CHAPTER 2: SDG16 PROGRESS

In 2015, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were updated and replaced with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a product of several years of intensive consultative processes promoted by the UN and organized by both public and non-state actors. The final formulation of the 17 Goals and 169 Targets was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2015, and the Goals entered into force at the beginning of 2016. The 17 SDGs look beyond economic and social variables to the conditions necessary for sustainable development.[5]

SDG16, Governance and Linkages to other SDGs. Goal 16 covers peace, governance and justice, with 12 targets and 23 indicators (*see Annex II: SDG16 Targets & Indicators*) of which 4 targets and 8 indicators are referred in this paper as the 'governance agenda' of SDG16 (*see Box II: Key Governance Related Targets & Indicators of SDG16*). Inclusion of these targets and indicators in Agenda 2030 constitutes the international community's acknowledgement that good governance, inclusion, and justice are fundamental to development, necessary for the achievement of Agenda 2030, and essential for inclusive growth and prosperity. It is both an end in itself and key to ensuring that other SDGs can be accomplished.

IFI Governance Agendas and SDG16. IFIs like the World Bank, Regional Development Banks (RDBs)[6] and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have

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BOX II: KEY GOVERNANCE RELATED TARGETS & INDICATORS OF SDG16

Target 16.5: Reduce corruption and bribery

Indicator: 16.5.1: Persons who paid or were asked for a bribe by a public official

Indicator: 16.5.2: Businesses that paid or were asked for a bribe by a public official

Target 16.6: Effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

Indicator 16.6.1: Government expenditures as a proportion of approved budget

Indicator 16.6.2: Percentage of population satisfied with public services

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

Indicator 16.7.1: Positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions

Indicator 16.7.2: Inclusive and responsive decision-making

Target 16.10: Public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms

Indicator 16.10.1: Violence against media, trade unionists and human rights advocates

Indicator 16.10.2: Public access to information

Source: Abbreviated from the UN's Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform. Accessed at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16

BOX III: GOVERNANCE AND THE SDGS

The success of the SDGs depends to a large extent on good public governance of implementation efforts. Illustrative examples to demonstrate the interaction between governance and some SDGs are given below.

SDG1—No poverty. People living in poverty are disproportionately exposed to various risk factors that are exacerbated by shortcomings in public service delivery. Inversely, quality public services can be the linchpin that lifts individuals and communities out of poverty.

SDG3—Health. Health care is a decentralized service by necessity which presents many opportunities for corruption along the supply chain. Leakage of drugs and medical supplies impedes on the ability of doctors and nurses to provide quality services.

SDG4—Quality Education. Parent-teacher associations and other community groups can serve as a check on school administration and teacher conduct, ensuring standards are met and budgets are spent judiciously.

SDG5—Gender Equality. Due to common gendered roles and responsibilities, women are disproportionately reliant on public services such as medical care, clean water and food rations, and so are disproportionately impacted by a disruption in those services due to inefficiencies, corruption and mismanagement.

SDG6—Clean Water and Sanitation. A failure to enforce laws can leave water sources vulnerable to pollution and encroachment. Lack of community consultation in the placement of water infrastructure, like irrigation systems, can result in major inefficiencies.

SDG7—Affordable and clean energy. Programs that introduce renewable energy sources to poor communities can utilize citizen engagement to ensure these resources go to the families and institutions for which they are intended, and not sold on the black market or collecting dust.

SDG8 -- Decent work and economic growth. Civic engagement can help make sure economic growth is inclusive. Inequities and disparities widen where poor governance and weak rule-of-law is exploited for economic gain (e.g. failure to pay workers; poor working conditions).

SDG11—Cities and Communities. Urbanization and social media provide opportunities for improving governance but are also seen as governance risks, especially to more repressive regimes. Constructive engagement between civil society and government can be a positive, non-confrontational method to address dissatisfaction and unrest within the citizenry.

recently adopted or updated policies and programs for enhancing governance and controlling corruption (*see Annex III: IMF and Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) Policies on Good Governance*). The corporate strategies of IFIs include commitments and performance indicators for helping their member countries improve governance, specifically to:

- promote effective, timely, accountable, inclusive and corruption-free delivery of public services;

- conduct transparent and effective public financial management;

- employ anti-corruption measures in all projects and programs they fund;

- fulfill rights to information;

- help implement national action plans for open government and the SDGs; and

- engage with stakeholders, including CSOs, in all of their operations.

IFI commitments[iii] embody the following aspirations in common with SDG16 and constitute a globally shared agenda for good governance:

- Reducing corruption and bribery

- Developing transparent and accountable institutions

- Responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making

- Enhancing public access to information

- Increasing responsiveness of service delivery

- Increasing effectiveness of public financial management and procurement

- Proactive civic engagement and feedback loops

- Reducing illicit financial flows

These commitments have been followed by the adoption of: (a) 'Governance and Institutions' as a special theme under the Eighteenth Replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA18) with specific performance indicators[7]; and (b) IMF adoption of an *Enhanced Framework on Governance* in 2018 to assess the nature and severity of governance and corruption vulnerabilities (particularly to foreign bribery and money laundering) in its member countries and provide recommendations to address them.[8] A 2013 review of IFI spending by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) demonstrates that these commitments are reflected in lending, as "'peace, justice and

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[iii] We reviewed policies of the IMF, World Bank, ADB and AfDB. This list is based on that and findings are summarized in Annex III. More generally all IFIs have declared that they support SDGs.

strong institutions' account for the largest share of IFI-disbursed [Official Development Assistance] to the SDGs with 18% of all disbursements."[9]

Initial reports of SDG16 progress indicate implementation is falling short. At the global level, the UN notes, "Advances in promoting the rule of law and access to justice are uneven. However, progress is being made in regulations to promote public access to information, albeit slowly, and in strengthening institutions upholding human rights at the national level."[10] The UN Secretary-General's 2018 SDG Report notes that "almost one in five firms worldwide report receiving at least one bribery payment request when engaged in regulatory or utility transactions."[11] On the positive side: "Freedom-of-information laws and policies have been adopted by 116 countries, with at least 25 countries doing so over the last five years. However, implementation remains a challenge."[12]

BOX IV: SDG16 MONITORING FRAMEWORK

The framework for monitoring SDG16 targets comprises of:

a) Progress Indicators for each Target.

b) Annual Report by the UN Secretary General covering all SDGs.

c) Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) presented at an annual UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF)

d) Independent CSO monitoring and initiatives ,e.g. SDG16 Data Initiative; SDG16 Progress Report; and Global Policy Watch Report.

See Annex IV: Monitoring the Governance-Related Targets in SDG16 for more details on these initiatives.

Countries have thus far tended to give little critical information in their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on governance as foreseen by the SDG16 indicators. The 2018 VNR Synthesis report prepared by the UN Secretariat notes:

> "Several countries (among them Australia, Bahrain, Egypt, Ecuador, Mali, Guinea, and Sri Lanka) elaborated on measures to promote good governance, protection of human rights, and the eradication of violence – especially against women and children…Several countries reported on their efforts to combat organized crime, money laundering and terrorist financing, corruption and bribery. Ecuador, for example, is seeking through education and training to generate a society with ethical and civic values to promote rejection of corruption….Slovakia and Hungary reported on their projects supporting countries to strengthen national institutions and public-sector effectiveness."[13]

The widespread under-reporting or failure to report on sensitive issues in the VNR process, including many SDG16 indicators, poses an obstacle to reliable data collection. This applies particularly to reporting internationally on corruption, where public

authorities may face a conflict of interest. The Institute for Economics and Peace, in its 2019 SDG16 Progress Report, notes "Just four of the 44 indicators have data available for all 163 countries... [and] only two indicators have a trend series of five or more years."[14] Broader challenges include limited resources, capacity, and in some cases, political will to support data production, collection, and monitoring.[15]

It is anticipated that more data and analysis on the progress towards SDG16 will result from the UN's HLPF in 2019 where it is slated for an in-depth review:

> *"The conference will take stock of global progress towards achieving the SDG16; share knowledge, success stories and good practices; identify particular areas of concern and main challenges; and suggest ways forward in terms of policies, partnerships and coordinated actions at all levels as well as specific ways to leverage the interlinkages between SDG16 and the other Goals."[16]*

Unofficial reporting has been undertaken by CSOs in parallel to UN reporting. The lack of official data has influenced the adoption of unofficial sources to supplement what is formally available in order to piece together a clearer picture of SDG16 progress. The SDG16 Data Initiative (SDG16DI), for instance, is a CSO-led effort" intended to complement efforts currently underway to develop an official indicator framework for monitoring the SDGs… [including] both globally agreed SDG16 indicators and additional, complementary indicators, which data experts regard as contributing to a more multi-faceted and comprehensive measure of progress against the various targets."[17] Parallel indicators identified by the SDG16DI averaged 87% availability versus the 44% availability for the official indicators of the UN Statistical Commission's Inter-Agency Expert Group (IAEG).[18]

The 2017 SDG16DI Report notes the following:"

- According to the World Bank Enterprise Survey, the global average of firms being asked for a bribe is 17.8 per cent, ranging from 1.9 per cent average in high-income OECD countries to 30.4 per cent in the east Asia and Pacific region

- Over two-thirds of the 176 countries and territories in the 2016 CPI fell below [50 points] on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).

- The Global Corruption Barometer estimates that more than one billion people have paid bribes across 53 countries in Asia Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa in order to access public services in the last 12 months.

- Civil society's freedom from governmental repression has been impeded in all regions, in particular in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, MENA, and Asia Pacific according to Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), a research collaborative focused on collecting global data-sets for complex indicators of democracy.

- Freedom House, in its annual Freedom in the World report, stated: "A total of 67 countries suffered net declines in political rights and civil liberties in 2016, compared with 36 that registered gains. This marked the 11th consecutive year in which declines outnumbered improvements."[19]

Under Agenda 2030, countries have agreed that partnerships between governments, CSOs, private sector and international organizations are essential for achieving the SDGs. The World Bank, Regional Development Banks (RDBs) and IMF have CSO collaboration policies in place and several of them are updating their policies (see *ANNEX IV: Comparison of IFI Policies, Procedures and Institutional Arrangements for Civil Society Engagement*). However, IFIs do not monitor and report on the number of CSOs they fund, the amount of funding awarded for CSO contracts or capacity building, or results of CSO work.

SDG17 Calls for multi-stakeholder partnerships. Unlike the MDGs, where governments had an overwhelmingly dominant role, Agenda 2030 adopts an "all of society" approach for achievement of the SDGs. It recognizes that without the active engagement of the private sector and civil society, the financing, implementation activities and initiatives, and monitoring necessary for achievement of the SDGs will be impossible. Specifically, SDG17 sets the following targets for multi-stakeholder partnerships:

> **Target 17.16** – Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries; and,

> **Target 17.17** – Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

CSOs are expected to play several roles in implementation and monitoring of SDGs including governance targets under SDG16.

CSOs from around the world played an important role in shaping the global governance agenda at the IFIs through advocacy and through constructive engagement in consultations. These roles and how to carry them out are well articulated in the TAP Network Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit.[20] This Toolkit "provides civil society and other nongovernmental stakeholders with guidance on how to engage with their governments and other local, regional or international stakeholders to support the planning, implementation, follow-up and accountability of Goal 16."[21]

How-to guidance is provided for CSOs in the following four areas:

1) Supporting national planning

2) Supporting national implementation

3) Supporting national follow up and monitoring

4) Engaging at the global level though participation in multinational processes

Although there are no official indicators by which to measure the level of CSO involvement in the SDGs evidence suggests that civil society has generally not had the opportunity, means or access to fulfill their role under SDG16.

The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has stressed the importance of early and informed collaboration and cooperation at the national level by governments for multi-stakeholder dialogues. With a few exceptions, a common complaint among many of the CSOs attending the 2018 HLPF has been that few governments have done this to date. The TAP Network produced a synthesis report on *TAP Network Survey on Strategic Priorities and Advocacy for the 2019 HLPFs*, noting:

> *"Many [CSO members] highlighted that engagement mechanisms with civil society were not as inclusive as they had hoped, with official entry points lacking. Many respondents noted that the HLPF did not have any mechanisms to take up any civil society reports, and highlighted that the lack of mechanisms for this engagement and follow up and review were challenges to holding governments accountable. Some also noted that the process for the VNRs was not efficient (particularly in regards to the time and space allocated for VNR presentations), and lacked entry points for civil society, and limited opportunities for interaction and dialogue."*[22]

Other common themes from CSO respondents were the need for greater capacity building, networking and funding to better participate in the SDG agenda at national and global levels.[23]

Several recent initiatives for rethinking governance and anti-corruption approaches are underway that emphasize CSO engagement. Examples include the World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law; Anti-corruption Policies Revisited, a five-year research project of the European Union; the ongoing British Academy/DFID Anti-Corruption Evidence Partnership; and the Pathfinders for SDG16+ and SDG16+ Forum.[24] All of these initiatives underscore the difficulties inherent in improving governance and recognize that civil society has to be part of the solution through its advocacy, monitoring and own-managed programs.