

Making Goal 16 and the SDGs Transformative: An Indicator Framework Fit for Purpose

A Policy Paper from the Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network



[LOGOS FOR ENDORSEMENT]

Key Messages

- As the foundation underpinning the goals and targets, the **indicator framework must be fit for purpose** to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are truly transformative and advances transparency, accountability and inclusive citizen participation.
- **Evidence from across the world shows that it is feasible to measure proposed Goal 16.** A wide variety of data already exists for measuring governance, peace and justice, and any indicators for Goal 16 must be reflective of this reality.
- To capture the full story of progress towards the realization of Goal 16 and all other SDGs, indicators should be developed ranging from 1) **input, output, and process indicators** to show steps taken to address the problem, 2) **outcome indicators** to show changes on the ground, and 3) **impact indicators** to show whether these changes are contributing to improvements in people's lives.
- **Any indicator framework should draw on both official as well as third party data sources** - including data produced by the UN and other multilateral institutions, civil society organizations, research institutions, academia and the private sector - and **should use a wide range of data types**, including administrative data, experiential, factual and perception based surveys, and expert assessments.
- We must collectively **use the Post-2015 process as an opportunity to significantly improve, widen and deepen data availability** over the next fifteen years through increased capacity support, innovation and partnerships between national statistics systems and third parties.
- **Civil society, the media and other development stakeholders must have political and legal freedom to produce, access, and use data** in order to hold governments to account.

Measuring Governance, Justice and Peace

As the world looks beyond 2015, the principles of transparency, accountability and participation are critical in the design, implementation and monitoring of our progress towards sustainable development. Nowhere is this more important than when thinking about the indicators that will be selected to set a baseline for where we are at currently, and to measure advances to where we want to be in 2030.

There is an opportunity now to develop ambitious, relevant and robust indicators to effectively track whether countries are making progress on these promises, building on data being produced by a variety of official government and third-party sources. Policymakers need robust indicators and data on the wide range of issues to know where their attention should be focused. Civil society groups, parliamentarians, the media, and other stakeholders also need this to hold decision-makers to account.

To ensure that the indicators fulfil these functions and that they are technically sound, they should be selected through a technical process involving experts that represent different stakeholders in data production and use: national statistical agencies governments, the UN and other multilateral institutions, civil society organizations, research institutions, academia and the private sector. The inter-agency expert group on SDGs (IAEG-SDG) and national consultations on indicators must be opened up to the participation of all these actors. This way the process embodies the principles of transparency, accountability and participation, which have been the hallmarks of the SDGs process to date.

In the current framework, Goal 16 is the centerpiece for these principles. Its targets address peace, access to information and justice, open and effective institutions and decision-making, and fighting corruption and illicit flows, among other areas. Yet these issues go beyond Goal 16, and are inherently interconnected to the achievement of all other SDGs. As such, while the paper focuses primarily on indicators to measure progress on Goal 16, its recommendations are applicable to all of the goals.

What can we build on?

Evidence from across the world - including in countries in the global north and south - shows that it is feasible to measure targets under Goal 16 through official and third party data. A wide variety of data currently exists from reliable sources that have been collected for a number of years and at multiple levels, including administrative information from governments and third party data from the UN and other multilateral institutions, civil society organizations, research institutions, academia and the private sector. This is true, for example, when it comes to corruption and bribery, access to birth registration and other forms of legal identity, access to information, illicit financial flows, budget transparency, levels of violence, access to justice, rule of law, accountability and citizen participation.

What does the indicator framework need to tell us?

An indicator framework needs, at a minimum, to tell us the following:

1. What the **starting point** is (baseline)
2. What **progress** has been made towards meeting targets at national and global levels, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups.
3. Whether the targets have been **met** at national and global levels, and for all groups.

The framework should include the most appropriate, relevant and statistically robust indicators possible to transparently and meaningfully monitor progress. Indicators must draw on timely data sources that can signal whether a target is on or off track and use methodologies that are open and can be verified.

Case study: Piloting governance indicators

In 2014 the [United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#) launched an initiative to pilot illustrative work on governance in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, aiming to support the Post-2015 inter-governmental processes by illustrating feasibility and measurability of the targets proposed by the Open Working Group in the current Goal 16, through concrete case studies and real experience at the national level. Albania, Indonesia, Rwanda, Tunisia and, most recently, the United Kingdom, have joined as pilot countries. While by no means challenge-free, the piloting initiative has demonstrated that – at least in the case study countries – measuring Goal 16 is feasible and highly relevant to national priorities:

- Targets from Goal 16 have been easily assimilated into existing plans and policies at national level, demonstrating that they are capable of being adapted to different contexts as part of a universal agenda. For example, targets on governance reform already exist in Albania's national development strategy.
- In most of the pilot countries many of the issues captured in Goal 16 are already being measured with indicators, as is for example the case with Rwanda's Governance Scorecard and Albania's MDG 9 reports.
- Countries have identified a wide range of indicators for possible use: Tunisia identified 90 potential indicators which it will work to prioritise, and the UK noted 43 possible indicators pertaining to facets of good governance in respect of which data is already collected to some extent. Albania has narrowed an initial list of 70 indicators to a final 20, while Indonesia has prioritised 11 and Rwanda 36 (though based on 163 variables). The cases demonstrate that capacity exists in the pilot countries for an ambitious monitoring framework.
- Most of the pilot countries have acknowledged data from third parties in considering possible indicators. For example, the UK has identified relevant material in datasets maintained by the World Bank and the Open Government Partnership as possible data sources while Albania includes data from Transparency International in its approach.
- The pilot countries have demonstrated the benefit of close partnership with multiple stakeholders, including civil society. For example, civil society groups acted as co-chairs on working groups to identify possible indicators in Indonesia.
- Some of the pilot countries have sought to ensure a balance of different types of indicators. For example, Tunisia has sought to balance objective/administrative data, perception/experience data and capacity indicators.
- Overall, there are clear similarities between the approaches used and indicators identified by different pilot countries. There are also similarities between the work of the pilot countries, and indicator lists currently being proposed at global level. This suggests that some consensus is emerging on how to approach the measurement of Goal 16.

The indicator framework must allow for global and national tracking of all agreed targets. It should draw on a set of internationally comparable **global indicators** that provide disaggregated data. The number of global indicators should be based on a technical assessment of what will be sufficient to effectively measure the full range of targets. Cross and intra-country comparison will help the international community and national actors focus attention where it is most needed and, when necessary, with the support of development assistance. Internationally comparable country data will help motivate political commitment to meeting targets and create an additional accountability lever for domestic constituencies to use. Finally, without comparable, relevant and accessible data, the follow-up and review process, and thus accountability for Post-2015 commitments, will not be possible.

This set of global indicators should be complemented by **national indicators** that are relevant to national contexts and priorities, and are agreed through inclusive processes of consultation at national level. Aside from issues of universality, national indicators should meet the same criteria and standards as that of global indicators and follow similar approaches. As is explored below, this includes using different types of indicators, drawing on different types of data sources and involving third parties. International statistical bodies, including within the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC), should provide guidance and support to countries on lessons learned and best practice in designing indicators to measure issues related to Goal 16.

What type of indicators?

The global indicators for the SDGs should be determined through a broad and inclusive process that assess whether they:

- are relevant for and representative of the target in question;
- can capture the different elements of the goal;
- can be universally measured and monitored;
- can be aggregated to assess global progress;
- can provide for disaggregated-level data where appropriate, in line with SDG target 17.18 (e.g. income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts);

No single indicator can in every context tell a fair, full and rounded story of progress on its own. This is especially the case with regards to complex issues of peace, governance and justice. Where possible, a more accurate picture of progress can be achieved through combining and balancing different types of indicators under individual targets. These different types could include:

- inputs (e.g. the amount of government spending on a country's judiciary)
- process (e.g. judicial appointment through competitive exam).
- outputs (e.g. the number of judges and paralegals per 100.000 people)
- outcomes (e.g. reduction in people experiencing case backlog)
- impacts (e.g. increased public trust and confidence in the judiciary)

Case Study: Measuring the media landscape

The UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) has developed a basket of indicators “enabling the assessment of media landscapes at national level.” Crafted in 2008, the [Media Development Indicators \(MDIs\)](#) meet the standard of universality principle of the SDGs in being applicable to any country; for example, the MDIs have been employed for previous assessments in countries including Bhutan, Croatia, Ecuador, Egypt, and Gabon. The MDIs are also being used for reviews in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, Iraq, Jordan, Liberia, Madagascar, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, Uruguay, and Yemen among other places. UNESCO has also developed a [“Practical Guidebook”](#) to assist in the ground-level application of the MDIs.

The MDIs have been recognized by other prominent institutions and civil society groups including the World Bank, the Council of Europe, the International Federation of Journalists, International Media Support, the Media Foundation for West Africa, and the Doha Centre for Media Freedom. Many media and freedom of expression experts have noted the relevance of the MDIs to Target 16.10 of the SDGs.

Drawing from these different types of indicators will help to show whether concrete steps are taken to address the problem (i.e. inputs, outputs and process), to show changes on the ground (i.e. outcomes) and whether improvements are happening in people's lives (i.e. impact).

What type of data sources?

In order to inform these different types of indicators, we need to draw on a wide range of data that monitors state-society relations, based on the following three pillars:

- **Administrative data** (data collected by official bodies) focusing on the coverage, effectiveness and efficiency of relevant governance processes (e.g. % of registered births, % of publically available procurement tenders).

- **Surveys** (experiential, factual, perception) collected by official and third parties, including those that capture the experiences and perceptions of all citizens in relation to key governance processes, as well as the effectiveness of public institutions (e.g. bribery, quality and coverage of service delivery).
- **Expert assessment** (data collected from experts by third parties such as UN, World Bank, research institutions and civil society organizations) focusing on relevant governance processes and issues. (e.g. on access to information by UNESCO, on perceptions of levels of corruption by Transparency International, on budget transparency, accountability and participation by the International Budget Partnership).

While indicators for which there is existing data should be prioritized, there may be especially relevant and feasible indicators where no data has been collected or where it is limited to a few countries. For example, we need globally-comparable data on whether people feel that they can participate in and influence decision-making (target 16.8). While data gaps such as these will need to be filled, there is a strong foundation of existing approaches and methodologies that can be drawn on; all of the target areas have precedence of measurement.

National statistics agencies and other stakeholders must not shy away from also developing new ways of capturing data, for example drawing on new technologies or citizen-generated data. Innovation and partnerships with a range of third-party stakeholders will be critical if this is to be achieved.

Case Study: Effectively measuring corruption with experiential surveys

Individual experiences with confronting demands for bribes in their daily lives has been seen as one measurement that helps to give a snap shot of overall levels of corruption in a country. Since 2003, Transparency International has been producing the most extensive [worldwide survey of people's experiences with corruption](#), with the latest survey in 2013 capturing the views of over 114,000 people in 107 countries. The survey allows for comparison of bribery rates between countries, as well monitoring change over time.

A simple question is asked: have you paid a bribe over the last 12-months while trying to access key public services such as the police, judiciary, the health and education systems, utilities, and registration services? Surveys capturing people's experience with corruption have also been championed at the national level to get increased levels of detail. For example the national chapter of Transparency International in Mexico has conducted a survey of over 10,000 households across the country to determine the average cost of a bribe as well as which institutions and services are most prone to bribery. Similar surveys have been done by other national chapters in such countries as Burundi, Greece, Kenya, Malaysia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Turkey and Uganda.

Who should produce data?

The onset of a data revolution since the inception of the MDGs provides an opportunity to develop an indicator framework to monitor Goal 16 - and all the SDGs - that draws on official as well as third-party data sources, including data produced by the UN and other multilateral institutions, civil society organizations, research institutions, academia and the private sector. Efforts to promote innovation through accessible technology that supports participatory monitoring and data collection, where all citizens are empowered to collect and use data should be supported. In particular, governance institutions and processes that take into account and address the barriers to participation faced by the world's most marginalized people - including women, persons with disabilities and all vulnerable groups

who are supposed to benefit from the SDGs - must be strengthened. While national statistical systems will continue to play a key role, a multi-stakeholder approach offers several benefits:

- It would help to respond to the reality of limited official data sources for some of the targets and help improve data availability. As the UNSC Friends of the Chair Group has argued, “the necessary data revolution is a joint responsibility of Governments, international and regional organisations, the private sector and civil society”.
- It is widely accepted that meeting the new goals will require deeper partnerships involving diverse stakeholders – for example leveraging the potential of the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The indicator framework is no different.
- When it meets standards of data quality and comparability, third-party data can supplement and validate data produced by NSOs. This will help create a more accurate picture of progress.

Case Study: Partnering for Data Collection and Measuring Governance

Launched in 1996, the World Bank’s World Governance Indicators (WGI) measure governance across six categories including: Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption. The WGI also employ a proven [partnership](#)-based, multi-stakeholder approach to data collection and analysis. According to the World Bank, “These [WGI] aggregate indicators combine the views of a large number of enterprise, citizen and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. They are based on 32 individual data sources produced by a variety of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and private sector firms.” Together, the six categories have strong resonance with Goal 16.

The WGI also meets the supports the ambition of a truly universal post-2015 development agenda in analyzing over 200 countries and territories. Platforms integrating [interactive data access](#), [methodology review](#), as well as [critiques and responses](#) are also available online and regularly updated.

Concluding thoughts

The ambition for global indicators must match the ambition of global goals and targets. The indicator framework must equally set a new paradigm for how we track progress. While a set of core global indicators is desired, this should be determined by looking at the minimum number of total indicators that will allow countries and the global community to effectively track progress, rather than setting an arbitrary number. This is a journey: we need to learn from the MDGs and accept that it will be an iterative process to provide increasing levels of quality data for global monitoring.

For Goal 16, this is a unique opportunity to change the way data is collected on transparent, participatory and accountable governance and institutions, as well as on wider issues related to peaceful and inclusive societies. It would mean moving beyond a piecemeal approach to a more comprehensive data collection and monitoring process.

The world is at a critical juncture in setting out a new development framework to achieve and sustain economic, social and environmental progress in all countries. The indicator framework must be fit for purpose to ensure that the Post-2015 agenda is truly transformative and advances transparency, accountability and citizen participation.

Members of the TAP Network stand ready to fully support this work around SDG Indicators in a Post-2015 world.