

CASE STUDY 6

Accountability as a strategic tactic to monitor progress on SDGs and NCDs in Brazil

Background

Civil Society Status Reports (CSSR) are critical advocacy tools that help compile civil society perspectives on the progress on NCDs, and complement and support government surveillance, monitoring, and reporting. CSSRs help inform the public, disseminate results and promote the implementation of evidence-based policies. **“Alternative reports are a way of putting pressure on public powers to implement the obligations they have undertaken. Alternative reports that are based on evidence can inform effective public policies.”**

ACT Health Promotion in Brazil has a long history of monitoring government commitments, and its first shadow report addressed the country’s implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. With the expansion of its mission beyond tobacco control in 2014, the alliance started monitoring NCDs through CSSRs. Its latest Civil Society NCD Status Report for Brazil was launched at the 4th Intersectoral Forum on the Fight Against NCDs, organised by the Brazilian Public Health Institute in April 2019 (following similar reports in 2014, 2015, and 2017). The report examined the state of NCD prevention in Brazil using health surveillance data collected during 2011-2017 through VIGITEL, an annual telephone survey of the Ministry of Health on risk factors and prevention, and via interviews with key NCD actors from government, academia, and civil society. Researchers from Rio de Janeiro State University and Federal University of Santa Catarina contributed to the data analysis.

In 2017, the alliance, as co-facilitator of the Civil Society Working Group for the 2030 Agenda, also began producing annual Spotlight Reports analysing the status of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Brazil. These reports aim to shed light on the implementation and gaps and provide possible solutions on how to move forward.

Impact

The alliance recognises that CSSRs help showcase gaps and setbacks that tend not to be reported through official government channels. The Spotlight Reports have become valuable given that the government has not yet submitted voluntary national reports to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, so the civil society report stands by itself as an assessment of SDG implementation in the country. Similarly, when the Brazilian National Plan for NCDs was slated to end in 2022, the government extended it to 2030, to align with the 2030 Agenda, and invited the alliance as a civil society representative to participate in the hearing process and launch of the revised Plan.

The evidence from its CSSRs has also been used to strengthen its advocacy campaigns for health promoting policies, both at the national and state levels. These include campaigns for the introduction of soda taxes, labelling of ultra-processed foods, adoption of a law to establish soda-free schools (the campaign drew much public attention and its hashtag #EscolasSemRefrigerante trended on Twitter in October 2019), and others.

Recommendations for monitoring government commitments via CSSRs

- **Share the CSSR results** widely with your networks and with government, as information sharing leads to a multiplier effect to strengthen advocacy efforts.
- **Use report data in campaigns**, opinion articles, declarations, events, and media advocacy to build a stronger case for politicians to address NCDs.
- **Include a set of recommendations in CSSRs**, which reinforces the importance of civil society participation in policy-making spaces in a democratic environment.