

The Importance of UNCAC Country Visits for Stakeholder Participation

First resumed 15th session of the Implementation Review Group
Next Phase of the IRM: Panel on direct dialogues
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Importance of Country Visits

- Country visits are the central element of the review process, add much value
 - Enable reviewers can get comprehensive, up-to-date information from a range of relevant government stakeholders
 - Important distinction to UNTOC review mechanism
- Entry point for participation of non-governmental stakeholders
- Enable civil society to provide findings and recommendations
 - 40+ parallel reports by civil society organizations on UNCAC implementation
- UNCAC Coalition developed a Guide for governments to transparency and participation in the review mechanism

Country Visits: Stakeholder Participation

- UNCAC Article 13:
 - “Each State Party shall take appropriate measures, within its means and in accordance with fundamental principles of its domestic law, **to promote the active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector, such as civil society, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, in the prevention of and the fight against corruption** and to raise public awareness regarding the existence, causes and gravity of and the threat posed by corruption. [...]”
- Terms of Reference of UNCAC review mechanism
 - encourages States Parties to “facilitate engagement with all relevant stakeholders in the course of a country visit.” (Chapter IV, para 30.)

Country Visits: Challenges During the Current Phase

- Country profile pages: Dates of country visits are only published after the visit
 - Does not allow for stakeholder preparation and effective engagement
- Contact of focal point not made public on country profile pages
- Invitations to stakeholders are often sent out on short notice (10 days or less), leaving little time for preparation
- Reviewers can only consider written input by stakeholders if allowed by the State Party under review
- Self-assessment often not made public – makes it more difficult for stakeholders to prepare for country visit
- Possible chilling effect when government under review is in meetings between reviewers and civil society organizations

Pre-Country Visit: Good Practices

- Publication of information on the upcoming review, including:
 - Schedule, focal point contact, entry points for stakeholder contributions
- Non-governmental stakeholders are engaged early in the review process
 - Consultation or validation workshops on draft self-assessment checklist
- Participation of a range of relevant, independent civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector, professional associations, academia, media
- Sufficient advance notice to stakeholders (ideally 1-3 months)
 - Allowing for preparation, coordination among stakeholders
 - Publish self-assessment; share agenda of the meeting, interlocutors
 - Preparatory meeting between CSOs and government

During Country Visit: Good Practices

- Meeting with non-governmental stakeholders before or at the beginning of the country visit
- Stakeholder meeting without representatives of government under review; no cameras
- Allocating sufficient time for meeting with stakeholders (2h minimum)
- Encourage and accept written submissions by non-governmental stakeholders to the reviewers, providing indications and assessments of effective UNCAC implementation & recommendations for improvements

After Country Visit: Good Practices

- Reflect stakeholder participation and their contributions in country report
- Open opportunity for CSOs to give input to a draft of the full country report
- Publishing full country report
- State party under review to continue engagement with involved stakeholders
 - Discuss findings of the review upon its compilation with stakeholders (e.g. workshop)
 - Working Group or committee of all stakeholders to monitor follow-up and recommendations
 - Stakeholder involvement in specific reform efforts
 - Inclusion of civil society experts in IRG delegation

Recommendations: Enhance Impact of Direct Dialogue

- Continue the practice of country visits, whenever feasible
- Invite a range of relevant non-governmental stakeholders, including independent civil society organizations, to participate with adequate notice
- Allocate sufficient time for engagement of non-governmental stakeholders
- Upgrade country profile pages with timely information:
 - Publish updated timelines for reviews, incl. country visit date, entry points for how civil society can engage
 - Publish contact information of the UNCAC focal point
 - Ensure data is easily accessible and in open data format (ideally with email notification feature)

Recommendations: enhance impact of direct dialogue

- Publicly share the self-assessment before DD/country visit
- Share relevant documentation with stakeholders
- Publish details on stakeholder participation in the review (who, how)
 - Publish written input submitted to reviewers around country visit
- Enable reviewers to take into account documents submitted by stakeholders, publish them on the country profile
- Reflect stakeholder contributions and input in the country report
- Publish of full country report, including to facilitate follow-up engagement with stakeholders involved in country visit