universities, research centres and independent authorities, to enhance awareness of the

objectives of the 2030 Agenda. **Ireland** established a [Development Education Strategy 2017 – 2023](#), which promotes a lifelong educational process that increases awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing world. **Paraguay** has launched a learning day on the SDGs to raise awareness about the importance of youth participation in their implementation. In **Norway** and **South Korea**, the SDGs have been incorporated into school curricula and textbooks.

In **Latvia**, an international campaign—the [World's Largest Lesson](#)—has been underway for three years. It aims to foster accountability for cultural and natural resources, promote civic participation, involve all citizens in shaping an inclusive society and sustain a strong economy. In addition, civil society organizations host an annual [Global Education Week](#) that engages individuals and organizations from around the country. The [Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation](#) prepares toolkits and materials each year, inviting a range of stakeholders—civil society organizations, youth, libraries and others—to make use of the materials and host their own events.

### BEYOND BUSINESS AS USUAL

Approaches that move beyond business as usual build capacity for ongoing awareness raising and promotion of global citizenship. In **Finland**, the [Finnish Youth Cooperation](#) aims to enhance awareness of and realize the 2030 Agenda among young people through various events. This group takes an extra step by letting young people take the reins on raising awareness among their own demographic, thereby building the capacities of youth leaders. **Mexico** has internship opportunities for youth in order to promote awareness of the SDGs. There have also been training programs that involved 900 young people who were encouraged to share knowledge about the SDGs with peers.

In **Spain**, institutional capacity for awareness raising has been developed through the creation of the SDG Observatory that monitors the implementation of the 2030 Agenda domestically and internationally. It raises public awareness through its transformative potential to promote sustainable development by focusing on people and nature and guaranteeing the exercise of human rights to leave no one behind.

### INNOVATIVE

Practices that are innovative include using new and unique ideas that raise awareness and promote global citizenship. **Finland, Germany, Latvia** and **Romania** have experimented with innovative approaches. In **Finland**, the Prime Minister's Office and

Ministry for Foreign Affairs arranged a regional tour of Finnish cities solely to raise awareness and talk about the 2030 Agenda. Local actors and government officials participated in the tour as well. In **Germany**, sustainable consumption is promoted through expanding credible labelling schemes based on environmental and social standards. A list of sustainability labels, including the government-sponsored eco-label the Blue Angel, can be found [online](#). The labelling system is a new way to raise awareness about sustainable development. In **Latvia**, civil society organizations created a newsletter about the 2030 Agenda that was distributed by youth in rural areas. In **Romania**, there was a coordinated competition on innovative sustainable development practices between top high schools. The government incorporated their perspectives into decision-making processes.

Artistic expression can be an important way to raise awareness and promote global citizenship. In **Lithuania**, there are documentary film festivals, photography exhibitions, interactive events and active discussions to enhance public engagement on the SDGs. **Thailand** has promoted a variety of youth engagement activities including the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy<sup>3</sup> speech and essay contests. The contests help Thai youth understand how the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy contributes to the achievement of the SDGs. In **Mexico**, there is [PienZa Sostenible](#), which has carried out a public art project to analyze and reflect on the country's current state of development in relation to the 17 SDGs.

Finally, experiences from **Canada, Egypt, Nepal** and **Sweden** provide examples of making use of technology to better engage citizens, namely youth. In **Canada**, [Nutrien](#), a company that works in agriculture, has developed [a series of mobile applications](#) to educate young people on the importance of food security and sustainability. [Global Hero](#), for example, includes 17 games that aim to educate youth on each of the SDGs. **Egypt** created a mobile application called "Sharek," which means participate. It allows citizens, particularly youth, to raise awareness of sustainable development and participate in the review of the country's Strategy for Sustainable Development. In addition to translating the 2030 Agenda into local languages, which has been key to raising awareness in **Nepal** with local populations, maintaining a website dedicated to the 2030 Agenda has helped to raise awareness. **Sweden's** Ministry of Foreign Affairs promotes the SDGs with its [#FirstGeneration](#) initiative and recognizes the vital role of educators in instructing youth on sustainable development.

## **Q** INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY

Inclusive and participatory awareness-raising approaches are crucial to implementing the 2030 Agenda with a whole-of-society approach. **Andorra** reached a broad audience through a major dissemination campaign that was conducted on the radio and through newspapers to encourage participation in its consultations. In **Belgium**, the [SDG Voices campaign](#) is comprised of eight organizations including local governments, private sector actors and civil society organizations. It promotes the SDGs as models through various activities. **Ireland** selects a number of national organizations from across a multi-stakeholder network to act as [SDG Champions](#), which leverage their public profiles to raise awareness of the SDGs and draw on their experiences to demonstrate the relevance of the goals to daily life in the country. In **Lithuania**, development cooperation projects have been presented in the form of cartoons, radio quizzes, advertisements and school campaigns, which outline projects implemented in different regions and involving partners like non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector. These initiatives reach a large range of regions and demographics.

A number of examples also exist of partnerships with and efforts by civil society organizations to raise awareness. Efforts by the [Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh](#)—a civil society platform in **Bangladesh**—have included generation of knowledge on the 2030 Agenda as a means to raise awareness of the SDGs among civil society organizations. In **Brazil**, civil society organizations have been collectively identified as key actors in raising public awareness of the 2030 Agenda. There has been cooperation with sub-national governments in promoting public engagement. The inclusion of multiple levels of government, various organizations and different sectors is important because all actors have complementary reach and impacts in society. **Denmark's** [Civil Society in Development](#)—a civil society platform that represents small and medium-sized organizations working in international development—manages a [fund](#) for civil society organizations that includes funding for public engagement, providing members with resources to raise awareness on the 2030 Agenda. In **Slovakia**, there is an award for the private sector that recognizes social and environmental contributions to the SDGs and serves to raise awareness of sustainable development. In **South Korea**, the [Korean Civil Society Forum on International Development Cooperation](#) is working to implement the SDGs, raise public awareness, and improve cooperation between non-state actors.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Government of Thailand, the [Sufficiency Economy Philosophy](#) is "an approach for sustainable development which espouses moderation, reasonableness and prudence as development framework based on knowledge and virtue. The Philosophy attaches great importance to human development at all levels and emphasizes the need to strengthen community's capacity to ensure a balanced way of life and resilience, with full respect for the environment."

Finally, **Jamaica**, **Japan**, **Nigeria** and **Spain** have had positive experiences raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda with the media and through media partnerships. In **Jamaica**, citizens were engaged through exhibitions, promotional events, community outreach program, billboards and radio interviews. **Japan's** media are actively promoting the SDGs by reporting on the activities that contribute to SDG implementation and hosting a symposium to raise public awareness. The media taking a leading role in raising awareness pushes the norm and supports a whole-of-society approach to raising awareness. Civil society organizations in **Nigeria** have developed a partnership with local media companies to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda. The [Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development](#)—a membership-based organization composed of civil society and the media—has established an initiative to broadcast talk shows and regular radio programming on the SDGs. Members of the coalition provide content while media partners provide the platform. This partnership has included programming in local languages, helping to bring awareness of the 2030 Agenda and related initiatives to local populations. For its part, **Spain** has adopted many innovative and effective awareness-raising tactics in collaboration with the Global Compact Spanish Network

and Atresmedia a media group. A television commercial for the campaign reached more than 31 million people, 73.8% of Spain's population, and the radio commercial was heard by more than six million people, 15.21% of the population.

With respect to global citizenship, a number of countries highlighted the promotion of volunteerism in their VNR reports. Many businesses in **Australia** promote volunteerism that contributes to the SDGs among their staff. Volunteers contribute domestically and internationally. According to Australia's VNR report, all individuals volunteering internationally receive a briefing on the SDGs.

**Slovakia** promotes volunteerism through its national Volunteer of the Year award which includes a special 2030 Agenda contribution category. This award fosters global citizenship among citizens in Slovakia. In **Togo**, volunteerism is seen as a key aspect of SDG implementation. Civic Commitment Volunteerism is a youth program that has seen over 8,127 volunteers mobilized, most of whom are unschooled or have dropped out of school. These volunteers work to achieve socio-economic development and fight poverty while boosting their competencies.



Photo Credit: PeaceGeeks



## Recommendations

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The international community has recognized that a whole-of-society approach is essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Awareness raising and the promotion of global citizenship are necessary elements for building support and encouraging contributions to SDG implementation over the long term. Governments can raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and promote global citizenship in a number of key ways.

### **Develop a long-term national plan for awareness raising and the promotion of global citizenship.**

A national plan for raising awareness and promoting global citizenship should be long-term, beyond the identification of national priorities and VNR reporting years. It should be formalized within national implementation strategies and set clear expectations, roles and responsibilities for awareness raising and global citizenship promotion for a range of non-state actors and government institutions. In addition, a plan should look at how to build on existing initiatives.

### **Use a variety of online and offline approaches to reach different audiences.**

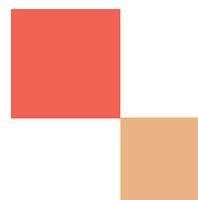
Awareness-raising mechanisms should include a variety of social and traditional media campaigns in local languages in order to reach as many communities as possible. Social media, television, radio and newspaper advertisements can all be employed in different ways to reach different target communities. As a starting point, there should be a dedicated website in all local languages.

### **Integrate sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda into curricula.**

In line with commitments to quality education under the 2030 Agenda, sustainable development and global citizenship education should be integrated into curricula at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, with additional adult education opportunities made available through formal and informal education sectors. Experts within the teaching and civil society communities should be brought together to both develop curricula and identify points of entry in the formal and informal education sectors to incorporate curricula that promote sustainable development and global citizenship.

### **Support concrete opportunities for citizens to take action on sustainable development locally and globally.**

Support for opportunities, such as volunteering and small-scale initiatives, that link local and global efforts fosters global citizenship. Recognition of the contributions of citizens and promotion of their active engagement on sustainable development supports a whole-of-society approach to 2030 Agenda implementation through collective ownership and action.



### Partner to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and promote global citizenship.

A variety of stakeholders—including government institutions, civil society, local communities, academia, the private sector and the media—should be empowered to leverage their expertise to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda in their communities and promote global citizenship. For example, academic institutions can lead in the development of curricula and work with students to support their efforts as global citizens. Civil society organizations can work directly with local communities to hold events, and implement projects that enable global citizenship and facilitate volunteerism. Business associations can work with the private sector to raise awareness and mobilize actions that contribute to sustainable development. Most importantly, local communities should be enabled to self-determine the most appropriate campaigns, events, and education materials

that support local SDG efforts, either independently or in partnership with other stakeholders. Sub-national governments are important actors in this context and should be supported to ensure effective translation of the SDGs into local plans that reflect local priorities.

### Take innovative and creative approaches to awareness raising and global citizenship.

Identifying the best ways to connect with citizens on the 2030 Agenda is a challenge that governments and other stakeholders face. Harnessing existing initiatives and efforts that engage citizens as well as making use of innovative and creative approaches, including working through the arts, sports and technology, can contribute to effective awareness raising and global citizenship promotion.



Photo Credit: HUGGS Canada

How to cite this document: Wayne-Nixon, Laurel, Wragg-Morris, Tanya, Mishra, Anjali, Markle, Dawson, and Kindornay, Shannon. 2019. *Raising awareness and promoting global citizenship to realize the 2030 Agenda*. Good Practice in 2030 Agenda Implementation Series. Vancouver and Ottawa: British Columbia Council for International Cooperation and Canadian Council for International Co-operation.

The authors thank Deborah Glaser (BCCIC) for her review of this policy brief. The authors would also like to thank Daniel Lam, Valenda Koster, Michelle Paguia, Jessica Cho and Kevin Kwong for their inputs. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.