# 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

## I. SUMMARY

SDG 16 provides the framework for peace, justice for all, and strong institutions – which are fundamental for accelerating progress of other SDGs, and for achieving the overall objective of leaving no one behind. In addition, the 2030 Agenda includes 24 targets from seven other SDGs that are linked to the aspiration of peace, justice and strong institutions. Together these targets are referred to as SDG16+ and illustrate the interlinkages between SDG 16 and other SDGs. Without peace, justice, inclusion and strong institutions, achieving other goals can be difficult to impossible, and vice-versa various SDGs (such as poverty, climate change) can help or hinder the achievement of SDG 16.[1]

The Asia-Pacific region has a long way to go to achieve Goal 16 targets. Though the region has seen a reduction in the number of internal and external conflicts,  there is an increase in violent crime, terrorism, insurgency, and political instability in the region.[2] This is also closely linked to limited improvement in rule of law and protection of human rights, leading to an increase in the number of countries adopting policies to restrict civic space.[3] The region has the highest number of journalists murdered,[4]  as well as unsentenced detainees.[5] Data shows

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1    See SDG16hub https://www.sdg16hub.org/interlinkages.
2    Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Peace Index 2018: Measuring Peace in a Complex World* (Sydney, June 2018). p. 12.
3    International Center for Not-for Profit Law, "Survey of Trends Affecting Civic Space: 2015-16", vol. 7, No. 4 (September 2016). See also Firmin, Andrew (CIVICUS), "Contested and under pressure: a snapshot of the enabling environment of civil society in 22 countries", Ine Van Severen, eds. (2017).
4    UNESCO observatory of killed journalists  https://en.unesco.org/themes/safety-journalists/observatory
5    UN Statistics Division, SDG Metadata Repository, Data for indicator 16.3.2 on Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population

This goal profile has been coordinated by:

UNITED NATIONS ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISM     UNITED NATIONS ESCAP Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific     UNDP     unicef     UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER     UNODC United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

increased perception of public sector corruption,[6] and that about 23.8 percent of businesses in the region have engaged in bribery.[7] Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to violence in the region. Over third of the women in the region have faced sexual violence. Available data from 21 countries shows that on average 70.7 percent of children aged between 1-14 have experienced physical discipline or psychological aggression by caregivers in the last month.[8] Improving governance statistics is vital for identifying people or groups that are most affected by poor governance systems and take remedy measures.

# II. CURRENT STATUS

SDG 16 is also one of the most challenging goals to implement and measure. SDG 16 targets are composite and require compound indicators to fully measure progress. In addition, 17 of the 23 indicators are classified as Tier II and III. Data for these indicators does not exist or is not widely collected to adequately measure progress or accurately analyse regional and/or subregional trends.[9] Further, disaggregated data by sex, age, and other categories is also not widely available.

But at the same time, there are other surveys that can provide insights into the state of governance in the region, and thus serve as proxy for the progress measuring of SDG 16 as a whole. The MY World Survey led by the United Nations and partners is a global citizen survey to bring people's voices into official debates about the SDGs. It is a tool to hold governments and institutions accountable and ensure that every person has their say on SDG achievement.[10]

The results of the MY World Survey indicate that people's concerns about the quality of basic services and issues such as poverty, job creation, and inequalities reveal that institutions may not be effective or responsive to peoples' needs.[11]

Data from the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)[12] provides insights on trends in governance over a period of time. WGI measures six dimensions of governance: voice and accountability, political stability and no violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption. Data from 2006 to 2016 shows subregional variance in the performance of the countries on the governance indicators as well as between individual countries within the subregion. Overall, the performance of countries in South Asia and the Pacific has stagnated. Countries in East and North-East Asia, South-East Asia, and Central and North Asia show some improvement. However, when compared to other regions, Central and North Asia countries scores the lowest on all six dimensions. Pacific countries, on the other hand, score the highest among all subregions in voice and accountability, political stability, rule of law and control of corruption.

Overall, data shows that average scores fall between 18 and 59 out of a maximum score of 100 in all six dimensions and across subregions (except in the Pacific). Countries need to do more to improve the overall quality of governance – without which achieving the SDGs would remain aspirational.

## A.    AREAS WHERE GOOD PROGRESS IS MADE

As mentioned above, measuring Goal 16 is challenging. Lack of reliable governance statistics limits the ability of governments and other actors to develop specific measures to reach those that are most affected by weak governance systems.

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6    Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer 2017. One in Four people said they paid a bribe when accessing public services in the last 12 months.

7    UN Statistics Division, SDG Metadata Repository, Data for indicator 16.5.2. bribery incidence (per cent of firms experiencing at least one bribe payment request)

8    UN Statistics Division, SDG Metadata Repository, Data for indicator 16.2.1. proportion of children aged 1-14 years who experienced physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in last month (per cent of children aged 1-14 years)

9    Pulling together data from different sources (including academia, civil society organizations etc.,) can provide a useful picture of the state of governance and peace in the region.

10    MY World Survey http://about.myworld2030.org/

11    ASEAN MY World Survey http://asean-data.myworld2030.org

12    See worldwide governance indicators http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#home

Despite the above limitations, there is indication of progress on specific indicators. These include:

- **Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere (target 16.1).**

Data is only available for one indicator, number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population (indicator 16.1.1). Across the region, the number of victims of intentional homicide has fallen. Kyrgyzstan shows the strongest improvement in the reduction of homicide rates, followed by Kazakhstan, Thailand, Samoa, Mongolia, Bhutan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.[13] A few countries showed an increase in homicide rates, such as Afghanistan, Kiribati and Tuvalu.

It is also vital to note data limitations for this indicator. Though classified as Tier I, disaggregated data by sex and age is not available. Some countries have data for a few years in a row, but others have data for only one year.

- **Legal identity for all, including birth registration (target 16.9).**

Civil registration provides legal identity and ensures basic human rights and participation in formal economy. Often poor and marginalized sections of the population are the ones whose births and deaths are not registered and/or certified, thus adding to the vicious cycle of marginalization.

Data for indicator 16.9.1. on the proportion of children under five whose births have been registered with a civil authority is available for only 40 countries out of the 56 countries and 2 territories of the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, each country only has data for one particular year (from 2008 to 2017). Based on this limited data, Bhutan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam have achieved a near 100 per cent rate for the registration of children under the age of 5. The countries that are falling behind with a rate between 50 and 75 per cent include Cambodia, Lao PDR, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal and Timor-Leste. Out of the countries for which data is available, five are poor performers (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu) with less than 50 per cent of children being registered.[14]

The proportion of children being registered in rural areas is slightly less than the proportion of children being registered across the country, with an average of 79 per cent being registered in rural areas whilst 83 per cent have been registered overall. There is no major discrepancy between the proportion of boys and girls who have been registered, with an average of 81 per cent in both cases.

But at the same time there is a discrepancy between birth registration and birth certification. While birth registration is the permanent legal record maintained by the governments, birth certification is a government issued copy of the birth registration that can be used for identification and for obtaining other services. In the Asia-Pacific region there is a high discrepancy between birth registration and birth certification. For instance, in Tuvalu, out of the 50 per cent registered, only 5 per cent have a birth certification.

Despite some countries falling behind, available data could be used to inform specific policies for improving birth registration and certification. UN ESCAP is working with governments and development partners to improve civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) in the region as part of the 'Get Every One in the Picture" initiative launched in 2014 in Asia and the Pacific.

- **Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (target 16.6).**

Effective, accountable, transparent institutions at all levels is one of the cornerstones for achieving Agenda 2030.  One key aspect of effectiveness includes the ability of the governments to implement the budgeted expenditure without much deviation. This is vital for governments to be able to deliver public services in line with policy statements, output commitments and work plans. The indicator 16.6.1 looks at actual total expenditure compared to the originally budgeted total expenditure (as defined in government budget documentation and fiscal reports). The Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability database analyses and ranks countries based on the percentage variation in total expenditure from original budgeted expenditure. Data is publicly available for only 14 Asia-Pacific countries for the period 2013-2018. Eight out of the 14 countries have only 0-5 per cent deviation from the original budgeted expenditure. In addition to PEFA data, gender budgeting data, and using SDG achievement as a lens in financial and performance auditing of governments can serve as a proxy for measuring accountability and effectiveness of institutions.

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13    UN Statistics Division, SDG Metadata Repository, Data for indicator 16.1.1. number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population.

14    UN Statistics Division, SDG Metadata Repository, Data for indicator 16.9.1 on proportion of children whose birth has been registered.