

Six main takeaways on Indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 16 from the Virtual Network on SDG 16 consultations¹



The Virtual Network on SDG16 is convened by the UNDP in collaboration with other partners to contribute substantively on the design of a top-level, global monitoring framework for Goal 16, as an input to the work of the IAEG-SDG, as well as looking in detail at other supplementary indicators for possible use in national settings. The Virtual Network brings together various experts and stakeholders, including

development practitioners, statisticians, UN agencies and civil society organizations to contribute to the work of the UN system and feed in to the IAEG-SDG.

The group met through an online platform, and some members of the Virtual Network have met in various configurations in recent months, including in New York and Vienna, and contributing to linked initiatives, such as a workshop in Tunis to discuss piloting approaches to governance in the context of the SDGs. The report from all of these various discussions in the Virtual Network will be issued in mid-June. The report will also provide inputs to ongoing and planned work of the Statistical Commission in the field of governance, peace and security indicators relevant for monitoring Goal 16, in particular by the IAEG-SDGs and the Praia Group.

This note gives a preview of six main takeaways from the discussions, though the report is still being written and reviewed by the Virtual Network, so these takeaways are not final.

1. Peace, Justice and Institutions can be measured and progress can be monitored

We can confirm that peace, justice and institutions can be measured, and it is already being done. A number of examples have been showcased in the Virtual Network discussion, including:

- SHaSa (Strategic Harmonization of Statistics in Africa) is measuring governance, peace and security (GPS) – perceptions of governance, satisfaction with governance, experience of corruption and bribery.
- A group of pilot countries (including Albania, Indonesia, Tunisia, UK, among others) has identified preliminary indicators, including some that have subsequently been identified for SDG 16, and testing how they could be measured and used for monitoring progress. An example of these indicators used in practice is the Rwanda Governance Scorecard, published annually, online, to monitor progress on governance reforms.

¹ The analysis and recommendations of this paper do not necessarily reflect the official views of the United Nations, its agencies or its Member States.

- A number of countries adopted an “MDG 9” at least a decade ago, including Albania and Mongolia (MDG 9 on inclusive politics), Afghanistan (security) and Laos (reducing the impact of unexploded ordinance) and have significant experience in measuring progress.
- National Statistics Offices (NSOs) have been engaged in household surveys for decades. New modules for household surveys on conflict, displacement, social cohesion, rule of law and governance have been introduced and piloted in many countries. Good examples are Mexico’s Social Cohesion and Violence Prevention Survey and Indonesia’s National Democracy Index.
- International standards for monitoring these issues are emergent. For example, guidelines have been developed by UNODC-ECE on victimization surveys to measure the experience of violence, corruption and crime reporting. Additionally, the newly approved International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes provides a comprehensive framework for monitoring types of homicides and other violent crime. OHCHR has developed a framework of Human Rights Indicators that provides guidance on indicators, including those related to political participation, personal security and access to justice, and data sources that reach the most marginalized and vulnerable.
- To build on momentum in measuring governance, The Praia Group on Governance Statistics has been formed under the auspices of the UN Statistical Commission to develop regional and national statistical capacities for measuring peace, rule of law and governance. This group will serve as a community of peers and practice that can apply the lessons learned from the innovative examples above across countries.

These examples demonstrate that knowledge exists on how to measure these concepts, that there is increasing political commitment to measure peace, justice and institutions, that there is capacity in many countries to undertake this, and that there is demand from the states and their people for these aspects of development to be measured.

2. Compound targets require multiple indicators

SMART indicators are Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant and Time-Bound. For an indicator to be specific (and actionable and relevant) the target it is associated with must be specific as well. Many targets in SDG 16 (and other SDGs) are composite (see, for example, Target 16.4 and 16.7), including more than one objective in a single target. In the MDGs, these could have been a goal in and of themselves, similar to “MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases”. To measure fully a target with more than one objective, more than one indicator will be required. For example, to measure the target properly, each component of Target 16.4 would need to be measured by an individual indicator – i.e. illicit financial flows, illicit arms flows, stolen asset recovery, organized crime. This is further compounded by the complexity of the concepts being measured (next takeaway).

3. Complex concepts require composite indicators

Many concepts in the SDGs are complex, particularly those in SDG 16. Even the most apparently simple of targets - such as the first part of Target 1 “Reduce violence” - is complex, given the nature of violence, how and when it is reported and how it can be measured. This is not to say that it cannot be measured, just that care must be undertaken when identifying indicators. The Virtual Network identified two types of compound indicators that are necessary to measure complex concepts, complementary indicators and supplementary indicators:

Complementary Indicators are those that are necessary to complete measurement of a complex concept. If two indicators are complementary, neither is sufficient alone. Consider measurement of effective institutions (Target 16.6) – the process of effective institutional performance can only be measured by both an output indicator (“What does the institution produce?”) and an outcome variable (“What is the impact of those outputs?”).

Supplementary Indicators are those that “round out” measurement of a complex concept. These indicators are suggestions that should be adopted by countries interested in more nuance in their monitoring of a particular target. Supplementary indicators allow countries to adapt the universal goals to their own contexts and identify other dimensions of the target that are important to them.

The report from the Virtual Network will include an in depth discussion on complementary and supplementary indicators, as a sourcebook for practitioners in NSOs and other policymakers.

4. A universal goal and international targets reinforce country indicators

Because these targets are composite and these concepts are complex, the universal indicators identified over the next year, designed for monitoring at the global level, should not be expected to be sufficient to fully measure peace, justice and institutions. This should not be interpreted as a shortcoming of the goals or the targets, but rather an opportunity for countries and societies to have discussions about their priorities for development with respect to peace, justice for all and effective institutions. As described above, supplementary indicators can be identified that will help countries to identify, monitor and communicate these priorities, at the same time as meeting monitoring requirements at the global level.

5. Disaggregation is both a commitment and a necessity

These indicators and nearly all others in the SDGs will need to be disaggregated to ensure that no one is left behind in the next 15 years of development. Disaggregation is a commitment, as most countries have already obliged themselves to guarantee rights and freedoms without discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status – so they will need to collect disaggregated data on performance to ensure that they are not discriminating in delivery of public services, governance, justice and rule of law. Beyond this, though, the Virtual Network agreed that many of the indicators in SDG 16 and other SDGs will need to be disaggregated along other dimensions (including age, disability status, social group, income levels, migratory status, location, among others) for policymakers to properly assess that peace, justice for all and effective institutions are reaching the most vulnerable, the poor and those who may be otherwise left behind in the development process and thereby aggrieved. On the other hand, disaggregation is expensive and requires additional capacity, the depth of disaggregation has to be calibrated to the right balance between the information needed to measure the target effectively and to take capacity limits into account.

6. Implementation is the next step, one step at a time

For some targets, indicators do not yet exist (Illicit financial flows is a good example of a concept for which an indicator is still being defined), or indicators exist, but they are not yet widely collected/reported/validated by national statistics offices (NSOs) – conflict-related deaths, for example. The Virtual Network was convened to identify the right indicators for measurement of these complex targets. The Virtual Network has not been limited by what is currently politically viable, what is feasible given current capacity or resources, or what is current practice, but simply what is possible over the next

15 years. The Financing for Development discussions and other international processes can address how resources are assembled to create the data revolution necessary to monitor these indicators. Hybrid models involving NSOs working with third party civil society and academic actors as well as UN agencies, multilateral and development agencies could bridge today's expertise to future capacity. And hybrid, collaborative relationships between stakeholders including civil society, government, media and society can build statistical numeracy and the trust between data users and producers necessary for effective evidence-based policy. New technologies (including high frequency cellphone surveys and increased internet access) could cut costs and simplify many of the indicators (or yield new, better indicators). Just as most countries could not measure infant mortality or poverty at the outset of the MDG process, the world needn't be ready to measure every indicator on day one of the SDG era. The Virtual Network report will help to identify a path forward for measuring SDG 16.

Sustainable Development Goal 16

Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development, Provide Access to Justice for All and Build Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions at all Levels

Target 16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

Target 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

Target 16.3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

Target 16.4: By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime

Target 16.5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

Target 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

Target 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

Target 16.8: Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

Target 16.9: By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration

Target 16.10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

Target 16.a: Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

Target 16.b: Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development