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# A Glance at Least Developed Countries' Institutional Arrangements for SDG Implementation at the National Level, 2015-2021

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## ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the development of national institutional arrangements in support of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since 2015 in the 46 Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The analysis is based on a set of indicators of institutional “milestones” in relation to SDG implementation, developed in the World Public Sector Report 2021. The results highlight commonalities as well as difference between institutional developments in LDCs and in a sample of countries at all levels of development analyzed in the World Public Sector Report. Similarities include the rapid and almost universal creation of high-level coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation and publication of at least one voluntary national review report. Differences include the lower level of engagement of civil society in SDG follow-up and review in LDCs, and the low number of LDCs having created government-managed central SDG hubs with information that goes beyond SDG indicators. On average, the achievement of specific milestones has been slower in LDCs than in other countries. The review also revealed that information related to public strategy and policy documents in LDCs is often hard to find on the web, which raises questions about awareness and engagement of all stakeholders around SDGs in those national contexts.

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

## Introduction

In 2015, all 193 UN Members States adopted the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Consequently, there has been a worldwide renewed commitment to sustainable development, particularly with a focus on people, the planet, and prosperity. National institutions play a core role in establishing the necessary foundations to reach the SDG targets by the 15-year timeframe. Although stakeholders outside of national government institutions, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and civil society organizations (CSOs) play a fundamental role as well, it is a country's respective government that provides the crucial oversight and leadership to achieve the SDGs. As the 2030 Agenda's halfway mark nears, there is an opportunity for reflection – both on the significant progress that has been made and the areas that need attention. There is also an opportunity to learn about countries' successes and challenges.

In August 2021, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) published the World Public Sector Report 2021. The first chapter of the report took stock of developments in institutional arrangements put in place by countries to implement the SDGs since 2015. In particular, the chapter introduced simple indicators of institutional “milestones”, which allow for cross-country comparisons of the scope and speed of institutional developments relevant to SDG implementation. The methodology was applied to a sample of 24 countries at various levels of development. The main results of this approach were summarized in a UNDESA policy brief on “A View of Changes in Institutional Arrangements for SDG Implementation at the National Level Since 2015”.<sup>1</sup>

In particular, 9 “milestones” were investigated: integration of the SDGs into a national development strategy or plan, publication of SDG roadmap, creation of a high-level piloting structure for SDG implementation in government, parliament's involvement, publication of national SDG indicators, government reporting on SDG progress at the national level, creation of a central SDG hub, involvement of the national supreme audit institution in SDG follow up and review, and evaluation by non-state actors. These milestones provide a comprehensive overview of the type of steps that have been taken regarding national frameworks for SDG implementation.

The objective of this policy brief is to replicate the 2021 policy brief, focusing on the Least Developed Countries (LDC). Thus, whereas the previous policy brief provided an overview of national institutions set in place for SDG implementation in both developing and developed countries, this paper will provide a more focused lens on the least developed countries. In total, 46 countries have been categorized as LDCs, based on low Gross National Income (GNI), low Human Assets Index (HAI), and a high Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index (EVI).<sup>2</sup> From a

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<sup>1</sup> Ainbinder, Lisa, and David Le Blanc. UN/DESA Policy Brief #116: A View of Changes in Institutional Arrangements for SDG Implementation at the National Level since 2015. United Nations, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-116-a-view-of-changes-in-institutional-arrangements-for-sdg-implementation-at-the-national-level-since-2015/>.

<sup>2</sup> “LDC Identification Criteria & Indicators.” United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category/ldc-criteria.html>.

geographical perspective, 33 of the LDCs are in Africa, 9 in Asia, 3 in the Pacific, and 1 in the Caribbean.<sup>3</sup>

The LDCs are an important group to analyze, as they are more vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks. They are also countries where institutional capacity may be challenged due to resource constraints and other structural constraints. Hence, it is valuable to gather insight into the institutional frameworks that LDCs have put in place to implement the SDGs at the national level since 2015.

## Methodology and limitations

Before delving deeper into the findings of this paper, it is important to understand the methodology that was used to conduct the research. As a start, the same 9 milestones analyzed in the 2021 policy brief were used.

The first milestone that assists the steering of the SDGs is the creation of a high-level piloting structure for SDG implementation in government. This milestone helps reflect whether the government has put an institution in charge of oversight and execution of the SDGs.

Parliament involvement is another milestone that contributes to the steering and piloting of the SDGs, as well as planning, monitoring, and review. More specifically, this milestone provides a glimpse at how involved a country's parliament is in the carrying out of the SDGs. The criterion for this milestone requires that a specific committee, caucus, or working group was created in parliament, or that an official report was published by parliament on SDG implementation. It is, therefore, important to recognize that some LDCs have had parliament engagement with SDGs that did not fit this criterion. For instance, Burkina Faso, along with other LDCs, had SDG-related parliament workshops.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, there have been examples of SDG committees or working groups in which parliaments were engaged, but not as the sole stakeholder.

Three milestones, in particular, are integral to the planning stage of SDG implementation: integration of SDGs into a national development strategy or plan, publication of a national SDG roadmap, and publication of national SDG indicators. Once created, national indicators also play an essential role in the monitoring and review of SDG implementation. These are all milestones that reflect the forethought and strategy that has gone into executing the SDGs at a national level.

Regarding the first milestone, a document was counted if there was clear evidence of assimilation and alignment of the SDGs into the country's national plan. A few countries had planning documents that acknowledged the existence of the SDGs, but did not thoroughly explain how the SDGs are integrated with the national framework. Instead, their national development plan or

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<sup>3</sup> *Map of the Least Developed Countries*. UNCTAD, <https://unctad.org/topic/least-developed-countries/map>.

<sup>4</sup> *IPU Member Parliaments Walking the Talk*. Inter-Parliamentary Union, <https://www.ipu.org/news/news-in-brief/2018-10/ipu-member-parliaments-walking-talk>.

strategy notes that it “is inspired by,”<sup>5</sup> “should be aligned”<sup>6</sup> with, is “contextualized by”<sup>7</sup>, or “forms the basis for pursuing”<sup>8</sup> the SDGs. These were therefore not counted as meeting the criterion.

Regarding the milestone on the publication of a national SDG roadmap, in order to be counted, the document had to clearly explain how the country aims to carry out the SDGs from the current date to 2030. Roadmaps that did not span until 2030 or did not include a plan for all SDGs were not counted.

In turn, the milestone on publication of national SDG indicators required that the country had created a list of SDG indicators that were nationally aligned with the country, rather than using the 231 unique global SDG indicators. Depending on the context, countries that referred to “prioritized” or “localized” indicators were not automatically counted as having national SDG indicators, because this does not guarantee that a process was carried out to create specific national indicators.

In addition to the publication of national indicators, various other milestones are also vital for SDG monitoring and evaluation, such as government reporting on SDG progress, Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) involvement, evaluation by non-state actors, and creation of a central SDG hub. These are all critical elements that can be set in place to ensure that the strategies created during the planning phase are followed through.

For the milestone on government reporting on SDG progress, a Voluntary National Review (VNR) was the most common means of satisfying this milestone. VNRs culminate in SDG progress reports that are presented at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development each year in July. From 2016 to 2021, total VNR reports have ranged from 0 to 3 per country.

The milestone on SAI’s involvement requires that a country has published a national audit report on SDG preparedness.

Regarding the milestone on evaluation by non-state actors, CSOs had to publish a report on a nation’s SDG progress covering a broad set of SDGs. Hence, the many CSOs which published shadow reports that were limited to one or two SDGs were not counted. Examples include Amis de l’Afrique Francophone – Benin (AMAF\_BENIN)’s alternative report on the implementation of SDG target 15.2, and the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia’s shadow report on the monitoring and review of SDG 16 plus. Blogs or articles published by CSOs as opposed to full reports also did not count.

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<sup>5</sup> République Du Burundi, 2018, *Plan National De Développement Du Burundi PND Burundi 2018-2027*, <http://www.presidence.gov.bi/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/PND-Burundi-2018-2027-Version-Finale.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Gouvernement De La République Centrafricaine, *République Centrafricaine : Plan National De Relèvement Et De Consolidation De La Paix*, <https://republiquencentrafricaine.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/RCPCA%20doc.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> República Da Guiné-Bissau, 2020, *Plano Nacional De Desenvolvimento (PND) 2020-2023*, <https://www.mef.gw/publicacoes/plano-nacional-de-desenvolvimento-pnd/23-pnd-plurianual-1/file>.

<sup>8</sup> República De Moçambique, 2020, *Programa Quinquenal Do Governo: 2020-2024*, [http://www.ts.gov.mz/images/PQG\\_2020.2024\\_Versao\\_AR\\_02042020-min.pdf](http://www.ts.gov.mz/images/PQG_2020.2024_Versao_AR_02042020-min.pdf).

**Table 1: Defining the milestones chosen to represent institutional arrangements for SDG implementation**

Milestones	Criteria	Comments
Creation of a high-level piloting structure for SDG implementation in government	Government high-level institutional mechanism established (e.g. Ministry mandated) to coordinate SDG implementation at the national level.	Date of mandate or of institutional mechanism creation
Parliament's involvement	Specific committee/caucus/working group in Parliament created or mandated to work on the SDGs; or official report issued by Parliament on SDG implementation.	Date of creation or mandate, or date of Parliament's report.
Integration of the SDGs into a National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) or National Development Plan (NDP)	Published NSDS or NDP based on the SDGs, or reflecting clearly the correspondence between national development goals and the SDGs.	Date of publication.
Publication of a national SDG roadmap or action plan for SDG implementation	Published SDG implementation roadmap or action plan presenting how the country is planning to implement the SDGs until 2030. The strategy needs to cover all the SDGs.	Date of publication.
Publication of national SDG indicators	First time a set of agreed national SDG indicators is published (either through a report or an online platform presenting the indicators).	Date of first publication.
Government reporting on SDG progress at the national level	First time government reports on SDG implementation at the national level - either through a VNR report or an SDG progress report.	Date of publication.
SAI's involvement	First national audit report on SDG preparedness published by the SAI, OR first occurrence of official involvement of the SAI in the VNR or national SDG reporting process.	Date of publication.
Evaluation by non-state actors	First time an evaluation of progress report is published independently by civil society (shadow report, also called alternative report); or first time an independent evaluation commissioned by the government is published.	Date of publication.
Creation of a central SDG hub – electronic portal	Launch of a dedicated central online portal operated by the government with information on the country's initiatives to implement the SDGs. The platform has to include information beyond SDG indicators.	Date of launch.
SDG Data Portal	Launch of an SDG data portal that is either established by the government or has been selected by the government.	Date of publication.

Lastly, for the creation of a central SDG hub, an electronic portal had to be established by the government that was more encompassing than just SDG indicators and data. Some countries published SDG-related news on their respective government websites; however, this does not fulfill the criteria of an SDG hub.

In addition to the 9 milestones used in the previous policy brief, a SDG data portal milestone was added. This milestone helps reflect any electronic hub that has country-specific data on global or national SDG indicators. This was added because it provided a more comprehensive overview of a government's online presence regarding SDG implementation. Only 3 LDCs seemed to have an electronic SDG hub, whereas 33 LDCs seemed to have an SDG data portal, a finding that will be elaborated on in more detail later in this brief.

For each of the 10 milestones, a "1" was added for the year in which the first relevant document, publication or website was produced, or group established. This, therefore, allows for a snapshot of whether a milestone was met. However, it does not provide insight as to whether a plan/group/website has been maintained and is continually operating. It is important to keep this limitation in mind.

A challenge that surfaced while investigating LDCs was lack of access to public documents on the Internet. It was often challenging to find official documents mentioned in Voluntary National Review reports, as well as to determine the date at which a report/website was published or a group created. This difficulty of access to the data for some of the LDCs represents a difference with the non-LDC countries that were investigated in the World Public Sector Report 2021, for which it was generally possible to access government documents from a Google search. Therefore, an additional visual representation was added in Figures 1, 2, and 4 to accommodate this limitation.

## Results

At the outset, LDCs have made significant advancements in a variety of institutional arrangements (see Figure 1). For instance, a majority of LDC governments have created a high-level piloting structure in charge of SDG oversight, have integrated the SDGs into their national development strategies and plans, and have published a report on SDG progress. Nevertheless, there are also milestones that few LDCs have met, such as the creation of a central government website dedicated to the SDGs, parliament involvement, and a published shadow report by non-state actors. In general, this suggests that LDCs are committed to the 2030 Agenda and are making it a national priority. However, it also highlights areas where further institutional adjustments may be beneficial to achieve the SDGs.

Among the two piloting-related milestones, there was mixed progress. On the one hand, by 2021, 42 out of 46 LDCs (approximately 90 percent) had created a high-level piloting structure for the SDGs. Notably, over 40 percent of them achieved this early on by 2016, as illustrated in Figure 1. For approximately a third of the countries that were identified as having a high-level piloting structure, it could not be ascertained when it was established, as shown in Figure 2. Within this milestone, ministries often have an indirect or direct hand in SDG oversight responsibility. Typically, this would be carried out by the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Planning, or an equivalent ministry, such as the Ministry of Economy, Planning, and Cooperation, Ministry of



Economic and Development Planning, Ministry of Planning and Foreign Cooperation, or Ministry of Finance & Development Planning.

On the other hand, involvement of parliament in SDG implementation was observed for roughly 20 percent of the LDCs. Only 10 LDCs were observed to have fulfilled the criterion outlined in Table 1. These countries included Bhutan, Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Malawi, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia. Among these 10, 4 established the parliament's working group on SDGs in 2016.

**LDC Spotlight 1: Uganda's Parliament Involvement on the SDGs**

An interesting observation among the 10 LDCs who had parliament involvement is Uganda's transition from mechanisms set in place for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to those made for the SDGs. In particular, the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development Goals (UPFSDGs) replaced the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Millennium Development Goals, a working group that had been established in 2007. This highlights that to bolster institutional capacity, countries can utilize institutions that are already in place and alter or adjust them to best suit the new arrangements.

For the three planning-related milestones, there was also varied progress. The integration of SDGs into the national planning framework was the second highest achieved milestone among all 10. Again, a significant proportion of the LDCs that met this milestone did so by 2016. Strategies and plans from numerous countries illustrated the integration of the SDGs by including tables that demonstrate the alignment between SDG indicators and national priorities. An example of this is Myanmar's Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030).<sup>9</sup> Within three different pillars of Peace & Stability, Prosperity & Partnership, and People & Planet, the planning document specifically notes the alignment between each of the action plans and the SDGs. Additional details such as strategic outcomes and relevant agencies were also included.

Seventeen LDCs were identified as having SDG implementation roadmaps. Among those, approximately half had planning documents with reference to roadmaps, but the actual document itself could not be accessed on the Internet in the context of this research, as shown in Figure 2. This reiterates that there is an accessibility barrier between the SDG-related documents that national institutions report they produce and what can easily be found online by the public.

<sup>9</sup> Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018 – 2030) . The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Ministry of Planning and Finance, Aug. 2018, [https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Core\\_Doc\\_Myanmar\\_Sustainable\\_Development\\_Plan\\_2018\\_-\\_2030\\_Aug2018.pdf](https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Core_Doc_Myanmar_Sustainable_Development_Plan_2018_-_2030_Aug2018.pdf).

Figure 1: Number of LDCs Achieving Given Milestones by Year

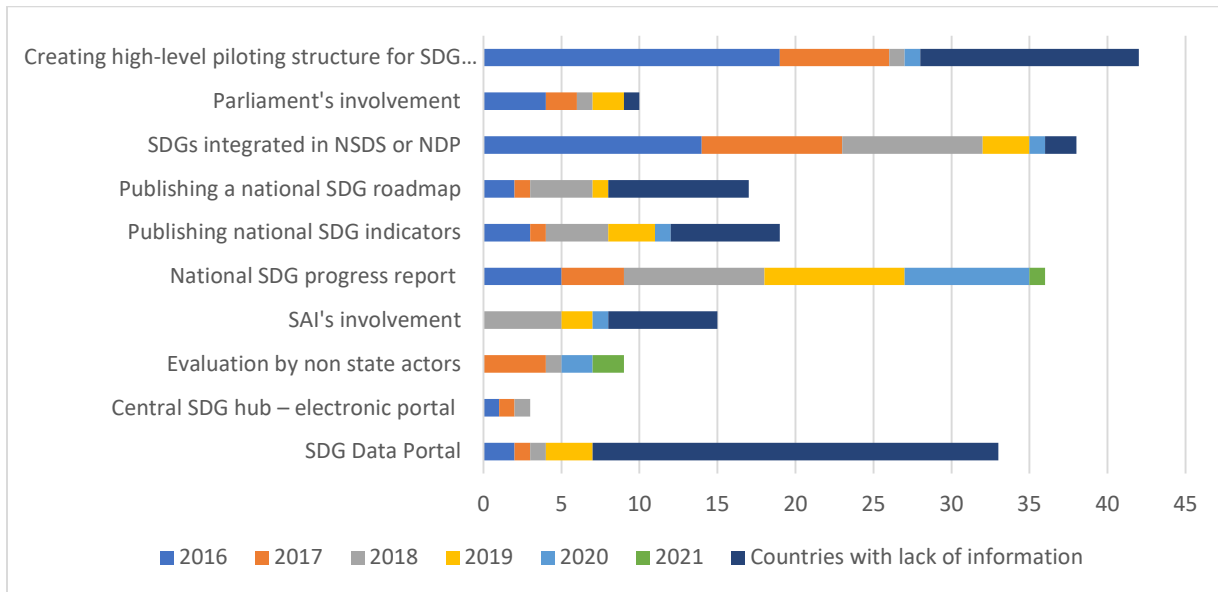
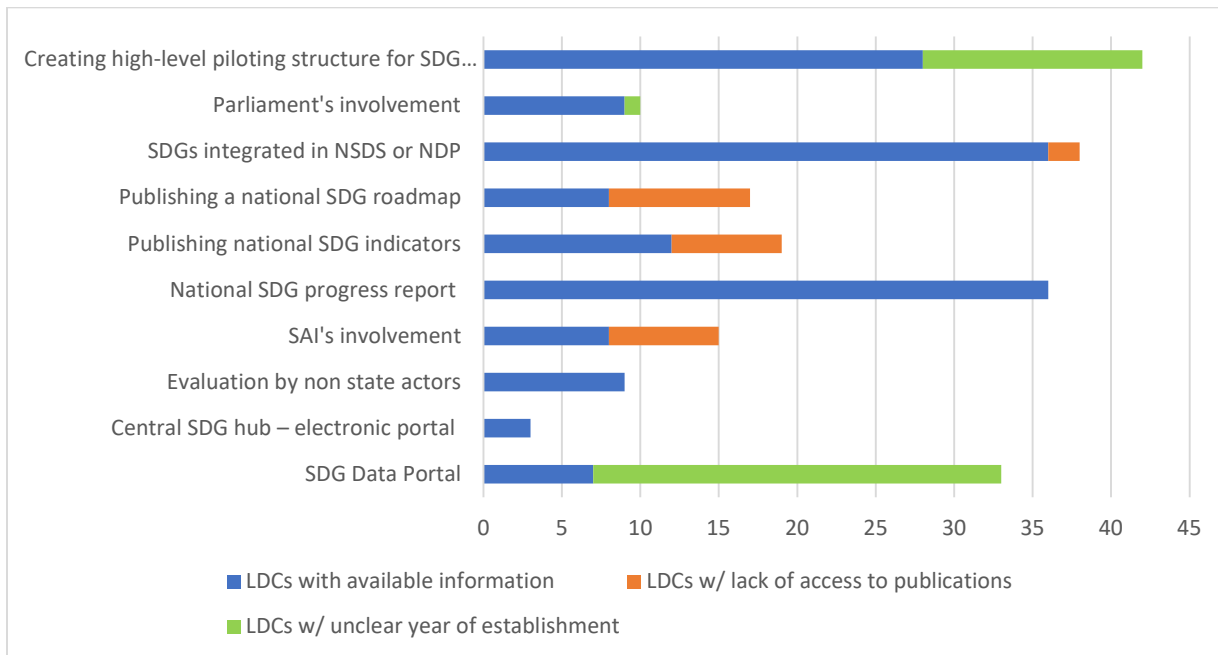


Figure 2: Number of LDCs Achieving Given Milestones with Breakdown of Availability of Information





### **LDC Spotlight 2: Nepal's SDG Roadmap**

An example of a country that had a comprehensive roadmap is Nepal, titled “Sustainable Development Goals, Status and Roadmap: 2016-2030”. Its roadmap spans from 2016 to 2030, which includes the full length of the 2030 Agenda. Certain components that were included in the roadmap are Nepal's development context, implementation methods of SDGs (identification, instruments, investment, institutions), and framework for tracking progress. There is also a detailed outline of all the SDGs, relevant indicators, and targets for 2019, 2022, 2025, and 2030, along with the responsible agencies in charge.

Another key milestone is the publication of national SDG indicators. In total, there are 231 unique global SDG indicators; however, not all of these are relevant to all of the LDCs. For instance, a country located in the Pacific Ocean will likely place much heavier importance on SDG 14 than a landlocked country with no geographic proximity to large bodies of water. Some countries also see the 17 SDGs as not fully encompassing national priorities. In all, 19 LDCs published national SDG indicators. A little more than a third of these 19 countries had planning documents with references to national SDG indicators, but the relevant publications could not be found on the Web.

### **LDC Spotlight 3: Cambodia's National SDG Indicators**

Cambodia has nationalized the SDGs into the CSDGs (Cambodian SDGs), finalizing the process in 2018. The CSDGs include the 17 SDGs, with an added 18<sup>th</sup> SDG to reflect the goal of Demining and Explosive Remnants. As one of the world's most highly mined countries, this is an important objective for the nation. Within the CSDGs, there are 88 nationally relevant targets and 96 national indicators.

The third most achieved milestone among the 10 was the publication of a national SDG progress report. Out of the 46 LDCs, 36 had published SDG progress reports by the end of 2021. Among the 10 that have not yet done so, 6 of them were on track to present their first Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the High-Level Political Forum in 2022. This includes Djibouti, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, and Tuvalu.

Most notably, it can be observed that the frequency at which LDCs are publishing SDG progress reports is not very different from that of other countries. For instance, on average, LDCs published 1.13 VNRs from 2016 to 2021. This is slightly lower than the average (1.33) for the 147 non-LDC countries. Among all 193 UN Member States, the average number of VNRs published since 2016 is 1.27. Overall, developing countries are reporting only slightly less in terms of quantity of VNRs. This may be due to fewer resources that can be allocated toward SDG reporting. Yet, some developed countries have not published any VNR report either.

For the milestone on SAI involvement, in approximately a third of the LDCs, the SAI published an audit report on SDG preparedness. In 8 of those countries, the report is publicly available. In 7 countries, official documents refer to an audit being done, but the audit report did not seem to be

publicly available. This could be due to the audit not yet being completed, or the report being confidential. As illustrated in Figure 1, there did not appear to be any SAI audit reports on SDG progress before 2018, which is consistent with the timing found for other countries (see World Public Sector Report 2021).

Although an expansive number of CSOs were found to be engaged with the VNR process in LDCs, very few CSOs have independently published holistic evaluations of SDG progress. CSO shadow reports were found in only 9 countries – Afghanistan, Chad, Malawi, Nepal, Niger, Togo, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia. Examples include Transparency International's "Policy, SDGs and Fighting Corruption for the People" in Afghanistan, the Centre for the Development of People's "Civil Society Report on Implementation of SDGs in Nepal, 2017," and Movement for Peace, Disarmament and Freedom's "Economic and Social Rights Report Niger" that focused on SDG 3, 4, 8, 16, and 17. Similar to the trend in SAI involvement, evaluation by non-state actors also seems to have emerged later than the piloting and planning related milestones.

In today's digital world, one of the most effective ways of communicating with the public is through online means such as an SDG hub. However, among the 10 milestones that were investigated across all 46 LDCs, this was the one that the fewest countries had achieved. Only 3 LDCs - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal - seemed to have comprehensive electronic central SDG hubs published by the government, as opposed to through the UN or another third party. These websites included some of the following features: achievements, news, events, resources, publications, reports, targets, indicators, initiatives, and dashboards.

Beyond SDG hubs, a multitude of LDCs have established SDG data portals featuring data for SDG indicators. Such data portals allow stakeholders to track progress on certain indicators. As demonstrated in Figure 3, over half of the LDCs have an SDG data portal through the African Development Bank's (AfDB) Open Data Platform (ODP). Through this portal, users can look at SDG progress either by SDG or by country. As confirmed by DESA's UN Stats page, countries such as Burundi, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, Uganda, and Zambia, have picked the AfDB ODP as their SDG indicator platform.<sup>10</sup> There is, however, an AfDB ODP site for all African countries. Among the 33 countries with AfDB ODPs, 8 of them had an operating website with no data present. These 8 were therefore not counted as milestone achievements. Among the 25 African LDCs who had data available on their AfDB ODP, a majority of the data was outdated.

Similar to the AfDB ODP, there is also a Pacific Data Hub covering some countries in the Pacific region.<sup>11</sup> Through this data hub, users can navigate the platform by SDG indicator or by country. The Pacific SDG Taskforce agreed on 132 relevant SDG indicators for the 16 Pacific Island Countries and Territories, including the three LDCs Kiribati, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu.<sup>12</sup> Although data is missing for many of the indicators, the data spans from 2010 to 2020.

<sup>10</sup> *UNSD-FCDO Project on SDG Monitoring*. United Nations, <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/UNSD-FCDO/>.

<sup>11</sup> "17 Sustainable Development Goals in the Pacific Dashboard." *17 Goals To Transform The Pacific*, Pacific Data Hub, <https://pacificdata.org/dashboard/17-goals-transform-pacific>.

<sup>12</sup> "SDD's Involvement in the SDGs." *Pacific Activities in SDGs*, Statistics For Development Division, <https://sdd.spc.int/sdds-involvement-sdgs>.

In addition to the AfDB ODP and Pacific Data Hub, some countries had their own data portals, including Bangladesh<sup>13</sup>, Bhutan<sup>14</sup>, Cambodia<sup>15</sup>, Laos<sup>16</sup>, Rwanda<sup>17</sup>, Nepal<sup>18</sup>, and Sao Tome and Principe<sup>19</sup>. Three of these countries (Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, and Tanzania) also had an AfDB ODP.

Figure 3: Breakdown of LDCs' SDG data portals

Type of SDG Data Portal	Number of Countries	List of Countries
AfDB ODP	25	Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda*, Sao Tome and Principe*, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Tanzania*, Zambia
AfDB ODP with no data	8	Angola, Central African Republic, Chad, DRC, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone
Pacific Data Hub	3	Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu
Own data portal	8	Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, Rwanda*, Sao Tome and Principe*, Tanzania*
No data portal found	5	Afghanistan, Haiti, Myanmar, Timor-Leste, Yemen

\* = countries with two different data portals.

Now that a deep dive has been conducted for each of the 10 milestones individually, it is valuable to look at the overall trends. For instance, Figure 4 provides a snapshot of the distribution of the number of milestones achieved at the end of select years between 2016 and 2021 for the 46 LDCs. The figure illustrates the progress in number of milestones achieved over time. Specifically, in 2016, 33 countries had achieved one or zero milestones; in 2019, 20 LDCs had achieved 2 or 3 milestones, and 12 had achieved 4 or 5; in 2021, only 14 LDCs had achieved fewer than 3 milestones. This suggests a consistent trend towards more elaborate institutional frameworks for SDG implementation over the years. However, these figures are likely to underestimate institutional changes in LDCs, due to the lack of accessibility of documents in some countries and the difficulty in assigning precise dates to them.

<sup>13</sup> 39+1 Indicators. SDG Tracker, Bangladesh's Development Mirror, [https://www.sdg.gov.bd/page/thirty\\_nine\\_plus\\_one\\_indicator/5#1](https://www.sdg.gov.bd/page/thirty_nine_plus_one_indicator/5#1).

<sup>14</sup> Sustainable Development Goals, DEWA, <http://dewa.gov.bt/dewa/dashboard/sdg>.

<sup>15</sup> National Indicator Reporting Platform, NIS Cambodia,

<http://camstat.nis.gov.kh/?start=0&locale=en&constraints%5B0%5D=6nQpoAP%2C0%7CSDG+indicators%23SDG%23&facet=6nQpoAP>.

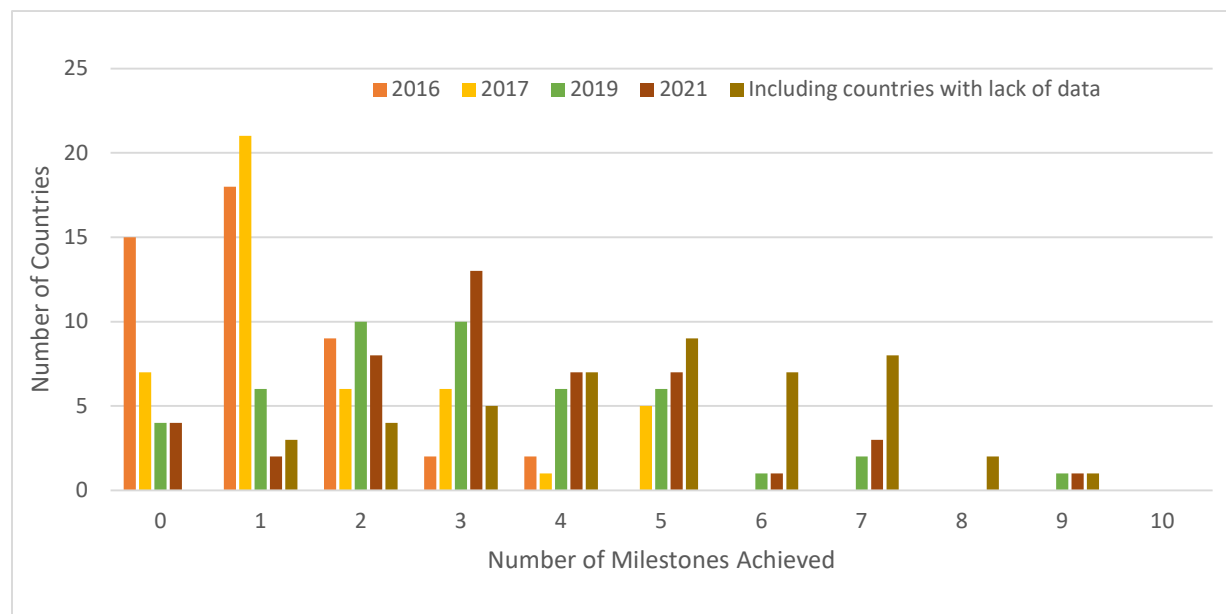
<sup>16</sup> Indicators For The Sustainable Development Goals, Lao Statistics Bureau, <https://www.lsb.gov.la/sdg/en/about/>.

<sup>17</sup> "17 Goals to Transform Our World." Sustainable Development Goals, National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, <https://sustainabledevelopment-rwanda.github.io/>.

<sup>18</sup> Sustainable Development Goals, An Official SDGs Portal of Government of Nepal, Government of Nepal, <http://sdg.npc.gov.np/en/>.

<sup>19</sup> "Sao Tome and Principe." São Tomé De Príncipe SDG Dashboard, STP DADOS, <http://www.stpdados.info/dashboard/ODS#/>.

Figure 4: **Distribution of the Number of Milestones Achieved in LDCs through Sample Years**



A comparison can also be made between the results of this paper and those of the previous policy brief, which analyzed 24 countries, both developed and developing. In both papers, the milestones on piloting structure for SDG implementation and publication of a national SDG progress report were in the top 3 most commonly achieved milestones. Some key differences, however, are that the evaluation by non-state actors was the 4th most achieved milestone in the previous report, whereas among the LDCs, it was the 2nd least achieved milestone. Additionally, the 6th highest milestone in the previous policy brief was the creation of a central SDG hub, with 63 percent of the 24 country-sample achieving that milestone. This is significantly higher than among the LDCs, where only 3 of the 46 LDCs achieved the milestone, making it the lowest attained milestone in this group of countries.

In general, the previous policy brief showed a higher percentage of milestones being met. For instance, in the 2021 report, the average achievement percentage for the 9 milestones was 73 percent among the 24 countries at the end of 2020. In comparison, for the LDCs it was 48 percent by the end of 2021. This suggests that LDCs may face more capacity limitations when it comes to establishing national arrangements for SDG implementation, hence validating the rationale to focus on LDCs. Understanding where institutional capacity constraints may come from is a key first step in being able to effectively support LDCs in prioritizing SDG implementation at the national level.