



Libraries, IFLA and the SDGs in 2019 – Webinar, 20 September 2018

Welcome everyone to this short webinar on libraries, IFLA and the Sustainable Development Goals in 2019.

[SLIDES 1 and 2]

As underlined, this is just a short update. There will be plenty of information, so if you miss something, don't worry, you can listen to the recording at the end.

I also hope that there will be time for questions. Please use the chat box to ask these. If we don't have time to cover them all, you can e-mail me as well – I will share my e-mail address on the final slide.

Finally, given the time, I will try not to repeat too many things you've heard before. If something isn't clear, we'll show you – also at the end – how to find some of the key documents you might need.

[SLIDE 3]

So, the Sustainable Development Goals. 17 Goals, 169 targets, 232 indicators.

These have been a major focus of our advocacy work in the last few years. This is because they are both an affirmation and an opportunity for libraries.

[SLIDE 4]

They are an affirmation because, for the first time, there is a major document, signed by all UN governments, that underlines the importance of access to information.

Not just in SDG 16.10, which comes under the SDG focused on peace, justice and strong institutions. This explicitly talks about access to information, but is often interpreted as meaning access to government information.

But also in around 20 other targets across the SDGs, where the importance of access – both the physical connection, and the skills and rights to use it – is crucial.

This is exactly the access – the meaningful access – that libraries are providing every day, to everyone.

[SLIDE 5]

And they are an opportunity.

Because all governments have signed up to them – all 193 Member States of the United Nations. They have given a promise to libraries – to their users – to support access to information.

And this is not just a promise that can be forgotten, buried under new promises. Because the Member States also agreed on an ongoing process of review and reporting.

Through the specific targets and indicators, it is possible to follow progress. See who is moving ahead, who is standing still or falling behind.

And this process gives libraries an opportunity to talk about what we are doing. To explain this in terms that politicians understand. To raise awareness of how important it is. To gain support.

[SLIDE 6]

The highlight of the process for following progress in implementing the SDGs is the High Level Political Forum, held in the middle of July each year.

This brings together ministers and senior officials from member states, the UN itself, its agencies, and partners from across civil society.

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A key feature of these meetings are voluntary national reviews.

Every year, between 40 and 50 countries volunteer to come to the United Nations, and talk about what they are doing to implement the SDGs, and what progress they are making.

There are opportunities for libraries both in the preparation, and in the presentation of these.

To prepare a voluntary national review, Member States must put together a report. This should not only look at progress on the specific SDGs, but also on how well the country has implemented the broader SDG framework into policy making.

What's most interesting for libraries is that they should talk about how they have built partnerships, and engaged different actors.

They should also talk about how they are promoting the cross-cutting factors that support development across the board, such as access to information.

To draft the report, governments are supposed to consult broadly. And this consultation offers an opportunity for library associations and libraries to get involved.

To provide input and views on how effectively people have access to information, on what they are already doing, on what more could be done.

The process varies from country to country. Maybe there are meetings, maybe the team organising the reports only welcomes written contributions.

There is also an opportunity in the presentation. A number of countries, when they come to New York, and sit on the stage, have a civil society representative with them. This is, indeed, seen as best practice.

Why shouldn't we have a library person on the stage? This what Irina Zubcevic, from the team running VNRs at UN Headquarters, suggested in our Global Convening in June.

[SLIDE 8]

So, the crucial information – who is doing a review? This year, 42 countries have volunteered.

If you see your flag here, you're on the list. You have this opportunity. IFLA has produced a [brief on VNRs](#) to help you understand the process, but the first thing to do will be to contact the person or team responsible for the SDGs in your own government.

Find out what their plans are for the Review. Impress them with how active libraries are, what you are doing to promote the SDGs, what you are doing to deliver them.

Show that libraries are partners for development in general, and their best friends in producing the review.

And of course let us know what you do, and we'll be happy to offer advice and ideas. We've already produced a brief – we'll show you how to find it at the end.

[SLIDE 9]

The second key feature of the High Level Political Forum are the focus SDGs. Each year, the meeting will pay particular attention to a certain number of SDGs.

This allows for deeper discussion than if they tried to look at all 17 at once.

[SLIDE 10]

For IFLA, this is an opportunity to show how access to information is important across the board. And 2019 is going to be a really special year, with a focus on education, employment, equality, climate change and access to information itself.

What does this mean?

So of course at the High Level Political Forum, there will be discussion sessions on each of these. Voluntary national reviews – for those of you in countries doing them – will also likely focus on these subjects.

A great opportunity for libraries there.

[SLIDE 11]

But they will also be a focus throughout the year. There are likely to be major conferences on each of these subjects, organised by the key UN agencies, such as UNESCO, the International Labour Organisation and others.

Each of these is an opportunity. We don't have many details yet, but as soon as we do, we'll let you know. And if one is held near you, we'll look to get you involved!

There will also be regional forums on sustainable development. Each of the UN's five regional economic and social commissions will organise one of these. Another great opportunity to talk about libraries.

Again, when we have dates, we'll want to work with you to ensure libraries are represented, organise side-events, and get involved in discussions.

[SLIDE 12]

Librarians were present at all five meetings in 2018, and in each case, it was an opportunity to make contacts with government, build up connections, in a way that is rarely possible at home.

All of these events also help us globally. Because these thematic meetings, these regional meetings, will all produce declarations and statements that shape what happens in New York.

[SLIDE 13]

The last big thing – or things – in 2019 is the review of the 2030 Agenda as a whole, as well as of the data framework.

As we mentioned at the beginning, the SDGs are more than a document, they're a process. And as part of this, Member States decided in 2015 that it was healthy to think, every few years, about what was working, and what could be done better.

So they decided that in 2019, as soon all of the SDGs had been in focus at least once at the High Level Political Forum, there should be a reflection on how it was all working.

Clearly the process isn't perfect. The voice of civil society at the UN is still not as strong as it could be. There is no mechanism for forcing governments to respect their commitments, or even naming and shaming them. Voluntary national reviews are highly variable.

And while some subjects receive a lot of attention, others, such as culture, receive barely any.

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These sorts of issues will all be up for discussion when the review is launched next year. A set of terms of reference will be agreed at General Assembly in September 2019, which will in turn steer the results.

For libraries, the crucial priority must be to defend references to access to information. There is always a risk that it gets forgotten, given that SDG 16 as a whole was already controversial in 2015.

We should argue for greater attention to culture – at the moment, the only reference is to safeguarding cultural and natural heritage.

And we should speak up in favour of inclusive development policies at all levels, involving libraries both in designing and implementing policies.

And this is something we need you to be doing with your governments, as much as we are doing with the UN.

[SLIDE 15]

[Data](#) is also on the agenda. I mentioned at the beginning the 232 indicators. These are intended to provide concrete ways of measuring success.

There are some useful ones in there. Measures of how many people have access to the Internet for example, of literacy rates.

However, they are far from perfect. Many of the SDG targets that include access to information do not include indicators that measure this.

[SLIDE 16]

And on some of the key targets, such as 16.10 (access to information) and 11.4 (safeguarding cultural heritage), the measures chosen are not helpful to libraries.

On 16.10, the indicators only talk about the existence of laws on access to government information, and attacks on journalists and human rights defenders. These are of course important. But they don't talk about access in the way that we understand it.

And on 11.4, the indicator is spending on museums, archives and heritage sites. But not libraries, because the UNESCO statistics framework places our institutions in the same category as publishing.

IFLA will be engaging in discussions at the global level. But you can also help nationally. If your government is designing its own statistics for measuring progress, then highlight indicators relevant to libraries.

You could use the data provided to the Library Map of the World. You could go further, and propose tools like satisfaction surveys of library users. Let us know if you find out about a possibility to get involved!

So what does this all mean for 2019? And for you?

We've talked about a number of opportunities to action already, but here's where we bring everything together.

[SLIDE 17]

To do this, we have created a [timeline](#).

This gives you an idea of what will be happening at different levels – global, regional and national – over the next year, and where IFLA's priorities will be.

So can see that each row relates to a different level or theme, with the bottom focusing on libraries

To start off with now – September 2018, we already have some work to do. This webinar is our opportunity to set out the programme.

[SLIDE 18]

But even next week, we have both the third anniversary of the signing of the 2030 agenda, on Tuesday, and the international day of universal access to information, on Friday.

IFLA will be publishing blogs on both days, underlining the role of libraries in promoting the SDGs, and the need to support access to information properly.

But we'd like to encourage you to get involved. Some of you may have clicked on the link in the e-mail inviting you to this webinar, others seen it on our website, but on 25 September, there is a day of action for the SDGs.

We will be sharing a poster which you can print – adapt if you want – and put up in your libraries. We'd love you to take photos and share them on social media! You can use the hashtags shown on the screen.

[SLIDE 19]

And there's also an opportunity for you to highlight your actions on the map produced by one of our partner organisations in New York. You can find the link on

the page for this webinar. These don't need to be big, and of course you can use it to celebrate things you are already doing. Book displays, discussions, training sessions, writing articles, going on the radio or television.

Is the opportunity to get your work noticed and recognised.

[SLIDE 20]

Through the last months of the year, we hope that libraries in countries involved in voluntary national reviews will be making contacts, and making sure you are involved in the preparation process. It's a great time, before things become too busy, to make those links.

[SLIDE 21]

But there's work for the rest of us too. Because as you know, we are looking for SDG stories. Evidence of how libraries are delivering the SDGs, every day, everywhere. We want to fill the map with colour, and focus in particular on those key focus SDGs – education, employment, equality, climate change, access to information.

You are essential to this. Your contributions won't just help us in New York and Geneva. They'll also help your colleagues – everyone at this webinar, and outside – in their own advocacy.

So look at the [manual](#), and submit your ideas!

[SLIDE 22]

And as we get into next year, the work continues. Those in VNR countries, we hope, will be working closely with their governments to ensure libraries and access to information are recognised, and perhaps get invited to the 2019 High Level Political Forum.

Others will have the opportunity to attend regional and thematic meetings – we have a guide on how to make the most of these, we'll how you where at the end.

And of course, you can all help, through telling your governments about the importance of access, through highlighting library-relevant indicators, and, of course, through your stories.

So that's a lot of information. Probably too much for 30 minutes. So to close, we want to tell you where you can find out more.

[SLIDES 23 and 24]

All of our briefing documents can be found under the [publications tab](#) in the [Libraries and Development section](#) of the IFLA website.

Here you can see a link to the timeline we've just showed you, but also briefings on VNRs, on UN data and on making the most of going to international meetings. There are powerpoint presentations and scripts from the Global Convening in New York in June,

So take a look, and of course ask questions or suggest other things that could be useful for you.

[SLIDE 25]

And, most importantly, stay in touch! We want to know how you are getting on, we want to know about your questions, and your activities. We're happy to post or retweet things from our Lib4Dev Twitter feed of course as well.

I hope this has been useful for you, and as underlined, you will be able to listen again afterwards. But for now, I want to leave some minutes for questions. Please type these in the box.