



Utrecht University

# Institutionalising Leaving No One Behind: a meta-analysis on worldwide national effort

EILEEN DE JONG

*e.dejong1@uu.nl*

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SUPERVISOR: DR. MARJANNEKE VIJGE  
SECOND READER: DR. SANDER CHAN  
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## i. Abstract

At the heart of the United Nations 2030 Agenda lies the pledge to ‘leave no one behind’ (LNOB). The real challenge of the LNOB principle lies within the translation into national policy frameworks which is open to broad interpretation (e.g., Fukuda-Parr & Hegstad, 2018). LNOB has no legally binding obligations and thus relies on much national leeway (e.g., Biermann, Kanie & Kim, 2017; Vijge et al., 2020). Although literature has widely researched LNOB and has urged for an integrated and cross-cutting approach, such an approach has not been reflected in research itself as it has been fragmented and narrow. In addition, a comprehensive analysis on the actual implementation of LNOB in countries is lacking. To fill up these theoretical and empirical gaps, this research has two objectives: i) to provide an overview of how the institutionalisation of LNOB can be analysed on a national level combining both scientific and policy literature and ii) to provide an (empirical) overview of how countries have (not) institutionalised LNOB. It will aim to answer the following question: What are the enabling (institutional) conditions and gaps for reaching LNOB in implementing the SDGs at the country level?

To answer this question a triangulation of methods was used. First, a literature study was done to create a single framework representing how LNOB should be institutionalised. This framework consists of 29 institutional aspects divided over five broader institutional mechanisms: policy coordination, policy coherence, inclusive participation, disaggregated data, and dedicated finance. Second, this framework was used to do a meta-analysis of 77 VNRS published from 2016-2021 to analyse how countries have (not) institutionalised LNOB. Third, a correlation analysis was carried out to identify the interlinkages between mechanisms taking on a cross-cutting approach.

The results revealed that the institutionalisation of LNOB shows many gaps, especially in terms coordination and financing. LNOB finds its way into VNR reporting and to some extent into policy making but when it comes to actual institutional structures and mechanisms to drive commitment or accountability clear gaps can be identified. Overall, countries show a lack of political commitment and will to institutionalise LNOB. The results also showed that the institutionalisation of LNOB is interlinked, but more research is needed to fully understand how this could create conducive conditions to reach LNOB. Some policy recommendations have followed from this research but what the ‘real’ impact is of LNOB on institutional structures of countries, which is crucial in understanding the progress on LNOB, remains uncertain at this point. The uniqueness of this research lies within the replicability of the analytical framework in other studies, which could be key in understanding how to best institutionalise LNOB and thus how to reach the LNOB principle.

### **Key words:**

Leaving No One Behind; Institutionalisation; Intersectionality; Policy coherence; Policy coordination

## ii. Preface and acknowledgements

Hereby, I would like to present you my master's thesis as part of the programme Sustainable Development, Utrecht University, specializing in Earth System Governance. This thesis is a result of an eight-month long research. The initial idea for this thesis came from interviews with stakeholders as part of a three-month job as a research assistant for dr. Marjanneke Vijge. While doing these interviews, it became clear that the universal vision to 'leave no one behind' in sustainable development was creating many (empirical) questions. This pledge has been signed by almost all Member States of the United Nations but has also been part of much (political) debate. With my social science background and an interest for social transformation, policy making and global development, I took on this opportunity to research how countries have institutionalised this highly ambitious and novel approach, while also knowing it would be complex and politically charged. At the same time, researching the implications of 'leaving no one behind' could be key for understanding future development and the trajectory the world takes for the coming years. It was this ambition that guided me through this long and sometimes heavy research.

The process of analysing the data has demanded every piece of dedication and perseverance, has pushed me to achieve what thought to be unachievable at times and has thought me many things about doing research on your own. In other words, this research was a rollercoaster with some ups and downs, and some twists and turns. It was going through this ride that brought me to where I am now and that made this thesis something I am extremely proud of. It would not have been possible without the great guidance of dr. Marjanneke Vijge. I am very grateful for believing in me, supporting me in the last couple of years, and for all the opportunities you have given me along the way.

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I hope you have a good time reading.

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*Utrecht*

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Societal background and challenge

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the most comprehensive global governance framework having 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. This framework presented a major shift from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by moving away from a focus on averages to disaggregate data with the aim to be universal and inclusive (UNSDG, 2019; UN, 2017b; Stuart & Samman, 2017; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; De Jong & Vijge, 2021). At the heart of these aspirations lies the pledge of the United Nations (UN) Member States to ‘leave no one behind’ (LNOB) which also means reaching the furthest behind first (UN, 2015; UNSDG, 2019; Fukuda-Parr, 2019; Samman et al., 2018). LNOB presents the commitment to “eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind” (UNSDG, 2019, p. 6). It recognises that rising inequalities within and among countries is one of the most pressing challenges of our time (UN, 2017b). To reach sustainable development, effective action is needed to reduce inequalities, proven to be even more urgent in times of COVID-19 as marginalised people are disproportionately impacted (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2020; Patel et al., 2020; Abedi et al., 2021; Ali, Asaria & Stranges, 2020). People that are left behind lack the choices and capabilities to participate in or benefit from human development (UNDP, 2018). Real transformation depends on how LNOB is interpreted, implemented, and institutionalised in national policy frameworks (Siegel & Lima, 2020; Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016).

Although there have been significant advances made over the past decades, the LNOB principle presents a novel approach to reducing inequalities. While the goal to reduce inequality is not new, it has never been made so prominent as under the principle of LNOB (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016). In addition, LNOB acknowledges the unequal distribution of development (Bhatkal et al., 2015), includes non-income-based inequalities (e.g., Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016), goes beyond single-factor metrics (UNDP, 2018) and focuses on the root and structural causes of inequalities (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Fukuda-Parr & Hegstad, 2018; Stuart & Samman, 2017). By aiming to reach the most marginalised groups first it moves away from the former equality approach, as part of the MDGs, that focuses on averages (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Fukuda-Parr & Hegstad, 2018). Therefore, LNOB is more than just an equality agenda; it is an anti-discrimination, poverty, inclusive, and equity agenda (e.g., Samman et al., 2018; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Stuart & Samman, 2017; Lay & Priebe, 2021).

LNOB goes beyond single social protection policies and calls for an integrated and cross-cutting approach among various policy instruments (e.g., Lemma & Cochrane, 2019). The true challenge of LNOB does not lie within the inclusion of such aspirational language but in translating it into actual implementation while connecting it to so many different worldwide policies (Lemma & Cochrane, 2019; Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018). How are countries doing this and at what levels? What do we know and not know about institutionalising LNOB given that it is such a great challenge?

For LNOB to be reached, whole-of-government approaches are needed which require policy coherence to maximise synergies among sectoral interventions (Lemma & Cochrane, 2019). It is this cross-cutting nature of LNOB which is politically and technically challenging (Engen, Hentinnen & Stuart, 2019). It includes both individuals and groups, vertical and horizontal inclusiveness (Stuart & Samman, 2017) and involves local, national, and global levels (Kabeer, 2016). There is a danger that LNOB is perceived as a “concept too far to implement” and thus to lose its transformative nature (Stuart & Samman, 2017, p. 2). There is no blueprint for action and no legally binding obligations for

countries have been set to guide integrated and whole-of-governments approaches (Siegel & Lima, 2020; UNSDG, 2019). The governance of SDGs is based upon ‘governance through goals’ that relies on much national leeway and weak global institutional arrangements (Biermann, Kanie & Kim, 2017; Vijge et al., 2020; Fukuda-Parr, Yamin & Greenstein, 2014). In terms of the operationalisation of LNOB, the concept remains ambiguous and open to broad interpretation (Fukuda-Parr & Hegstad, 2018; Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018). The implementation of policy coherence, especially in connection to LNOB, also remains vague (Theeuwes, 2019; Vijge, 2021). This together with the aforementioned challenges makes it highly uncertain whether the LNOB principle and its cross-cutting focus is reflected in national structures. To contribute to the lack of guidance and blueprints for reaching LNOB, this thesis aims to provide an overview of how LNOB should be institutionalised based on academic literature and policy documents. Such an overview will make the process of institutionalising LNOB more ‘hands-on’ and so reducing the idea that LNOB is a concept too far to implement. In addition, this thesis aims to analyse actual institutionalisation of LNOB on a national level, collecting overall gaps and conducive interactions which can inform new policy recommendations. These contributions make this thesis empirically and policy relevant.

## 1.2 Scientific background and knowledge gap

LNOB has been a recurring theme in academic literature. As a response to the ambiguity of the LNOB concept, research has focused on the origins of LNOB and the underlying discourses (e.g., Fukuda-Parr & Hegstad, 2018, Fukuda-Parr, 2019; Weber, 2017). Although LNOB is an overarching and cross-cutting goal in the SDGs, it has often been linked to the goals that relate to inequality (SDG 5 and SDG 10). Goal 10 is entirely committed to reducing inequalities within and among countries. However, it is this goal that has been widely criticized by literature (e.g., Fukuda-Parr, 2019; Anderson, 2016; MacNaughton, 2017) and has even been framed to be “one of the most politically contentious goals” (Persson, 2020). A large share of literature has attempted to decrease the ambiguity of LNOB by clarifying its meaning (e.g., Stuart & Samman, 2017; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Cochrane & Thornton, 2018; Kabeer, 2016). The UN has also attempted to explain the concepts related to LNOB and to build a conceptual framework around it (UNDP, 2018; UN, 2017). Related to this, there has been research on the interpretation of LNOB by countries, donors, or other actors (e.g., Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018; Fukuda-Parr & Hegstad, 2018). Literature has focused on monitoring and the collection of data related to LNOB (e.g., Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017), on the agri-food business (Siegel & Lima, 2020) and on donors specifically (e.g., Engen, Hentinnen & Stuart, 2019). In terms of implementation of the LNOB principle, existing research is less abundant. Some literature attempts to provide recommendations to countries (e.g., Espey, Lafortune & Schmidt-Traub, 2018; Donoghue & Khan, 2019), however, when mapping the efforts by countries to institutionalise LNOB in their national policy frameworks, these articles do not go further than to say that “governments worldwide are starting to put in place institutional mechanisms” (Espey, Lafortune & Schmidt-Traub, 2018, p. 134) or that “few [Member States], if any, have reported on specific institutional arrangements” (Donoghue & Khan, 2019, p. 30). They do not specify what institutional mechanisms are in place, by whom, and how they take shape.

Although consensus exists on the importance of policy coherence to reach LNOB (e.g., Lemma & Cochrane, 2019; Theeuwes, 2019), the institutional linkages between policy coherence and LNOB have been insufficiently researched and defined (Theeuwes, 2019). For example, how policy coherence efforts work for specific groups, development cooperation or developing countries, where the effects on the most marginalised are strongest, is understudied (Vijge, 2021; Runhaar et al., 2018; Candel,



2018). Not everything can be made to cohere (Bocquillon, 2018; Jordan & Haplin, 2006), and therefore policy coherence can, and should, be seen as a political process (Bocquillon, 2018) that creates political conflicts with potential winners and losers (Vijge, 2021). LNOB also finds its place into such political conflict as it asks for the prioritisation of those furthest behind. Therefore, studying the institutional link between policy coherence and LNOB is important. How are policies made to cohere and how does this impact those left behind? Who are (de)prioritised or left out?

The above literature overview shows that there has been a myriad of literature on explaining the meaning and operationalisation of the LNOB principle. In these publications, recommendations can be found on how countries should institutionalise LNOB. However, often their focus is narrow, meaning they only focus on one actor or one institutional aspect (e.g., Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017). Literature on institutionalising LNOB is thus fragmented, whereas the institutionalisation of LNOB asks for a cross-cutting approach among various policy instruments (e.g., Lemma & Cochrane, 2019; Engen, Hentinnen & Stuart, 2019). So, although it is widely argued that LNOB needs an integrated approach (e.g., Espey, Lafortune & Schmidt-Traub, 2018; Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Zamora et al., 2018), it is not reflected in the existing literature itself. Hence, there is a need for a single framework that shows how LNOB should be institutionalised, which this thesis will attempt to create. It needs to be holistic in order to identify possible links and conducive interactions between different aspects and so to approach LNOB on the cross-cutting level it requires (UNSDG, 2019; UNDP, 2018). An overview of how LNOB should be institutionalised will thus not only synthesise existing literature and guide LNOB efforts; it will also make new insights possible about integrated implementation of different institutional mechanisms, such as policy coherence, and their link to LNOB.

In addition, although there has been a great share of research on LNOB, a comprehensive analysis on actual implementation of LNOB is missing. Sarwar & Nicolai (2018) did an analysis on the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of 2016 and 2017 and concluded that future research should delve deeper into the different ways LNOB is being institutionalised in countries. In addition, they argue that the number of VNRs has reached a critical mass and that, together with clearer guidelines on reporting on LNOB, reviewing VNRs would be essential for “tracking commitment and progress on ‘leave no one behind’ and the SDGs as a whole” (p.1). Samman et al. (2018) contributed, although only partly, to this by analysing VNRs of 2017 and their reference to LNOB. They found that 39 out of 43 countries mentioned the term LNOB but only 16 referred to explicit strategies to implement it. Yet, no specification was made to which countries this applied to and how the implementation of these strategies took shape. Another article that is worth mentioning, is the paper by Fukuda-Parr & Hegstad (2018). They also conducted an analysis on the 2017 VNRs but focused on the interpretation and framing of LNOB by countries. Their analysis mentioned some national policies that were created. However, these were only mentioned as part of explaining the interpretations that countries took in terms of LNOB. Institutional elements such as distribution of responsibilities or allocation of resources are not mentioned. Brand, Furness & Keijzer (2021) questioned how noble ideas such as LNOB fit within national policy frameworks, but the question is still to be answered. Furthermore, LNOB-readiness and LNOB-outcome indices have been made to assess and monitor the extent to which countries are ‘ready’ and in ‘progress’ to reach LNOB (see for latest research Chattopadhyay & Salomon, 2021). The data for these indices are from national VNRs and other additional resources. Although these indices empirically assess countries in their LNOB implementation, there has been criticism on the extent to which they are able to grasp the magnitude of LNOB (Lay & Priebe, 2021).

As a comprehensive analysis on how countries have institutionalised LNOB is lacking, and literature has pointed to the urgency of closing this gap, this research will endeavour to offer such an analysis. It will do so by analysing the actual implementation of LNOB on a national level.

### 1.3 Research aims and questions

As can be derived from the previous sub-sections, the aim of this thesis is twofold: i) to provide an overview of how the institutionalisation of LNOB can be analysed on a national level according to scientific and policy literature and ii) to provide an (empirical) overview of how countries have (not) institutionalised LNOB. To guide this research, an overarching research question is created: **What are the enabling (institutional) conditions and gaps for reaching LNOB in implementing the SDGs at the country level?** This question is further divided into 2 sub-questions:

**Sub-question 1:** How can the conceptualisation and institutionalisation of LNOB be analysed on a national level according to academic and policy literature? [*theoretical*]

**Sub-question 2:** How and to what extent do countries conceptualise and institutionalise (mechanisms and conditions for) LNOB? [*empirical*]

This research will largely be based upon a meta-analysis of VNRs published from 2016 to 2021. VNRs will be used as the main source of information as they present and assess countries' progress on the SDGs and their pledge to LNOB. A country-level analysis is necessary as the state is the only institution that has the authority to respond to, or to act in the interests of all citizens (Kabeer, 2016; UNDP, 2018). In addition, the Member States are the ones who have pledged to implement LNOB; therefore, actual transformations are expected to, or rather should happen at a state level (Siegel & Lima, 2020). Tasking those responsible to take action for LNOB is framed as the first critical step to effective and inclusive implementation of the SDGs (UNDP, 2018). An analysis on national institutional mechanisms for LNOB will contribute to the discussions around the (national) impact of governing through goals (e.g., Biermann, Kanie & Kim, 2017; Vijge et al., 2020) and implementation of policy coherence (e.g., Theeuwes, 2019; Runhaar et al. 2020; Brand, Furness & Keijzer, 2021).

This thesis is structured as follows. Section 2 will touch upon the data analysis and collection, the structure and critical reflection of the VNRs, and some ethical issues. Section 3 will then move on to explain the theoretical foundation of the thesis by sharing a conceptual lens of LNOB and an (analytical) overview of how LNOB should be institutionalised according to literature answering **sub-question 1**. Section 4 will present the results of the meta-analysis of VNRs and thus covering **sub-questions 2**. Section 5 provides the discussion by touching upon theoretical and empirical implications, and some important limitations of this research. It will give points for future research while also some policy advice. Lastly, section 6 will conclude by providing an answer to the main research question.

## 1.4 Research framework

**Figure 1** shows the proposed research framework to analyse current global LNOB status.

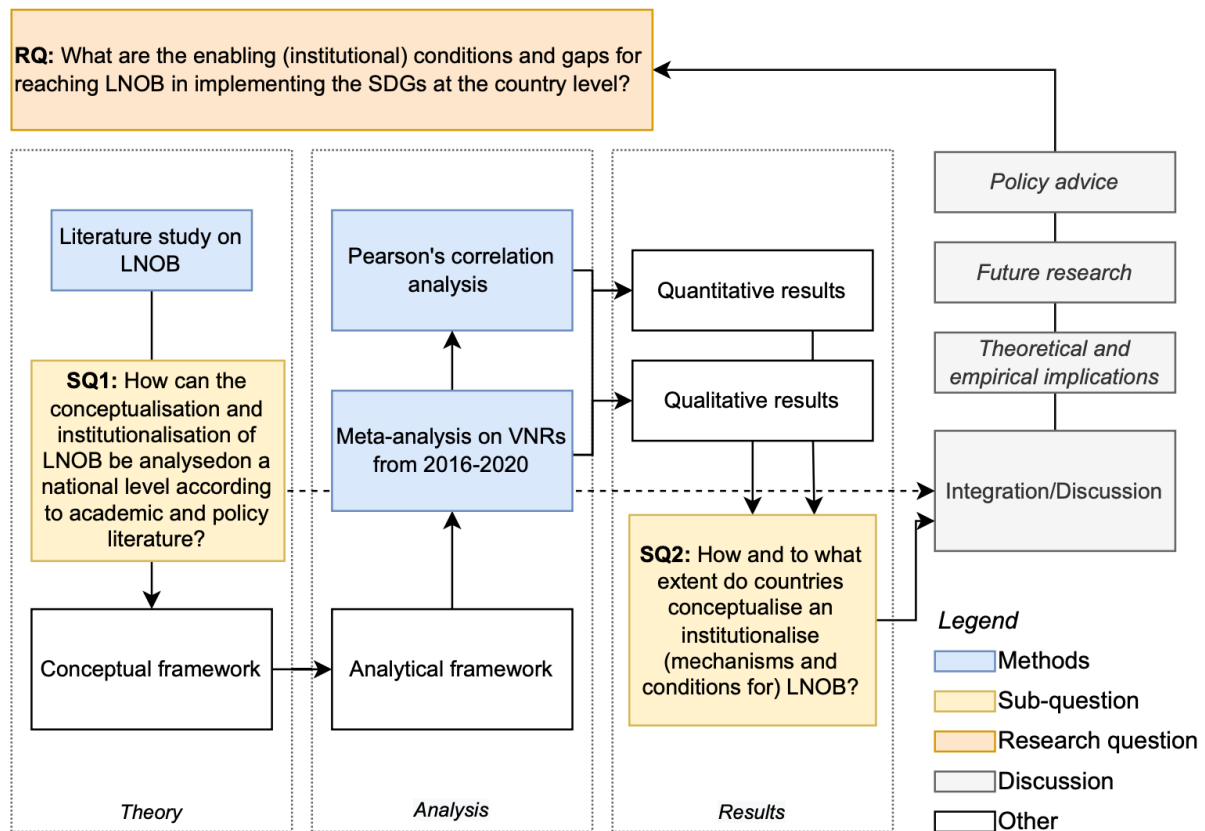


Figure 1: Research framework for global LNOB analysis (RQ= research question, SQ = sub-question)

## 1.5 Scientific and societal relevance

The scientific relevance of this research lies within both theoretical and empirical contributions, consistent with the dual objective of this thesis. Theoretically, this research will provide an integrated overview of how LNOB should be institutionalised. This overview will summarize and combine years of LNOB-specific literature into a single and a more refined (analytical) framework. Hence, this research will theoretically contribute to making the concept of LNOB less ambiguous while also adding a holistic framework to analyse LNOB institutionalisation. Empirically, this research will reveal how LNOB is institutionalised in practice, thereby providing an empirical basis for further discussions or research on the operationalisation of LNOB, and discussions around governing through goals and policy coherence. The extent and shape of actual implementation of LNOB by countries can indicate the importance or influence of an overarching principle, to which most countries have committed to, but that has no legal obligations and much national leeway (Bierman, Kanie & Kim, 2017; Vijge et al., 2020; Fukuda Parr, Yamin & Greenstein, 2014). In addition, analysing the institutionalisation of LNOB in connection to policy coherence can uncover institutional links between the two concepts addressing the gap in knowledge. The meta-analysis of VNRs will provide insights into the (dis)similarities and gaps in how countries have institutionalised LNOB. It will also shed light on new perspectives on parallel implementation of multiple institutional mechanisms and their influence on LNOB, expanding the focus of literature so far.

In terms of societal relevance, analysing how LNOB is being institutionalised in countries has been framed as a critical step to enable effective and inclusive implementation of the SDGs which is essential

for reaching sustainable development. The single and holistic overview of how LNOB should be institutionalised can, on its own, already guide countries in operationalising the LNOB principle. However, together with the empirical overview of similarities and gaps in national implementation, this thesis will be able to make recommendations for future implementation and so will help support the LNOB pledge of the United Nations State Members.

## 2 Methods

To make the analysis of this research systematic, clear research steps need to be formed. Section 2.1 will propose these steps by explaining data collection and analysis. Section 2.2 explains the structure of the VNRs and will provide some critical reflection. Section 2.3 will end with some ethical issues.

### 2.1 Data collection and analysis

The research is based upon a triangulation of methods that are both qualitative and quantitative to increase the validity of this research: a literature review, a meta-analysis, and a correlation analysis.

First, a literature review was conducted using the Google Scholar database to answer **sub-question 1**. Due to the novelty of the LNOB principle, as laid out in the introduction, general literature on institutionalisation is expected to be unsuitable for identifying the necessary institutional mechanisms to reach LNOB. Therefore, only LNOB-specific literature was identified and analysed using a combination of the following search terms: 'LNOB', 'leaving no one behind' (including variations), and 'national', 'implementation', 'institutionalisation' (including variations). Based on this analysis five broad institutional mechanisms were found: policy coherence, policy coordination, disaggregated data, dedicated finance, and inclusive participation. More specific institutional aspects of these mechanisms for LNOB were identified based on a combination of the following search terms: 'LNOB' or 'leaving no one behind' (including variations), and 'coherence', 'coordination', 'disaggregated data', 'dedicated finance', or 'inclusive participation' (including variations). A snowballing technique was used, meaning that based on literature found, other relevant papers were identified. In the end, a list of 29 documents were yielded which can be found in **Annex A**. This list consists of scientific articles and policy documents, such as policy guidelines of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and UN reports. In the end, based on the literature review an analytical framework was created consisting of the five institutional mechanisms and 29 detailed aspects to be used for analysing the institutionalisation of LNOB.

Second, a meta-analysis was done to answer **sub-question 2**. VNRs published from 2016 to 2021 were identified to empirically analyse the institutionalisation of LNOB. The documents were retrieved from the official website of the UN<sup>1</sup> using the filter of 'leaving no one behind' which yielded 82 VNRs. Some VNRs could not be analysed, due to language or technical reasons. In the end, 77 VNRs of which 67 countries form the data set of this thesis (**Annex B**). In total, 247 VNRs were published from 2016 to 2021 representing 177 countries, making this research' data set represent about one quarter of the countries. It was chosen to use a filter to select suitable VNRs objectively and systematically and to avoid personal interpretation. In addition, the filter maximizes the replicability of this study. Although it is not entirely known how this filter works, one can expect that it selects the VNRs that included LNOB to some extent. However, this makes the results somewhat skewed as the data set overly represents LNOB-relevant VNRs. In the end, the purpose of this research is to analyse the

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<sup>1</sup> [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/?str=leaving+no+one+behind#results\\_area](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/?str=leaving+no+one+behind#results_area)

institutionalisation of LNOB on a national level and thus it makes more sense to analyse countries that institutionalise LNOB to some extent than countries that do not implement LNOB at all. Although it makes such bias less relevant, it is good to be conscious of this while interpreting the results, as some nuance is needed. In this data set, there are a few countries from which multiple VNRs (from different years) are included. These were included to make an analysis possible on reporting development, which might explain or give depth to certain results. However, when presenting percentages of countries that have (not) institutionalised elements of LNOB, they always represent unique country numbers; meaning that in cases of dual publications, the latest VNR is taken into account. Although no country within South America is represented in the data set, it does include countries from both the Global North and the Global South, and VNRs spread over every year from 2016 to 2021 (see **Annex C**). Together with the extensivity of the data set the expected results were both valid and reliable.

The data was coded and analysed using NVivo. NVivo was chosen for analysing the qualitative data to bring order, structure and meaning to the collected data (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). The coding process was based upon several rounds starting with general codes and to keep further unravelling more detailed coding, as guided by **sub-question 1**. In the end, a detailed overview of (dis)similarities and gaps was developed which was used to answer **sub question 2**. A combination of quantitative and qualitative results will increase the validity and reliability of the results and will give the most complete answer to the main research question. Therefore, the frequencies of concepts linked to LNOB and/or certain aspects of the institutional mechanisms were counted and presented in pie and/or bar charts, where found necessary. In addition, the qualitative results were quantified in terms of percentages as much as possible. Such quantitative analyses were done through Excel. Although these quantitative results are useful to get a clear overview, the results section is largely based upon the qualitative results as they provide a deeper analysis.

To be able to summarize the implementation of the five institutional mechanisms (and their 29 aspects), as identified under **sub-question 1**, a colour code was given to represent the overall level of implementation. It is important to acknowledge that the levels are chosen for analytical purposes; it is not assumed that the high levels always represent the ideal institutional outcomes. **Figure 2** shows the classification of the used colour codes. If more than half of the countries implement a certain institutional aspect, we classify it as 'high' because it is unlikely all countries use the same approach to LNOB.

Colour code	Level of implementation
0-20%	Low
20-50%	Moderate
>50%	High

*Figure 2: Colour codes used to identify levels of implementation*

Third, the results of the analysis on the VNRs were used to do two correlation analyses: a correlation analysis on the institutional mechanisms and on the institutional aspects. The former to find out links between the mechanisms and the latter to find out links between the detailed aspects. Together, they will reveal how and on which points the institutional mechanisms correlate. For example, as already shortly introduced in the introduction, literature has argued that LNOB needs dual implementation of coordination between government departments and policy coherence between policies and

interventions (e.g., Lemma & Cochrane, 2019). Furthermore, part of the contribution of this thesis is to expand the focus of existing literature from a single perspective to a holistic and integrated perspective, meaning that it will be relevant to also touch upon the links between mechanisms to institutionalise LNOB. A correlation analysis can identify such links, while also reflecting on the strength and the direction (positive or negative) of the link. Correlation was calculated using SPSS Statistics 28 and through the Pearson's correlation coefficient and a significance level of  $\alpha=0,05$ . The Pearson's correlation coefficients identify different strengths of correlations: low ( $<0,29$ ), moderate ( $0,3-0,49$ ), or high ( $>0,5$ ). Also, a positive correlation coefficient indicates a relation in which if the one variable increases/decreases, the other variable also increases/decreases. Whereas a negative correlation coefficient indicates a relation in which if the one variable increases, the other decreases, or vice versa. In order to research the Pearson's correlation coefficient, the results of the analysed VNRs needed to be transferred to quantitative data. For each institutional aspect, a country received a value linked to their implementation of that aspect: 'no implementation' (0) or 'implemented' (1). This yielded into a table of binary values (**Annex D**). The correlation analyses thus added to the quantification of the results.

## 2.2 The VNRs

In 2016, the UN published guidelines for the VNRs to follow which were subsequently updated in 2017 (UN, 2017a) and later in 2019 (UN, 2019). **Table 1** summarizes these guidelines, in which the years indicate the differences in updates. Although following these guidelines remain voluntary, it is expected that countries will largely follow them. For practical reasons, the analysis will exclude point 6 (progress on goals and targets) and the Annexes of the VNRs. These chapters would include specific and detailed data that is beyond the scope of this research. Point 6 mainly focuses on outcomes in terms of how national efforts have influenced the

### Box 1. Guidelines on LNOB reporting

The guidelines ask countries to report on their efforts to reach the LNOB principle (i.e., in points 1, 2, 5d/e, 7, and 8). In more detail: "The review could also assess how the principle of leaving no one behind has been mainstreamed in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This would also address how this principle has been translated into concrete actions for tackling inequalities and discrimination, as well as efforts to ensure inclusive and effective participation in implementation efforts. In this regard, the review could detail how the people who are the furthest behind and vulnerable groups have been identified, including through improved data collection and disaggregation, how they are involved in finding solutions, as well as what policies and programmes are being implemented to address their needs and support their empowerment." (UN, 2019, p. 5-6). Also, "The review could indicate how financial systems, statistical data and resource allocations are being aligned to support the realization of the 2030 Agenda and its pledge to leave no one behind." (UN, 2017a, p. 6)

indicators laid out in the targets of the SDGs. The focus of this research is, however, on how countries have nationally created institutional structures that are conducive to LNOB, rather than a focus on how all policies have had an impact on LNOB. Thus, this thesis is much more concerned with the (policy or institutional) inputs rather than outputs and outcomes. In addition, it will be unachievable to analyse the countries on such a specific level within the time frame of this thesis. As the goal is to gather a systematic overview of how LNOB is institutionalised, an analysis of 77 VNRs – although more generally – is chosen over a more selective analysis. To partly bridge this gap, all national policies specifically relevant to reaching LNOB are expected to be found in the chapter of Leaving No One Behind (point 5d). **Box 1** gives some specific sentences on LNOB reporting as asked by the UN guidelines.

Table 1: UN guidelines for the VNRs

Structure of report	Included
<u>1. Opening Statement</u>	Yes
<u>2. Highlights</u>	Yes
<u>3. Introduction</u>	Yes
<u>4. Methodology and process for preparation of the review</u>	Yes
<u>5. Policy and enabling environment</u>	Yes
5a. Ensuring ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals and the VNRs	
5b. Integration of the Sustainable Development Goals in national frameworks	
5c. Integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions	
5d. Leaving no one Behind	
5e. Institutional mechanisms	
5f. Structural issues (2016/2017) / Systemic issues and transformative actions (2019)	
<u>6. Progress on Goals and targets and evaluation of policies and measures taken so far</u>	No
<u>7. New and emerging challenges (update 2019)</u>	Yes
<u>8. Means of implementation</u>	Yes
<u>9. Conclusion and next steps</u>	Yes
<u>10. Annexes</u>	No

Although the VNRs offer the possibility to systematically analyse national efforts, some critical reflection is needed. The total number of published VNRs is reaching a considerable quantity, but there is much difference between countries in terms of frequency and quality as reporting remains voluntary. Many countries have published at least one VNR in the last 5 years, less have published two VNRs, and close to none have published three VNRs. However, the high number of countries that by now have published a VNR, exert international pressure on countries who have yet to publish a report (Sarwar & Nicolai, 2018). It is important to keep in mind that the VNRs can carry biases as countries can choose what to report. Countries might be more inclined to report successful outcomes rather than gaps and limitations. The VNRs are, therefore, not just descriptive reports but political documents as well. Hence, underreport does not necessarily mean that a mechanism or aspect is not implemented in a country. It does, however, indicate a lack of focus and/or commitment which has implications for the institutionalisation of LNOB too (Sarwar & Nicolai, 2018). Thus, although this thesis' analysis will, to a certain extent, 'measure' how well and complete certain countries are in reporting on LNOB, it will explain more about the level of commitment to institutionalising LNOB.

### 2.3 Ethical issues

As this research is based on impersonal and open access documents, no ethical issues in terms of use and storage of data are expected. The set-out research steps are not only meant to systematically guide the meta-analysis, but they also warrant for inappropriate data analysis. Due to the replicability of the research, i.e., having an open data set and laid-out research steps, intentional omission of results is averted.

### 3 A framework for analysing the institutionalisation of LNOB

This section aims to provide the theoretical foundation of the research and thereby answering **sub-question 1**. It will offer a conceptual lens to study how countries define/frame LNOB (3.1) and identify which institutional mechanisms and aspects enable LNOB according to scientific and policy literature (3.2). The latter will be used to create a single (analytical) framework to analyse national institutionalisation of LNOB. In addition, this section will reflect on which conditions literature has described to reach LNOB (3.3).

#### 3.1 Conceptualising LNOB: equality, anti-discrimination, equity

As the introduction already indicated, there has been plenty of (academic) literature that has attempted to explain what it means to LNOB (e.g., Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018; Stuart & Samman, 2017). In addition, the UN has also attempted to further define the LNOB principle in several policy documents (e.g., UNSDG, 2019; UN, 2017b; UNDP, 2018). It is outside of the scope of this thesis to reflect on this literature exhaustively. Rather, the aim is to define LNOB generally so that it can be used to study how countries have framed LNOB which has been found to influence national implementation of LNOB (Stuart & Samman, 2017; Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018; Siegel & Lima, 2020). Generally, LNOB ensures that all people “may benefit from sustainable development and the full realization of human rights, without discrimination on the basis of sex, age, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status” (UN, 2017b, p. 4). The next paragraphs will discuss (literature around) three concepts in relation to LNOB.

Equality is perhaps the most straightforward concept linked to LNOB, yet also one of the most criticised concepts in the SDGs (e.g., Fukuda-Parr, 2019; Anderson, 2016; MacNaughton, 2017). Although it is important to acknowledge the existence of such criticisms, it is outside of the scope of this thesis to address them in full detail. Moreover, LNOB attempts to break the cycles of disadvantage which goes beyond equality alone. Analysing all literature of equality is, therefore, unnecessary to define and study LNOB. Equality is here defined as the imperative to achieve equality in opportunity and outcome (UN, 2017b). LNOB is framed as an intersectional approach to interlocking inequalities (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016) involving both horizontal and vertical inequality (UN, 2017b; Stuart & Samman, 2017) as well as absolute and relative inequality (UN, 2017b). Horizontal inequality deals with inequalities between population groups which are often (in)direct results of laws, policies, and practices (UN, 2017b). This type of inequality is as such also closely related to discrimination. In contrast, vertical inequality includes inequalities between individuals which are not directly based on group-based status such as income inequality (UN, 2017b). Although vertical inequality tends to cause less social unrest than horizontal inequality, high levels of vertical inequality are still undesirable and can destabilize political, economic, and social systems (UN, 2017b). Together, horizontal and vertical inequalities reveal the inequalities manifested in a country (Kabeer, 2016). As part of creating a complete picture of inequalities and those who are structurally left behind in a country, it is important to consider both absolute and relative inequalities (UNDP, 2018; UN, 2017b; Stuart & Samman, 2017; Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018). Absolute inequality deals with minimum living standards of, for example, income and well-being, while relative inequality looks at income and well-being in relation to other individuals or groups. In countries where most minimum living standards are achieved, relative inequality measures become more important (Stuart & Samman, 2017). The equality concept of LNOB is somewhat paradoxical as on the one hand, it asks for inclusive development in which no one should be left behind, while on the other hand, it asks to prioritise those who are furthest behind first. The



UN has also acknowledged this: “to achieve equality, unequal situations may need to be treated unequally” (p. 35). Although prioritisation is not entirely avoidable and sometimes even desirable (Forestier & Kim, 2020), it does create conceptual questions. The next section (3.2 – *policy coherence*) will return to this topic. LNOB has also often been framed as an agenda for elevating poverty. However, part of the importance of LNOB is that it recognises that people face more forms of inequality than only income inequality which forms the experience of poverty (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016). On the same note, the experience of poverty can also be exacerbated by discrimination or inequitable distributions (Samman et al., 2018; UNSDG, 2019; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017). In addition, people living in poverty have been identified as being left behind, but those left behind are more far-reaching than poor people only (UNSDG, 2019). Therefore, this thesis does not include poverty as a separate concept in framing LNOB.

The second concept often used to define LNOB is anti-discrimination. Discrimination is the unjust treatment of individuals and/or groups based on their sex, race, colour, religion, or any other status. Social justice and human rights are words often linked to discrimination (e.g., UN, 2017b; UNDP, 2018; Stuart et al., 2016; Fukuda-Parr & Hegstad, 2018). Whereas the MDGs were criticised in not addressing structural discrimination, the SDGs are intended to close this gap (UN, 2017b; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016). However, Fukuda-Parr & Hegstad (2018) question this as LNOB does not require member states to address difficult issues of discrimination. Understanding discrimination is essential as it is often known how to reach the poorest but not the most marginalised people (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017). Achieving the LNOB principle, and thus prioritising those furthest behind, might need so-called ‘positive discrimination’ by allocating extra resources or services to those groups that are left behind (UN, 2017b). Discrimination is often linked to ‘social exclusion’ (vs ‘inclusion’) (e.g., Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; UN, 2017b; Lay & Priebe, 2021). Social inclusion is defined as a “process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights” (Lay & Priebe, 2021, p. 129).

Although equality and discrimination are recurring concepts to frame LNOB, the third concept of equity has often been linked to LNOB more implicitly. Equity is, however, inherently part of the 2030 Agenda discourse (De Jong & Vijge, 2021), also in connection to LNOB (Lay & Priebe, 2021). In the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development the following link is made: “a just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met” (p.7). Equity is defined as the fair distribution of costs, benefits, and opportunities (UN, 2017b), so that burden is fairly shared among groups. Equity in connection to LNOB is said to be more relevant for middle-income countries, as poverty is significant and because economic progress tends to be more unequally distributed there (Lay & Priebe, 2021). Although equity overlaps with equality, it is not identical to it. Equity adds a helpful focus on fairness, while equality focuses on the state of being at the same level (UN, 2017b; Kumar, 2021). Kumar (2021) has further defined the difference between equity and equality as process versus outcome and need versus abilities. A discussion on fairness is especially useful in the prioritisation of the furthest behind first when this creates unequal treatments or outcomes. In connection to LNOB, equity is also defined as “the extent to which services are available to and reach all people that they are intended to” (Engen, Hentinnen & Stuart, 2019, p. 26). Equity has, however, been described as a more subjective and ethical concept than equality as the perception of what is fair will differ among groups and people (Espinoza, 2007). An important concept related to equity, in connection to LNOB, is intergenerational equity. It touches upon the fairness or justice between

generations, meaning that the present should not compromise the ability of future generations to sustain themselves (Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018).

It is important to acknowledge that equality, anti-discrimination, and equity, although addressed separately, are closely related concepts. When these concepts overlap, they give rise to an intersecting model of inequality “where each fuses with, and exacerbates, the effects of the other” (Kabeer, 2016, p. 56). Intersectionality provides the conceptual lens for comprehending the complex ways in which equality, discrimination, and equity interact to shape social constructions (Collins, 2015). These concepts are used as a conceptual lens and is used in this research to analyse how countries use or might not use these concepts to frame their efforts on LNOB. The concepts of equality, anti-discrimination, and equity are as from now on referred to as the ‘conceptual elements/concepts of’ LNOB. Table 2 summarizes the three concepts and some related concepts, while also presenting some guiding questions to guide the analysis.

*Table 2: Conceptual lens to study how countries define/frame LNOB*

<b>Conceptual element</b>	<b>Guiding questions</b>	<b>Related concepts</b>
<b>Equality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>How have countries placed LNOB in their VNRs?</i></li> <li>– <i>How have countries conceptualised LNOB as an intersectional problem?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equality in opportunity</li> <li>Equality in outcome</li> <li>Absolute/relative equality</li> <li>Horizontal/vertical equality</li> </ul>
<b>Anti-discrimination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>How are LNOB efforts built around the issues of equality, discrimination, and/or equity?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social justice</li> <li>Human rights</li> <li>Social inclusion/exclusion</li> </ul>
<b>Equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>What elements of equality, discrimination and equity are used?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Burden sharing</li> <li>Distribution</li> <li>Fairness</li> </ul>

### 3.2 Institutionalising LNOB: institutional mechanisms and aspects

The dictionary defines *to institutionalise something* as “[making] something become part of an organized system so that it is considered normal” (Oxford Learners’ Dictionary). Institutionalising LNOB thus means creating mechanisms or conditions that make LNOB normal, or rather mainstreamed, within the policy framework. As was introduced in the methods section, the analysis on LNOB-literature has identified five institutional mechanisms: policy coherence, policy coordination, disaggregated data, dedicated finance, and inclusive participation. This thesis will use ‘creating institutional mechanisms’ when describing the implementation of either of these mechanisms, and ‘creating (conducive) conditions’ when describing the implementation of multiple mechanisms. The latter is thus referring to the multiplier effect combined implementation has, which will be further discussed in section 3.3. For each institutional mechanism, specific aspects were identified to be used for the analysis. However, it is important to provide some nuance to these institutional mechanisms and/or aspects. Therefore, for each institutional mechanism a small text is devoted to discussing important debates or challenges related to its implementation.

First, an intersectional approach to LNOB needs collaboration between different sectors, ministries, governments, and other institutions (e.g., Stuart et al., 2016; UNDP, 2018; Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Espey, Lafortune & Schmidt-Traub, 2018). Therefore, **policy coordination** is often presented as a key institutional condition to reach LNOB. Institutional structures and coordination mechanisms can “facilitate more integrated policy making and budgeting” (Espey, Lafortune &

Schmidt-Traub, 2018, p. 135). LNOB means moving away from the siloed efforts of different ministries responsible for their own sectors (Radcliffe, 2015 as cited in Stuart et al., 2016) to a more ‘whole-of-government’ approach. It has even been recommended to implement one national coordinating body to oversee the implementation of LNOB (Donoghue & Khan, 2019). Levels of policy coordination are identified by literature: knowledge exchange is considered to be a ‘light’ form of coordination, whereas joint problem solving in terms of making agreement(s) on priorities, common strategies or guidelines is considered to be a ‘heavy’ form of coordination (Metcalf, 1994, as cited in Bianchi & Peters, 2018; Van Driel et al., 2022). These premises and more detailed requirements are reflected in the **Table 3**.

*Table 3: Analysing the institutionalisation of policy coordination in connection to LNOB*

Code	Aspect	Level
<b>Policy coordination</b>	1. Governments need to <b>create a high-level mechanism at the heart of the government</b> , i.e., office of prime minister/president, planning and/or finance ministries, that ensures systematic attention and drive commitment to LNOB at a cabinet level (Donoghue & Khan, 2019) <u>AND/OR</u> <b>an interdepartmental/ministerial coordinating committee that prioritises LNOB</b> , i.e., equality, anti-discrimination and equity issues, and/or focus on marginalised groups (UNSDG, 2019; UN, 2017b)	
	2. Governments should <b>identify and task those responsible to take action on LNOB</b> (UNDP, 2018)	
	3. Governments should <b>assign responsibility to and/or create a mechanism that systematically tracks and monitors progress</b> on LNOB and report this to cabinet (Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Stuart et al., 2016; UN, 2017b)	
	4. Governments should <b>assign responsibility to the national coordination mechanism for carrying out impact analyses/mapping exercises</b> to understand the policy impacts on LNOB and the most marginalised groups (see <i>policy coherence</i> ; Donoghue & Khan, 2019)	
	5. Governments should <b>include local authorities</b> into the coordination mechanisms to ensure vertical coordination (UNDP, 2018; UN, 2017)	
	6. Governments should <b>create a specific working group(s) to address LNOB</b> and/or issues of equality, anti-discrimination and equity (UNICEF, n.d.)	

Second, **policy coherence** is essential in securing a systematic focus on LNOB throughout all policies. Such focus will ensure priority attention on reaching LNOB that has been universally promised (Donoghue & Khan, 2019). Enhancing policy coherence is essential to maximise synergies and minimise trade-offs (Espey, Lafortune & Schmidt-Traub, 2018). “Exploiting synergies and avoiding – or minimising – trade-offs” are found to be even more important for the worst-off than for other groups (Donoghue & Khan, 2019, p. 8). Pursuing policy coherence will maximize win-win outcomes among sectoral interventions which would otherwise be fragmented (Lemma & Cochrane, 2019). LNOB itself is framed as a form of policy coherence, due to its cross-cutting and holistic focus (Ylönen & Salmivaara, 2021). The section on equality already introduced the concept of prioritisation as an integral part of the LNOB principle (Stuart et al., 2016; Klasen & Fleurbay, 2018). An important question remains: should reaching the furthest behind first, have priority over other goals? LNOB is a guiding principle which, to be fully integrated into policy frameworks, should always take priority over other sectoral objectives across policy domains (e.g., Persson et al., 2018). However, the intersectionality of LNOB means that many, if not all, SDGs should be jointly targeted through integrated policy approaches

(Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Lemma & Cochrane, 2019). To meet all the SDGs in a way that no one is left behind, national governments should ensure that policies positively reinforce each other. At the same time, not everything can be made to cohere (Bocquillon, 2018; Jordan & Haplin, 2006) and thus the decision to prioritise one thing over other objectives is political and creates winners and losers (Bocquillon, 2018; Vijge, 2021). Policy coherence is linked to the degree of consistency across different policy areas (Nilsson et al., 2012) and thus relates to mainstreaming LNOB throughout policy domains. Runhaar et al. (2020) have distinguished two levels of mainstreaming: harmonisation and prioritisation. The former would imply that when LNOB is mainstreamed it would have equal consideration to other objectives, whereas in the latter LNOB would have precedence over other objectives. Thus, an important question to ask is: how are countries approaching policy coherence in connection to LNOB? **Table 4** presents the institutional aspects of policy coherence that will answer this question. The analysis on how LNOB is mainstreamed (aspect 9) will be built around the levels of mainstreaming identified by Runhaar et al. (2020).

*Table 4: Analysing the institutionalisation of policy coherence in connection to LNOB*

Code	Aspect	Level
<b>Policy coherence</b>	7. Governments should adopt a <b>common approach to LNOB</b> , e.g., National Policies, Strategies and/or Plans, that is holistic which will drive alignment through having shared objectives across systems, actions, and areas (UN, 2017; Zamora et al., 2018; UNSDG, 2019; Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018; Donoghue & Khan, 2019)	
	8. Governments should adopt a <b>policy approach to LNOB that is long term</b> by having time horizons of at least three to five years (UNSDG, 2019)	
	9. Governments should <b>mainstream LNOB</b> , i.e., equality, anti-discrimination, and equity issues, among policies to ensure systematic focus on the poorest and most marginalised groups (Samman et al., 2018; Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Kenny, 2018; Stuart & Samman, 2017; Lay & Priebe, 2021).	
	10. Governments should <b>carry out impact (distributional) analyses/mapping exercises</b> to understand the impact of their policy decisions on marginalised groups and to be able to quickly mitigate any negative impacts (Stuart & Samman, 2017; Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Machingura & Lally, 2017; Bouyé, Harmeling & Schulz, 2019; UNSDG, 2019) (e.g., PSIA)	
	11. Governments should <b>ask their ministries to certify that their policy proposals are consistent with LNOB</b> and confirm that they included the impacts on the most marginalised groups (Donoghue & Khan, 2019)	

Third, **inclusive participation** has been framed as a central premise of LNOB (UNDP, 2018; Stuart et al., 2016; Woodroffe & Satterthwaite, 2017; Bhushan et al., 2018). It means that population groups should be represented or should have a voice in national policy making and is often referred to as social inclusion (Lay & Priebe, 2021). Inclusive participation is also called meaningful participation and referred to as an act of empowerment (UNDP, 2018). Including local stakeholders in knowledge-sharing, learning and problem solving is framed as important for both policy coherence and coordination (Smith et al., 2014). In order to analyse inclusive participation, the concepts of the 'policy cycle model' (Howlett, Ramesh & Wu, 2015; Brisbois, 2015; Howlett, McConnell & Perl, 2017) and 'ladder of citizen participation' (Arnstein, 2000) will be used. The former describes five different stages of policymaking, which in its turn explains the different influences actors have on policy decisions

(Brisbois, 2015). These stages are not necessarily sequential but rather iterative (Howlett, McConnell & Perl, 2017). The latter explains eight rungs of citizen participation that describe the extent to which citizens have the power to determine the end product, e.g., policies (Arnstein, 2000). For this thesis, only rungs three till eight will be included as the first two rungs describe non-participation. The ladder of citizen participation will also be used more broadly to also include other types of stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs). Both models are further explained in **Tables 5** and **6**.

*Table 5: The stages of the policy cycle.*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Agenda setting</b>	Problem definition
<b>Policy formulation</b>	Developing policy alternatives or options
<b>Decision making</b>	Selection of preferred policy option
<b>Policy implementation</b>	Implementation of chosen policy
<b>Policy Evaluation</b>	Assessing and reviewing the policy outcomes

*Source: Howlett, Ramesh & Wu, 2015; Brisbois, 2015; Howlett, Mc Connell & Perl, 2017*

*Table 6: The rungs of the ladder of (citizen) participation*

<b>Rung of ladder</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Informing</b>	Stakeholders are informed of their rights, responsibilities, and options
<b>Consultation</b>	Stakeholders are invited to share their opinions and ideas, but no further power is given that will ensure inclusion of these views
<b>Placation</b>	Stakeholders are allowed to advise or plan but the powerholders retain the "rights to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice" (Arnstein, 2000, p. 245)
<b>Partnership</b>	Stakeholders negotiate with powerholders and agree to share planning and decision-making responsibilities
<b>Delegated power</b>	Stakeholders achieve some decision-making authority and thus delegated power
<b>Citizen power</b>	Stakeholders are given power to fully control (their) decision-making, govern programs and/or institutions

*Source: Arnstein, 2000*

Literature has urged from direct inclusion of those considered to be left behind (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Lopez-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017; UNDP, 2018; Bhattacharya, 2020). Including marginalised groups in decision making processes will ensure that policies or interventions are informed by the voices, experience, and perspectives of the furthest behind (UNDP, 2018). However, at the same time literature has acknowledged that including marginalised groups directly can be challenging. Therefore, the inclusion of NGOs and CSOs has been framed as important. Due to the advocacy work of NGOs, they are able to share knowledge on behalf of marginalised groups, while also support service delivery in communities and strengthen the capacities of marginalised groups (Stuart

& Woodroffe, 2016; UNDP, 2018). CSOs also have an empowering impact on marginalised communities or groups, are widely connected to local communities and are committed to strengthening the unheard voices (Pant, 2021; Bhushan et al., 2018). **Table 7** represents these important requirements for institutionalising inclusive participation in connection to LNOB.

*Table 7: Analysing the institutionalisation of inclusive participation in connection to LNOB*

Code	Aspect	Level
Inclusive participation	12. Governments should <b>create dialogue forums or networks where different stakeholders come together</b> including CSOs, collective groups and (representatives of) the furthest behind to assess, implement and track progress (UNSDG, 2019; López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017)	
	13. Governments should <b>include NGOs and/or CSOs in existing political institutions</b> as they can represent the interests, knowledge, and priorities of marginalised communities due to their connections and advocacy work (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UNDP, 2018; UNSDG, 2019; Pant, 2021; Bhushan et al., 2018)	
	14. Governments should <b>ensure that marginalised groups are included for a long-term by giving them a permanent place in political institutions</b> such as coordination mechanisms, e.g., working groups, to ensure sustained link between marginalised groups and authorities (López-Franco, Howard, Wheeler, 2017; UNICEF, n.d.; UNDP, 2018)	
	15. Governments <b>should include (representatives of) marginalised groups in tracking, reviewing and/or monitoring</b> LNOB efforts (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; UN, 2017; López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017)	
	16. Governments should <b>provide information and data to the marginalised groups</b> so that they are empowered to claim their rights (UNDP, 2018)	

Fourth, the assembling and use of **disaggregated data** has been framed as an essential step in reaching LNOB (e.g., Engen, Hentinnen & Stuart, 2019; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Samman et al., 2018; Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017). Avendano, Culey, & Balitrand (2018) have argued that the lack of disaggregated data has prevented countries from institutionalising LNOB. Understanding what makes people lack behind is essential to be able to eliminate disadvantages but also to know what to prioritise in policies (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; Stuart & Samman, 2017). LNOB means going beyond averages and making sure groups are targeted on a disaggregated scale (Bhattacharya, 2020; De Jong & Vijge, 2021). Not disaggregating data to specific groups can in itself be the reason why some groups are left behind (Stuart et al., 2015), and thus the type of data gathered has influence on what is perceived to matter (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017). National governments should, therefore, invest in gathering, using, and analysing disaggregated data on who is left behind (UNDP, 2018; Stuart et al., 2016). More detailed conditions needed to institutionalise disaggregating data are reflected in **Table 8**.

*Table 8: Analysing the institutionalisation of disaggregating data in connection to LNOB*

Code	Aspect	Level
Disaggregated data	17. Governments should <b>invest in data to identify the groups furthest behind</b> (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016)	

18. Governments <b>should disaggregate data on, at least, gender, age, disability, social groups and/or geography</b> (UNDP, 2018; Abualghaib et al., 2019; Lay & Priebe, 2021; Avendano, Culey & Balitrand, 2018)	
19. Governments should <b>include international organisations, civil society and/or private sector in data collection</b> (Samman et al., 2018; Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017)	
20. Governments should <b>participate with marginalised groups for data collection</b> (UN, 2017; Zamora et al., 2018; Abualghib et al., 2019; López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016)	
21. Governments should <b>gather data that is holistic and multi-layered</b> , such as a multi-dimensional Poverty index, as it addresses the multidimensionality of LNOB and thus can improve the understanding of who is left behind (UNDP, 2018; Lekobane & Roelen, 2020; Bhattacharya, 2020)	
22. Governments <b>should carry out national representative surveys, e.g., DHS, MICS, (non)-household surveys, and/or censuses</b> to gather disaggregated data but with a focus on marginalised people as they risk leaving out the most vulnerable (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; Samman et al., 2018; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UN, 2019; Chattopadhyay & Salomon, 2021; Greenhill, 2017; Stuart et al., 2016)	

Fifth and last, **dedicating finance** to LNOB or those left behind is seen as crucial (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Samman et al., 2018; Stuart et al., 2016; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017). Dedicated finance means that finance should go to the furthest behind. Greenhill & Rabinowitz (2017) argue that for changes in governance, data and policies will require a change in finance too. Dedicated finance should be long term and flexible to changing contexts, while also made consistent through policy domains and coordinated across sectors and ministries (Samman et al., 2018). Although this institutional condition has been recommended in the context of LNOB, operational recommendations by literature have not been abundant. It is included in the analysis, as it will be interesting to see whether and how countries take this mechanism into account when institutionalising LNOB. Recommendations that literature has made are reflected in **Table 9** and will be used to analyse the institutionalisation of dedicated finance.

*Table 9: Analysing the institutionalisation of dedicated finance in connection to LNOB*

Code	Aspect	Level
<b>Dedicated finance</b>	18. Governments should <b>orientate financing towards left-behind groups and left behind areas</b> (Samman et al., 2018; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Stuart & Samman, 2017; UNSDG, 2019; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)	
	19. Governments should <b>target finance to left behind groups that is a) long term impacts</b> (Samman et al., 2018) and <b>b) in the areas of health, education, and social protection especially</b> (Chattopadhyay & Salomon, 2021; Greenhill, 2017; Stuart et al., 2016; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)	
	20. Governments should <b>ask their ministers who are applying for budgetary allocations to show how their proposed policy action will impact LNOB and/or marginalised groups</b> (Donoghue & Khan, 2019)	
	21. Governments should <b>design their tax system in a way to ensure an appropriate spread of the tax burden across society</b> (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UNDP, 2018; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)	

22. Governments should <b>orientate finance to local authorities</b> to encourage targeting those who are left behind in their communities (UNSDG, 2019)	
23. Government should <b>do specific investments in strengthening the capacities to LNOB</b> (UNSDG, 2019)	
24. Governments should <b>provide additional financial incentives</b> , such as the Conditional Cash Transfer, no-interest-rate loans, concessional grants and non-aid incentives, to catalyse action for marginalised groups (Samman et al., 2018; Lay & Priebe, 2021; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)	

**Tables 3-4** and **7-9** together form the analytical framework for analysing the institutionalisation of LNOB on a country level. The institutional mechanisms by no means offer an exhaustive list nor should they be used as a checklist. Rather, the list represents the mechanisms most recommended by literature, according to this review, to successfully reach LNOB. Even though the implementation of the institutional mechanisms proposed here do not guarantee success, they do give conditions under which LNOB might be achieved. Despite the institutional mechanisms having distinctive features making them suitable to be analysed separately, it is important to acknowledge that these institutional mechanisms are interlinked and overlap in some areas. In this way implementing multiple will improve the implementation of the single. Also, one of the contributions of this research is that it takes a more holistic view on the institutionalisation of LNOB than most existing literature. Therefore, the next section will focus on the interlinkages between the five identified institutional mechanisms.

### 3.3 Creating conditions for LNOB: a holistic view

As part of the contribution of this thesis, a more holistic and integrated view is taken to analyse the institutionalisation of the LNOB principle. The introduction has already stated that literature sees such an integrated approach as essential for reaching LNOB but has yet lacked in translating this into research. The review of Lay & Priebe (2021) also illustrated that the challenges surrounding the institutionalisation of LNOB are closely interlinked and thus it calls for integrated solutions. Although the previous synthesis of literature forms an approach to analyse the institutionalisation of five different mechanisms, a reflection on how these separate mechanisms is interlinked is needed. Which interlinkages can we expect according to literature? What does literature tell us about institutionalising LNOB through, for example, policy coherence but without policy coordination? It must be noted that literature has not focused on these questions as such but has sporadically touched upon some interlinkages. The latter will be summarized here, but the analysis on the actual institutionalisation of the institutional mechanisms will be used to verify and perhaps expand these interlinkages. The correlation analysis, as introduced in the methods, will be the tool used to do so.

Much literature has focused on the link between policy coherence and coordination outside of the connection to LNOB (e.g., Nilsson, Vijge, 2022; Candel, 2019; Karlsson-Vinhuyen et al., 2018), whereas also LNOB-specific literature has reaffirmed this (e.g., Samman et al., 2018; Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2016; Norton et al., 2014; Espey, Lafortune & Schmidt, 2018). In terms of LNOB-specific literature, the concepts of policy coherence and coordination are often mentioned in the same sentence without a proper explanation of how they are linked. Policy coordination has been framed as an enabling mechanism for policy coherence (e.g., Nilsson, Vijge et al., 2020): “governments need to work across sectors and departments to streamline leave no one behind considerations ... to ensure that synergies and trade-offs between various policy objectives and sectors are carefully considered” (Espey, Lafortune & Schmidt-Traub, 2018, p. 135). To implement a synergistic and comprehensive



programme that leaves no one behind, coordination between government bodies is essential (Bhattacharya, 2020). This would also mean that countries cannot institutionalise policy coherence without policy coordination, at least not effectively. In addition, Kenny (2018) argued that coherent policies will bring about ‘automatic’ coordination and will help to prioritise coordination in areas where most trade-offs exist. In the aspects of policy coordination and coherence, overlap can also be identified in the importance of carrying out impact analyses (aspect 10) and assigning the responsibility for these impact exercises to the national coordination mechanism (aspect 4). Therefore, it is expected that the analysis will show such a link between institutionalisation of policy coordination and policy coherence. Literature has also explained that without dedicating finance to LNOB it remains a vague description or a vision and will never be fully operationalised (UNSDG, 2019). Finance is thus linked to effective policy coordination and policy coherence, as it will create accountability and commitment to reaching LNOB (UNSDG, 2019; Samman et al., 2018; Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen et al., 2018; Stuart et al., 2016). As such, for effective policy coherence and coordination, the analysis should identify a link between those mechanisms and dedication finance.

Disaggregation has also been linked to many other institutional mechanisms, mostly because it is seen as the first step towards institutionalising LNOB. Disaggregated data informs what is perceived to matter and who is left behind (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2016; Samman et al., 2018). Avendano, Culey, & Balitrand (2018) have argued that identifying those left behind and creating coherent policies are intertwined and that successfully mainstreaming LNOB needs disaggregated data. Bhattacharya (2020) also concluded that the lack of disaggregated data collection creates an issue for ensuring policy coherence. At the same time, disaggregating data is seen as crucial for effective budgeting and targeting finance towards the ‘correct’ groups. The aspect of disaggregating data about including (marginalised) groups into data collection (aspect 19 & 20) also directly interlinks with inclusive participation. Disaggregated data on those furthest behind has been framed as an important tool to increase awareness (Lay & Priebe, 2021), whereas also inclusive participation in data collection can give more depth to disaggregated data (López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017). One can, therefore, expect that disaggregated data links with each of the other institutional mechanisms and institutionalising LNOB without disaggregated data creates empirical questions.

Although inclusive participation has been framed as a central premise for LNOB, from literature it is not entirely clear what that means for the institutionalisation of LNOB. For example, if policy coherence is implemented but inclusive participation is not, what does that tell us about the institutionalisation of LNOB? Including marginalised groups into decision making is framed as essential in making sure policies and institutions are informed by their perspectives and experiences (UNDP, 2018), which would lead to more effective outcomes in terms of LNOB. Also, because including marginalised groups in disaggregated data collection is seen as crucial, and in its turn that disaggregated data is essential for policy coherence, one can conclude that inclusive participation is needed to reach policy coherence. The same can also be said for policy coordination and dedicating finance. The analysis should point out whether these assumptions are correct. Greenhill & Rabinowitz (2017) argued that partnerships with NGOs are also important for mobilising finance to ensure LNOB which would point to a link between inclusive participation and dedicated finance.

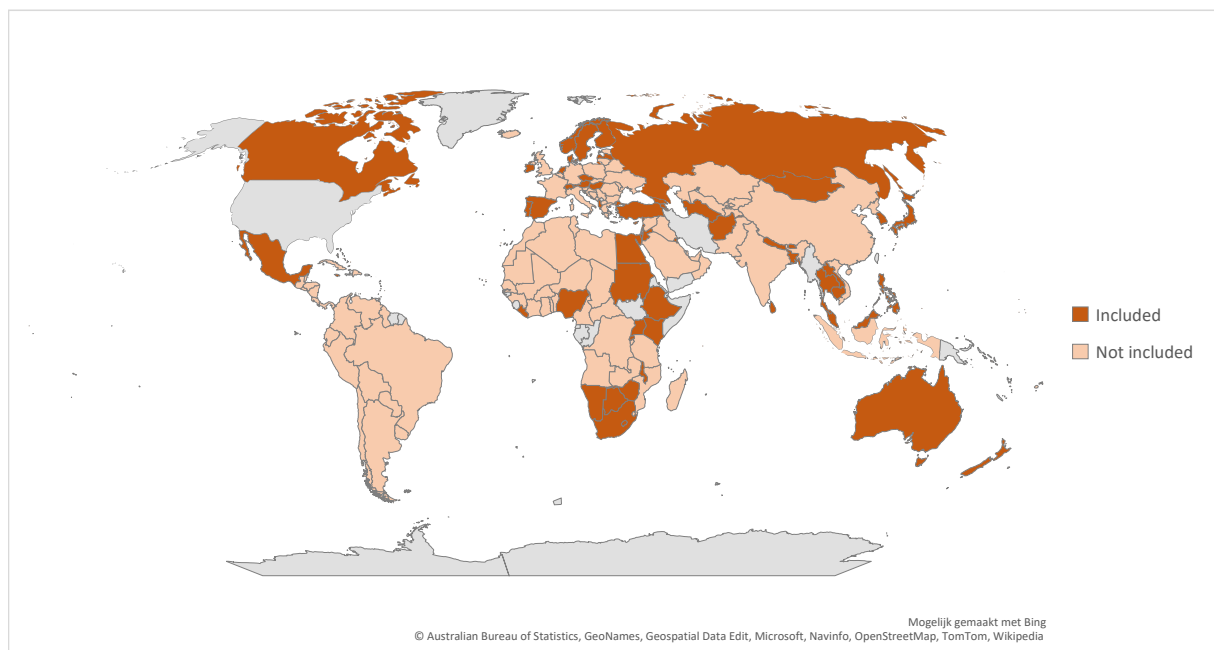
These are the most talked about links in literature which are hardly encompassing. The aspects of the institutional mechanism, however, also show some overlap of which some have already been discussed above. Including stakeholders into political institutions (aspect 13 & 14), for example, is closely connected to institutional structures of countries and thus policy coordination. Also, asking ministries to include an impact exercise when applying for budget (aspect 25) is closely linked to

carrying out impact analyses (aspect 10) and asking ministries to certify their policy action to LNOB (aspect 11). It goes without saying that aspects of the same institutional mechanism show more overlap. The correlation analysis will reveal if and how these links appear in the actual institutionalisation of LNOB in countries.

## 4 Results: the institutionalisation of LNOB on a country level

This section will share the outcomes of the meta-analysis and will answer **sub-question 2**. First, how countries have framed LNOB based on the concepts of equality, anti-discrimination and equity will be explained. Second, an empirical overview will be given on how countries have institutionalised LNOB structured by the aspects of the institutional mechanisms as presented in **Table 3-4 and 7-9**.

As was already discussed in the methods, a total of 177 countries have published at least one VNR up to 2021. **Figure 3** illustrates the countries that have published a VNR by 2021 and the countries that are included in this thesis. Although this thesis' data set consists of about one quarter of the countries, it is good to note that the overview of LNOB institutionalisation, which this section will provide, is intended to create a general overview of how countries have implemented LNOB. It should thus, not be considered as a per country case study. The latter would need a more extensive set of sources. The levels of implementation will reflect actual country numbers, but these percentages will be lower in reality as the most LNOB-relevant VNRs – countries – were analysed. The results thus need some nuance. Although the general overview will perhaps not reflect total institutionalisation of all countries, it will reveal general gaps and similarities which can be used to expand current (academic and policy relevant) knowledge.



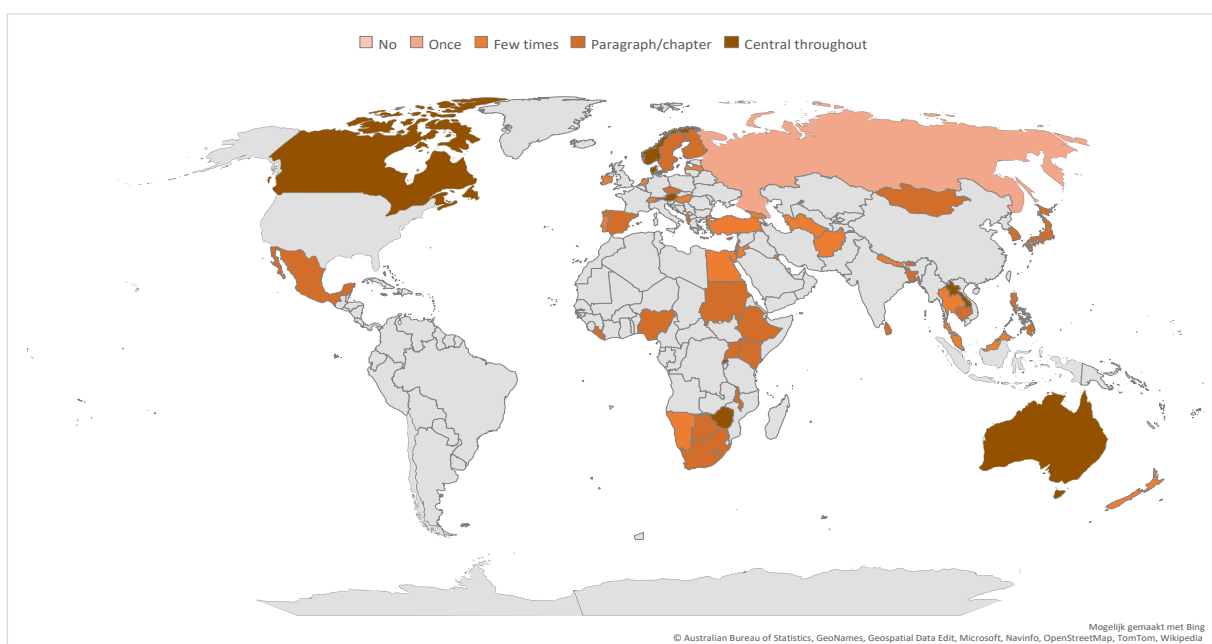
*Figure 3: World map of included and excluded countries in the data set of this research*

### 4.1 National conceptualisations of LNOB

Before analysing the more detailed results of the institutional mechanisms and its aspects, it is useful to address how LNOB has been conceptualised in the VNRs. This will paint a general picture on how countries have (not) focused on LNOB, which in its turn is a steppingstone to how countries have institutionalised LNOB. Although the question of whether countries will reach LNOB lies not in such

conceptualisation but in the translation into implementation (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; Engen, Hentinnen & Stuart, 2019), the interpretation of the LNOB principle can explain the extent and shape of actual transformations (Siegel & Lima, 2020). In addition, the LNOB principle requires more than only institutional implementation; it requires a normative shift as well (Fukuda-Parr & McNeill, 2019).

First, countries include the LNOB principle to different extents, meaning that some referred to LNOB once or only a few times throughout their VNR (35%), some countries spent more attention on LNOB by including a paragraph or a chapter fully devoted to the principle (45%), and lastly some countries did not only include a chapter on LNOB but also put it central throughout their VNR (15%). **Figure 4** shows a representation of this. Please note, that this figure is intended to offer an overall impression and that the smallest countries (e.g., Small Island Developing States) cannot be viewed from this general picture. In addition, for countries that have published multiple VNRs, the data of the most recent VNR is represented in the figure.



*Figure 4: General overview of the extent to which countries reference LNOB in their VNRs (No= not mentioned, Once= mentioned one time, Few times= mentioned but not in a structured way, Paragraph/Chapter = mentioned in a dedicated paragraph or chapter, Central throughout = mentioned in a dedicated paragraph or chapter but also recurring throughout the document)*

The guidelines for the VNRs, as provided by the UN, ask for a separate chapter on the LNOB principle, but more than one third of the countries do not offer this. One could argue that over the years, countries would have had more time to gather data and, therefore, are better able to report on LNOB. Furthermore, countries with a higher income status might have more resources to implement LNOB. In other words, is the level of reference to LNOB connected to the year of publication or income status of countries? This is represented in **Figure 5** and **6**.

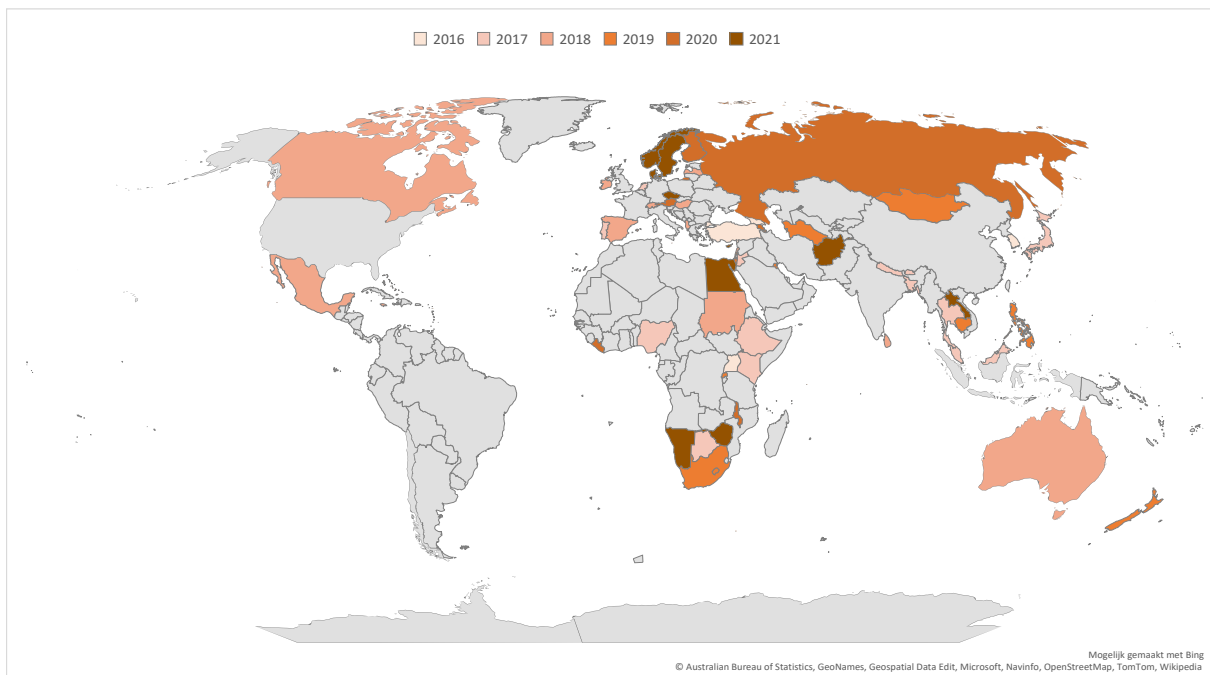


Figure 5: General overview of analysed VNRs classified per year

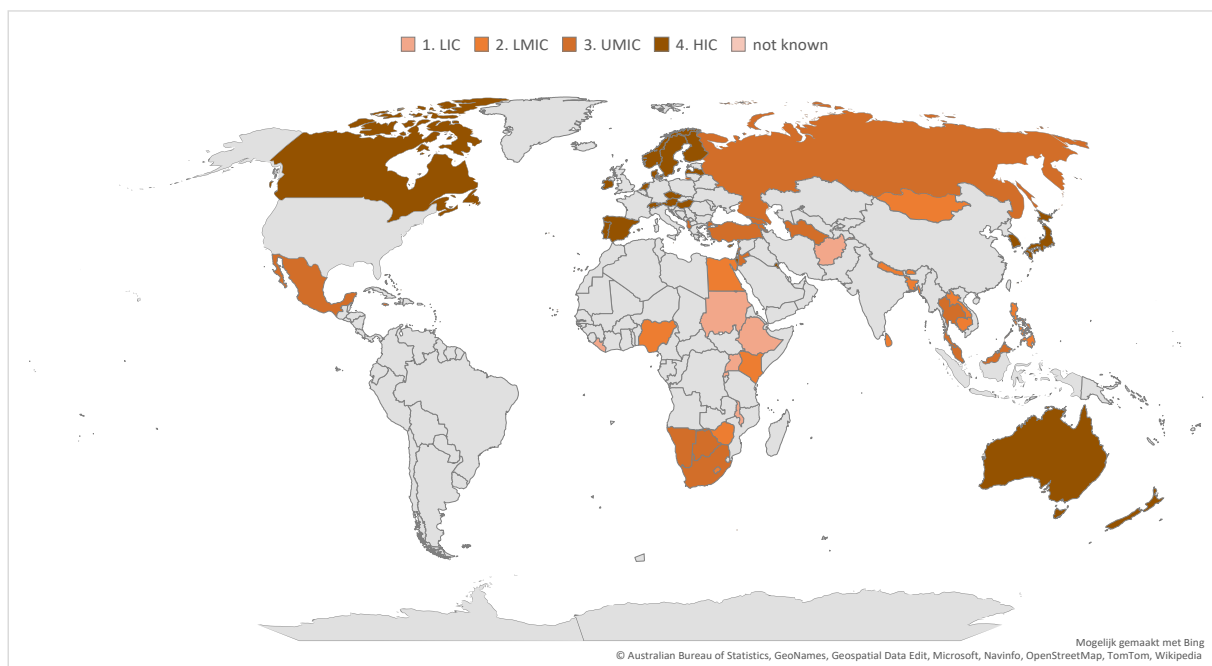


Figure 6: General overview of analysed VNRs classified per income status (HIC= High-Income Country, HMIC= High Middle-Income Country, LMIC= Low Middle-Income Country, LIC= Low-Income Country<sup>2</sup>)

Both **Figures 5** and **6** use the same colour scale as **Figure 4** to show possible links between a darker colour (i.e., a higher level of reference, a more recent year, or a higher income status) in one figure and another. Comparing **Figure 4** to **Figure 5**, no real pattern between the level of reference and the year in which the VNRs were published can be identified. However, from the countries that published multiple VNRs, and which were part of the analysis, almost all increased their focus on LNOB (from a

<sup>2</sup> Classification from World Bank, <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>

'few times' to a 'paragraph/chapter' or 'central throughout'). The increase in focus mainly lies within a) expanding the concepts linked to LNOB from only a broad focus on equality to a more intersectional and context-dependent approach by also linking anti-discrimination and equity issues to LNOB, or b) broadening the groups identified as left behind from no groups mentioned or only broad groups, such as women and the poor, to more specific population groups. This result would imply a possible positive correlation between the level of reference and number of publications. When comparing **Figure 4** to **Figure 6**, also no clear pattern can be identified. For example, the High-Income Countries (HICs) show much variance in their extent to which LNOB is addressed, from a few times to a paragraph/chapter to a central focus. In contrast, Low-Income Countries (LICs) almost all refer to LNOB in terms of a paragraph/chapter which refutes the argument that a high-income status is connected to a better focus on LNOB.

Second, how did countries conceptualise LNOB in terms of its three conceptual elements: equality, anti-discrimination, and equity? **Figure 7** shows how countries have linked the conceptual elements of LNOB classified per year. The concepts do not seem to change much over the years, except for a small increase in the year 2021. Equality remains the most stable and the most referenced in connection to LNOB, whereas equity and anti-discrimination fluctuate slightly. When classifying the focus of countries per income status (see **Figure 8**), larger differences between the categories can be identified. Equity seems to be a more important concept linked to LNOB for LICs and Low Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) than for Upper Middle-Income Countries (UMICs) and HICs, which is consistent with the conclusion of Lay & Priebe (2021). Such a division was also shown in international negotiations on sustainable development where developing countries pushed for inclusion of the equity principle in the form of 'common but differentiated responsibilities' whereas developed countries advocated against it (Sénit, 2020). Equality is rather stable among income statuses, whereas anti-discrimination fluctuates. When taking into account the differences between equality and equity, one can conclude that countries overall focus more on equal outcomes and abilities rather than fairness in terms of processes or needs (Kumar, 2021). The stability of equality might also be explained by the fact that it has been described as the more straight-forward concept linked to LNOB while also being less subjective and ethically biased than equity (Espinoza, 2007).

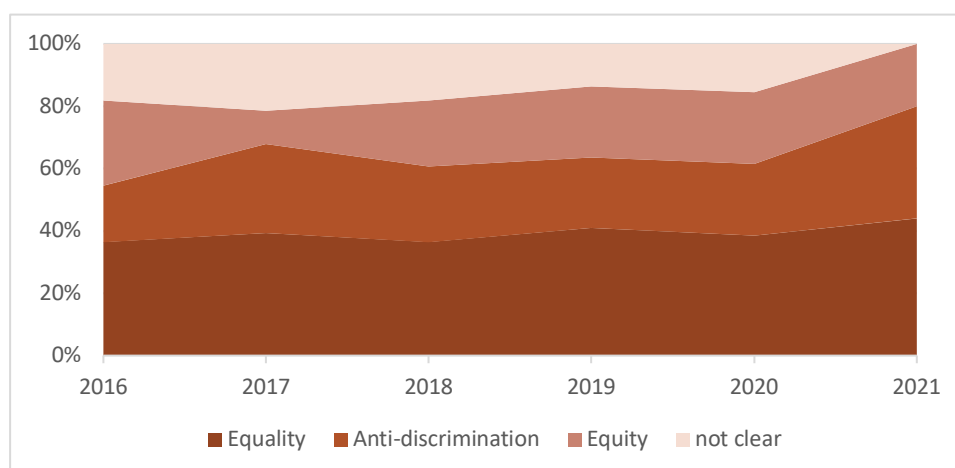


Figure 7: Conceptual focus of countries in terms of the LNOB principle classified year

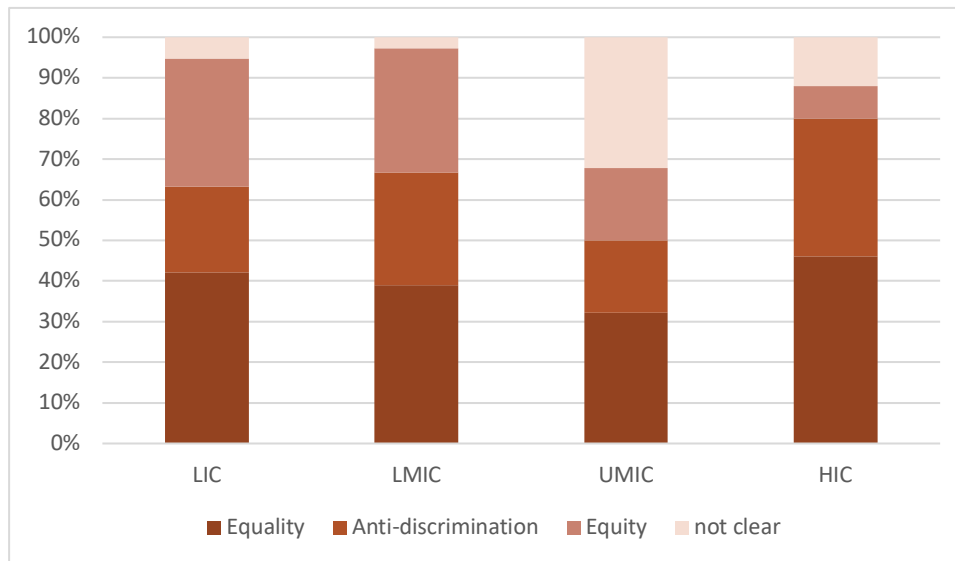


Figure 8: Conceptual focus of countries in terms of the LNOB principle classified per income status (HIC= High-Income Country, LMIC= Low Middle-Income Country, LIC= Low-Income Country<sup>2</sup>)

The intersectionality of the LNOB principle is acknowledged in the VNRs: “disadvantage can be compounded, exacerbated or prolonged by a combination of factors” (Australia, 2018, p. 6) and “many of these disadvantages often permeate each other, increasing their negative impact” (Czech Republic, 2021, p. 24). In addition, half of the countries linked LNOB to more than one of the conceptual elements. About 15% of the countries linked all three concepts – equality, anti-discrimination, and equity – to LNOB. Most of these countries dedicated a chapter to LNOB as a minimum or made it central throughout while also having an extensive list of identified left-behind groups. It was not the case that countries dedicated sections to explaining their conceptualisation of LNOB, but it became apparent through their wide descriptions on left-behind groups and/or proposed efforts. It seems that the more comprehensive the national analysis on LNOB is, the higher the chances are that the conceptualisation of LNOB is consisting of all three concepts. In other words, it is not the case that the combined implementation of the concepts of equality, anti-discrimination, and equity always present the ‘best’ form of LNOB implementation as they do not represent the needs of every marginalised individual or group. However, when talking about national implementation of LNOB, which presents the complete collection of national efforts concerning all marginalised groups in a country, it almost always includes all three concepts.

Equality is most referenced by countries, of which one third of the countries specifically link LNOB to gender equality. “The world cannot leave half of humanity behind” (Canada, 2018, p. 13) and so gender equality is a “prerequisite for building a modern, fair and equitable society” (Portugal, 2017, p.11). This is not completely surprising as the VNR guidelines of the UN ask for particular attention on how national efforts aim to empower women and girls, and how countries have “responded to the principle of leaving no one behind, including with regard to gender equality” (UN, 2019, p. 3). The focus lies on horizontal equality because inequality was often described as being connected to, (amongst others) gender, race, status, and/or location. As will become evident from the analyses on institutional mechanisms (sections 4.2-4.6), the most prominent connection is to gender. Equality and anti-discrimination are, therefore, also more often framed together (45%) than equality and equity (34%). Equity and anti-discrimination have not been used together to conceptualise LNOB, but only if equality was also part of the conceptualisation. In terms of equity, countries used it to talk about ‘fair’ and ‘even’ distribution of gains, outputs, and resources. In more detail, countries stressed the

importance of inter-generational equity: “a huge cross-section of the present generation will be left behind but also, the sustained survival of those yet unborn could be doubtful” (Sierra Leone, 2016, p. 5). Discrimination has been framed to cause social exclusion: “whereby many groups are marginalised with no chance of fully participating in their community’s social life” (Israel, 2019, p. 17). Exclusion makes voices of certain groups unheard and overlooked which makes them left behind (Bahamas, 2018). In addition, discrimination and social exclusion are linked to sustaining/causing poverty. In fact, about 20% of the countries have framed poverty as being one of the important concepts of LNOB calling it the “common denominator of vulnerable groups” (Czech Republic, 2021), while others (10%) see it as being intertwined within the concepts of equality (e.g., income equality), discrimination (e.g., social exclusion) and equity (e.g., unfair distribution of gains). Poverty is then framed as a result of intersecting disadvantages, rather than being the cause of those disadvantages. While the MDGs were mainly a pro-poor development agenda focusing on the poorest people, the SDGs and the LNOB principle offer a more comprehensive perspective on marginalised groups, including but not limited to poverty alone (De Jong & Vijge, 2020; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016). Only one country (Nigeria, 2017) solely focused on poverty in connection to LNOB, whereas most other countries included (some of) the other concepts, i.e., equality, discrimination, and equity, in their conceptualisation of LNOB. One quarter of the countries did not specify how they conceptualise the LNOB principle. At the same time, these countries only referenced to LNOB a few times.

Although this section does not offer a frame analysis that is exhaustive, it does shed some light on how the LNOB principle has been placed in the analysed VNRs, and how, and to what extent countries have used the conceptual elements of LNOB to explain their focus. The results have shown that equality is the most common and most stable concept linked to LNOB, whereas the focus on equity seems to be dependent on a countries’ income status. Only 20% of the countries focused on one of the concepts, whereas 50% of the countries focused on several of the concepts, pointing to a conceptual focus that is intersectional to a certain extent. The next sections will focus on the institutional implementation of the LNOB principle based on the institutional mechanisms and aspects as presented in section 3.2 (**Tables 3-4** and **7-9**).

## 4.2 Policy coordination

Previously explained, systematic focus on LNOB implementation is needed (Donoghue & Khan, 2019). Policies alone are not enough to ensure LNOB. Instead, operational translation into institutional structures is needed (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UNSDG, 2019). Such translation creates commitment and accountability (UNSDG, 2019). A high-level institutional mechanism at the heart of the government is, therefore, seen as essential (Donoghue & Khan, 2019). At the same time, the LNOB principle demands to strive even further in coordination efforts (UNICEF, n.d.), by creating inter-ministerial committees and working groups focused on addressing the concepts of LNOB. These prerequisites are reflected in the identified aspects and will be discussed in this chapter.

The VNR guidelines ask for explanation on coordination efforts in multiple of their outlined chapters (**Table 1**, 5b/e and 8). In fact, all countries have reported on their institutional set ups for the purpose of policy coordination. The depth and length to which this has happened differed among VNRs. More than one quarter of the countries have referred to ‘whole-of-government’ approaches, which was found to be important for reaching LNOB (Lemma & Cochrane, 2019).

1. Governments need to create a high-level mechanism at the heart of the government, i.e., office of prime minister/president, planning and/or finance ministries, that ensures systematic attention and drive commitment to LNOB at a cabinet level (Donoghue & Khan, 2019) AND/OR an interdepartmental/ministerial coordinating committee that prioritises LNOB, i.e., equality, anti-discrimination and equity issues, and/or focus on marginalised groups (UNSDG, 2019; UN, 2017b)

This aspect contains two different coordination mechanisms that literature has recommended in light of reaching LNOB. As was already made clear, there is not one ideal way to reach LNOB. Both recommended coordination mechanisms, i.e., high-level mechanism and interdepartmental/ministerial mechanism, were therefore taken into account in the analysis. The analysis focused on the functions of these mechanisms by classifying them into two levels of coordination as identified by literature (section 2.2): knowledge sharing as a ‘light’ form of coordination and joint problem solving as a ‘heavy’ form of coordination (Metcalf, 1994, as cited in Bianchi & Peters, 2018; Van Driel et al., 2022). To structure this aspect, this section will first address the creation of high-level mechanisms and then the creation of interdepartmental/ministerial coordination mechanisms. It will end with a concluding paragraph combining both findings.

In terms of implementing the 2030 Agenda, most countries (>90%) have explained how they plan to coordinate this by assigning responsibilities to ministries or the prime minister (PM)/president offices, or by creating (new) coordination mechanisms. To give an idea, 70% of the countries were clear on which governmental authority received the overall coordination responsibility, which is summarised in **Figure 9**. Finland (2020) argued that by moving the responsibility of the 2030 agenda coordination to the PM office, their sustainable development policy and cross-departmental practices have improved. Similarly, Denmark (2021) explained that moving the responsibility from the ministry of Foreign Affairs to the ministry of Finance will ensure that sustainable development is integrated into “domestic policy and the daily workings of the government” (p. 76). These examples thus show that a high-level status is important.

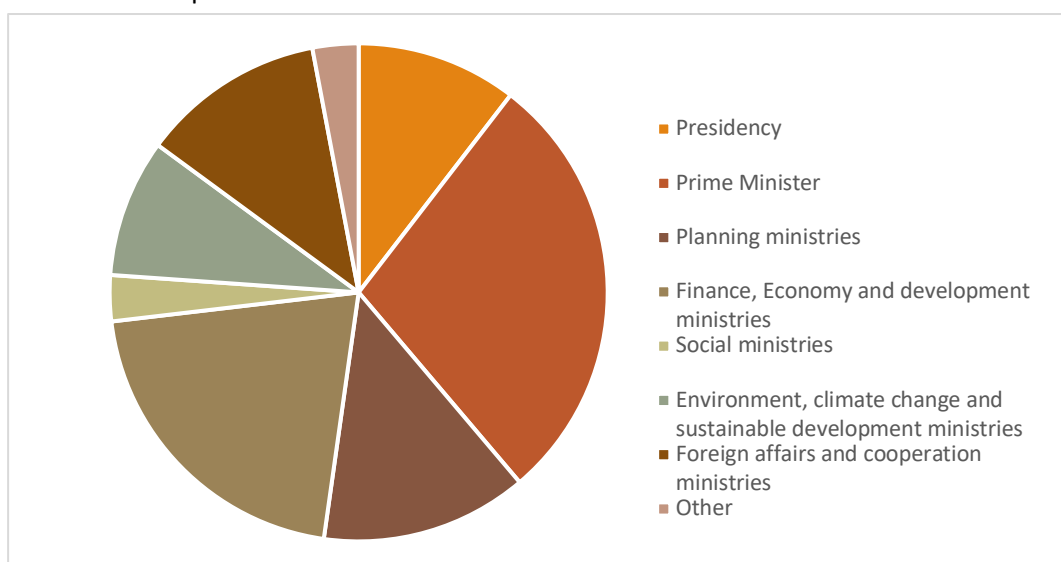


Figure 9: Lead and co-lead ministries responsible for coordination of the 2030 Agenda

The high-level mechanisms, often referred to as the national Coordination/Steering Committee/Council, are mostly (30%) created for structural oversight and facilitation of inter-ministerial cooperation. The argument is that oversight and facilitation will foster close communication





and so better alignment with development policies and strategies, which in its turn increases effective implementation. Coordination is hence closely related to policy coherence. However, coordination mechanisms used for this purpose only push for a 'light' form of coordination, as no priorities, guidelines or monitoring systems are co-produced or defined. A smaller proportion (15%) use the high-level coordination mechanisms to assess progress, review policies and provide feedback. Although this points to a 'heavy' form of coordination, countries often explain that this leads to policy guidance which implies advice and not enforcement. Bhutan (2018) did push for a 'heavy' form of coordination by giving the national coordination mechanism authority for planning and policy formulation. In addition, in Thailand (2017) the national coordination mechanism is able to formulate policies and strategies on sustainable development. Although this shows that countries do create and use high-level mechanisms for coordination, it does not ensure systematic attention on LNOB. In fact, no country has given such a mechanism the responsibility of LNOB coordination specifically.

Aspect 7 (section 4.3) will explain that national strategies of countries enclose (concepts of) LNOB. As the high-level coordination mechanisms also coordinate these strategies, one could argue that they indirectly coordinate the LNOB principle. It is not the case that countries who have more coordination also have more policy coherence. This will also become clearer in section 4.7. Such indirect focus does not give the LNOB principle the priority attention it needs (Donoghue & Khan, 2019). Lao PDR (2018) explained that "extra efforts are still required in planning and coordination to reach the poorest and most disadvantaged groups" (p. 70). Mexico (2018) expressed that 'it is expected' that the evaluations of the national committee 'will have' a focus on gender and cultural diversity in light of the LNOB principle. However, such activity is hence not ensured. Turkmenistan (2019) explained that high-level coordination is needed to be able to involve population groups and so to reach LNOB. Also, Egypt (2016), Czech Republic (2021), Canada (2018) and Cabo Verde (2018) have argued this. Section 4.6 will look in more depth at inclusive participation and how it leads to LNOB.

Next, the use of inter-ministerial/departmental coordination committees can ensure priority attention to LNOB. Inter-ministerial and high-level mechanisms are not mutually exclusive, meaning that countries have installed both, while also created high-level mechanisms that are inter-ministerial/departmental. About 30-40% of the countries specifically created a coordination mechanism that is inter-ministerial or inter-departmental, while more than 75% of the countries have installed mechanisms that are in fact inter-ministerial or inter-departmental. The latter has already been partly addressed above: one of the objectives of high-level mechanisms was to increase inter-departmental cooperation and communication. Aspect 6 (section 4.2) will cover the other part by addressing inter-ministerial working groups. Here, the focus will lie on countries that have specifically created an inter-ministerial/departmental coordination mechanism. The main objective of inter-ministerial mechanisms is to break silo-thinking by ensuring a continuous dialogue and opportunity to share knowledge between ministries. Antigua Barbuda (2021) also explained that next to knowledge sharing, their inter-ministerial commission would better divide roles and responsibilities among the ministries. A 'heavy' form of coordination is thus in both instances not pursued. When it comes to LNOB, again no country used inter-ministerial mechanisms specifically to prioritise (concepts of) LNOB. Azerbaijan (2017) expressed that through sharing expertise and knowledge, they remain committed to reaching LNOB. In addition, Denmark (2021) explained that working across ministries will ensure that vulnerable groups are included as it will enclose areas of poverty, discrimination, equality, and exclusion.

To combine these results, many to most countries create high-level and/or inter-ministerial mechanisms to coordinate the 2030 agenda. These mechanisms rarely push for a more 'heavy' forms

of coordination. However, if we specify this to the LNOB principle, coordination structure do not drive systematic attention or priority to (the concepts of) LNOB. National strategies are (partly) linked to LNOB and are often coordinated by these mechanisms which might imply indirect coordination of LNOB (see for further analysis on these national approaches aspect 7 and 10, section 4.3). However as was argued above, policies alone are not enough to reach LNOB, but it needs to be supported by institutional set ups to give political pressure, provide operational translation, and ensure commitment in the accountability framework (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UNSDG, 2019). The next aspect will explore in further detail how LNOB enters the accountability framework by explaining who is made responsible for action on LNOB.

## 2. Governments should **identify and task those responsible to take action on LNOB** (UNDP, 2018)

In terms of responsibility for the LNOB principle, not much is said. As will be explained in *policy coherence* (aspect 9, section 4.3), concepts of LNOB are mainstreamed throughout, meaning that every ministry is responsible for, e.g., addressing equality within their own work. In addition, other aspects will show that some countries demand their ministries to address consistency with the LNOB principle in their policy proposals and budgetary allocations (aspect 11, section 4.3, and aspect 25, section 4.6). This will ensure that ministries can be held accountable if their efforts do not reflect the LNOB principle as defined by the country.

Some countries (15%) have also divided responsibilities among ministries based on the targets of the SDGs (e.g., Lao PDR, 2021; Ireland, 2018; State of Palestine, 2018). One could argue that the ministry/-ies who received the responsibility of SDG 5 and 10 targets, are largely responsible for LNOB. However, as this thesis has already argued, LNOB is cross-cutting and intersecting among different SDGs and will thus need systematic attention throughout (e.g., Lemma & Cochrane, 2019; Van Driel et al., 2022).

Although countries identify programmes and/or strategies issued for LNOB (see section 4.3), almost no country (<10%) have tasked specific stakeholders accordingly. In some of these cases, efforts by stakeholders are mentioned, but it is often left vague whether this is due to voluntary effort by these stakeholders or tasked responsibility by the government. In connection, accountability remains unclear. In terms of the national LNOB-coordination structure, tasking those responsible is thus not an approach pursued by countries.

## 3. Governments should **assign responsibility to and/or create a mechanism that systematically tracks and monitors progress** on LNOB and report this to cabinet (Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Stuart et al., 2016; UN, 2017)

Based on the previous analysis, it is not surprising that almost no country (<10%) has tasked specific actors or mechanisms to systematically track or monitor progress on LNOB. However, it is not uncommon for countries to assign responsibility to systematically track and monitor progress, when it comes to implementation of the SDGs. Namely, 50-60% of the countries do so. Although specific monitoring responsibilities for LNOB implementation are rare, still some interesting points can be raised here.

In Bhutan (2018), the national commission was given responsibility to monitor and evaluate national progress in light of social equity, women's empowerment and good governance. Similarly, Afghanistan (2017) made the Ministry of Economy responsible for monitoring progress on sustainable



development as explained in their national framework (*ANPDF-II*). This national framework integrated the LNOB principle (see aspect 7, section 4.3), and so the Ministry of Economy indirectly also tracks LNOB efforts. The same applies to countries that mainstreamed (concepts of) LNOB in their policies or budgets (see aspect 9, section 4.3 and aspect 25, section 4.6). However, as previously argued, LNOB needs to be made explicit rather than only being addressed implicitly. Operational translation into the institutional set up is needed to create ownership and systematic attention (Donoghue & Khan, 2019; UNSDG, 2019; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016). One interesting example where LNOB was specifically mentioned to be monitored is that of Turkey (2019) who created a national database for ‘Best Practices and Projects’. This online database will monitor and evaluate the “impact of efforts contributing to the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ ” (p. 14). However, it remains unclear who is made responsible for this, and thus no commitment or accountability is created. In some cases, marginalised groups, CSOs and/or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are included in monitoring or tracking activities which contributes to the LNOB principle as well, but this will be further explained in the code *inclusive participation* (aspect 15, section 4.4).

**4. Governments should assign responsibility to the national coordination mechanism for carrying out impact analyses/mapping exercises to understand the policy impacts on LNOB and the most marginalised groups (see *policy coherence*; Donoghue & Khan, 2019)**

When investigating who is made responsible for impact analyses and/or mapping exercises, no further specification is given than the ‘national government’. Ministries, or other policy actors, might be affected as some of these mapping exercises aim to review policies which are under these actors’ jurisdictions (Norway, 2021; Canada, 2018; Bhutan, 2018). However, impact and mapping analyses are thus not given institutional translation.

**5. Governments should include local authorities into the coordination mechanisms to ensure vertical coordination (UNDP, 2018; UN, 2017)**

Including local governments is found to be important for reaching LNOB by multiple countries (15-25%) (e.g., Jamaica, 2018; Egypt, 2021; Malaysia, 2017, Cabo Verde, 2018). Ethiopia (2017), Latvia (2018) and Ireland (2018) explained that including local governments is essential for LNOB as they are closer to the communities. Hence, they are able to address local needs better and translate national policies into tangible actions. Lao PDR (2018) stated that to reach the poorest and most disadvantaged groups, vertical coordination needs to be improved. Moreover, Cyprus (2021) argued that engaging local governments will increase the ownership and involvement of Cypriot society in its entirety. Vertical coordination is thus directly linked to reaching LNOB, while at the same time, including local authorities in coordination is seen as challenging because it adds complexity and contestability (Egypt, 2016; Australia, 2018; Lao PDR, 2021).

While countries state that including local authorities could potentially have positive impacts, only a few (10-20%) actually do so through including them in coordination structures (e.g., Spain, 2018; Papua New Guinea, 2018). Ireland (2018), for example, explained that increasing local authority inclusion will be an important task for their national strategy in the coming years (i.e., 2018-2020). Also, Jordan (2017) argued that local level implementation is essential to ensure reaching LNOB but did not explain how they institutionalised this further. In general, vertical coordination is less often

institutionalised than horizontal coordination. The next paragraph will focus on some examples where countries included local authorities into the political structure in connection to LNOB.

Ethiopia (2017) linked their decentralised administrative system to their efforts in engaging local governments. They explained that through this decentralisation, they gave more power to local levels because they are closer to the communities and better able to address local needs. Cabo Verde (2018) created a platform - *Strategic Municipal Plans for Sustainable Development* - where local plans are reviewed to identify the local needs and priorities, and to link it to national priorities. In addition, they followed a regionalisation approach to strengthen the capacities of the municipalities in light of contributing to the LNOB principle. This regionalisation approach did not include local authorities in political mechanisms, but rather set targets for each region to reach. Papua New Guinea (2018) made a specific body – *a Provincial Local Level Government Services Monitoring Authority* – to coordinate between national and sub-national levels.

In other countries (10%), local governments are included in collaborative forums (Ireland, 2018, Switzerland, 2018), in working groups (Latvia, 2018), and in national coordination mechanisms (e.g., Jordan, 2017; Spain, 2018). In terms of the latter, local governments were stated as one of the many members, but countries did not elaborate on the associated tasks and/or roles. In Norway (2021) the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation was given the responsibility to coordinate the 2030 Agenda, which might imply the focus on involving local authorities. Similarly, Malawi (2018) has tasked the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to collaborate with local councils to ensure alignment of local action with national strategies.

In terms of including local governments into coordination, multiple countries acknowledge the importance, but few countries report on clear institutional translation. Of course, the VNRs focus on national implementation, and therefore a focus on local governments might be lacking. Although beyond the scope of this research, it is interesting to add that sub-national governments also report their progress and efforts in so-called Voluntary Local Reviews. These documents might be more informative on how local governments have contributed to LNOB coordination.

#### 6. Governments should **create a specific working group(s) to address LNOB** and/or issues of equality, anti-discrimination and equity (UNICEF, n.d.)

Many countries (30%) created a single working group or multiple working groups to help with coordinating the 2030 agenda. This is often in addition to the institutional coordination mechanisms as discussed in aspect 1 (section 4.2). In contrast to the coordination mechanisms, working groups are not created for the purpose of having the main responsibility of coordination. The overall objective of these working groups is, however, to provide technical (advisory) input, to report on progress through monitoring and evaluating tasks and to initiate dialogue. All of which point to a 'light' form of coordination. Only Mexico (2018) created a working group specifically to address the LNOB principle. Other countries have created working groups that address some of the concepts of LNOB. Palau (2019) created a working group on equality and Jordan (2017) a working group on gender and equity. In Jordan (2017), the working group is responsible for mainstreaming gender in national policies. In addition, Liberia (2020) created a working group on the theme of social protection which has also been found as important to reach the LNOB principle (Chattopadhyay & Salomon, 2021; Greenhill, 2017; Stuart et al., 2016; see also aspect 24, section 4.6). Afghanistan (2017) created a working group on Human Rights. Lastly, there are countries that have formed working groups linked to the social dimension (Cabo Verde, 2018; Azerbaijan, 2019; Russian Federation, 2020). These countries have

linked specific social SDGs to their working groups, SDGs 5 and 10 more specifically, that are closely linked to the LNOB principle. These examples show that only about 10% of the countries use working groups to address concepts of LNOB. It must be noted here that many countries (20%) do not explain on which themes their working group(s) will work on.

To conclude, countries are active on policy coordination in terms of the 2030 Agenda but when it comes to the LNOB principle many gaps can be identified. Coordination approaches, creating high-level mechanisms, inter-ministerial committees, and/or working groups, are widely implemented, but they rarely push for more ‘heavy’ forms of coordination and do not focus on (concepts of) LNOB. In addition, coordination efforts do not drive commitment and/or accountability as specific mechanisms and/or actors are rarely given responsibility to take action, monitor and track progress, or carry out impact and mapping analyses. This section shows that countries are not translating LNOB into specific (coordination) mechanisms that ensure systematic attention in everyday decision-making (Donoghue & Khan, 2019). It is important to mention here that countries have acknowledged a link between coordination and coherence: “an overarching coordination mechanism has been needed to strengthen policy coherence by facilitating the mainstreaming of sustainable development into government policies and to consult on questions concerning the realization of the SDGs” (Hungary, 2018, p. 6) and “instilling stronger coordination between governmental bodies and other stakeholders would enable better synergy and coherence for policy planning across government” (Seychelles, 2020, p. 119). The links between coordination and coherence will also be further discussed in section 4.7. **Table 10** summarizes the results.

*Table 10: Policy coordination in relation to LNOB institutionalisation and global achievement*

Code	Aspect	Level
<b>Policy coordination</b>	1. Governments need <b>to create a high-level mechanism at the heart of the government</b> , i.e., office of prime minister/president, planning and/or finance ministries, that ensures systematic attention and drive commitment to LNOB at a cabinet level (Donoghue & Khan, 2019) <u>AND/OR</u> <b>an interdepartmental/ministerial coordinating committee that prioritises LNOB</b> , i.e., equality, anti-discrimination and equity issues, and/or focus on marginalised groups (UNSDG, 2019; UN, 2017b)	0-20%
	2. Governments should <b>identify and task those responsible to take action on LNOB</b> (UNDP, 2018)	0-20%
	3. Governments should <b>assign responsibility to and/or create a mechanism that systematically tracks and monitors progress</b> on LNOB and report this to cabinet (Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Stuart et al., 2016; UN, 2017b)	0-20%
	4. Governments should <b>assign responsibility to the national coordination mechanism for carrying out impact analyses/mapping exercises</b> to understand the policy impacts on LNOB and the most marginalised groups (see <i>policy coherence</i> ; Donoghue & Khan, 2019)	0-20%
	5. Governments should <b>include local authorities</b> into the coordination mechanisms to ensure vertical coordination (UNDP, 2018; UN, 2017)	0-20%
	6. Governments should <b>create a specific working group(s) to address LNOB</b> and/or issues of equality, anti-discrimination and equity (UNICEF, n.d.)	0-20%

### 4.3 Policy coherence

The VNR guidelines urge countries to report on coherence and interlinkages to reach integration among various levels of government. Policy coherence is more likely to be available if there is consistency in issue framing and when there is a shared understanding of issues and interests (May, Sapotichne & Workman, 2006). So even though targeted interventions might benefit LNOB, it requires an overall strategy conducive to fully include those left behind (Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018). In addition, mainstreaming LNOB into all national policies by adopting a ‘LNOB lens’ is important to offer more systematic focus on marginalised groups and the factors that cause them to be left behind (Reinders et al., 2019; Van Kesteren, Altaf & de Weerd, 2019; Hathie, 2020; Donoghue & Khan, 2019). To give institutional weight to mainstreaming of LNOB, screening exercises are needed to ensure alignment with LNOB and to define and prioritise policies that are synergistic and minimize trade-offs for the most marginalised groups (Bouyé, Harmeling & Schulz, 2019).

7. Governments should adopt a common approach to LNOB, e.g., National Policies, Strategies and/or Plans, which will drive alignment through having shared objectives across systems, actions and areas (UN, 2017; Zamora et al., 2018; UNSDG, 2019)

Many to most countries (>80%) have developed national policies, strategies and/or plans to guide the implementation of the SDGs. However, fewer countries (25%) have linked these national frameworks to LNOB or have integrated concepts of LNOB into it. Some countries solely state that their national policy framework will ‘leave no one behind’ without making clear in practice how this will happen (e.g., Japan, 2017; Cabo Verde, 2018).

Other countries offer slightly more information on how they aim to reach LNOB, by prioritising equality, anti-discrimination and/or equity. For example, Lao PDR (2021), Latvia (2018), Finland (2020) and the Philippines (2019) have made equality one of their main goals to ensure that marginalised groups are not left behind. Liberia (2020) made equity one of the pillars of the national plan: “to empower Liberians with the tools to gain control of their lives through more equitable provision of opportunities in education, health, youth development, and social protection (women and vulnerable people with special needs)” (p. 7). Nigeria (2017) integrated LNOB in their national policy framework by prioritising the goal of social inclusion. They operationalised social inclusion based on two objectives: 1) “increase social inclusion by enhancing the social safety net for the poor and the vulnerable”, and 2) “address region-specific exclusion challenges, particularly in the North East and the Niger Delta” (Nigeria, 2017, p. 20). These examples show that countries include specific concepts of LNOB as focus areas. Ensuring policy coherence by adopting a wider cross-sectoral focus is seen as a challenge (Norway, 2021). Although a focus on equality, discrimination or equity does not touch upon the LNOB principle in its entirety, it remains valuable that these governments think through the implications of a shared policy agenda (Donoghue & Khan, 2019).

Next to prioritising concepts of LNOB in national policy frameworks, countries have created specific ‘policy acts’ to focus on either equality or anti-discrimination (e.g., Republic of Korea, 2016; Finland, 2020; Malawi, 2020). Norway (2021) explained in their VNR that “a strong focus on equality and non-discrimination is key to ensure LNOB” (p.7). These specific policy acts are highly connected to the conceptual focus that countries have taken in terms of LNOB (section 4.1).



Afghanistan (2021) is more advanced in how they have placed LNOB in their national policy approach. In their national policy framework (ANPDF-II), they committed to addressing the issue of LNOB “through a comprehensive social protection system for the most vulnerable by defining a national social protection floor and strengthening coordination across all stakeholders” (p. 9). At the core of the ANPDF-II vision lies the principle that the government must respond to demands of citizens, women and vulnerable groups specifically. The identification of the left behind groups is integrated in the ANPDF-II framework, which will drive alignment over different levels of government.

There are also countries who have installed national policies, strategies and/or plans specifically linked to (one of) their identified marginalised groups. For example, Sweden (2021) has created an action plan for “the equal rights and opportunities of LGBTIQ people” (p. 46) by including a number of focus areas, such as discrimination and abuse. It aims to boost concerted effort on concrete measures for the LGBTIQ community. Other countries have created a National Disability Plan/Strategy (Australia, 2018; Austria, 2020; Republic of Korea, 2016; Finland, 2020; Antigua and Barbuda, 2021; Malawi, 2020; Lesotho, 2019). In addition, National Youth (Malawi, 2020) and Gender policies (Liberia, 2020; Seychelles, 2020) have been created.

8. Governments should adopt a policy approach to LNOB that is long term by having time horizons of at least three to five years (UNSDG, 2019)

From the countries that have installed national policy approaches to LNOB or its concepts, the time horizons are indeed three to five years. In some cases (10%), the time horizon was simply not specified, while at the same time national policy approaches linked to LNOB are rarely longer than five years. One third of the countries create so called visions, which are often 10 to 30 years ahead. Although these visions guide policy direction, it does not provide practical policy guidelines. The Czech Republic (2021) has acknowledged this by saying that their 2030 vision has played “an informative rather than [a] managerial role” (p. 15). Although the 2030 vision of the Czech Republic has spread over the levels of government, “only some ministries have executed their strategies so that they truly align with the goals” (p.15) in which there is only a very general alignment. A greater alignment can be found with national strategies that have been created as part of this vision. Cambodia (2019) places LNOB at the heart of their 2050 vision but refers to three specific national policies when explaining how LNOB is targeted in the country. It thus implies that, although the principle of LNOB has been integrated into some of the national visions, it is the national policies, strategies and/or plans that drive actions and so policy coherence.

9. Governments should mainstream LNOB, i.e., equality, anti-discrimination, and equity issues, among policies to ensure systematic focus on the poorest and most marginalised groups (Samman et al., 2018; Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Kenny, 2018; Stuart & Samman, 2017; Lay & Priebe, 2021).

Before discussing how LNOB has been mainstreamed among policies, there is one point noteworthy of mentioning here. In some VNRs (e.g., Australia, 2018, Canada, 2018), LNOB is mainstreamed in the document itself, meaning that LNOB was not only discussed in one chapter or section but that it was a recurring theme throughout. It would not fall under any of the levels of mainstreaming as described in the theory section (section 2.2 – *policy coherence*), because it does not necessarily mean that LNOB is integrated in strategic and operational plans. One could, however, argue that in the process of

setting up the VNR that there was a certain amount of focus on LNOB, indicating that it is indeed a central focus in national efforts.

Theoretically, Runhaar et al. (2020) classified policy coherence by making a distinction between harmonisation and prioritisation (see section 2.2 – *policy coherence*). Based on this classification and on this thesis' empirical evidence, a classification of three levels of mainstreaming is identified:

1. Mainstreaming LNOB by putting it centrally or at the core of national efforts
2. Mainstreaming LNOB by integrating it into strategic and operational plans to ensure focus on the most marginalised groups
3. Mainstreaming LNOB by integrating it into strategic and operational plans to prioritise the most marginalised groups

In terms of the first level, 15% of the countries have mainstreamed LNOB by explicitly mentioning that it is “in the centre of attention” (Azerbaijan, 2019), “at the core of our efforts” (Bangladesh, 2017; Lesotho, 2019) or central in future work (Israel, 2019). Although placing LNOB centrally in current and future practices will ensure systematic focus to a certain extent, it remains unclear what it entails, who is involved and who is responsible.

In terms of the second level, LNOB is being mainstreamed in national policies, strategies and plans by 20% of the countries in which often a specific focus is chosen (e.g., Nigeria, 2017; Ireland, 2018; Japan, 2017; Lao PDR, 2021, see aspect 7, section 4.3 for examples). However, in some cases (5%) LNOB is mainstreamed by using multiple concepts, i.e., equality, anti-discrimination, and equity, and/or the focus lies on multiple marginalised groups. For example, Cambodia (2019) mainstreams LNOB in three key development frameworks that focus on ensuring income security and reducing economic vulnerability, increasing social security and assistance services, and on empowering older people. Zimbabwe (2021) mainstreams LNOB by embedding equity and inclusion in the country's development and sectoral policy frameworks. It devotes a whole chapter on how this takes shape in concrete actions. Although it will be too extensive to state all these actions here, a few actions are important to highlight. First, Zimbabwe (2021) not only integrated LNOB in one of their overarching national goals, but they have also connected many other (existing) policies to this. Second, the government of Zimbabwe (2021) installed a comprehensive communication system to equip stakeholders “with the requisite information ... to effectively contribute to [making] informed decisions” (p. 38). The mainstreaming approach of Zimbabwe was thus not only envisioned but also communicated and put into practice. Although more countries claim to have mainstreamed LNOB by integrating it to several policies, it often remained unclear how this is done and in which policies exactly.

More countries (15%) have, however, mainstreamed LNOB focusing on specific marginalised groups (e.g., people with disabilities, pro-poor). For example, Austria (2020) have adopted a gender-sensitive and youth policy perspective. In addition, disability mainstreaming strategies are pursued (e.g., Malawi, 2020). Most often though, gender was mainstreamed in national efforts to LNOB. For example, Rwanda (2019) has mainstreamed gender into all their 16 national sector strategic plans. Sweden (2021) explained that the aim of gender mainstreaming is to “bring about permanent changes in operations and working methods, with both the Government Offices and government agencies” (p. 140). Here, gender will be mainstreamed in four central processes: “budget process, legislative process, governance of government agencies and European Union work” (p. 46). In the code of *dedicated finance*, the gender perspective in budgets will be further explained (aspect 25, section 4.6).





Although a disability or gender perspective will contribute to LNOB, reaching LNOB will require the same for all other marginalised groups (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016).

Only in some cases (<10%), the third level is aspired by prioritising LNOB over other objectives. For example, Antigua Barbuda (2021) integrates LNOB into strategic policies of government entities by ensuring that the most left behind groups are considered first. Also, the Republic of Korea (2016) says to have designed all government policies with the principle of “benefit for all” but in which the most vulnerable groups will be prioritised. Within the approach of gender mainstreaming, gender equality and women are often prioritised (e.g., Canada, 2018). Again, countries are vague in how prioritisation is realised and guaranteed. Without these explanations, such prioritisation statements will fall no higher than level one of mainstreaming. There are a few examples where countries do ensure prioritisation, but this is done through budget allocations to these prioritised groups or concepts. This will be further explained in the mechanisms *dedicated finance* (aspect 25, section 4.6).

Overall, many countries are mainstreaming LNOB to some extent, by positioning it in national visions or even national policies, strategies and/or plans. When moving to higher levels of mainstreaming, countries are increasingly vague on how this receives institutional status. There also seems to be a trade-off with the implementation of the SDGs; the SDGs are widely mainstreamed in which the LNOB principle is often considered to be inherently part of. Countries thus minimize the LNOB principle to certain specific targets. Although this is not completely untrue, i.e., LNOB targets are present in multiple SDGs, such an approach lacks the priority attention that the LNOB principle requires and that has been universally promised (Donoghue & Kahn, 2019). What has been argued to help with LNOB mainstreaming efforts, are mapping/impact assessments and including impacts on marginalised groups in policy proposals. Both would lead to systematic attention on LNOB which would improve understanding of synergies and trade-offs and so lead to better alignment. The next sections will focus on how countries have or have not used this in their efforts on LNOB.

10. Governments should **carry out impact (distributional) analyses/mapping exercises** to understand the impact of their policy decisions on marginalised groups and to be able to quickly mitigate any negative impacts (Stuart & Samman, 2017; Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Machingura & Lally, 2017; Bouyé, Harmeling & Schulz, 2019; UNSDG, 2019) (e.g., PSIA)

The use of mapping exercises to better understand the impact and coherence of policies is not uncommon when it comes to the 2030 agenda. For example, Austria (2020) explains that in favour of sustainable development, impact assessments are used to increase transparency, traceability, and coherence. However, exercises to assess the impact of policies on LNOB are less common (10%). Although not prevalent, there are some examples where countries use mapping analysis to assess their impact on marginalised groups and/or other dimensions of LNOB. First, some countries use multidimensional analysis and indexes to inform what appropriate policy actions are for marginalised groups. These multidimensional measures are able to take into account the intersectionality of LNOB and they can hence rightly inform policy impacts on different marginalised groups from different perspectives. This will be discussed further in the mechanism *disaggregated data* (aspect 21, section 4.5).

Second, some countries use registries to map vulnerable and marginalised groups and households (e.g., Cabo Verde, 2018; Nigeria, 2017, see aspect 17, section 4.5) upon which policy decisions are based. These registries, unlike the multidimensional measures, are less static as they are designed to track groups over a longer period of time instead of being a one-point in time measurement. These

two examples are more often used to inform policies, instead of measuring (ex-ante) impact on marginalised groups and concepts of LNOB. However, they are mentioned here as they have the potential to do so.

Third, Antigua Barbuda (2021) included a table showing the current situation of vulnerable groups or at risk to be left behind and the country's commitment through policies and strategies to better the situation of these groups in their VNR. This table maps out what/who the policies aim to target positioned in the context of an SDG-goal. Not many other countries approach their LNOB efforts in such a systematic and straightforward manner. Although, Antigua Barbuda (2021) does not use this table to measure policy impacts, or at least does not mention this, it does create the opportunity to do so. The table will, however, need more advancement if used for this purpose. Similarly, Denmark (2021) asked their ministries to map out their policy work and performance in light of the LOB principle.

Fourth, Norway (2021) and Canada (2018) introduced a policy review and reform process to "help ensure it [laws, policies, practices] meets its constitutional obligations with respect to indigenous and treaty rights" (Canada, 2018, p. 11) and to outline the impact it had on national minorities (Norway, 2021). The objective of such a review is to strengthen national policies to better align with the needs of indigenous/national minorities.

The fifth and last example presents the most advanced mapping exercise for understanding policy impacts on LNOB. Bhutan (2018) uses a Vulnerability Baseline Assessment to "assess the vulnerability of each group, [identify] causes, [review] the current policy and program landscape and how it enables or blocks groups to manage or overcome vulnerabilities, while also identifying opportunities of further improvement" (p. 57). It was specifically designed for the purpose of guiding national efforts on LNOB and will be used as a policy baseline for the next five years. In the VNR of Bhutan (2018), future recommendations are provided which are all based upon the Vulnerability Baseline Assessment. It is unknown whether the Vulnerability Baseline Assessment is indeed systematically used to analyse impact of policies by all governmental actors, but it presents, by far, the most advanced approach to map LNOB efforts from all analysed VNRs.

A mapping exercise that is mostly used by countries to assess the alignment of policies to the SDGs, is the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) approach. This framework, created by the UN, helps to integrate the SDGs in policies and at the same time to find priority areas that will accelerate progress by focusing on bottlenecks, synergies, and trade-offs. This example is mentioned here as in some cases, it identified priority areas that are linked to the concepts of LNOB (e.g., Azerbaijan, 2019; Spain, 2018). In addition, one could argue that LNOB should be inherently part of the MAPS approach because sustainable development cannot be reached without prioritising the furthest behind. The accelerators for progress will then always need to focus on the factors preventing those furthest behind to develop. Although this is interesting, it transcends the scope of this thesis, because the MAPS approach remains a UN framework and is not adjustable on a national scale.

**11. Governments should ask their ministries to certify that their policy proposals are consistent with LNOB and confirm that they included the impacts on the most marginalised groups (Donoghue & Khan, 2019)**

Next to mapping and impact assessments, certifying that policy proposals have taken into account its impacts on marginalised groups can better align policies with the LNOB principle. After the previous analyses, it is not surprising that such certifying actions are rare when it comes to LNOB (<10%). Denmark (2021) has asked their ministries to map out their policy work that aims at supporting the

LNOB principle. However, this was only asked in preparation of setting up the national action plan. It is hence not a continuous requirement. Bangladesh (2017) introduced an Annual Performance Agreement which is a ‘result-based performance management system’. This agreement requires each ministry to outline goals and target linking it to performance indicators so that “long-term objectives can be translated into annual work plan of the ministries” (p. 7). Bangladesh (2017) explained they started on integrating the SDGs into this measure. However, it could also potentially be used for assessing progress on LNOB when its concepts are integrated. Similarly, Finland (2020) asks their ministries annually to compile their efforts on the implementation of the 2030 agenda to be used as input for the ‘Government’s Annual Report to the Parliament’. Next, Norway (2021) installed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities that oblige ministries to involve the national minority groups on issues that affect them. Similarly, a duty to consult the ‘Sami Parliament’ was agreed upon, but this is explained in more detail in *inclusive participation* (section 4.4, aspect 14). Both Ireland (2018) and Sweden (2021) have, as part of their gender mainstreaming approach, required ministries and other governmental actors to factor in their impact on gender equality in all of their policy decisions. More countries have asked their ministries to include gender impact by requiring it in their budget allocations. This will be further explained in the code *dedicated finance* (section 4.6, aspect 25).

To conclude, the analysis on policy coherence shows that countries are largely pursuing holistic and long-term approaches to the SDGs, and to LNOB, moderately. A specific focus or priority is often chosen in these approaches that reflects either one of the concepts of LNOB or one marginalised group. In only some rare cases, countries have integrated the full LNOB principle into their national approach. LNOB or concepts of LNOB, especially gender, are mainstreamed by countries. However, the extent to which this happens differ and countries are increasingly vague on how they ensure such mainstreaming. Mapping and impact exercises can give practical meaning to mainstreaming statements but, although there are examples of impact or mapping exercises, most countries do not link this to the LNOB principle. This analysis did show that some of these exercises show potential to do so. Similarly, certifying actions by ministries to show how their policy proposal impacts LNOB is not often demanded by countries. **Table 11** summarizes these results.

*Table 11: Policy coherence in relation to LNOB institutionalisation and global achievement*

Code	Aspect	Level
<b>Policy coherence</b>	7. Governments should adopt <b>a common approach to LNOB</b> , e.g., National Policies, Strategies and/or Plans, that is holistic which will drive alignment through having shared objectives across systems, actions, and areas (UN, 2017; Zamora et al., 2018; UNSDG, 2019; Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018; Donoghue & Khan, 2019)	20-50%
	8. Governments should adopt <b>a policy approach to LNOB that is long term</b> by having time horizons of at least three to five years (UNSDG, 2019)	20-50%
	9. Governments should <b>mainstream LNOB</b> , i.e., equality, anti-discrimination, and equity issues, among policies to ensure systematic focus on the poorest and most marginalised groups (Samman et al., 2018; Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Kenny, 2018; Stuart & Samman, 2017; Lay & Priebe, 2021).	20-50%
	10. Governments should <b>carry out impact (distributional) analyses/mapping exercises</b> to understand the impact of their policy decisions on marginalised	0-20%

	groups and to be able to quickly mitigate any negative impacts (Stuart & Samman, 2017; Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Machingura & Lally, 2017; Bouyé, Harmeling & Schulz, 2019; UNSDG, 2019) (e.g., PSIA)	
	11. Governments should <b>ask their ministries to certify that their policy proposals are consistent with LNOB</b> and confirm that they included the impacts on the most marginalised groups (Donoghue & Khan, 2019)	0-20%

#### 4.4 Inclusive participation

Including stakeholders such as CSOs, NGOs and community groups is important for LNOB as it strengthens the voice and capacities of those left behind (UNDP, 2018). Giving the voice to the most vulnerable and empowering CSOs to represent these marginalised groups are essential to bring about transformative social change that is needed to LNOB (Bhattacharya, 2020). Most countries (>90%) used participatory approaches, such as stakeholder consultations, to prepare the VNR report. Although this has also to do with inclusive participation, it will not be taken into account in this analysis for two reasons. First, the UN guidelines for the VNRs specifically ask for a participatory approach which makes such an outcome likely and unsurprising. The countries that did not have participatory approaches either presented an incomplete VNR or explained that COVID-19 prohibited them from liaising with stakeholders. Second, this thesis is concerned with how LNOB is institutionalised, meaning that it focuses on how countries have included, in this case, inclusive participation into their national institutional structures, and not whether countries have used inclusive approaches at a certain point in time. If institutional structures were created for the purpose of the VNR but were going to be used continuously after, it has been included in the analysis.

About 30% of the countries included stakeholders beyond VNR processes only through adopting so-called ‘whole-of-society’ approaches. ‘Whole-of-society’ approaches aim to include different stakeholders in decision-making processes. Cambodia (2019) explained that a whole-of-society approach means that decision making is open to civil society and business actors. In the VNRs, the countries also link ‘inclusivity’ of all stakeholders directly to achieving LNOB, making it the most obvious institutional mechanism linked to LNOB.

12. Governments should create dialogue forums or networks where different stakeholders come together including CSOs, collective groups and (representatives of) the furthest behind to assess, implement and track progress (UNSDG, 2019; López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017)

About 40% of the countries have used dialogue forums, networks, or events to bring together different stakeholders. These stakeholders range from NGOs and CSOs to private sector actors to marginalised groups among which women and youth. The purpose of these dialogues differs between countries. For example, dialogue with stakeholders is pursued to collect data and exchange information (Finland, 2020; Hungary, 2018; South Africa, 2019; Liberia, 2020), to promote acceptance (Bahamas, 2017), to build partnerships and bring stakeholders together (Australia, 2018; Azerbaijan, 2017; Bhutan, 2018; Cambodia, 2019; Denmark, 2017, 2021; Finland, 2020; Sweden, 2021), to promote participation (Austria, 2020; Australia, 2018), to review and monitor progress (Bhutan, 2018; Hungary, 2018), and/or to give a voice to marginalised groups (Azerbaijan, 2019; Bangladesh, 2017; Cabo Verde, 2018; Malawi, 2020; Philippines, 2019; Switzerland, 2018; Turkey, 2016). The other 60% of the countries that did not report on dialogue forums or networks have used consultations in which stakeholders were included, but these were often held sporadically. Often, these countries were vague about these consultations



in terms of who was involved, what the purpose was, or what the outcomes were. This does, however, point to a lack of commitment of these countries to systematically include stakeholders for the purpose of dialogue.

A distinction can be made in terms of the extent to which dialogue approaches are institutionalised. From the countries that pursue dialogue with CSOs, NGOs and/or marginalised groups, about half did not explain how they have given those dialogue approaches institutional status. For example, Bangladesh (2017) purely explained that dialogue with ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups is pursued to identify their ideas and needs. In addition, Cabo Verde (2018) expressed that the main objection of creating dialogue was to give less-favoured groups the opportunity to raise their voice and express their ideas. Although, Cabo Verde said that this process contributed to the post 2015 development agenda, it remains unclear how dialogue was created and whether it is a continuous effort. The same applies in the VNR of Norway (2016) which stated that “the Government will continue to engage in a constructive dialogue with relevant stakeholders” (p. 6). Although, they explain occasions where dialogue was searched, no institutional weight is attached to this.

The other half of countries did create institutional mechanisms or structures to create continuous dialogue. Forums and/or platforms were created to allow for stakeholders to participate and voice their opinions in the implementation policies (e.g., South Africa, 2019; Ireland, 2018; Lao PDR, 2021). In Austria (2020), the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection created a dialogue forum specifically focused on LNOB. Liberia (2020) installed a Citizens Feedback Mechanism; a platform to gather citizens’ perceptions and ideas in order to improve service delivery. It helped to make better informed decisions to increase the wellbeing of citizens. Both Cabo Verde (2018) and Egypt (2021) created an online platform to allow for better participation with citizens. Norway (2021) specified that the national minority organisations and state authorities who participate in the Contact Forum, meet annually. Ethiopia (2017) specified that their platform called the Public Wing meet quarterly. The other examples did not explain the frequency of meetings. Although private sector actors, academia and NGOs also use these forums and/or platforms (Finland, 2020), they were mostly created for the purpose of including CSOs, civil society and marginalised groups (Ethiopia, 2017 Liberia, 2020; Norway, 2021; South Africa, 2019; Switzerland, 2018). Finland (2020) used the National Commission as a dialogue platform, as this commission consists of different stakeholders that jointly implement sustainable development. Ireland (2018) explained that their forum provided a mechanism for stakeholders to report, share and discuss progress while at the same time it created an opportunity to be mutually informed. Lastly, the Maldives (2017) used a national forum to bring together NGOs and civil society actors to catalyse action on the ground. Next to these forums and/or platforms, networks are created to enhance dialogue (Finland, 2020; Denmark, 2021; Hungary, 2018; Malawi, 2020). Malawi (2020) launched the Young Feminists Network to prioritise empowering marginalised populations in line with the LNOB principle. Hungary (2018) explained that the purpose of a network was to promote regular meetings and information exchange between stakeholders. However, it was not further explained how many meetings this network should have.

The purpose of these participatory dialogues, forums and networks can, however, be analysed in more detail based on which stage of the policy process they address (Howlett, Ramesh & Wu, 2015; Brisbois, 2015; Howlett, Mc Connell & Perl, 2017), and on which rung on the ladder of citizen participation these can be placed (Arnstein, 2000). First, a policy process is argued to have 5 stages: agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, policy implementation, and policy evaluation (Howlett, 2009 as cited in Howlett, Ramesh & Wu, 2015, see section 2.2 – *inclusive participation*). Of

the 40% of countries that have used forums and networks, a large proportion (20%) only explain that they aim to increase participation or involvement of stakeholders, but it remains unclear at what stage they are involved. For example, Denmark (2021) explained that their network had the purpose of ‘collaboration’ between stakeholders, but whether this is for agenda-setting, implementation or evaluation is unknown. In addition, Finland (2020) created their platform so that stakeholders can jointly advance implementation, but how they are included in the policy process remains unclear. Lao PDR (2021) stated that their dialogue platform has implications for implementation, but these implications are left unexplained. Another large proportion (15%) of countries included their dialogue forums, platforms and/or networks in the stage of ‘agenda-setting’. Most dialogue structures were meant for providing data or information, raising concerns or opinions, or giving technical input, all of which in order to inform policy decisions. Because stakeholders are not included in translating this input into concrete policy options, it does not fall under the second stage of ‘policy formulation’. Azerbaijan (2019) did explain that including the voices of rural women helps to mainstream women’s priorities into policymaking, but without addressing the stage of ‘policy formulation’ and ‘decision making’, influence on policymaking cannot be guaranteed. Cabo Verde (2018) explained that their dialogue forum gave marginalised groups the opportunity to express their aspirations, but again no guarantee is given in terms of inclusion of these aspirations into policymaking. Ethiopia (2017) stated that their Public Wing platform gave citizens the opportunity to participate in discussion to develop common development objectives. Some of these platforms or networks also use the information input for ‘policy evaluation’ next to ‘agenda-setting’. For example, Bhutan (2018) explained that the stakeholders not only raise voices and opinions, but also offer reviews of progress so far. The division between ‘agenda-setting’ and ‘policy evaluation’ is thus not always clear-cut; it depends on whether the purpose of informing policy decisions is ex-ante or ex-post which are used interchangeably. Less than 10% of the countries use the dialogue forums, platforms and/or networks for ‘policy formulation’, ‘decision-making’ or even ‘policy implementation’. Interestingly, the Bahamas (2017) explained that an inclusive approach is needed for successful policy implementation as it will increase acceptance. They did not explain how such an inclusive approach should look, i.e., which stage it should address.

Second, the ladder of (citizen) participation consists, for the purpose of this analysis, of six rungs classified from low to high participation: informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control (Arnstein, 2000, see section 2.2. – *inclusive participation*). Although countries are informing their citizens, this will not be explained at this point but in aspect 16 (section 4.4). Of the 40-50% of countries that have used forums and networks, about 30% of those have used it for consultation purposes. Countries have explained that the dialogue forums or networks are intended to collect different opinions and views or to gather information, but no guarantee is given that these inputs will be used. 10% of the countries give a little more authority to the stakeholders involved through placing high-level leadership directly within the same network or platform, by allowing stakeholders to advise or take part in the policy making stage and/or to report on progress. Although this will give the stakeholder slightly more influence, the institutional powerholders still decide whether to include the input of these stakeholders. Less than 10% of the countries talk about creating partnerships as the purpose of their forums, platforms, or networks. However, it remains unclear if this means that the authoritative levels of the actors involved are indeed equal, so that they can negotiate over outcomes, or if there remains a difference between powerholders and the other actors. In the case of the latter, these so-called partnerships will fall under no higher than the third rung of the ladder: placation. Overall, the purpose of the dialogue forums and networks is mainly for consultation. The next two aspects (aspects 13 and 14, section 4.4) will further explain if and how

stakeholders have been included in participation beyond consultation only, by giving them a place in political institutions.

13. Governments should include NGOs and/or CSOs in existing political institutions as they can represent the interests, knowledge, and priorities of marginalised communities due to their connections and advocacy work (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UNDP, 2018; UNSDG, 2019; Pant, 2021; Bhushan et al., 2018)

Literature has stressed the importance of including NGOs and CSOs in political institutions as they have close connections to communities and marginalised groups, and thus have moral ground to advocate for these groups (Pant, 2021; Bhushan et al., 2018). Some countries have also expressed this in their VNRs (e.g., Papua New Guinea, 2020; Lebanon, 2018). CSOs and NGOs are described as potential agents of change (Maldives, 2017) who will play a critical role in LNOB as they can reach those left behind (Japan, 2017; Malaysia, 2017; Finland, 2020; Nepal, 2017), and so bring the voices of citizens into national policy making (Lebanon, 2018). Papua New Guinea (2020) explained: “CSOs have a unique role in the implementation of SDGs on account of their expertise, experience and extensive presence at the community level, which will allow them to disseminate information, encourage local ownership and generate microlevel insight and impact” (p. 85). Malawi (2020) expressed that CSOs have enabled “ordinary people to articulate what they really need from government and other players” (p. 31) and to “organize the youth, women and men into structures that would enable them to speak with one voice and also to act with one voice” (p. 31). Antigua Barbuda (2021) and Republic of Korea (2016) stated that participation with CSOs will ensure that no one is left behind.

NGOs and CSOs have been included in different types of political institutions. 40% of the countries have been clear on including CSOs and/or NGOs in their political institutions, while almost all countries (>80%) have said or envisioned to include CSOs and/or NGOs in their decision-making processes. Interestingly, the 10-20% countries that have not envisioned or implemented inclusive institutions are also the countries that have only mentioned LNOB a ‘few times’, were vague or entirely unclear on how they conceptualised the LNOB principle (see section 4.1). When comparing this to other institutional mechanisms, these countries were particularly unclear on *policy coherence* while also lacking in *disaggregating data* and *dedicating finance*. Overall, one can conclude that the countries that did not envision or pursued inclusive political institutions were highly uncommitted to LNOB.

In terms of inclusive decision-making processes, CSOs and NGOs have been included in designing national plans or strategies (e.g., Sudan, 2018; Liberia, 2020; Armenia, 2020; Mexico, 2018). There is also a group of countries that see inclusion of CSOs and/or NGOs as important but have yet to put this vision into practice. For example, Bangladesh (2017) said that a whole-of-society approach needs an institutional mechanism that ensures regular engagement with, amongst others, NGOs, CSOs and marginalised groups. The Republic of Korea (2016) pledged to encourage and facilitate meaningful participation of CSOs and local governments to ensure LNOB. Both did not further explain how this would take shape in the future.

So how did 40-50% of the countries include CSOs and NGOs in national political institutions? As already explained above, CSOs and NGOs are included in national dialogue forums, platforms and/or networks (e.g., Hungary, 2018; Cabo Verde, 2018; Denmark, 2021; Finland, 2020; Japan, 2017; Ireland, 2018; Lao PDR, 2021). However, about 15% of the countries included CSOs and NGOs in working groups, advisory groups, or taskforces (e.g., Russian Federation, 2020; Malta, 2018; Seychelles, 2020; State of Palestine, 2018). Malaysia (2017) explained that including CSOs and NGOs into their Cluster



Working Committees, it has formalised the participation of those groups in national development processes. The role that CSOs and/or NGOs have in these working groups differ. For example, Malawi (2020) created a taskforce consisting of 26 members, including NGOs and CSOs, to ensure that policies are designed, monitored, and implemented in favour of marginalised groups. Whereas in Liberia (2020) and Switzerland (2018), the CSOs and NGOs purely have an advisory role.

Some countries (15%) have included NGOs and/or CSOs in their National Council/Committee (e.g., Mexico, 2018; Afghanistan, 2021; Jordan, 2017). In Hungary (2018), the National Council consisted of 30 members representing, amongst others, NGOs and CSOs. Lebanon (2018) involved representatives of the private sector and CSOs as official members of the National Committee. Lesotho (2019) included CSOs and NGOs to ensure technical direction and quality of decisions while also for monitoring and reporting. Armenia (2020) rotates the membership of NGOs in their coordination council. Often, membership in coordination mechanisms was indicated in terms of the type of actor (e.g., CSOs, NGOs, private sector etc.) and not the precise actors. Further analysis on whether these NGOs or CSOs represent the identified marginalised groups in a country is thus hard.

**14. Governments should ensure that marginalised groups are included for a long-term by giving them a permanent place in political institutions such as coordination mechanisms, e.g., working groups, to ensure sustained link between marginalised groups and authorities (López-Franco, Howard, Wheeler, 2017; UNICEF, n.d.; UNDP, 2018)**

Next to consulting CSOs and NGOs, directly including (representatives of) marginalised groups in political institutions has found to be important for LNOB (López-Franco, Howard, Wheeler, 2017). About 20-30% of the countries have consulted marginalised groups at some point. For example, marginalised groups were consulted in drafting the Guiding Principles of Japan (2017). In addition, Sudan (2018), Malawi (2020), Spain (2018) and Seychelles (2020) have consulted vulnerable groups in drafting their national action plans. The aim of these consultations was to understand the challenges people face and their aspirations (Seychelles, 2020). Mongolia (2019) has organised focus groups discussion with six groups that are most at risk to be left behind. During these discussions, the groups could share their issues, concerns and interests. Canada (2018) reached out to Canadians, including indigenous people and civil society, to create a national strategy with the aim to catalyse sustainable development action in the country. Latvia (2018) created a website where citizens can submit proposals. The government is required to consider such a proposal if it reaches a certain number of signatures. While this website creates the opportunity for continuous participation, it does not necessarily ensure political power. An explanation on the extent to which the Latvian parliament needs to take these proposals into account is lacking. It is also a one-way relationship in which citizens provide proposals but are not included in discussions or implementation (or at least this is not explained). Although these consultations are valuable, they do not give marginalised groups a permanent place in policy making and therefore long-term consultation is not ensured. The next sections will provide examples where marginalised groups have been included in political institutions.

Canada (2018), Finland (2020) and Norway (2021) gave indigenous groups a permanent place in decision making processes. Canada (2018) started creating the Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework that “should include new legislation and policies that will make the recognition and implementation of rights the basis for all relations between Indigenous peoples and the federal government going forward” (p.11). Next to this, it created two new departments – *Department of Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada* – to improve



the lives of indigenous groups and to facilitate “a path to self-determination ... allowing them to control service delivery for their respective peoples” (p. 11). These structures were all in full partnership with indigenous people. Finland (2020) included indigenous people and other marginalised groups in their National Commission. Lastly, in Norway (2016; 2021) the indigenous group *Sami* has their own parliament. The national government and the Sami Parliament have a consultation agreement that states that the Sami Parliament needs to be consulted “in decision-making processes that affect their rights” (2021, p. 24). The government of Norway (2021) has submitted a proposal to enlarge this ‘duty to consult’ to authorities at all levels. In addition, Norway (2021) created a Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities that obliges governmental actors to involve those groups on issues that might affect them.

Multiple other countries (10-20%) have focused on including youth and children in political institutions. Denmark (2017) expressed that youth are a key priority and that they will strengthen engagement with young people. Cyprus (2021) and Ethiopia (2017) created a Children’s Parliament to foster youth participation in the decision-making process so they can get their voices heard and rights respected. Finland (2020) created a Youth Group, and Sweden (2021) and Curaçao (The Netherlands, 2017) a Youth Policy Council for similar purposes. The Finnish Youth Group also have the responsibility to inform other young people. To give this group autonomy, “a group member will always play an official role” (p. 27) in the Finnish National Commission meetings. Sweden (2021) argued that the inclusion of youth and children’s experiences is a key element in the national efforts on LNOB. Their youth council was created for dialogue and consultation purposes so that the youth’s perspective is systematically integrated. On a similar note, the youth taskforce created by Zimbabwe (2021) aimed to improve active participation of this group which in its turn ensures that youth is not left behind. Lastly, Egypt (2018) said to be developing a mechanism to increase active participation of youth in planning and monitoring processes. Norway (2021) asked their local authorities, through the Local Government Act, to establish a council for senior citizens, persons with disabilities and youth to ensure that their interest are included in the long-term.

One other way in which marginalised groups are included in political institutions, is through inclusion in working groups. The list of countries that directly include marginalised groups in these working groups is however short (<10%). For example, Jordan (2017) included representatives of women and youth in their working groups. In addition, Malaysia (2017) included youth representatives in their working groups. More countries (15%) reveal that they include ‘civil society’ (e.g., Finland, 2020; Malaysia, 2017; Cabo Verde, 2018; Lao PDR, 2021; Liberia, 2020), but although civil society also encapsulates marginalised groups, the inclusion of those groups left behind is not guaranteed. Moreover, it is often the marginalised groups that are least likely to be included in decision making processes (UNDP, 2018), and therefore a specific focus on including the groups furthest behind is needed. Bangladesh (2017) argued that involving other stakeholders ‘meaningfully’ and to ensure coordination between these stakeholders is a major challenge. Some coordination mechanisms, although not including (representatives of) marginalised groups, have the task of improving, increasing or ensuring inclusive participation. In Antigua Barbuda (2021), the committee was tasked to develop an engagement strategy to increase inclusivity and participation. Furthermore, in Armenia (2020) and Denmark (2021) the coordination council/unit was responsible to facilitate participation. The coordination council of Azerbaijan (2019) committed itself to involving different vulnerable groups, according to the LNOB principle, by conducting group discussions. In addition, Kuwait (2019) stated that the coordination mechanisms enabled different stakeholders, under which NGOs and CSOs to provide input, review and discuss progress and inter-linkages.

Although previous sections have showed that many countries see participation of (some) marginalised groups as important, it can also be challenging. Mongolia (2019), for example, acknowledged that stakeholder participation, especially of those most left behind, is a major bottleneck. Zimbabwe (2021) further explained that including marginalised groups into policy making processes needs microscopic attention to ensure it truly leaves no one behind. Central to LNOB is the active participation of marginalised groups (Malawi, 2020), but this is not automatically reached when groups are integrated into a political institution. For example, the VNRs were not always clear whether and how the inclusive mechanisms had political autonomy. As is clear from the above, most mechanisms aim to increase the opportunity for marginalised groups to share their perspective. Without autonomy, such perspectives will likely not find their way into policies.

**15. Governments should include (representatives of) marginalised groups in tracking, reviewing and/or monitoring LNOB efforts (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; UN, 2017; López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017)**

The results show that countries do not actively include (representatives of) marginalised groups in tracking, reviewing and/or monitoring LNOB efforts. This is consistent with the outcomes of aspect 3 (section 4.2), which explained that almost no actors or mechanisms were tasked with the responsibility to track or monitor progress on LNOB. However, still some interesting examples can be raised here.

Antigua Barbuda (2021) and Liberia (2020) did include stakeholders into monitoring and tracking, by opening up their statistical systems. These stakeholders were citizens, CSOs and private sector actors. Egypt (2016), Ireland (2018) and Hungary (2018) pledged to increase the inclusion of stakeholders in planning, monitoring, and reporting, but again there is no focus on including marginalised groups specifically. Ethiopia (2017) also pledged to increase efforts to include citizens in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the SDGs. Although this was in light of LNOB, it was not revealed how they planned to achieve this.

More countries aim to include citizens in monitoring and reviewing. In Egypt (2018), governmental authorities developed systems to gather complaints of citizens. The aim is to analyse the “frequency, types and locations of complaints can provide maps that point out bottlenecks and allow the Government to improve services” (p. 16). Through these complaints, citizens can thus review policies. However, their influence is not guaranteed. Finland (2020) carried out two independent assessments on the progress of the SDGs: one assessment by governmental actors, and one assessment by civil society actors. In addition, the Finnish government created a Citizen Panel that assesses the state of their sustainable development annually, “thereby [providing] policy-makers information on how sustainability issues are seen among the Finns” (p. 91). Next to the Citizen Panel, a multi-stakeholder network for ‘National Follow-up and Review’ was created. Both mechanisms are part of the participatory national follow-up system of Finland (2020). Sweden (2021) included civil society in reviewing government’s effort on the SDGs and policy coherence and shared this in a national publication. These efforts to include citizens in reviewing and monitoring does, however, not guarantee that marginalised groups are included. It was also shown that some forums and/or networks (aspect 12, section 4.3) had the goal of monitoring and reviewing progress.

In a previous paragraph (aspect 13), it was discussed that CSOs and NGOs can rightly represent marginalised groups and therefore are important actors to include. Georgia (2016), Lebanon (2018) and the Republic of Korea (2016) included CSOs and NGOs in monitoring processes. In addition, some countries (e.g., Malawi, 2020; Mongolia, 2019) included CSO and/or NGOs in their working groups who

were tasked to monitor, track and review progress on sustainable development. There are many more examples of countries who are including stakeholders into monitoring activities, but these are to track progress on the SDGs, and not on LNOB efforts specifically.

Two countries did include marginalised groups, i.e., indigenous groups, in monitoring and review processes. First, Canada (2018) committed itself to “joint priority-setting, co-development of policy and monitoring progress with indigenous people through regular meetings of permanent bilateral mechanisms”. Second, Norway (2016) also stated that their duty to consult the *Sami* people when policies affect this group directly (see aspect 14, section 4.3), ensures their inclusion in follow-up processes.

16. Governments should **provide information and data to the marginalised groups** so that they are empowered to claim their rights (UNDP, 2018)

Next to including marginalised groups into political structures to raise their voice, information provision to these groups is also framed to be important for empowerment. Arnstein (2000) has argued that “informing citizens of their rights, responsibilities, and option can be the most important first step toward legitimate citizen participation” (p. 244). In Lao PDR (2021), the focus lies on ensuring that information reaches the poor while at the same making sure that the poor can communicate back to governmental actors. Zimbabwe (2021) explained: “the Principle of Leaving No One Behind requires equipping stakeholders with the requisite information, capacitating communities to effectively contribute to make informed decisions and address challenges related with information asymmetry” (p.38). To increase dissemination of data, Finland used an inter-agency network for data collection and sharing among actors. Sierra Leone (2016) engaged CSOs and NGOs to ensure that information is disseminated to lower-level development actors. As part of dissemination strategies, about 20% of the countries used radio, TV, social media, or other sources to reach the general public and/or local communities (e.g., Bahamas, 2018; Liberia, 2020; Seychelles, 2020; Sierra Leone, 2016; Papua New Guinea, 2020). About half of these countries used these sources to reach marginalised groups (e.g., Czech Republic, 2021; Jamaica, 2018). Azerbaijan (2019) argued that media could be important into raising awareness especially “in terms of engaging vulnerable population groups in policies intended to benefit them” (p. 53).

In addition, 10% of the countries focused on translating policy efforts in different languages to reach multiple communities (e.g., Norway, 2021; Lao PDR, 2021; Zimbabwe, 2021). Liberia (2020) translated policy messages into local dialects to reach those left behind. Malawi (2020) also translated their national policy strategies in three local languages and distributed these among local authorities as they expected that “the awareness to the general public will be instrumental as they take charge of the development interventions and be able to participate in the community monitoring of the same” (p. 30).

Providing information to vulnerable and left behind groups is also part of countries’ awareness, advocacy and/or outreach campaigns. 10% of the countries aim to raise awareness through enhancing communication strategies (e.g., Jamaica, 2018; Japan, 2017; Bhutan, 2018). Several other countries (Spain, 2018; Uganda, 2016; Mongolia, 2019; Jamaica, 2018; Mexico, 2018) have tasked or created a working group to raise awareness and do public outreach exercises. Cambodia (2019) explained that “awareness-raising activities will aim to increase the engagement of citizens and local communities in order to promote a sense of ownership” (p. 91). In addition, Seychelles (2020) stated that it is crucial to intensify awareness raising efforts at all levels in line with the LNOB principle. About half of the

countries used awareness raising strategies to empower stakeholders, of which only about 10% were clear on using it to empower marginalised groups (e.g., Liberia, 2020; Austria, 2020; Azerbaijan, 2019). Zimbabwe (2021) stated that authorities should conduct awareness raising campaigns to create ownership at all levels of society and so to ensure LNOB. In their awareness raising campaigns, the Bahamas (2017) paid special attention to marginalised groups and economically challenged communities in light of ensuring LNOB.

To conclude, countries are pursuing inclusive participation to bring together different stakeholders. This can be seen in the forums and network that have been created. The purpose of these forums and networks was mainly addressing the first stage of policy making: agenda-setting; and the second rung of the ladder for (citizen) participation: consultation. In addition, NGOs and CSOs find their way into political institutions and were identified as important actors to reach more marginalised groups and communities. However, when it comes to including marginalised groups more directly, there are some clear gaps. Marginalised groups are not offered a long-term position in political structures but are more often consulted at some point in the policy process. Representation in political institutions is, however, needed to make engagement with left behind groups truly meaningful. Countries argued that raising awareness of citizen groups is essential in ensuring that no one is left behind as it will empower those groups and create ownership. However, such empowerment and ownership remain unused if not engaged in tracking, reviewing, or monitoring at the same time. Only then are countries able to “break the vicious cycle of invisibility and neglect” (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; López-Franco, Howard, & Wheeler, 2017). Including marginalised groups in monitoring is also argued to overcome the invisibility in data gathering and thus important for *data disaggregation* (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; see aspect 25, section 4.6). Overall, including CSOs and NGOs is promising for LNOB, but as marginalised groups tend to have the least to say in policy decisions that affect them (UNDP, 2018), countries will need to increase efforts to directly include those left behind in their institutional set-ups. **Table 12** summarizes these results.

*Table 12: Inclusive participation in relation to LNOB institutionalisation and global achievement*

Code	Aspect	Level
Inclusive participation	12. Governments should <b>create dialogue forums or networks where different stakeholders come together</b> including CSOs, collective groups and (representatives of) the furthest behind to assess, implement and track progress (UNSDG, 2019; López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017)	20-50%
	13. Governments should <b>include NGOs and/or CSOs in existing political institutions</b> as they can represent the interests, knowledge, and priorities of marginalised communities due to their connections and advocacy work (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UNDP, 2018; UNSDG, 2019; Pant, 2021; Bhushan et al., 2018)	20-50%
	14. Governments should <b>ensure that marginalised groups are included for a long-term by giving them a permanent place in political institutions</b> such as coordination mechanisms, e.g., working groups, to ensure sustained link between marginalised groups and authorities (López-Franco, Howard, Wheeler, 2017; UNICEF, n.d.; UNDP, 2018)	0-20%

15. Governments <b>should include (representatives of) marginalised groups in tracking, reviewing and/or monitoring</b> LNOB efforts (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; UN, 2017; López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017)	0-20%
16. Governments should <b>provide information and data to the marginalised groups</b> so that they are empowered to claim their rights (UNDP, 2018)	20-50%

#### 4.5 Disaggregated data

The guidelines of the VNRs ask for an explanation on how left behind groups were identified and through which data, in which disaggregation of data is encouraged. Although exact disaggregated indicators were expected to be found in the annexes, the analysed sections of the VNRs were expected to show how disaggregated data was used in national efforts to reach LNOB specifically. Gathering disaggregated data is essential in LNOB, as it is often from the most marginalised groups that we have the least data (UN, 2018).

#### 17. Governments should invest in data to identify the groups furthest behind (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016)

Many to most countries (80%) have identified marginalised groups in their VNR. The depth to which these groups are identified and/or guide the document varies. Some countries only identify the marginalised groups in one or two sentences or mention several marginalised groups throughout the document, whereas other countries devote a separate chapter on how their policy actions have influenced/are meant to influence those furthest behind. **Figure 10** gives an indication of the groups most identified as being left behind by the analysed VNRs.

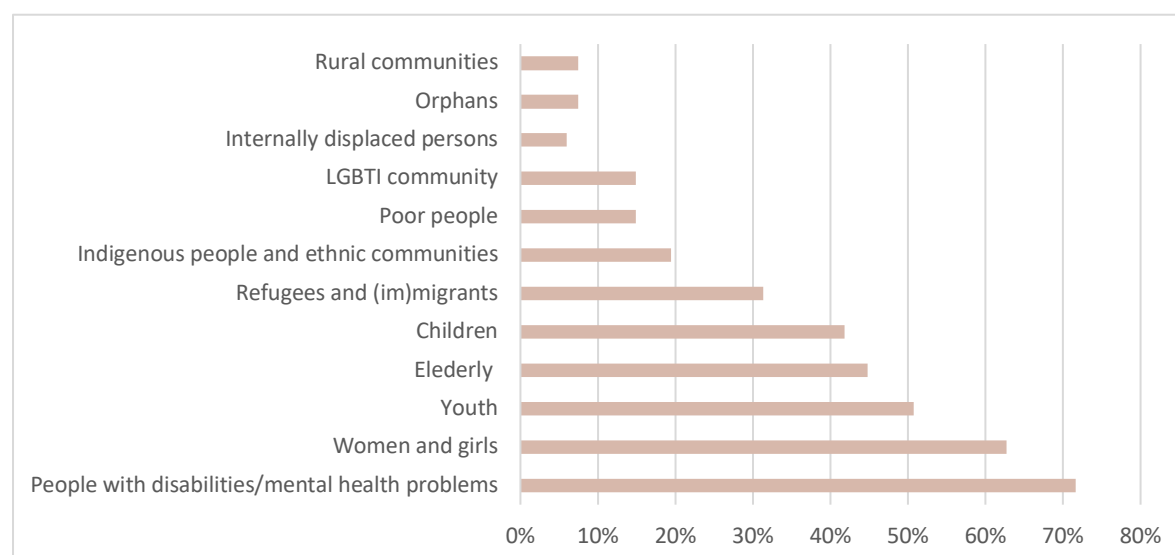


Figure 10: Groups that were most identified to be left behind

Although countries identify the groups furthest behind, it is not always clear how they have done so, e.g., based on what indicators and which data sets, and whether they update this data regularly. For example, Antigua Barbuda (2021) stated: “We have taken steps to identify and better understand marginalised groups and how as a government we must address their needs first, since many of these groups are furthest behind on the development pathway”. However, it remains unclear what these steps entailed. There are many countries that only mention marginalised groups as if they are a ‘ready-

made' list without stating whether they have undertaken national efforts to identify those groups. Perceiving the marginalised groups as a given is, however, problematic as it neglects the multi-dimensionality and complexity of LNOB. Due to the intersectionality of inequalities, new groups can become left behind. In addition, marginalised groups, although largely overlapping, are country specific and there is thus no ready-made list.

There are also countries that did explain how they have identified the groups furthest behind. Norway (2021) and Mongolia (2019), for example, explained who were identified as those left behind, which factors they included, and what their main source of data was in a separate chapter. Afghanistan (2021) included the identification of marginalised groups in their overarching policy strategy (ANPDF-II). Such a systematic focus is essential to ensure priority attention on those left behind (Donoghue & Khan, 2019). Some countries even go one step further by using a framework that systematically maps and monitors those left behind. Bhutan (2018) used the Vulnerability Baseline Assessment to identify those most vulnerable to “risk, stigma, discrimination, or to falling back to poverty” (p. 56) (see also aspect 10, section 4.3). Cabo Verde (2018) uses a Single Social Registry to map “vulnerable families, for monitoring the situation of families” (p. 30). Nigeria (2017) has also adopted a similar approach to identify the poor and vulnerable via a national social register. The identification of those furthest behind is also important for reaching *policy coherence*, as such identification makes analyses possible on the impact of policies on these groups (Mexico, 2018).

**18. Governments should disaggregate data on, at least, gender, age, disability, social groups and/or geography (UNDP, 2018; Abualghaib et al., 2019; Lay & Priebe, 2021; Avendano, Culey & Balitrand, 2018)**

More than half of the countries identify those factors such as gender, age and disability to influence a marginalised status and therefore seen as important to include in data collection (e.g., Azerbaijan, 2019; Finland, 2020; Mongolia, 2019). In addition, countries agree that disaggregated data is essential for reaching the principle of LNOB as it enables monitoring and evaluation (e.g., Azerbaijan, 2019; Jamaica, 2018), enhances targeting (e.g., Bhutan; 2018, Jamaica, 2018), measures national progress (e.g., Philippines, 2019) and allows for evidence-based policy formulation (e.g., Sri Lanka, 2018). It is interesting then that less than 15% of the countries systematically disaggregate data. The remainder of the countries (30-40%) do express their ambition to disaggregate data in future years, while also acknowledging that it remains a challenge. Collecting disaggregated data is seen as methodologically challenging (e.g., Cabo Verde, 2018), resource demanding (e.g., Cabo Verde, 2018; Nepal, 2017; Georgia, 2016), and ethically inappropriate at times (e.g., Finland, 2020; Sweden, 2021; Cabo Verde, 2018). In terms of the latter, disaggregation based on race, ethnic minority groups, indigenous status and disabilities is deliberately avoided as identifying minority groups is against the aim of an equal and democratic society (Finland, 2020). In terms of the former two, lacking skills and resources are hence framed as barriers to collecting and analysing disaggregated data.

Few countries (<15%) do already systematically disaggregate data. There is no connection between disaggregating data and how these countries have conceptualised LNOB (section 4.1), meaning that countries that do disaggregate data do not necessarily have placed LNOB central or have connected many of the concepts to LNOB. In addition, these countries also do not present the share of countries that were most extensive in their identification of those groups left behind (aspect 17, section 4.5, **Figure 10**). In terms of disaggregating data, Nigeria (2017) did so by sub region, state, sex and sector as a regular convention. Sierra Leone (2016) focused on sensitising government agencies



with the collection of disaggregated data “to enable effective policy making and tracking of relevant inequalities” (p. 5). Mongolia (2019) created a so-called data dashboard that policy makers can access to find data disaggregated “by regions, urban-rural, gender, other population groups, etc.” (p. 45) which will better help to identify and include the groups furthest behind. Finland (2020) explains that disaggregated data is available because statistics production “utilizes administrative data sources and registers, which provide extensive data on population and allow a variety of disaggregation possibilities” (p. 89). Most of the countries that disaggregate their data do so by disability and/or sex. The VNRs thus show that, although more countries use disaggregated sporadically, less countries have institutionalised the collection of disaggregation systematically.

**19. Governments should include international organisations, civil society and/or private sector in data collection (Samman et al., 2018; Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017)**

15% of the governments included other stakeholders into data collection. Interestingly, the countries that involved stakeholders in data collection are not the countries that disaggregated data more frequently (aspect 18, section 4.5). In addition, it is not always clear who these stakeholders are and/or which data is collected. In Afghanistan (2017), for example, stakeholders are included in the working groups who are responsible for data collection and verification. Finland (2020) created an inter-agency network and a public platform for national data collection. Malawi (2020) explained that disaggregated data was collected and validated through a stakeholder workshop, though a specification of which stakeholders, is missing. Creating partnerships with stakeholders has been brought forward as a strategy to improve data collection (e.g., Bahamas, 2018; Cabo Verde, 2018). Ireland (2018) has been working with international stakeholders to improve the availability of gender disaggregated data. Also, it has allocated the identification of data to a CSO in consultation with the interdepartmental working group. In terms of data collection for the VNRs specifically, governments were clearer on who they involved, which was consistent with the above-mentioned stakeholders: international organizations, civil society and/or private sector. In many countries, national statistics offices are largely responsible for data collection. These offices have also been working with other stakeholders including development partners and CSOs (Antigua and Barbuda, 2021).

**20. Governments should participate with marginalised groups for data collection (UN, 2017; Zamora et al., 2018; Abualghib et al., 2019; López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017)**

The participation of marginalised groups in data collection is not common (<10%). Including communities in data collection is also framed as a challenge due to limited resources (Malawi, 2020; Maldives, 2017). Norway (2021) did acknowledge that for some specific population groups data is lacking and to complete data collection consultation with those groups is imperative. Some consultation with marginalised groups is searched by countries to gather ideas and perceptions. However, such ideas and perceptions are not part of collecting data in terms of variables, indicators, and disaggregation per se; rather they serve for policy input.

**21. Governments should gather data that is holistic and multi-layered, such as a multi-dimensional Poverty index, as it addresses the multidimensionality of LNOB and thus can improve the understanding of who is left behind (UNDP, 2018; Lekobane & Roelen, 2020; Bhattacharya, 2020)**



Multi-dimensional data and/or indices are used by about one quarter of the countries, while also linked to LNOB and disaggregating data. The countries that did systematically disaggregate data (15%, aspect 2, section 4.2) also widely use multidimensional data/indices. For example, Malawi (2020) explained that using the multi-dimensional Poverty Index helps to ensure data disaggregation by offering in-depth understanding of, in this case, service delivery. In addition, Australia (2018) stated that multidimensional measures will identify who is left behind, in what way and to what extent and so supports data disaggregation. Australia (2018) also finds multidimensional measurement critical to understanding how national efforts are contributing to LNOB. Therefore, Australia (2018) has made an Individual Development Measure (IDM) that is a gender-sensitive, on an individual level, and multidimensional measure to assess deprivation. There thus seems to be a positive correlation between systematic data disaggregation and the use of multi-layered measures. The use of multidimensional data is, however, more widely used than only by the countries that systematically disaggregate data. It has also been linked to LNOB more generally. Zimbabwe (2021) recognised that multisector approaches are essential for tracking those left behind and thus for reaching LNOB. The Multidimensional Poverty Index is also used by many countries (e.g., Liberia, 2020; Malawi, 2020; Rwanda, 2019). Other multidimensional measures that were created by countries, and linked to LNOB efforts, were: Child Multidimensional Poverty Index (Bhutan, 2018), Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index (Liberia, 2020), and Multi Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (Rwanda, 2019).

**22. Governments should carry out national representative surveys, e.g., DHS, MICS, (non)-household surveys, and/or censuses to gather disaggregated data but with a focus on marginalised people as they risk leaving out the most vulnerable (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; Samman et al., 2018; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UN, 2018; Chattopadhyay & Salomon, 2021; Greenhill, 2017; Stuart et al., 2016)**

National representative surveys are not an uncommon activity (>80%). Especially, Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multi Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and other household surveys are carried out on a regular basis to gather data. However, they are not always connected to the principle of LNOB and/or for the purpose of collecting disaggregated data with a focus on marginalised groups.

A few examples can be found where such surveys served the goal(s) of LNOB. Nepal (2017) recognised that surveys need be tailored to collect more information on gender, social class, and geographical location if it is meant to serve LNOB. Finland (2020) explained further that not all data can be obtained from administrative databases or registers, so that non-statistical data on specific interest groups are best gathered by surveys or studies. Afghanistan (2021) and Rwanda (2019) carried out a survey specifically focused on people with disabilities in order to classify them so that interventions can be designed to fit the needs of each category. Albania (2018) used their Living Standard Measurement Survey and Census of 2011 to uncover national inequities. Bhutan (2018) used the Population and Housing Census of 2017 to gather information on specific population groups to be used as input for the Vulnerability Baseline Assessment. The Bhutan Multi Indicator Survey was carried out to gather data for their Child Multidimensional Poverty Index. Thailand (2017) has undertaken surveys specifically focused on gender inequality and violence. Malawi (2020) is regularizing major statistical surveys, such as the Integrated Household Survey, Demographic and Health Surveys, and the Multiple Cluster Indicator Surveys, to ensure data disaggregation. Zimbabwe (2021) created a Vulnerability Assessment Committee to undertake annual nutrition surveys and together with surveys undertaken by the national statistical agency, they provide information to identify those furthest behind.



Censuses also contributed to gathering data on those left behind, although to a lesser extent. For example, Zimbabwe (2021) has gathered statistics to help identify the furthest behind and are planning to update this data with a 2021 National Census. Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR) (2021) also focused on collecting data on people with disabilities but did so through a Population and Housing census.

To conclude, countries are investing resources into identifying marginalised groups. However, there are clear gaps in the way they do so. First, countries often do not specify how they have identified the groups furthest behind. Second, participation with other stakeholders in data collection is lacking. Disaggregated data on specific indicators is found important while at the same time, it is challenging, which is reflected in the few examples where countries did systematically disaggregate data. In contrast, countries are using multi-dimensional indices and carrying out surveys and/or censuses to gather multi-layered data. However, this apparently did not largely translate into more disaggregated data as most countries still argue that disaggregated data is lacking and need to be increased, advanced, or improved. **Table 13** summarizes these results.

*Table 13: Disaggregated data in relation to LNOB institutionalisation and global achievement*

Code	Aspect	Level
Disaggregated data	17. Governments should <b>invest in data to identify the groups furthest behind</b> (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016)	>50%
	18. Governments <b>should disaggregate data on, at least, gender, age, disability, social groups and/or geography</b> (UNDP, 2018; Abualghaib et al., 2019; Lay & Priebe, 2021; Avendano, Culey & Balitrand, 2018)	0-20%
	19. Governments should <b>include international organisations, civil society and/or private sector in data collection</b> (Samman et al., 2018; Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017)	0-20%
	20. Governments should <b>participate with marginalised groups for data collection</b> (UN, 2017; Zamora et al., 2018; Abualghib et al., 2019; López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016)	0-20%
	21. Governments should <b>gather data that is holistic and multi-layered</b> , such as a multi-dimensional Poverty index, as it addresses the multidimensionality of LNOB and thus can improve the understanding of who is left behind (UNDP, 2018; Lekobane & Roelen, 2020; Bhattacharya, 2020)	20-50%
	22. Governments <b>should carry out national representative surveys, e.g., DHS, MICS, (non)-household surveys, and/or censuses</b> to gather disaggregated data but with a focus on marginalised people as they risk leaving out the most vulnerable (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; Samman et al., 2018; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UN, 2018; Chattopadhyay & Salomon, 2021; Greenhill, 2017; Stuart et al., 2016)	20-50%

#### 4.6 Dedicated finance

Prioritising the development of those furthest behind will require financial resources. Without proper resource allocation, LNOB will only remain a country’s vision, a vague description without operationalisation and no real commitment (UNSDG, 2019). In addition, integrating LNOB into budgeting will create accountability (UNSDG, 2019).

It is important to note here, that this code turned out to be the least suitable to be analysed from country VNRs only. Although the guidelines of the VNRs prompt to include sections on how the 2030 agenda has been integrated in budgetary frameworks, the VNRs lack clear sections explaining how budgeting and/or financing are taken care of in the country. In addition, this thesis' analysis excluded the specific progress chapters on the individual SDGs which will, most likely, contain more information on finance targeting to specific groups and areas connected to specific targets and policy actions. However, still some overarching results were found which are useful to share.

### 23. Governments should orientate financing towards left behind groups and left behind areas (Samman et al., 2018; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Stuart & Samman, 2017; UNSDG, 2019; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)

More than 60% of the countries do in some way or the other target finance to left behind groups, however the level of commitment, extent and depth of these targeted finances differ greatly. Many countries merely state that they orientate finance or budget to vulnerable groups, or to specific issues related to LNOB such as inequality (e.g., Afghanistan, 2017; Cabo Verde, 2018). Additionally, specific policy programmes linked to the left behind groups are mentioned, to which finance is attached. The focus, however, lies here on explaining the workings of these programmes and the impact it has on the specific groups, not so much on how it is financed. Countries do acknowledge the importance of orienting finance to specific vulnerable groups, as without "they could lack choices and opportunities required" (Lesotho, 2019, p. 6). In addition, the equitable allocation of financial resources is seen to be vital to ensure that no one is left behind (Jamaica, 2018). Several countries argue that new and innovative ways of financing is needed to reach LNOB (Jamaica, 2018; Bangladesh, 2017). Developing countries also acknowledge that financing is a challenge due to limited financial resources available (e.g., Kenya, 2017).

Some countries (30%) offer a bit more information on what types of targeted finance is used. For example, the government of the Bahamas (2018) use non-contributory benefits which are financed from the government revenue. Canada (2018) goes one step further by committing a 5-year's budget to financing indigenous communities and people. In addition, Kenya (2017) commits to allocating a half percent of all revenue collection by the government to left behind areas. Antigua and Barbuda (2021) offer an overview with all the programmes intended to target marginalised groups, of which a few are financial arrangements. Multiple other countries (10-20%) have created funds (e.g., Kenya, 2017; Lao PDR, 2021) and programmes (e.g., Sudan, 2018; Uganda, 2016) to systematically provide finance to left behind groups. Norway (2021) created a separate grant scheme for national minorities but did not explain what this entailed. The left behind groups that receive finance or are targeted for future finance are largely consistent with the groups in **Figure 10** (aspect 17, section 4.5). However, exploring correlations between data disaggregation and targeted finance further, no other connections can be found. For example, the countries that disaggregated data systematically, are not the ones who systematically target finance to marginalised groups. Interestingly, the countries who are mostly orientating finance to left behind groups have a prominent conceptual focus on equality (see also section 4.1). This might be related to so-called 'gender-responsive budgeting' which is the orientation of finance to gender-based groups and issues. The focus is on making sure that budgeting positively impacts gender equality. As gender-responsive budgeting is often used as a systematic tool to assess gender impact, it will be further addressed in aspect 25 (section 4.6).

**24. Governments should target finance to left behind groups that is long term (Samman et al., 2018) and in the areas of health, education, and social protection especially (Chattopadhyay & Salomon, 2021; Greenhill, 2017; Stuart et al., 2016; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)**

Although finance is targeted to specific left behind groups, the timespan of such commitment is often not shared. This could either imply that financing to marginalised groups is on-going, meaning it is indefinite. However, it could also point to a lack of commitment by national governments to sustain long-term finance to left behind groups (Samman et al., 2018). The latter would be problematic.

The areas of health, education and social protection are common areas to which national governments dedicate finance to in relation to reaching the LNOB principle. Especially the area of social protection is recognised as being key in reducing inequalities (Antigua Barbuda, 2021). Many countries then also prioritise finance to health, education and social protection over other areas in their efforts to LNOB (e.g., Antigua Barbuda, 2021; Egypt, 2016; Norway, 2021; Republic of Korea, 2016). Specific institutional mechanisms to secure finance to these areas are often through delivery programmes. However, much detail on these programmes is not provided.

**25. Governments should ask their ministers who are applying for budgetary allocations to show how their proposed policy action will impact LNOB and/or marginalised groups (Donoghue & Khan, 2019)**

In the mechanism *policy coherence* (section 4.3), it was already shared if and how policy actors are using impact assessments to certify action with LNOB. Here we are specifically interested in whether (proposed) budgets take into account the impacts on LNOB and/or marginalised groups.

Although, there is no institutional measure used by countries to systematically assess the impact of budgeting on the concept of LNOB, there are two interesting examples that might show potential to be used for LNOB as well. First, Austria (2020) included budget targets with performance indicators to assess the success of policy actions. The government of Austria calls this approach an ‘impact-oriented budget management’. They express a focus on equality of women and men, but the performance indicators are not further specified. However, if these performance indicators closely reflect the concepts of LNOB, this approach could potentially offer a systematic tool for ministries to link their budgets to LNOB progress. Second, Latvia (2018) mentioned using the Resource Management Maps. These maps are included in the Annual National Budget Statements and are intended to offer information on the linkages between the budget expenditures and the national priorities under the national action plan. This example might require some more tailoring to be fit for LNOB, but when these maps include LNOB as one of the priorities to which expenditure need to be linked to, it could be used as a measure to certify budgetary policy action for both the national government as the ministries.

One specific approach that is more often used in linking budgeting to LNOB impacts, is gender-responsive budgeting (15%). As was already briefly introduced, gender-responsive budgeting is a strategic tool used to assess “the gender impact of budgetary policy and reallocating income and expenditure to promote gender equality” (Sweden, 2021, p. 46). As part of gender-responsive budgeting, countries require their ministries to annex a gender budget statement to their budgetary allocation paper (Rwanda, 2019; Canada, 2018) and/or to incorporate a gender analysis that indicates the impacts of the budget on women and men (Rwanda, 2019, Sweden, 2021).

**26. Governments should design their tax system in a way to ensure an appropriate spread of the tax burden across society (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UNDP, 2018; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)**

From the analysed VNR sections, countries did not make a link between appropriate tax systems and the concepts of LNOB. Some countries talked about the need for equitable distribution of resources to ensure that no one is left behind (e.g., Jamaica, 2018). Spain (2018), for example, recognises that an equitably shared burden will increase overall resources of vulnerable families. An equitable distribution of resources is linked to LNOB, but the tax system is thus not brought forward as a possible solution to attain this.

**27. Governments should orientate finance to local authorities to encourage targeting those who are left behind in their communities (UNSDG, 2019)**

This is not a focus of national governments when it comes to reaching LNOB, or at least it could not be confirmed from the analysed VNR sections. The only noteworthy example is that Nigeria (2017) upscaled their Conditional Grants Scheme to sub-national governments to incentivise them to orientate financial resources to two priority areas: poverty reduction and social development.

**28. Government should do specific investments in strengthening the capacities to LNOB (UNSDG, 2019)**

Next to targeted finance to left behind groups or areas, specific investments can lead to reaching LNOB and its concepts. This has already been partly discussed above by identifying to which areas and issues most countries orientate finance to. However, capacities to LNOB are more encompassing by also including those investments that create enabling environments, such as institutions, practices and policies, capacity development and empowerment.

Almost no countries talk about investments to strengthen capacities of LNOB. In Ethiopia (2017) investments are orientated to modernising the financial system to provide access to citizens to equally participate in and equitably benefit from development programmes. In addition, Bangladesh (2017) has implemented a financing needs assessment for “sector specific demand for resources in implementing SDGs” (p. xii). Although this example does not include LNOB directly, it does represent a systematic tool to orientate finance where it is needed. This example is given here as it shows potential to be used for LNOB specifically.

Investments in strengthening the capacities of LNOB is also done in non-financial ways, such as through outreach, advocacy, and communicative strategies. This is mostly connected to the empowerment of different stakeholders and was thus analysed in *inclusive development* (aspect 16, section 4.4).

**29. Governments should provide additional financial incentives, such as the Conditional Cash Transfer, no-interest-rate loans, concessional grants, and non-aid incentives, to catalyse action for marginalised groups (Samman et al., 2018; Lay & Priebe, 2021; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)**

There are multiple examples (20%) where countries have used additional financial incentives to reach LNOB. Not every country has been specific on how exactly these financial incentives enable LNOB but have merely stated that additional financial resources were provided for left behind groups such as

people with disabilities, elderly, and women (e.g., Turkey, 2019; Uganda, 2016). The Bahamas (2018) have given the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development the responsibility to provide (un)conditional transfers and targeted subsidies to the poorest and most vulnerable to ensure that they have access to health, education, housing, and public utilities. Egypt (2016, 2018, 2021) created two key cash transfer programmes: *Takaful* and *Karama*. *Takaful* is a monthly conditional cash transfer for households with children “aiming at promoting capital accumulation by providing family income support while incentivizing poor households to invest in their children’s health, education, and nutrition by imposing conditions” (Egypt, 2018, p. 11). *Karama* is a monthly unconditional cash transfer program “aimed at promoting social inclusion through integration of the most vulnerable” (Egypt, 2018, p. 11). These cash transfer programmes were part of redirecting social spending programmes, which were mostly based on direct price subsidies, to better target the most vulnerable groups and thus to reach LNOB. Nigeria (2017) offers monthly conditional cash transfers to households as part of the Social Investment Programme. This programme aims to increase the social safety net, and works through a national social register that identifies poor and vulnerable households. In this way, Nigeria can target cash transfers to the households that need it most, while at the same time it offers a tool to track the conditions of the same households.

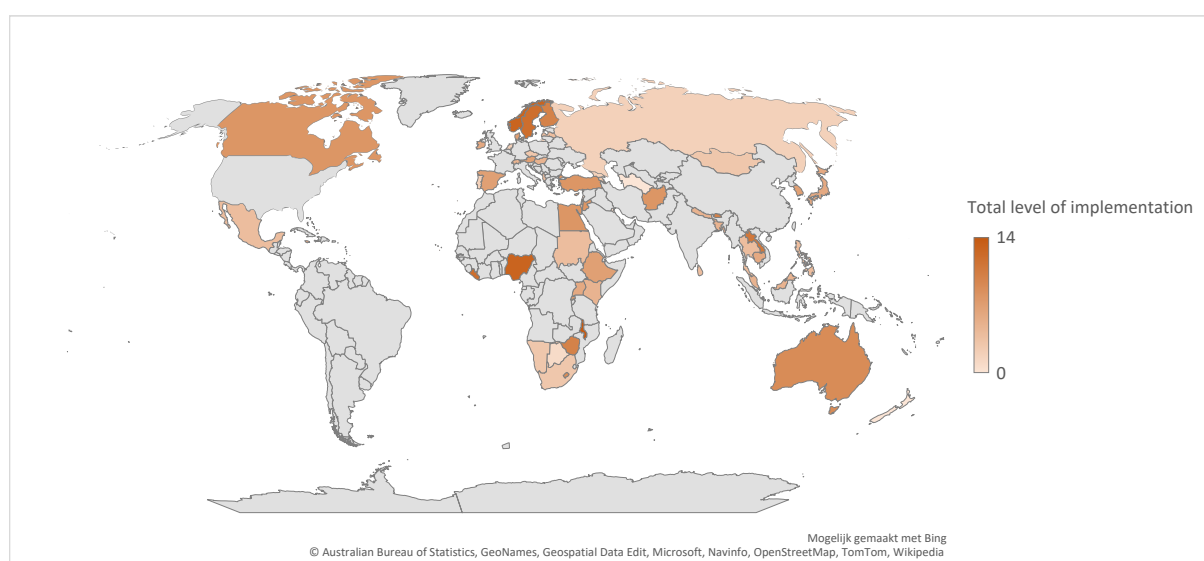
To conclude, countries are orienting finance to marginalised groups, but remain vague about the extent of and level of commitment to these financial decisions. The same applies to additional financial incentives. As was already explained at the beginning of this section, it could be the case that these statements were further delineated in the specific chapters on the progress on SDGs. In addition, most countries do not ask their ministries to specify their impact on LNOB when applying for budgets. These gaps risk that the widespread ambition to target finance to left behind groups will not be translated into action. Although finance largely goes to areas of health, education and social protection, countries do not specify the length of these promises. In addition, ensuring an equitable tax system, targeting finance to local authorities, and investing in strengthening the capacities to LNOB are lacking. It is clear that in terms of dedicating finance to left behind groups, countries lack operationalisation resulting in a lack of commitment and accountability. There is a conditionality argument that explains a lack of commitment and accountability for some countries. To explain, developing countries shared their financial ambitions and plans, but at the same time explained that they were dependent on development assistance of other (developed) countries (e.g., Afghanistan, 2021; Zimbabwe, 2017; Ethiopia, 2017). In their VNRs, developed countries have also explained their international (financial) commitment, but because this exceeds the national scale it is outside of the scope of this thesis. **Table 14** summarizes the results.

Table 14: Dedicated finance in relation to LNOB institutionalisation and global achievement

Code	Aspect	Level
Dedicated finance	23. Governments should <b>orientate financing towards left-behind groups and left behind areas</b> (Samman et al., 2018; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Stuart & Samman, 2017; UNSDG, 2019; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)	>50%
	24. Governments should <b>target finance to left behind groups that is a) long term impacts</b> (Samman et al., 2018) and <b>b) in the areas of health, education, and social protection especially</b> (Chattopadhyay & Salomon, 2021; Greenhill, 2017; Stuart et al., 2016; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)	0-20%

25. Governments should <b>ask their ministers who are applying for budgetary allocations to show how their proposed policy action will impact LNOB and/or marginalised groups</b> (Donoghue & Khan, 2019)	0-20%
26. Governments should <b>design their tax system in a way to ensure an appropriate spread of the tax burden across society</b> (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UNDP, 2018; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)	0-20%
27. Governments should <b>orientate finance to local authorities</b> to encourage targeting those who are left behind in their communities (UNSDG, 2019)	0-20%
28. Government should <b>do specific investments in strengthening the capacities to LNOB</b> (UNSDG, 2019)	0-20%
29. Governments should <b>provide additional financial incentives</b> , such as the Conditional Cash Transfer, no-interest-rate loans, concessional grants and non-aid incentives, to catalyse action for marginalised groups (Samman et al., 2018; Lay & Priebe, 2021; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)	20-50%

To summarize all these results, **Annex E** presents the complete framework of how and to what extent countries have institutionalised LNOB. No single country has institutionalised more than 14 out of the 29 aspects as is illustrated in **Figure 11**. When comparing this global overview to the global overviews of section 4.1 (Figures 4-6), no patterns can be identified between level of reporting on LNOB, year of publication or income status, and the extent to which countries have institutionalised LNOB.

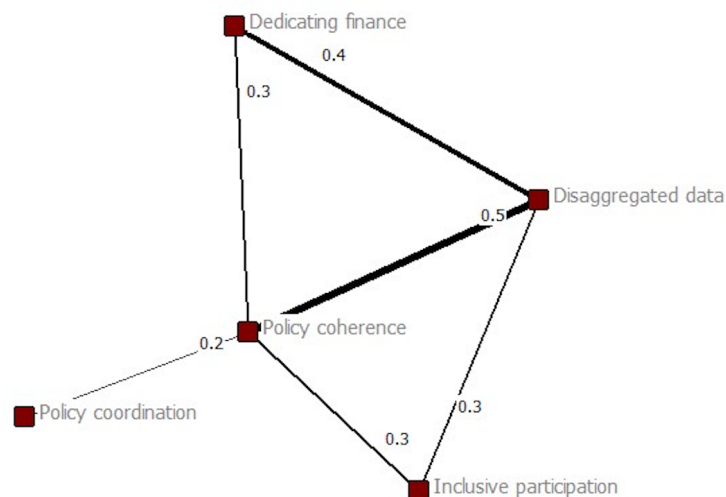


*Figure 11: Global overview of the level of institutionalisation of LNOB*

#### 4.7 Creating conducive conditions: correlation between institutional mechanisms

The previous sections presented the results of LNOB implementation based on institutional aspects and mechanisms as recommended by literature. Although these results help to gather a general overview of how countries have institutionalised the LNOB principle, it lacks a reflection on how these implementations lead to conducive conditions to reach LNOB. In other words, if a certain institutional mechanism was present, does that also mean that another mechanism was always present? Or, if a country implemented aspect X, did it also always implement another aspect at the same time? How literature sees these relations has already discussed (section 3.3), but it was also concluded that literature has been lacking in reflecting on the implications of an integrated institutionalisation of LNOB. Therefore, this section will reveal if the same links are identified based on the meta-analysis or whether new links between institutional mechanisms surfaced.

As was described in the methods, two Pearson’s correlation analyses were done to find out possible links between institutional mechanisms and/or aspects of which the outcomes are presented in **Annex F**. As **Figure 12** illustrates, policy coherence and disaggregated data show the most as well as the strongest links with other institutional mechanisms. In contrast, policy coordination shows the least (and also the weakest) correlation with other institutional mechanisms. These results thus indicate that countries that are implementing policy coherence and/or are disaggregating data, often also implement other institutional mechanisms at the same time, or vice versa. When comparing this to the links identified by literature (section 3.3), this figure largely confirms the expected links between policy coordination and coherence – although only weakly, between disaggregated data and most other mechanisms, between inclusive participation and disaggregated data and policy coherence, and between dedicated finance and policy coherence. However, there is also a link missing that was identified by literature: a link between dedicated finance and policy coordination. In addition, the link between policy coherence and coordination was expected to be stronger. No direct links between inclusive participation and coordination and finance are identified, downplaying the view of inclusive participation as being the central premise of LNOB. As such, it is interesting that policy coherence does take up a central position in the institutionalisation of LNOB by being the only institutional mechanism connected to all other mechanisms.



*Figure 12: Correlations between the five institutional mechanisms [labels reflect the correlation coefficients; tie strength reflects the strength of the correlation]<sup>3</sup>*

When analysing correlations in more detail based on the different institutional aspects, a few interesting correlations can be identified (see **Annex F, table 18** for the full table with correlation coefficients). For three aspects (aspect 1, 4, 26), no correlation could be calculated because no country has implemented these aspects. **Figure 13** shows that there are many links between aspects of institutional mechanisms for LNOB. Links between aspects from the same institutional mechanism are not necessarily stronger than links between aspects from other institutional mechanisms. This indicates that if a country implements an aspect of a certain institutional mechanism, it does not necessarily implement others from the same mechanism as well. This result is consistent with the implementation

<sup>3</sup> Only the significant correlations are included

gaps as identified in the previous sections (section 4.2-4.6, **Tables 10-14**). It is interesting that including stakeholders in political institutions or monitoring (aspect 13, 14, and 15) do not (or hardly) correlate with aspects of policy coordination, whilst they are overlapping.

In addition, when looking at the stronger links (i.e., thicker lines) these are not mainly based on linkages between aspects of the same institutional mechanisms. The latter is interesting, as it shows that institutionalising LNOB is more integrated and comprehensive than single mechanisms implementation. Although all individual correlations are interesting, it will be too extensive to go into each of them here. Instead, all high and moderate correlations are summarized in **Table 15**. Notably, there are no moderate/high correlations that are negative, indicating that if one aspect increase, the other one decreases. This implies that there is little trade-off between aspects, but rather a synergistic interaction. ‘To ensure that marginalised groups are included in political institutions’ – aspect 14 – and to ‘include marginalised groups in tracking, reviewing, and/or monitoring’ – aspect 15 – almost present a high correlation. The analysis in section 4.4, however, showed that only few countries include marginalised groups in political institutions directly. This correlation is thus interesting as it shows that when marginalised groups were included, they were often included in tracking, reviewing and/or monitoring, and vice versa.

Although the previous outcomes are interesting and point to the interlinked nature of disaggregated data and policy coherence, one must approach these results with caution. Correlation represents the strengths and direction (positive or negative) of relationships but does not explain the type of relationship. For example, the link between policy coherence and disaggregated does not explain which is dependent on which. Does increased policy coherence enable disaggregating data, or vice versa? Also, these correlations do not represent actual implementation numbers. For example, the ten countries who have the highest level of total implementation, are not institutionalising policy coherence the most, but rather disaggregated data and inclusive participation, and even dedicated finance. The correlations between policy coherence and other mechanism are thus interesting and will be further discussed in a later section (section 5.2).

Overall, the links show that there are multiple interlinkages and that institutional mechanisms overlap to some extent. Hence, creating conducive institutional conditions for LNOB will benefit from combined implementation.

*Table 15: The high and moderate (positive) correlations between aspects [the inter-correlations, meaning the correlations between aspects of different institutional mechanisms, are in **bold**]*

Rank	Correlation	Correlation coefficient
1	‘A common approach to LNOB’ (aspect 7) and ‘A policy approach to LNOB that is long term’ (aspect 8)	0,905
2	<b>‘To carry out national representative surveys and/or censuses’ (aspect 22) and ‘to ask ministries who are applying for budgetary allocations to show their proposed policy action will impact LNOB and/or marginalised groups (aspect 25)</b>	0,480
3	‘To ensure that marginalised groups are included for a long-term by giving them a permanent place in political institutions’ (aspect 14) and ‘to include (representatives of) marginalised groups in tracking, reviewing and/or monitoring’ (aspect 15)	0,457



4	<b>‘To carry out impact analysis/mapping exercises’ (aspect 10) and ‘to gather data that is holistic and multi-layered’ (aspect 21)</b>	0,433
5	‘To mainstream LNOB’ (aspect 9) and ‘to carry out impact analysis/mapping exercises’ (aspect 10)	0,398
6	‘To include international organisations, civil society and/or private sector in data collection’ (aspect 19) and ‘to participate with marginalised groups for data collection’ (aspect 20)	0,380
7	<b>‘To carry out impact analysis/mapping exercises’ (aspect 10) and ‘to participate with marginalised groups for data collection’ (aspect 20)</b>	0,346
8	<b>‘To provide information and data to the marginalised groups’ (aspect 16) and ‘to invest in data to identify the groups furthest behind’ (aspect 17)</b>	0,345
9	<b>‘To ask ministries to certify that policy proposals are consistent with LNOB’ (aspect 11) and ‘to ensure that marginalised groups are included for a long-term by giving them a permanent place in political institutions’ (aspect 14)</b>	0,345
10	‘To disaggregate data on, at least, gender, age, disability, social groups and/or geography’ (aspect 18) and ‘to participate with marginalised groups for data collection’ (aspect 20)	0,332
11	<b>‘To ask ministries to certify that policy proposals are consistent with LNOB’ (aspect 11) and ‘to participate with marginalised groups for data collection’ (aspect 20)</b>	0,330
12	‘To target finance to left behind groups that has long term impacts and in the areas of health, education, and social protection especially’ (aspect 24) and ‘to provide additional financial incentives’ (aspect 29)	0,320
13	<b>‘To carry out impact analysis/mapping exercises’ (aspect 10) and ‘to carry out national representative surveys and/or censuses’ (aspect 22)</b>	0,317
14	‘To orientate financing towards left-behind groups and left behind areas’ (aspect 23) and ‘to ask ministries who are applying for budgetary allocations to show their proposed policy action will impact LNOB and/or marginalised groups (aspect 25)	0,316
15	<b>‘To include (representatives of) marginalised groups in tracking, reviewing and/or monitoring’ (aspect 15) and ‘to do specific investments in strengthening the capacities to LNOB’ (aspect 28)</b>	0,315
16	‘To mainstream LNOB’ (aspect 9) and ‘to ask ministries to certify that policy proposals are consistent with LNOB’ (aspect 11)	0,301
17	<b>‘A policy approach to LNOB that is long term’ (aspect 8) and ‘to gather data that is holistic and multi-layered’ (aspect 21)</b>	0,301

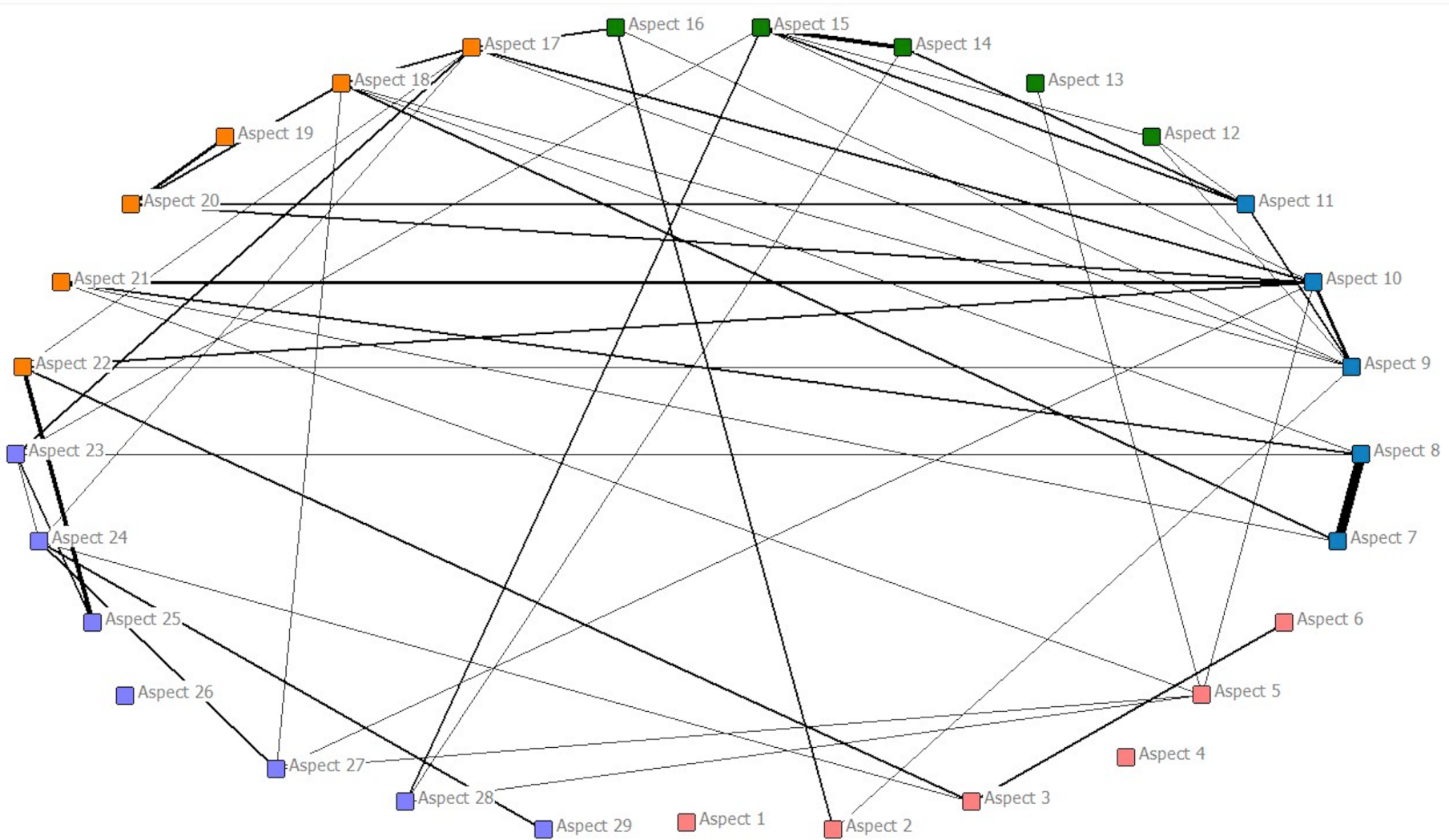


Figure 13: Correlations between aspects of the institutional mechanisms [tie strength reflects the strength of the correlation; only significant correlations are included]

## 5 Discussion

The results have demonstrated that countries interpret and institutionalise LNOB to different extents showing similarities but also gaps. This section will not focus on specific country or specific institutional mechanism/aspect examples, as the results section has already offered a rich analysis on this. Instead, it will focus on how this research has contributed to literature (5.1), how the (empirical) results fit within the theoretical debates and how combined, they show overarching gaps and conducive interactions (5.2). The latter will inform points for future research (5.3) and policy advice (5.4). Lastly, the section will end with a reflection on the most important limitations of the research (5.5).

### 5.1 Contribution of this research: a holistic analytical framework

Plenty of literature exists that has researched the LNOB principle, especially focused on trying to make the principle and related concepts less ambiguous. Although literature, both academic and policy-relevant, has made recommendations on how LNOB should be conceptualised or institutionalised, their focus has been narrow, whilst also fragmented (e.g., Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017). The same literature, however, argues that to reach LNOB it needs an integrated and cross-cutting approach (e.g., Espey, Lafortune & Schmidt-Traub, 2018; Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Zamora et al., 2018) but this is not reflected in existing research itself. Therefore, a major part of the theoretical contribution and uniqueness of this research is that it offers a single and holistic approach to analysing the institutionalisation of LNOB on a national level. Existing literature on LNOB has been synthesised to create a single analytical framework that can be replicated in other studies (see **Annex E**). While this framework has been used in this research to create a global overview of national institutionalisation, it also lends itself to be used for more in-depth case studies. In addition, the correlation analysis can be replicated in other studies which would provide more insight into the theoretical and empirical interlinkages between institutional mechanisms/conditions, as well as (policy relevant) insights into where countries should start when institutionalising LNOB. The analytical framework of this research should, thus, be an incentive to address loose ends within LNOB literature. This thesis already endeavoured to do so by using the framework to conduct a meta-analysis on 77 VNRs published from 2016 to 2021. Hence, the second contribution of this research is that it offers a comprehensive and empirical analysis of how countries have institutionalised LNOB, which has also been lacking in literature until now. These results show different theoretical and empirical implications, which will be discussed in the next section.

### 5.2 Theoretical and empirical implications of the results

The first part of the results shared how countries have conceptualised LNOB based on three concepts: equality, anti-discrimination, and equity. Overall, the results are not surprisingly different than from already existing literature on the discourse(s) behind the LNOB principle (e.g., Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Fukuda-Parr & Hegstad, 2018; Sénit, 2020).

Several results are worth mentioning here. First, the results showed that the conceptualisation and extent to which LNOB was discussed differs among countries and VNRs, without a clear pattern in geographics, year and income status. Most countries do not solely conceptualise LNOB to equality but link it to more than one concept. Such an intersectional approach has been framed as vital for not only explaining the marginalisation of groups, but also for enabling governments to potentially break the cycle of marginalisation (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Kabeer, 2016; Samman et al., 2018; Stuart et al.,

2018). Second, there is a positive link between number of VNR publications and the level of reference to LNOB which implies that not income levels, but rather political commitment is crucial for making progress on LNOB. Third, although the focus on equality was the largest and most stable among countries, equity seemed to be a more common focus for LICs and LMICs. Lay & Priebe (2021) have also made a comparable conclusion for middle income countries. However, this thesis has further separated ‘middle income countries’ and showed that equity is only a more important concept for LMICs and not for UMICs. Literature has defined the differences between equity and equality as process vs outcome, need vs abilities, subjective vs objective and fair vs same (Kumar, 2021; UN, 2017b; Espinoza, 2007), which might explain the differences in focus between countries. However, the analysis of this research was not appropriate to study this in further detail.

The second part of the meta-analysis focused on the national implementation of five institutional mechanisms in connection to LNOB: policy coordination, policy coherence, inclusive participation, disaggregated data, and dedicated finance. Although literature has recommended these mechanisms and more detailed aspects, it has been lacking in terms of empirical evidence. Chattopadhyay & Salomon (2021) concluded that based on the ‘LNOB readiness index’ – which is based upon three components: policy, data, and finance – most countries are ‘ready’ or ‘partially ready’ to meet the LNOB principle and only a few are ‘not ready’. However, the analysis of this thesis showed that the overall implementation of institutional mechanisms connected to LNOB is low where most institutional mechanisms are only partially implemented and by far less than half of the countries. In some institutional mechanisms, the gaps are larger than in others. The next paragraphs will, therefore, focus on the most important results while also reflecting on links between them.

### 5.2.1 Institutionalising LNOB without coordination: what does this mean?

When it comes to coordinating LNOB, many gaps can be identified and hardly any aspects of coordination are implemented. The coordination structures that are implemented only aim for a ‘light’ form of coordination (Van Driel et al., 2022). For example, some countries have created working groups linked to LNOB. Literature has described this as the least intrusive process, aiming for low levels of coordination with little decision-making power (Wong, 2019; Breuer, Leininger & Tosun, 2019). Including stakeholders in these working groups would mean little for empowerment. It is hence questionable whether working groups would enable LNOB and are not simply a way of governments to ‘stack’ an issue so that no one more powerful has to deal with it. A ‘heavy’ form of coordination will be needed to create shared sensemaking that is essential for understanding a hierarchy of importance (Van Driel et al., 2022; Setzer & Nachmany, 2018). Such a hierarchy is especially important for the LNOB principle, as prioritisation of those furthest behind is inherent. A ‘heavy’ form of coordination creates the buy-in to commit to this common understanding and so normatively integrates the notion of prioritisation among policy sectors and actors (Van Driel et al., 2022; Ivanova & Roy, 2007). These institutional and normative changes are needed to drive commitment to LNOB (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UNSDG, 2019), and for LNOB to have transformational impact (Biermann et al., 2022).

The results of this thesis did not show strong links between policy coordination and coherence, whereas literature has widely accepted such a link (e.g., Nilsson, Vijge et al., 2020; Espey, Lafortune & Schmidt-Traub, 2018; Candel, 2019). Academics argue that institutional structures are a crucial lever for mainstreaming efforts (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen et al., 2018; Espey, Lafortune & Schmidt-Traub, 2018). Meaningful changes in institutional, policy and monitoring frameworks are needed to be made to enhance policy coherence (Candel, 2019). To be more specific, Candel (2019) sees shared agenda framing and deliberation structures as enablers for creating ground rules and norms to enhance policy

coherence. Norton et al. (2014) state that mainstreaming concepts such as equity and inclusiveness are more likely to be effective when political arrangements aim for developing a broad consensus around these. Thus, both pointing to the need for a ‘heavy’ form of coordination in connection to policy coherence efforts. Countries (Hungary, 2018; Seychelles, 2020) have also argued that an overarching coordination mechanism and stronger coordination will strengthen policy coherence.

Therefore, it is salient that the analysis did not find a (strong) correlation between policy coordination and coherence. It creates questions of whether LNOB can be effective or made ‘real’ without institutionalising policy coordination. Also, can (effective) policy coherence exist without coordination? Although interesting, this outcome might be skewed by the fact that so few countries have coordination mechanisms for LNOB in place. It will hence require follow up research, especially because existing literature on policy coherence and coordination have little empirical grounding (e.g., Bierman et al., 2022).

### 5.2.2 The most interlinked mechanism: policy coherence

In terms of policy coherence, countries are implementing several aspects of it to some extent. Policy coherence showed the most and strongest correlations with other institutional mechanisms, while actual implementation was not the highest. This can imply two things. First, policy coherence is more dependent on the implementation of other mechanisms, e.g., it needs data, finance, or participation. Or second, policy coherence is intertwined in other mechanisms, meaning it is being addressed through the implementation of other mechanisms without countries aiming for coherence itself. A conclusion cannot be made based upon the results of this thesis.

Literature has described using impact or mapping exercises on policy decisions and showing how ministries’ policy proposals impact LNOB, as practical tools to improve mainstreaming efforts (Machingura & Lally, 2017; UNSDG, 2019; Stuart & Samman, 2017). The results of this thesis have also pointed to the conducive nature of these aspects. In addition, the results have identified strong and direct links between policy coherence and disaggregating data, which is salient as not much literature did. Literature has pointed to the collection of disaggregated data as being the first essential step in understanding those left behind (e.g., Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Engen, Hentinnen & Stuart, 2019; Samman et al., 2018; Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017). Disaggregated data can produce knowledge that will shape the way policy makers understand certain issues (Merry, 2011). The UN (2014) has even defined data as the “lifeblood of decision-making and the raw material for accountability” (p. 2). These claims imply that the type of disaggregated data and the way it is collected hence feeds into how common approaches to and/or mainstreaming activities of LNOB are shaped, and so disaggregated data influences policy coherence. A more direct link was acknowledged by Ylönen & Salmivaara (2021) who have concluded that the lack of disaggregated data forms a major challenge for mainstreaming the LNOB principle in Finland. As can be derived from this research, impact analyses for both policy decisions and policy proposals mostly linked with aspects of disaggregated data. When also taking into account their internal link with mainstreaming LNOB, one can conclude that there is indeed a link between mainstreaming LNOB and disaggregated data, which was assumed by Ylönen & Salmivaara (2021).

### 5.2.3 Inclusive participation: making it meaningful

Countries are to some extent institutionalising inclusive participation. Clear gaps can be identified in terms of the inclusion of marginalised groups in decision making, monitoring processes and/or data collection. The inclusion of those left behind is argued to be strongly connected to political will and

societal attitudes (Stuart et al., 2016) which makes cooperation in LNOB-issues more political than in other areas (Lay & Priebe, 2021). A focus on including marginalised groups is not only seen as crucial for breaking the cycle of invisibility and neglect (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; López-Franco, Howard, & Wheeler, 2017; UNDP, 2018), it has also been framed as a cross-cutting guidance (UNSDG, 2019) or a central requirement (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017) among all dimensions of implementing the LNOB principle. Improving inclusive participation then also needs to occur in all stages and on all levels (UNSDG, 2019; López-Franco, Howard, & Wheeler, 2017). The results do not show this; stakeholders were mostly involved at the agenda-setting stage, and rarely in formulation, implementation and/or evaluation.

In addition, countries are only involving marginalised groups in terms of consultation which is, without combining with other forms of participation “still a sham since it offers no assurance that citizen concerns and ideas will be taken into account” (Arnstein, p. 244). Participation in monitoring is important for empowerment as it is not only used for performance evaluation but also for accountability and advocacy (Fukuda-Parr, 2014). In addition, López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler (2017) argued that marginalised groups must be involved in building systems of accountability that impact their lives. Interestingly, the correlation analysis showed a moderate positive correlation between including marginalised groups in political institutions, and in monitoring and tracking, while implementation levels of both were low. Furthermore, the same set of countries were also investing in data to identify the groups left behind. These links thus imply conducive interactions between empowerment and data invisibility.

#### 5.2.4 Low levels of data disaggregation: a financial or a political gap?

The implementation levels of disaggregated data were the most advanced from all the other institutional mechanisms. Countries especially invested in identifying groups that are left behind. The groups identified as left behind (**Figure 10**) are largely similar to the list identified by Fukuda-Parr & Hegstad (2018, table 2). At the same time, countries still see the action of disaggregating data and involving other stakeholders as a challenge in terms of resources and these levels of implementation are low. This is interesting, while also an important gap: how can it be that countries are identifying those groups left behind, gathering holistic and multi-layered data, and carrying out surveys and censuses, but still do not disaggregate data to high levels?

Winkler & Satterthwaite (2017) explain that the data availability debate should not only be treated as a technical problem, but rather as a political one. They argue that most surveys allow for disaggregation by race and ethnicity, which is in contrast with the claims that there is a lack of data availability and difficulty in collecting disaggregated data. Winkler & Satterthwaite (2017) further explain: “where there is data, there is a way to analyse processes of marginalisation and discrimination. And where there is political will and proven methodologies, there is usually a way to gather such data” (p. 1084). As the results of this thesis showed that countries are widely investing in data to identify those groups left behind, gathering multi-layered data, and carrying out surveys, this argument seems plausible. Abualghaib et al. (2019) have also acknowledged the mismatch between the collection of data through surveys and censuses, and it being disaggregated. However, they have argued that also material factors, such as financial restraints, explain why some countries, especially LICs, have difficulty with disaggregating data. They explain: “our point is that when no such data exists within states, political will to address the inequalities ... [will be] restrained, compared to if states are able to obtain disability disaggregated data.” (p. 4). The results of this thesis, however, do not show

the low levels of implementation is due to the LICs or LMICs only, implying that overall, political will explains more about the lack of disaggregation than financial restraints.

#### 5.2.5 Lacking finance: empty promises?

Finance is, however, still found to be important for reaching LNOB (e.g., Stuart et al., 2016; Chattopadhyay & Salomon, 2021; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017). Without proper resource allocation LNOB will remain no more than a vague description or a vision without operationalisation, commitment, and accountability (UNSDG, 2019). Research did also link the level of dedicating finance to LNOB and those left behind to political will and commitment (Samman et al., 2018; Stuart et al., 2016). Annual budgets, namely, explain the areas to focus on and what need to be done to ensure that happens, and so governments make themselves accountable (Peters, 2018; UNSDG, 2019). Chattopadhyay & Salomon (2021) conducted a specific analysis on dedicating finance to LNOB and concluded that only few countries are ‘ready’ in terms of finance, which is generally what the results of this thesis also showed. Literature on how to finance LNOB was not abundant, and the analysis proved not to be totally appropriate for analysing financial allocations of countries.

This thesis did not find strong correlations between dedicated finance and other institutional mechanisms which creates questions as literature did identify links with policy coordination, coherence, and inclusive participation (e.g., Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen et al., 2018; Stuart et al., 2016, Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017). Interestingly though, the ten countries with the highest total level of implementation have implemented disaggregated data and inclusive participation the most; but also dedicated finance ranks significantly higher than policy coherence and coordination. This raises questions such as can countries be ‘serious’ about institutionalising LNOB without dedicating finance to it? Or, when the institutionalisation of LNOB does not coincide with dedicated finance, will or can it be made ‘real’? Overall, there is a need for more and further research on finance linked to LNOB.

#### 5.2.6 Lacking political commitment to institutionalise LNOB

The above discussion shows that many questions and gaps remain when it comes to institutionalising LNOB. Especially in terms of the interlinkages between institutional mechanisms, many uncertainties appear. What reoccurred throughout, is that the gaps in implementation are mainly explained in literature as lacking political commitment and political will. Pant (2021) concluded that the implementation of LNOB “is well positioned in multiple policy procedures whereas implementation mechanism is still unclear and inconsistent due to the resource constraints, capacity gaps and lack of political commitments and ownership which has direct implication on the realization of the LNOB principles and mainstreaming the left behind communities” (p. 50). This thesis can make a similar conclusion by showing that LNOB finds its way into VNR reporting and to some extent into policy making, that countries invest in data to identify those left behind, mention to allocate finance to these groups through different ways and attempt to include stakeholders in decision making, but when it comes to actual institutional structures and mechanisms to drive commitment or accountability, clear gaps can be identified. Thus, there have been some discursive changes because of LNOB, but little normative or institutional effects have materialised which is needed for far-reaching transformational changes. A similar conclusion was made by Biermann et al. (2022) when analysing the impact of the SDGs on national structures.

Both the SDGs and the LNOB principle rely on ‘governance through goals’ which is characterized by non-legal binding rules, ‘weak’ institutional arrangements, and much national leeway (Biermann, Kanie & Kim, 2017; Biermann et al., 2022). Effective implementation of LNOB thus relies on translation

from global to national aspirations in which the latter is subject to contestation and negotiation (Fukuda-parr, 2014; Vijge et al., 2020). Legal bindingness can be a ‘double-edged sword’, as on the one hand binding agreements lead to countries making less ambitious commitments or non-participation (Bodansky, 2016), while on the other hand non-binding agreements limit the sense of urgency, commitment, and acceptance (Young, 2017; Vijge et al., 2020). This trade-off might explain why all Member States have committed themselves to the LNOB principle, which is a highly ambitious and aspirational approach, while at the same time, the results of this thesis showed that it is the same political commitment and political will that limit actual institutionalisation of LNOB. The focus on those furthest behind and the concepts of LNOB remain inherently political (Stuart & Samman, 2017; Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017).

An important question remains: What is the ‘real’ impact of the LNOB principle on national institutional structures considering that political commitment is low and at the same time there is much national leeway, no legal authorities within the UN or rules to guide implementation? While this thesis adds to this question by offering a first holistic and refined framework to study the institutionalisation of LNOB while also the first comprehensive analysis on actual implementation, future and more in-depth research is needed to further define how the LNOB principle affects national institutional structures and under what circumstances, which in its turns will explain the progress on LNOB. The next section will further set out points for future research.

### 5.3 Future research

The replicability of this research creates multiple opportunities for future research. While this thesis provided a first step to understanding the institutionalisation of LNOB, more in-depth case studies are needed and desired. Replicating this study will further provide insight into the empirical linkages between institutional mechanisms and conditions to reach LNOB, which in its turn can enrich literature on these mechanisms and LNOB. In addition, it will increase the understanding of where countries should start and how it should institutionalise LNOB. Herein, it is especially important to study the interlinkages between institutional mechanisms in order to understand what an integrated approach to reach LNOB should entail. The results of this research also point to more detailed recommendations for future research which will be discussed next.

First, the analysis showed that policy coherence has many linkages with other institutional mechanisms of which not all were expected from literature, while also, it could imply different things. Policy coherence and LNOB have been linked before but at the same time much uncertainty exists (e.g., Theeuwes, 2019; Vijge, 2021; Runhaar et al., 2018; Candel, 2018). Although this research marginally adds to this, by showing how policy coherence has been used to institutionalise LNOB, it also supports the claims that the link between LNOB and policy coherence is not yet clear and defined. Future research should focus on policy coherence and its linkages to the other institutional mechanisms and its effect on LNOB. Is policy coherence dependent on data, finance, and participation? Or is policy coherence so intertwined in these mechanisms that it is addressed without aiming to address coherence as such? What does the strong link between policy coherence and disaggregated data tell us? In addition, the link between policy coordination and coherence is widely addressed in literature, but this link was not empirically supported in this thesis. This research shows that policy coherence can exist, at least on paper, without policy coordination. Is policy coordination then needed to enable policy coherence? Is it necessary to have one dedicated coordination mechanism to guide LNOB? It also calls for further empirical research to find out whether such a conclusion was not skewed



by the fact that only few countries have coordination mechanisms for LNOB in place. Thus, future studies should aim to empirically ground the link between policy coordination and policy coherence.

Second, inclusive participation has been described as a central premise for LNOB, and while it showed a more advanced level of implementation, it did not show the most links with other institutional mechanisms. This creates questions as to whether inclusive participation should really take such a central place in institutionalising LNOB. If inclusive participation is not implemented, will other mechanisms for enabling LNOB be ineffective? Could a country create a conducive condition for LNOB without institutionalising inclusive participation? Future research should answer these questions.

Third, while some literature has explained the gap between collecting data and disaggregating data to be either linked to political commitment or material restraints, this thesis supports the argument of commitment more so than financial restraints. However, as this is such an important gap and might explain the low levels of data disaggregation on a country level, future research should explore this gap further.

Fourth, finance linked to LNOB was described as essential but also ill-defined in existing literature and the results of this thesis could not, or hardly, enlarge this knowledge. Future research should thus study more in-depth national documents and carry out case studies to find out the institutionalisation of finance linked to LNOB. In connection, literature indicated finance as being both a driver and a restraint, but this was barely supported by the correlation analysis of this research, which showed little links between finance and other institutional mechanisms. What does it mean for LNOB when finance is lacking but other mechanisms are in place? Budgets represent where resources are allocated to and so reflect the political objectives of a country that directly affects the achievement of such objectives (e.g., Hege & Brimont, 2018; Hege, Brimont & Pagnon, 2019). Without sufficient finance, are the institutionalisations of other mechanisms to reach LNOB not simply empty promises? Answering such questions would be imperative for reaching LNOB.

Fifth and connected to the previous points, the correlation analysis of this research identified links between institutional mechanisms which are empirically grounded. Although literature has so far been lacking in analysing these links and what it means for the institutionalisation of LNOB – and this research has made a first attempt to understand this, more research is needed to fully comprehend the integrated character of institutionalising LNOB. For example, future research should focus on the nature of the (empirical) links as identified in this research. Do the links represent one-way or two-way relations? Does a link represent a dependency relationship? Does a link mean it is a driver or a restraint?

Overall, these points would help to understand how the institutionalisation of LNOB should take shape, while also answering the question of what the ‘real’ impact of LNOB principle is on national institutional structure and policy making which in its turn would explain the progress on LNOB. It will, especially, contribute to fully understanding what the conducive conditions are that enable reaching the LNOB principle. The next section will explore some policy insights and advice that can be derived from this research.

#### 5.4 Policy implications

This thesis suggests that policy makers and governments have been lacking in financing and committing to the institutionalisation of LNOB. The analytical framework created in this research is already policy relevant, being a synthesis of recommendations made by literature on how to best

institutionalise LNOB. Policy makers can take this framework to see what has been advised and thus use it as a guide. However, this research endeavoured to give an empirical meaning to these recommendations by showing gaps in implementation, while also correlations between institutionalisation efforts thus pointing to enabling conditions. As Klasen & Fleurbaey (2018) have concluded, targeted interventions are valuable for LNOB but ultimately, it is an overall strategy that will enable reaching LNOB. Although there is no easy fix to increase political commitment, some general policy recommendations follow from the results. These are meant to guide the UN Member States in their pledge to LNOB by filling up the gaps in implementation, inheriting an intersectional-lens and making use of the links between mechanisms to create conducive conditions.

As the results suggest, institutionalising LNOB is complex, and many questions remain unanswered when it comes to how an integrated approach to LNOB should look. Therefore, this thesis can only detail policy recommendations for creating enabling conditions to reach LNOB to a certain extent and urging future research to expand these. While the recommendations are nowhere near exhaustive, they combine insights from identified gaps in implementation and links found between institutional mechanisms. The appropriability of these recommendations always depend on national context and should thus be used as starting points considering political realities and domestic needs (Stuart et al., 2016).

**Recommendation 1: Countries should aim for combined implementation of different institutional mechanisms to enable reaching LNOB.**

- The institutionalisation of LNOB has shown to be more integrated and comprehensive than implementation of single mechanisms. Given that LNOB institutionalisation remains complex, countries should use the links identified in this research to guide institutionalisation of LNOB, but future research should expand this into more ‘hands-on’ recommendations.

**Recommendation 2: Countries should focus on translating LNOB into institutional structures, especially budgets, and (coordination) mechanisms beyond policies alone.**

- Countries should make clear who is responsible for coordinating, monitoring and/or tracking efforts on LNOB to increase accountability.
- Countries should ask their ministries to include their impact on LNOB in policy proposals to create accountability, and in budgetary allocations, to drive financial commitment. Both will make the vision of LNOB move from vague descriptions to real operationalisation and action.
- Countries should focus on making normative and institutional changes in connection to LNOB, rather than only discursive changes.

**Recommendation 3: Countries should focus on including marginalised groups meaningfully by moving beyond consultation alone.**

- Countries should invest in empowering marginalised groups by including them in tracking and monitoring of LNOB efforts. The (correlation) analysis has shown the capacity of doing so.
- Including marginalised groups in monitoring or tracking mechanisms linked to LNOB will create ownership and give them a degree of political autonomy and authority which has been lacking.
- It will also break the cycles of invisibility and neglect in data collection/disaggregation, making the gap between collection and disaggregation potentially smaller.

## 5.5 Limitations

Although this research shows great potential in its replicability and scalability, there are also some limitations worth noting. In terms of the methodology, the LNOB-filter on the UN website was used to objectively select a data set that was relevant for analysing LNOB institutionalisation. It is, however, not known how this filter selects suitable VNRs, making it hard to know how this might have influenced the results of this thesis. Also, the choice to select only LNOB-relevant VNRs creates bias and might skew the results to present a more positive image. It was, therefore, explained at the beginning of the results section that some nuance should be taken when interpreting the results and that the percentages of implementation are thus expected to be even lower in reality. There are also limitations connected to using VNRs as the main source of information and to the choice of including/excluding certain chapters of the VNRs, as was already discussed in section 2.2. Because the aim of this research was to show how countries have institutionalised LNOB on a comprehensive and holistic level, these choices were considered as valid. Although seen as valid, future research should validate these limitations by analysing the institutionalisation of LNOB based on other types of (policy) documents, such as national policy documents.

In addition, this research used triangulation but only to a certain extent, which carries limitations. The research used methodological triangulation, meaning it used different methodologies to study the same topic: a literature review, a meta-analysis, and a correlation analysis. In addition, the institutionalisation of LNOB was studied from both a theoretical and an empirical point of view, increasing the reliability of the results. However, there has been no data triangulation, meaning that there were not three different data sets connected to the analyses. The meta-analysis and the correlation analysis were both based upon the VNRs and thus inherently encompassed the same limitations as described in the previous paragraph. Thus, although the methodological triangulation increased the validity for the results, future research should also focus on studying the institutionalisation of LNOB based on data triangulation to verify the credibility of this research' results.

There are also some limitations to the results. First, the low levels of implementation of policy coordination might have skewed the results and the lack of links with other institutional mechanisms. This has already been acknowledged above and future research should uncover whether this the case. A large limitation of this research lies within the correlation analysis, which was useful to identify links between aspects/mechanisms, but did little in terms of explaining the nature of relationships. A bias can be identified in coding the VNRs and their connections to the different institutional aspects/mechanisms. As countries differ in their political structures or explanation, it was sometimes hard to judge whether certain efforts would fall under which, or any of the institutional aspects/mechanisms. Thus, more diverse, in depth and detailed (case) studies are needed to verify and/or expand the results.

## 6 Conclusion

LNOB has been a recurring theme in both academic and policy research in which some recommendations for the institutionalisation of LNOB can be found. However, a comprehensive analysis on how LNOB should be institutionalised and how it is being institutionalised by countries has been missing so far. This thesis has endeavoured to fill these gaps by doing three types of analyses – a literature study, a meta-analysis, and a correlation analysis – aiming to find an answer to the question: **What are the enabling (institutional) conditions and gaps for reaching LNOB in implementing the SDGs at the country level?** The contribution of this thesis is twofold: i) it provides an overview of how the institutionalisation of LNOB can be analysed on a national level according to scientific and policy literature and ii) it provides an (empirical) overview of how countries have (not) institutionalised LNOB. These objectives are guided by two sub-questions and will be answered next.

**Sub-question 1:** How can the conceptualisation and institutionalisation of LNOB be analysed on a national level according to academic and policy literature?

Literature have broadly used three concepts to explain the meaning behind the LNOB principle: equality, anti-discrimination, and equity. These three concepts are closely related concepts and when they overlap, they give rise to an intersecting model of marginalisation. Such an intersectional understanding and approach is crucial for reaching LNOB. The three concepts were used as a conceptual lens to analyse how countries use or might not use these to frame their efforts on LNOB.

Based on a literature study of LNOB-relevant academic and policy documents, it can be concluded that LNOB should be institutionalised through five mechanisms: policy coordination, policy coherence, inclusive participation, disaggregated data, and dedicated finance. An analytical framework was created consisting of these five institutional mechanisms and 29 more detailed aspects to study the institutionalisation of LNOB. The institutional mechanisms are interlinked and overlap in some areas, and thus implementing multiple will improve the implementation of the single. It is therefore important to take a holistic view on the institutionalisation of LNOB, but literature on LNOB has been narrow and fragmented so far.

A major part of the uniqueness of this thesis is that it created a single, theoretically rigorous, and holistic framework to study how LNOB should be institutionalised taking on an integrated approach that is able to reflect on links between the implementation of institutional mechanisms. This thesis urges to replicate this framework in other studies to provide further insights into interlinkages between institutional mechanisms/conditions, as well as (policy relevant) insights into where countries should start when institutionalising LNOB. Overall, the framework should be an incentive to address loose ends within LNOB-literature and implementation.

**Sub-question 2:** How and to what extent do countries conceptualise and institutionalise (mechanisms and conditions for) LNOB?

A meta-analysis on 77 VNRs published from 2016-2021 have showed that the conceptualisation of LNOB differs among countries, but also that the focus on equality is overall the largest and most stable. While at the same time, countries rarely use only one of the concepts to explain their approach to LNOB, thus pointing to an intersectional approach to a certain extent.

Using the analytical framework created in this thesis, the meta-analysis showed that countries are institutionalising mechanisms to reach LNOB but only to some extent, showing many gaps in implementation. It can be concluded that LNOB finds its way into VNR reporting and to some extent

into policy making, that countries invest in data to identify those left behind, mention to orientate some finance to these groups through different ways and attempt to include stakeholders in decision making, but when it comes to actual institutional structures and mechanisms to drive commitment or accountability clear gaps can be identified. Especially in terms of policy coordination of and dedicating finance to LNOB, countries have been lacking. Including marginalised groups into decision making and data collection is rare, and an important gap remains between the collection and disaggregation of data. When looking at the more detailed institutional aspects of these mechanisms, it can be concluded that no institutional mechanism can be considered as sufficiently implemented. Overall, this thesis concludes that countries lack political commitment and political will to institutionalise LNOB.

By analysing the correlations between the institutional mechanisms and their aspects, this thesis showed that the institutionalisation of LNOB is more integrated and interlinked than single mechanism implementation; and so, supporting the argument that combined implementation will benefit reaching LNOB. Although the correlation analysis has been the first attempt in literature to analyse the institutionalisation of LNOB from a holistic and an integrated view, many questions remain unanswered. For example, the correlation analysis showed no strong link between policy coordination and coherence, which has widely been described in literature. Also, policy coherence – and disaggregated to a lesser extent – showed many links to other institutional mechanisms to reach LNOB. Future research should further investigate these links to understand how an integrated approach to institutionalise LNOB should look like and thus what the enabling conditions are to reach LNOB.

Overall and to answer the main research question, the LNOB principle is being institutionalised incrementally, but much variance between countries exists and little normative and institutional changes are being materialised. Many gaps are identified in the institutionalisation of LNOB pointing to a lack of political commitment. Although, this research has also attempted to identify conducive conditions to reach LNOB and has done so to a certain extent by showing how institutional mechanisms are interlinked, more future research is needed in order to make a conclusion about this.

Some policy recommendations have followed from this research but what the ‘real’ impact is of LNOB on institutional structures of countries remains uncertain at this point. Replicating this research in other types of studies, incl. in-depth case studies, could be key in understanding where countries need to start when institutionalising LNOB and thus how to reach the LNOB principle.

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## Annex A: Literature list for compiling the analytical framework

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## Annex B: Total data set

Table 16: Total data set for the meta-analysis

Country	Year of VNR	Classification*	Continent	Country	Year of VNR	Classification*	Continent
Afghanistan	2017	LIC	Asia	Lesotho	2019	LMIC	Africa
Afghanistan	2021	LIC	Asia	Liberia	2020	LIC	Africa
Albania	2018	UMIC	Europe	Malawi	2020	LIC	Africa
Antigua and Barbuda	2021	HIC	North and Central America	Malaysia	2017	UMIC	Asia
Armenia	2020	UMIC	Asia	Maldives	2017	UMIC	Asia
Australia	2018	HIC	Oceania	Malta	2018	HIC	Europe
Austria	2020	HIC	Europe	Mexico	2018	UMIC	North and Central America
Azerbaijan	2017	UMIC	Asia	Mongolia	2019	LMIC	Asia
Azerbaijan	2019	UMIC	Asia	Namibia	2021	UMIC	Africa
Bahamas	2018	HIC	North and Central America	Nepal	2017	LMIC	Asia
Bangladesh	2017	LMIC	Asia	Netherlands	2017	HIC	Europe
Bhutan	2018	LMIC	Asia	New Zealand	2019	HIC	Oceania
Botswana	2017	UMIC	Africa	Nigeria	2017	LMIC	Africa
Cabo Verde	2018	LMIC	Africa	Norway	2016	HIC	Europe
Cambodia	2019	LMIC	Asia	Norway	2021	HIC	Europe
Canada	2018	HIC	North and Central America	Palau	2019	HIC	Oceania
Cyprus	2021	HIC	Europe	Papua New Guinea	2020	LMIC	Oceania
Czech Republic	2021	HIC	Europe	Philippines	2019	LMIC	Asia
Denmark	2017	HIC	Europe	Portugal	2017	HIC	Europe
Denmark	2021	HIC	Europe	Republic of Korea	2016	HIC	Asia
Egypt	2016	LMIC	Africa	Russian Federation	2020	UMIC	Asia
Egypt	2018	LMIC	Africa	Rwanda	2019	LIC	Africa
Egypt	2021	LMIC	Africa	Seychelles	2020	HIC	Africa
Ethiopia	2017	LIC	Africa	Sierra Leone	2016	LIC	Africa
Finland	2020	HIC	Europe	South Africa	2019	UMIC	Africa
Georgia	2016	UMIC	Asia	Spain	2018	HIC	Europe
Hungary	2018	HIC	Europe	Sri Lanka	2018	LMIC	Asia
Ireland	2018	HIC	Europe	State of Palestine	2018	not known	Asia

Israel	2019	HIC	Asia	Sudan	2018	LIC	Africa
Jamaica	2018	UMIC	North and Central America	Sweden	2017	HIC	Europe
Japan	2017	HIC	Asia	Sweden	2021	HIC	Europe
Jordan	2017	UMIC	Asia	Switzerland	2018	HIC	Europe
Kenya	2017	LMIC	Africa	Thailand	2017	UMIC	Asia
Kuwait	2019	HIC	Asia	Turkey	2016	UMIC	Asia
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2018	LMIC	Asia	Turkey	2019	UMIC	Asia
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2021	LMIC	Asia	Turkmenistan	2019	UMIC	Asia
Latvia	2018	HIC	Europe	Uganda	2016	LIC	Africa
Lebanon	2018	UMIC	Asia	Zimbabwe	2017	LMIC	Africa
				Zimbabwe	2021	LMIC	Africa

*\*Classifications: LIC = Low-Income Country, LMIC = Low Middle-Income Country, UMIC = Upper Middle-Income Country, HIC = High-Income Country*

## Annex C: Temporal and spatial distribution of VNRs

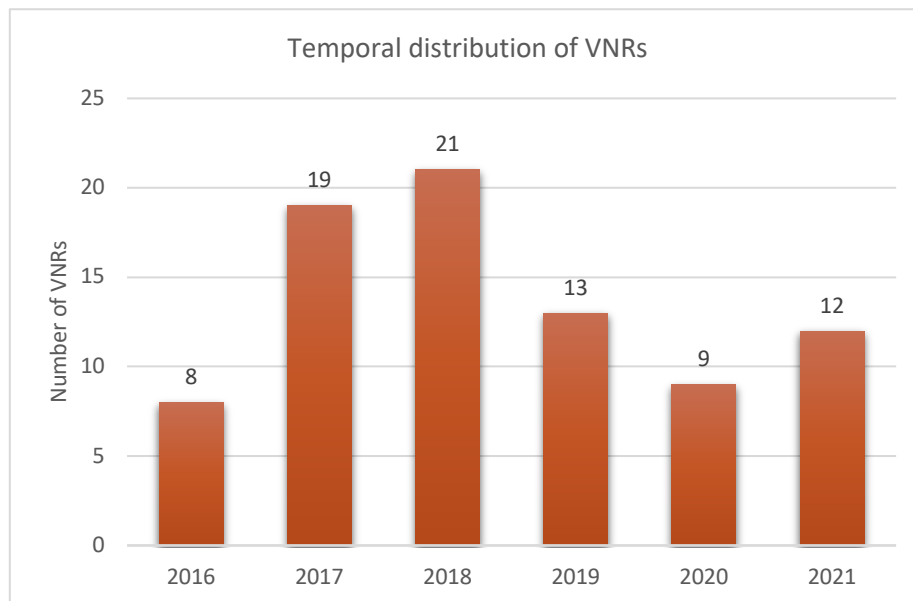


Figure 14: Temporal distribution of VNRs

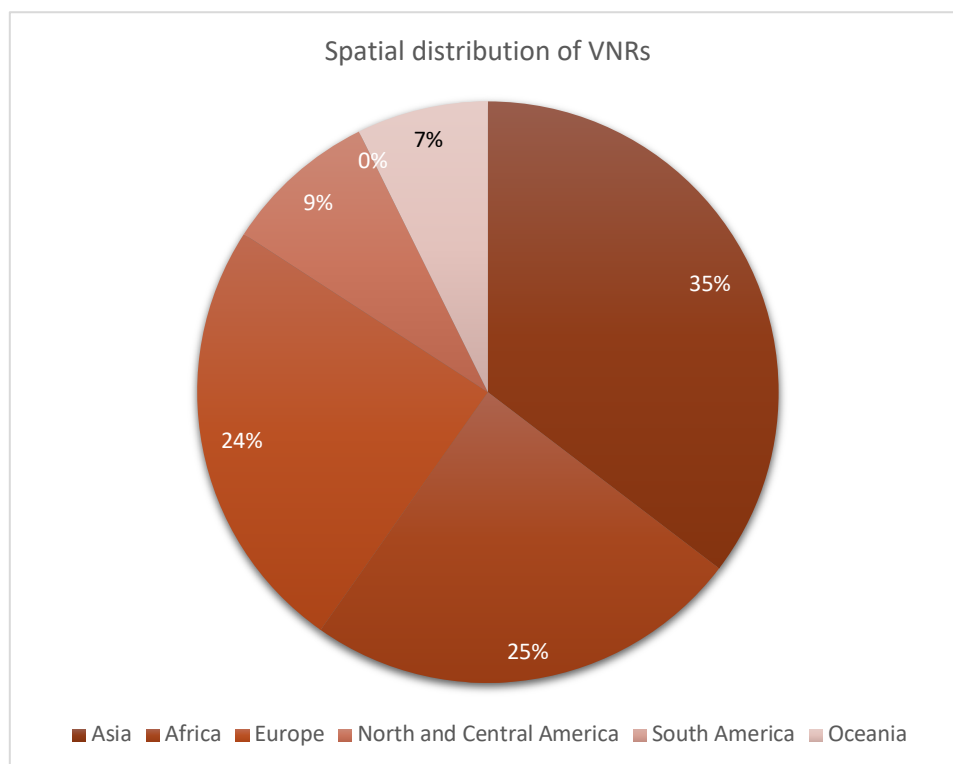


Figure 15: Spatial distribution of VNRs





## Annex E: Total implementation levels of the institutional mechanisms

Institutional mechanism	Aspects	Level
Policy coordination	1. Governments need to <b>create a high-level mechanism at the heart of the government</b> , i.e., office of prime minister/president, planning and/or finance ministries, that ensures systematic attention and drives commitment to LNOB at a cabinet level (Donoghue & Khan, 2019) <b>AND/OR an interdepartmental/ministerial coordinating committee that prioritises LNOB</b> , i.e., equality, anti-discrimination and equity issues, and/or focus on marginalised groups (UNSDG, 2019; UN, 2017b)	0-20%
	2. Governments should <b>identify and task those responsible to take action on LNOB</b> (UNDP, 2018)	0-20%
	3. Governments should <b>assign responsibility to and/or create a mechanism that systematically tracks and monitors progress</b> on LNOB and report this to cabinet (Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Stuart et al., 2016; UN, 2017b)	0-20%
	4. Governments should <b>assign responsibility to the national coordination mechanism for carrying out impact analyses/mapping exercises</b> to understand the policy impacts on LNOB and the most marginalised groups (see <i>policy coherence</i> ; Donoghue & Khan, 2019)	0-20%
	5. Governments should <b>include local authorities</b> into the coordination mechanisms to ensure vertical coordination (UNDP, 2018; UN, 2017b)	0-20%
	6. Governments should <b>create a specific working group(s) to address LNOB</b> and/or issues of equality, anti-discrimination and equity (UNICEF, n.d.)	0-20%
Policy coherence	7. Governments should adopt a <b>common approach to LNOB</b> , e.g., National Policies, Strategies and/or Plans, and that it is holistic which will drive alignment by having shared objectives across systems, actions and areas (UN, 2017; Zamora et al., 2018; UNSDG, 2019; Klasen & Fleurbaey, 2018; Donoghue & Khan, 2019)	20-50%
	8. Governments should adopt a <b>policy approach to LNOB that is long term</b> by having time horizons of at least three to five years (UNSDG, 2019)	20-50%
	9. Governments should <b>mainstream LNOB</b> , i.e., equality, anti-discrimination, and equity issues, amongst policies to ensure systematic focus on the poorest and most marginalised groups (Samman et al., 2018; Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Kenny, 2018; Stuart & Samman, 2017; Lay & Priebe, 2021).	20-50%
	10. Governments should <b>carry out impact (distributional) analyses/mapping exercises</b> to understand the impact of their policy decisions on marginalised groups and to be able to quickly mitigate any negative impacts (Stuart & Samman, 2017; Donoghue & Khan, 2019; Machingura & Lally, 2017; Bouyé, Harmeling & Schulz, 2019; UNSDG, 2019) (e.g., PSIA)	0-20%
	11. Governments should <b>ask their ministries to certify that their policy proposals are consistent with LNOB</b> and confirm that they included the impacts on the most marginalised groups (Donoghue & Khan, 2019)	0-20%
Inclusive participation	12. Governments should <b>create dialogue forums or networks where different stakeholders come together</b> including CSOs, collective groups and	20-50%

	(representatives of) the furthest behind to assess, implement and track progress (UNSDG, 2019; López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017)	
	13. Governments should <b>include NGOs and/or CSOs in political institutions</b> as they can represent the interests, knowledge, and priorities of marginalised communities due to their connections and advocacy work (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UNDP, 2018; UNSDG, 2019; Pant, 2021; Bhushan et al., 2018)	20-50%
	14. Governments should <b>ensure that marginalised groups are included for a long-term by giving them a permanent place in political institutions</b> such as coordination mechanisms, e.g., working groups, to ensure sustained link between marginalised groups and authorities (López-Franco, Howard, Wheeler, 2017; UNICEF, n.d.; UNDP, 2018)	0-20%
	15. Governments should <b>include (representatives of) marginalised groups in tracking, reviewing and/or monitoring</b> LNOB efforts (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; UN, 2017b; López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017)	0-20%
	16. Governments should <b>provide information and data to the marginalised groups</b> so that they are empowered to claim their rights (UNDP, 2018)	20-50%
<b>Disaggregated data</b>	17. Governments should <b>invest in data to identify the groups furthest behind</b> (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016)	>50%
	18. Governments should <b>disaggregate data on, at least, gender, age, disability, social groups and/or geography</b> (UNDP, 2018; Abualghaib et al., 2019; Lay & Priebe, 2021; Avendano, Culey & Balitrand, 2018)	0-20%
	19. Governments should <b>include international organisations, civil society and/or private sector in data collection</b> (Samman et al., 2018; Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017)	0-20%
	20. Governments should <b>participate with marginalised groups for data collection</b> (UN, 2017b; Zamora et al., 2018; Abualghib et al., 2019; López-Franco, Howard & Wheeler, 2017; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016)	0-20%
	21. Governments should <b>gather data that is holistic and multi-layered</b> , such as a multi-dimensional Poverty index, as it addresses the multidimensionality of LNOB and thus can improve the understanding of who is left behind (UNDP, 2018; (Lekobane & Roelen, 2020; Bhattacharya, 2020)	20-50%
	22. Governments should <b>carry out national representative surveys, e.g., DHS, MICS, (non)-household surveys, and/or censuses</b> to gather disaggregated data but with a focus on marginalised people as they risk leaving out the most vulnerable (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017; Samman et al., 2018; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UN, 2017b; Chattopadhyay & Salomon, 2021; Greenhill, 2017; Stuart et al., 2016)	20-50%
<b>Dedicated finance</b>	23. Governments should <b>orientate financing towards left-behind groups and left behind areas</b> (Samman et al., 2018; Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; Stuart & Samman, 2017; UNSDG, 2019)	>50%
	24. Governments should <b>target finance to left behind groups that has long term impacts</b> (Samman et al., 2018) and <b>in the areas of health, education, and social protection especially</b> (Chattopadhyay & Salomon, 2021; Greenhill, 2017; Stuart et al., 2016; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)	0-20%
	25. Governments should <b>ask their ministers who are applying for budgetary allocations to show how their proposed policy action will impact LNOB and/or marginalised groups</b> (Donoghue & Khan, 2019)	0-20%

	26. Governments should <b>design their tax system in a way to ensure an appropriate spread of the tax burden across society</b> (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016; UNDP, 2018)	0-20%
	27. Governments should <b>orientate finance to local authorities</b> to encourage targeting those who are left behind in their communities (UNSDG, 2019)	0-20%
	28. Government should <b>do specific investments in strengthening the capacities to LNOB</b> (UNSDG, 2019)	0-20%
	29. Governments should <b>provide additional financial incentives</b> , such as the Conditional Cash Transfer, no-interest-rate loans, concessional grants, and non-aid incentives, to catalyse action for marginalised groups (Samman et al., 2018; Lay & Priebe, 2021; Greenhill & Rabinowitz, 2017)	20-50%



## Annex F: Correlation coefficients of mechanisms and aspects

Table 17: Outcome of correlation analysis between institutional mechanisms

Policy coordination	1				
Policy coherence	<b>0,233</b>	1			
Disaggregated data	0,147	<b>0,521</b>	1		
Dedicated finance	-0,076	<b>0,269</b>	<b>0,383</b>	1	
Inclusive participation	0,131	<b>0,279</b>	<b>0,277</b>	-0,028	1
	Policy coordination	Policy coherence	Disaggregated data	Dedicated finance	Inclusive participation

### Legend

	Low
	Low (but higher than 0,2)
	Moderate
	High
<b>value</b>	Significant correlation coefficient



Table 18: Outcome of correlation analysis between institutional aspects

Aspect 1	1															
Aspect 2	<sup>a</sup>	1														
Aspect 3	<sup>a</sup>	-0,047	1													
Aspect 4	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	1												
Aspect 5	<sup>a</sup>	0,099	-0,101	<sup>a</sup>	1											
Aspect 6	<sup>a</sup>	-0,073	<b>0,279</b>	<sup>a</sup>	0,067	1										
Aspect 7	<sup>a</sup>	0,021	0,111	<sup>a</sup>	0,125	0,128	1									
Aspect 8	<sup>a</sup>	0,040	0,138	<sup>a</sup>	0,169	0,167	<b>0,905</b>	1								
Aspect 9	<sup>a</sup>	<b>0,259</b>	-0,061	<sup>a</sup>	0,109	-0,116	0,161	0,177	1							
Aspect 10	<sup>a</sup>	0,079	0,041	<sup>a</sup>	<b>0,262</b>	0,038	0,149	0,199	<b>0,398</b>	1						
Aspect 11	<sup>a</sup>	-0,047	-0,055	<sup>a</sup>	0,061	-0,085	-0,019	0,002	<b>0,301</b>	0,193	1					
Aspect 12	<sup>a</sup>	0,080	-0,102	<sup>a</sup>	0,028	-0,098	0,099	0,067	<b>0,239</b>	0,098	<b>0,25</b>	1				
Aspect 13	<sup>a</sup>	0,091	0,028	<sup>a</sup>	<b>0,267</b>	0,165	0,074	0,037	0,011	0,123	0,028	-0,152	1			
Aspect 14	<sup>a</sup>	-0,095	-0,110	<sup>a</sup>	0,076	0,038	0,000	-0,114	0,190	0,127	<b>0,345</b>	0,098	-0,012	1		
Aspect 15	<sup>a</sup>	-0,073	-0,085	<sup>a</sup>	-0,045	-0,007	0,128	0,073	0,134	<b>0,248</b>	<b>0,279</b>	<b>0,226</b>	0,002	<b>0,457</b>	1	
Aspect 16	<sup>a</sup>	<b>0,282</b>	-0,043	<sup>a</sup>	-0,004	0,082	-0,026	-0,090	<b>0,238</b>	0,091	-0,043	0,102	-0,027	0,162	0,082	
Aspect 17	<sup>a</sup>	-0,040	0,134	<sup>a</sup>	-0,086	0,021	0,162	0,188	<b>0,258</b>	<b>0,27</b>	-0,002	-0,007	-0,098	0,036	0,114	
Aspect 18	<sup>a</sup>	0,070	0,033	<sup>a</sup>	-0,031	-0,179	<b>0,27</b>	<b>0,251</b>	<b>0,227</b>	0,193	0,180	0,131	-0,107	0,023	0,127	
Aspect 19	<sup>a</sup>	-0,087	0,061	<sup>a</sup>	0,210	0,067	0,125	0,086	0,036	0,169	0,222	0,100	0,123	0,076	0,178	
Aspect 20	<sup>a</sup>	-0,033	-0,038	<sup>a</sup>	0,155	-0,059	0,077	0,096	0,210	<b>0,346</b>	<b>0,33</b>	0,174	0,019	0,135	0,195	
Aspect 21	<sup>a</sup>	-0,115	0,002	<sup>a</sup>	<b>0,252</b>	0,073	<b>0,238</b>	<b>0,301</b>	0,115	<b>0,433</b>	0,002	0,007	0,098	0,199	0,167	
Aspect 22	<sup>a</sup>	0,216	<b>0,299</b>	<sup>a</sup>	0,030	0,001	0,149	0,131	<b>0,232</b>	<b>0,317</b>	-0,125	-0,059	0,157	-0,007	0,099	
Aspect 23	<sup>a</sup>	0,027	0,119	<sup>a</sup>	-0,102	-0,041	0,194	<b>0,258</b>	0,186	0,165	0,119	0,011	-0,133	0,014	<b>0,231</b>	
Aspect 24	<sup>a</sup>	-0,082	<b>0,239</b>	<sup>a</sup>	-0,073	0,083	0,070	0,111	0,142	0,096	0,072	0,064	-0,139	0,000	0,083	
Aspect 25	<sup>a</sup>	-0,095	0,193	<sup>a</sup>	-0,203	-0,067	0,000	0,043	0,190	0,214	0,041	-0,172	-0,012	0,040	0,143	
Aspect 26	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>
Aspect 27	<sup>a</sup>	-0,023	-0,027	<sup>a</sup>	<b>0,267</b>	-0,042	0,181	0,200	0,148	<b>0,243</b>	-0,027	-0,107	-0,102	-0,054	-0,042	
Aspect 28	<sup>a</sup>	-0,023	-0,027	<sup>a</sup>	<b>0,267</b>	-0,042	-0,073	-0,066	0,148	-0,054	-0,027	0,122	0,129	<b>0,243</b>	<b>0,315</b>	
Aspect 29	<sup>a</sup>	-0,107	0,016	<sup>a</sup>	-0,056	-0,194	0,010	0,058	0,039	-0,007	-0,125	0,129	-0,158	-0,089	-0,096	
	Aspect 1	Aspect 2	Aspect 3	Aspect 4	Aspect 5	Aspect 6	Aspect 7	Aspect 8	Aspect 9	Aspect 10	Aspect 11	Aspect 12	Aspect 13	Aspect 14	Aspect 15	



Aspect 1														
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Aspect 12														
Aspect 13														
Aspect 14														
Aspect 15														
Aspect 16	1													
Aspect 17	<b>0,345</b>	1												
Aspect 18	0,204	<b>0,282</b>	1											
Aspect 19	-0,004	-0,003	0,060	1										
Aspect 20	0,056	0,093	<b>0,332</b>	<b>0,38</b>	1									
Aspect 21	0,101	0,188	0,175	0,169	0,096	1								
Aspect 22	0,017	.232 <sup>*</sup>	0,133	0,030	0,110	0,204	1							
Aspect 23	0,056	.283 <sup>*</sup>	0,214	0,139	0,083	0,123	0,166	1						
Aspect 24	0,101	.234 <sup>*</sup>	-0,013	0,132	0,167	0,111	0,051	<b>0,25</b>	1					
Aspect 25	-0,052	0,114	0,023	-0,110	-0,077	0,199	<b>0,48</b>	<b>0,316</b>	0,000	1				
Aspect 26	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	<sup>a</sup>	1			
Aspect 27	-0,082	0,066	.233 <sup>*</sup>	-0,049	-0,019	0,200	0,215	0,187	<b>0,281</b>	-0,054	<sup>a</sup>	1		
Aspect 28	-0,082	-0,200	-0,056	-0,049	-0,019	-0,066	-0,061	-0,070	-0,047	-0,054	<sup>a</sup>	-0,013	1	
Aspect 29	-0,115	0,159	0,054	0,030	0,110	0,131	0,170	0,166	<b>0,32</b>	0,074	<sup>a</sup>	0,215	-0,061	1
	Aspect 16	Aspect 17	Aspect 18	Aspect 19	Aspect 20	Aspect 21	Aspect 22	Aspect 23	Aspect 24	Aspect 25	Aspect 26	Aspect 27	Aspect 28	Aspect 29

