Statement submitted by Youth Advocacy Nepal on the “Roles of Youth for the Accountability and Implementation of SDG”

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1. Background
Voluntary National Review (VNR) is a country-led and country-driven follow up and review mechanism to accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It aims to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and, lesson learned in the regional and global mechanisms. The government bears the responsibility to prepare the VNR report by consulting with relevant stakeholders at various level. However, civil society has critical and constructive role in indentifying the genuine issues of citizen from marginalized and vulnerable groups to be incorporated into the VNR report prepared by government. In addition, if the government fails to address the issues of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups through the VNR processes, civil society has responsibility to prepare the alternative reports and the call for action for raising the issues of those community at various levels and policy processes.

With the objectives of contributing in the VNR processes led by the Government of Nepal (GoN), Youth Advocacy Nepal (YAN) took lead in developing the citizen report on the SDGs incorporating the voices of more than 1000 marginalized youths and communities in five provinces of Nepal in partnership with VSO Nepal, ActionAid Nepal, Restless Development, Nepal SDG Forum and more than 10 civil society organizations.

2. Process of developing citizen’s report on the SDGs
At the outset, a loose network called ‘Citizen Initiative for Sustainable Development, Nepal (CISD)’, consisting of more than 100 civil society organizations from diverse backgrounds, was formed to facilitate the process of preparing the Voluntary Citizens’ Review (VCR) report. After serious of consultations, a broader framework to bring the voices of marginalized and vulnerable young people was developed. The framework included specific scope within SDGs, and modality and tools of collecting evidences and voices from marginalized youth. The major SDGs covered in the report are social security, sexual and reproductive health rights, lifelong learning, active citizenship, technical and vocational education, gender equality, skills development, inequality within young people, climate action, participation in the government process and volunteerism.

To ensure the voices of marginalized youth and communities, multi-stakeholder consultations, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, researches, lesion learning sessions, and direct voices of marginalized youth and communities were conducted in five provinces of Nepal which include the voices from more than 1000 youth of Nepal. Most marginalized sections of Nepal were reached in this process especially to Dalit, LGBTIQ, Madhesi, Muslim, Person with Disabilities, Chpang, Rajbanshi, and Raute communities.

3. Major findings:
- To some extent, the provisions of social security and protection provided so far, has contributed in people’s life. However, this provision is very nominal in addressing poverty, inequality and exclusion and has been not at all sufficient for the marginalized groups including people with disabilities and Raute.
- Although the GoN has some programs regarding sexual and reproductive health rights, several marginalized and vulnerable young people are deprived of information and services with regards to SRHR.
• Several young people have very limited information and knowledge about lifelong learning and are not getting benefit of this provision.
• Young people have enthusiasm to be active citizenship. However, due to limited public opportunities and spaces, they have not been able to utilize their full potential.
• Due to limited opportunities for technical and vocational educations, youth are obliged to enroll in general education.
• Despite various rules and regulations against gender-based violence and harassments, its implementation is very poor in the society.
• The discrimination and inequality are rooted based on class, gender, physical and mental status, geography, sex, among others and still practiced in the communities.
• Youth have very limited opportunities in the decision-making and governance processes that has curtailed the possibility to use the potentials of young people in those processes.
• Young volunteer has very significant roles to achieve the SDGs in community. However, their roles and functions have not been recognized, accredited as expected and not enough enabling environments.

4. Our call for action
• The government should endorse the integrated comprehensive social security and protection provisions and systems for youths from all marginalized and vulnerable communities.
• The government should provide and adopt specific measures to provide the Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRHR) services and facilities.
• The government should adopt policy and programs to integrate the lifelong learning in the school curriculum and community levels and ensure the effective delivery.
• The government should adopt proper policies and programs with adequate resources to promote the technical and vocational education for young people.
• The government should implement the laws and policies to eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination against women and challenge harmful social norms and practices.
• The government should create the enabling environment to young people for active citizenship initiatives.
• The government should develop special policy and program and mobilize youth as beneficiaries, as volunteers and as leaders to eliminate the inequality and discrimination in Nepal.
• The government should make the conducive environment to increase the meaningful participation of young people, particularly from marginalized and vulnerable sections, in the governance and inclusive development process at all levels.
• The government should recognize the contribution of volunteers and provide enabling environments to promote youth volunteers as volunteerism is more than a means of implementation for the SDGs. For many young people, it is the crucial step in becoming more active citizens and taking a more active role in the decisions that affect their lives.