



**Statement by Samuel Mensah-Baah - VSO Regional Director for West & Central Africa at the  
Post 2015 Intergovernmental Negotiations  
United Nations HQ - New York.**

**May 20<sup>th</sup> 2015**

Your Excellencies,

If the UN and Member States are serious about not leaving anyone behind and for the review and follow-up process to be credible, we must look beyond statisticians and government reports and ensure progress is measured through co-creation from the perspective of those most affected by poverty and inequality.

Excellencies, I am here to ask you to recognise and embed within the SDGs a strong participatory, bottom up approach to review & follow-up.

In this respect, the UN and member states should embrace the powerful and practical role that Volunteers, Civil Societies and Active Citizens can and do play as conveners of people's participation, especially extending development to the hard to reach and often unaccounted populations in remote parts of the world.

However let us be clear, involving citizens in participatory review and follow-up at any level cannot be a token, box ticking exercise: structures, processes and a conducive environment supported through investment in capacity building and education of citizens is needed.

Volunteer involving organisations such as VSO, Civil Societies, Academia and Governments have some good co-created participatory Action Research tools that can be harnessed, developed further and scaled up to revolutionise the way review and follow up occurs.

We know this hands on bottom up process works, is sustainable and empowering. For example, in Cameroon, VSO's "Small Money Big Change" project, involved working with communities and elected politicians on participatory accountability, gender equality & women empowerment. Capacity was built on both sides ensuring poor and marginalised women and girls became active participants in holding politicians to account for the delivery of basic services.

And finally at the regional level we will advocate for robust regional review mechanisms, similar to Africa's NEPAD peer to peer review but complimented with the knowledge and insight of civil societies.

**We must make sure we leave no one behind!**

Thank You.