



EAST AFRICAN
HUMAN RIGHTS
INSTITUTE

THRDC/EAHR Monthly Online Training Course Series

April 2026 Online Training Agenda

**INTEGRATING SDGS INTO CSOS' OPERATIONS
LEVERAGING THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW PROCESS TO ADVANCE
ACCOUNTABILITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

Proposed Date: 15th May, 2026

Platform: Online (Zoom Meeting)

Organizer: Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) in Collaboration with East Africa Human Rights Institute (EAHRI)

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC), in collaboration with the East Africa Human Rights Institute (EAHRI), continues its structured Monthly Online Training Series aimed at strengthening the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in engaging with key human rights and governance processes.

For over a year, THRDC and EAHRI have been jointly offering these online sessions, reaching a wide network of CSOs and HRDs across Tanzania and beyond. The trainings have created an important platform for learning and exchange on topical and practical issues relevant to civil society operations. These include compliance with regulatory authorities, engagement with human rights mechanisms at national, regional, and international levels, as well as resource mobilization and organizational sustainability. Through this sustained initiative, thousands of participants have been able to enhance their knowledge, skills, and coordination in advancing human rights work.

This Training session is specifically dedicated to the United Nations SDGs reviewing system, with a strong focus on the Voluntary National Review (VNR) and enhancing CSOs' effective participation and follow-up on the ongoing National VNR process of 2026. The Voluntary National Review (VNR) is a unique peer-review mechanism under the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) established in September 2015 through UN General Assembly under the Resolution A/RES/70/1-Titled "Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". It mandates regular reviews by the HLPF to be on voluntary base, state-led, and undertaken by all countries. Through this process, it aims to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges, and lessons learned, to accelerate the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Tanzania is currently preparing the VNR report to be submitted on May, 2026, where the last time the state VNR report were submitted on July 2023 to the United Nations General Assembly-High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). This represents a critical opportunity to assess the country's progress in implementing SDGs, track the progress from the last reporting and assess the possible challenges available and the way forward towards fulfilling the commitments aligned with the 2030 Agenda to foster inclusive development for all. The outcomes of this process will significantly influence national human rights and development priorities and commitments in the years ahead in implementing the Agenda 20230.

While states remain the primary duty bearers in the VNR process, the role of CSOs is indispensable. CSOs play a vital role in ensuring that national reports on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are comprehensive, evidence-based, and inclusive of all groups. Their involvement moves the process from top-down reporting to a participatory assessment of reality on the ground, contribute through independent reporting, stakeholder submissions, advocacy engagements, and monitoring the implementation of the agenda 2030. However, many organizations lack sufficient awareness and technical understanding of how the VNR process works, how to engage effectively in national reporting and how to use the VNR as a tool for accountability and advocate for human rights in Tanzania. As a result, the VNR risks being state-centered, with limited reflection of the CSOs participation, Transparency and accountability.

This makes this training session particularly timely and strategic. As Tanzania is undergoing the preparation of the VNR report and validation stage for submission by Mid-May, 2026. While the timeframe for CSO independent "shadow" or "spotlight" reports by July, therefore there is a crucial window for CSOs to:

- a) Prepare and submit high quality independent shadow report jointly and at thematic levels

- b) Engage effectively with UN-SDGs reporting mechanism jointly and at thematic level
- c) Influence more participation of CSOs in the ongoing preparation of the State- VNR report
- d) Highlight priority SDGs concerns especially under SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions based on credible evidence; and
- e) Develop follow-up and monitoring strategies post-review.

The session will therefore focus on strengthening practical knowledge and skills across SDGs integration in human rights works and the entire Voluntary National Review (VNR) process from preparation and documentation to reporting, advocacy, and post-review follow-up. It will also provide updates on Tanzania's reporting progress, noting that the country is currently at an active stage of preparing its 2026 VNR, with ongoing data collection, stakeholder consultations, and drafting processes underway. Overall coordination of CSOs is facilitated through the Tanzania Sustainable Development Platform (TSDP), while the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) is leading coordination efforts on Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

As an umbrella organization with a network of over 350 members across mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, THRDC has been actively mobilizing and coordinating civil society engagement in various human rights related mechanisms, including the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process. At this critical juncture, it is therefore of utmost importance to equip Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) with the knowledge and skills needed to engage effectively. This training seeks to strengthen advocacy efforts, enhance accountability, and ensure meaningful engagement within Tanzania's SDGs–human rights landscape.

This session is particularly timely as it comes at a decisive moment in Tanzania's 2026 VNR process. It aims to empower civil society not only to engage in the VNR process, but also to actively shape the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through informed, coordinated, and strategic action. Currently, a draft CSOs' joint shadow report is being developed under the coordination of the Tanzania Sustainable Development Platform (TSDP). The training will provide an important opportunity for participants to receive updates on the progress of the 2026 VNR reporting process by both the Government and TSDP, ahead of its submission to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2026.

2.0 THE RATIONALE OF THE TRAINING

The Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) is strategically utilizing this online training session to strengthen the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their operations and to enhance effective engagement in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process. This session comes at a critical moment, as it coincides with the final stages of validation and consolidation of Tanzania's 2026 VNR Joint CSOs' Shadow Report.

By directly linking the training to the ongoing VNR reporting process, THRDC aims to ensure that CSOs are not only well informed about the VNR mechanism but are also meaningfully contributing to a credible, well-coordinated, and impactful stakeholder submission that reflects realities on the ground. This training is therefore essential for both Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and CSOs, as it seeks to respond to identified gaps in SDGs integration, accountability engagement, and evidence-based reporting within the national SDGs–human rights framework

This training is not only essential to Human Rights Defenders and CSOs but it is also envisioned to respond to;

- i. **Limited Integration of Human Rights in SDGs Interventions and reporting (VNR)**
Many CSOs implement SDG-related activities without fully integrating human rights principles and obligations, they take SDGs as purely developmental prospects hence, weakening the overall impact of their interventions.
- ii. **Limited CSOs' Strategic Role to foster Accountability and Oversight**
There is a gap in HRDs engagement in monitoring government commitments, tracking progress, and demanding accountability, despite the State being the primary duty bearer. But also, CSOs must transition from implementers to key accountability actors, actively influencing policies, monitoring implementation, and engaging in reporting processes.
- iii. **Misconception of SDGs as Purely Developmental**
The SDGs are often treated as development targets rather than human rights commitments, leading to limited focus on equality, justice, and participation. Which affect the effective implementation of some or most of the SDGs like Climate Action, Gender Equality, Quality Education, etc.
- iv. **Limited HRDs Engagement in SDGs Reporting Mechanisms**
Many HRDs are not effectively participating in national and international reporting platforms, such as Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).
- v. **Capacity Gaps in Monitoring and Documentation**
There is a need to equip HRDs with practical tools for monitoring, documenting, and reporting human rights impacts of development and SDGs initiatives.

Therefore, this training is designed to bridge these gaps by strengthening the capacity of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) to critically engage with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a human right-based approach. It will equip participants with practical tools to monitor implementation, promote accountability, and influence policy processes, thereby enhancing their role as key actors in advancing sustainable, inclusive, and rights-based development in Tanzania.

3.0 OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF THE TRAINING

To strengthen and position Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) as effective accountability actors in SDGs implementation, by enhancing their capacity to meaningfully engage in Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to advance human rights, transparent and inclusive development in Tanzania.

3.1 Specific Objectives

- i. To strengthen CSOs' understanding of the linkage between SDGs and international human rights obligations, and their application within the Tanzanian context.
- ii. To enhance the capacity of CSOs to effectively engage in national SDG processes, including planning, monitoring, reporting, and participation in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) process.
- iii. To equip participants with practical tools for monitoring, documenting, and advocating for accountability and good governance in the implementation of SDGs.
- iv. To promote coordination among CSOs and HRDs in fostering collaboration, inclusion, and collective action towards advancing transparent and accountability in the SDGs implementation and reporting processes.

4.0 TRAINING COVERAGE AND MODULES

Module 1: Overview of the SDGs - Integrating the SDGs into CSOs' Operations and Human Rights interventions - Facilitator: THRDC

Learning Objectives and Focus

- a) Provide an overview of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their national implementation framework.
- b) Strengthen CSOs' capacity to integrate SDGs into their organizational strategies, programmes, and human rights advocacy work,
- c) Enhance understanding of CSOs' roles in documentation, reporting, advocacy, and post-review monitoring within the VNR process with particular attention to SDGs 16 and 17.

Module 2: The Role of UN in supporting CSOs in Monitoring, Documentation, and Shadow Reporting in the VNR Framework-Facilitators: OHCHR

Learning Objectives and Focus

- a) Equip CSOs with knowledge, tools, and methodologies for UN human rights monitoring and evidence-based documentation related to SDG implementation.
- b) Strengthen practical skills in the preparation of credible shadow and stakeholder reports linked to the VNR process.
- c) Build a clear understanding of the roles and mandates of UN agencies and diplomatic missions in the VNR process.
- d) Examine how international actors influence inclusion, accountability, and follow-up in national SDG reporting including possible areas of support and collaboration.

Module 3: Understanding the State Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report and Validation Process-Facilitator: National Planning Commission

Learning Objectives and Focus

- a) Explain the Tanzania process for preparing, validating, and submitting the State Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report.
- b) Provide insights into government procedures for data collection, inter-ministerial coordination, and report drafting.
- c) Identify opportunities for constructive CSO engagement during the State reporting, validation stages and after reporting.
- d) Strengthen understanding of the interaction between State and CSO submissions, drawing lessons from Tanzania's experience in VNR reporting.

Module 4: Updates on the 2026 VNR Process and Coordinated CSO Engagement Facilitator: Tanzania Sustainable Development Platform (TSDP)

Learning Objectives and Focus

- a) Provide up-to-date information on the progress and status of Tanzania's 2026 VNR process, including key milestones and timelines.

- b) Share updates on the development of the Joint CSOs' Shadow VNR Report, including thematic coordination and submission plans.
- c) Clarify the national CSO coordination role of TSDP in consolidating inputs and engaging with government and UN mechanisms.
- d) Strengthen CSOs' preparedness for engagement at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and post-VNR national follow-up and advocacy.

5.0 EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND TARGETED GROUP

The training is expected to reach more than 300 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working on human rights, including both THRDC member and non-member organizations, from mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. By the end of the training, the following results are expected to be achieved:

- a) Improved understanding of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process among CSOs, enabling more informed and strategic engagement in national and international SDG reporting processes.
- b) Enhanced capacity of CSOs to monitor and report on SDG implementation, with strengthened skills in documentation, evidence collection, and contribution to civil society reporting initiatives.
- c) Clear understanding of the SDGs as human rights commitments, enabling participants to effectively link development priorities with international human rights obligations and apply a rights-based approach in their work.
- d) Strengthened strategic engagement and advocacy capacity of CSOs, positioning them to influence national SDG processes, including planning, policy dialogue, and accountability mechanisms such as the Voluntary National Review.
- e) Improved collaboration, networking, and collective action among CSOs and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), fostering coordinated advocacy, information sharing, and sustained efforts to protect civic space and promote accountability.

6.0 0 FACILITATION

The session will be facilitated by experienced human rights and SDGs practitioners with expertise in the Agenda 2030 reporting, CSOs coordination, particularly the Voluntary National Review process from UN, CSOs and the Government.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present a unique opportunity to transform development into a process grounded in justice, accountability, and human dignity. This training is therefore both timely and necessary to empower CSOs to take a leading role in ensuring that development truly serves the people and upholds their rights and welfare.

