DCAF Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

LINKING GOOD SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE TO **SDG 16**

THE CONTRIBUTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 16 THROUGH SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE AND REFORM

A SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES

About this publication

This case study compilation was developed as part of DCAF's project, 'Linking Good Security Sector Governance and SDG 16'. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 aims to develop peaceful and just societies by building strong institutions, and targets 16.6 and 16.7 focus on good governance and the accountability of public institutions. To achieve the ambitions of SDG 16, all states will need to redouble their efforts to ensure that their national security sectors are both effective and accountable and operate within a framework of democratic civilian oversight, rule of law, and respect for human rights. However, there is currently limited guidance on how security sector governance and reform (SSG/R) policies can contribute to achieving SDG 16, especially targets 16.6 and 16.7, which are crucial to stability, especially in fragile contexts. This project focuses on three different security sector oversight actors, addressing the role of parliaments, civil society, and independent oversight institutions in promoting SSG/R and SDG 16. Good practices and lessons learned are examined and discussed with the aim to provide SDG 16-specific guidance that supports states in implementing SSR in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the institutions referred to or represented within this publication.

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List of Abbreviations

2030 Agenda	United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
APCOF	African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CECORE	Center for Conflict Resolution
CGD	Citizen-generated data
CNMS	National Multisectoral Monitoring Committee
CSO(s)	Civil society organization(s)
CSPPS	Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
DCAF	DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
DIHR	Danish Institute for Human Rights
EU	European Union
GPPAC	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
HLPF	United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IAEG-SDGs	Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators
IDPS	International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
INCAF	International Network on Conflict and Fragility
ISC/SDG-CI	Civil Society Initiative for the SDGs in Côte d'Ivoire
JI	Open Society Justice Initiative
MDG(s)	Millennium Development Goal(s)
NGO(s)	Non-governmental organization(s)
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NSO(s)	National Statistical Office(s)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
R4R	Ready for Review
RCPCA	National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan for the Central African Republic
RDC	Resident District Commissioner
RIA	Rapid Integrated Assessment
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SSG	Security sector governance
SSR	Security sector reform
SWG	Sectoral Working Group
TAP	Transparency, Accountability, and Participation
ULAF	Ukrainian Legal Aid Foundation
UN	United Nations

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VNR(s)	Voluntary National Review(s)
WJP	World Justice Project

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Executive Summary

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted its global action plan for sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda, composed of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In SDG 16, the Agenda sets out a vision for peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. Realizing this goal will require national security sectors that operate within a framework of accountability, rule of law, and respect for human rights. With this in mind, the four case studies compiled here focus on the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) as key oversight actors and explore the ways they can contribute to advancing both SDG 16 and security sector governance and reform (SSG/R).

These case studies feature the experiences of four CSOs. The first case study elaborates on work by the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) to promote police accountability and supporting SDG 16 indicator development, notably at the national level in South Africa. The second case study discusses the activities of the 'Open Society Foundations' Justice Initiative (JI) to support access to criminal and civil justice by strengthening a global SDG indicator (16.3.2) and supporting the creation of an altogether new indicator (16.3.3). In the third and fourth case studies, the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) and the Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) analyse engagement on good governance in the fields of peacebuilding, statebuilding, and conflict prevention, including through SSG/R activities where relevant. CSPPS describes its support to CSO engagement in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process in three countries in Sub-Saharan Africa; and CECORE details its work to localize SDG 16+ in Uganda, including through the development of a spotlight report. These four cases showcase a diversity of activities by civil society at different levels of intervention (local, national, regional, and international), and offer examples of direct engagement with SDG 16 and its targets. Observations from the various case studies lay the foundation for a comparative analysis of common themes, which has resulted in a set of recommendations; though, these recommendations are by no means exhaustive, and should be viewed not as prescriptions but as insights that can serve as a resource for anyone involved in or seeking to contribute to good governance, SSG/R, and the realization of SDG 16.

The recommendations are summarised here. First, efforts to raise awareness on SDG 16 should be increased, especially at the community level. Indeed, knowledge dissemination is an essential initial step to enabling greater engagement in advancing the SDGs. CSOs should also be provided with sufficient institutional resources so that they can effectively contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda. Continuous funding support is critical for CSOs to engage in the SDGs, as the absence of financial resources may lead to a lack of, or only episodic engagement. At the same time, capacity development must also be ensured, so that CSOs are equipped with the relevant technical capacities to meaningfully take part in SSG/R and SDG processes.

As the 2030 Agenda presents an opportunity to promote greater linkages, and to share knowledge, lessons learned, and expertise, in order to break out of sectoral silos, synergies should be strengthened between actors working in the fields of security, good governance and sustainable development. Partnerships among CSOs should also be forged and enhanced. Notably, collaboration between CSOs that are new to SDG processes and those which have previous experience in this area should be promoted. Cooperation should also be encouraged not only between CSOs working on the same level (local, national, etc.) but between organizations working on different levels.

As multistakeholder engagement is critical to the success of the 2030 Agenda, the meaningful inclusion of CSOs in national SDG institutional structures should also be promoted. Formalizing these spaces for multistakeholder involvement is key for civil society engagement. More broadly, the space for civil society participation in SDG-related processes should be strengthened. Mechanisms for multistakeholder engagement which include civil society should therefore be fostered through an enabling environment for partnerships to promote a whole-of-society approach to the 2030 Agenda and 'leave no one behind'.

1. INTRODUCTION, COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WRITTEN BY ALEXANDRA PREPERIER
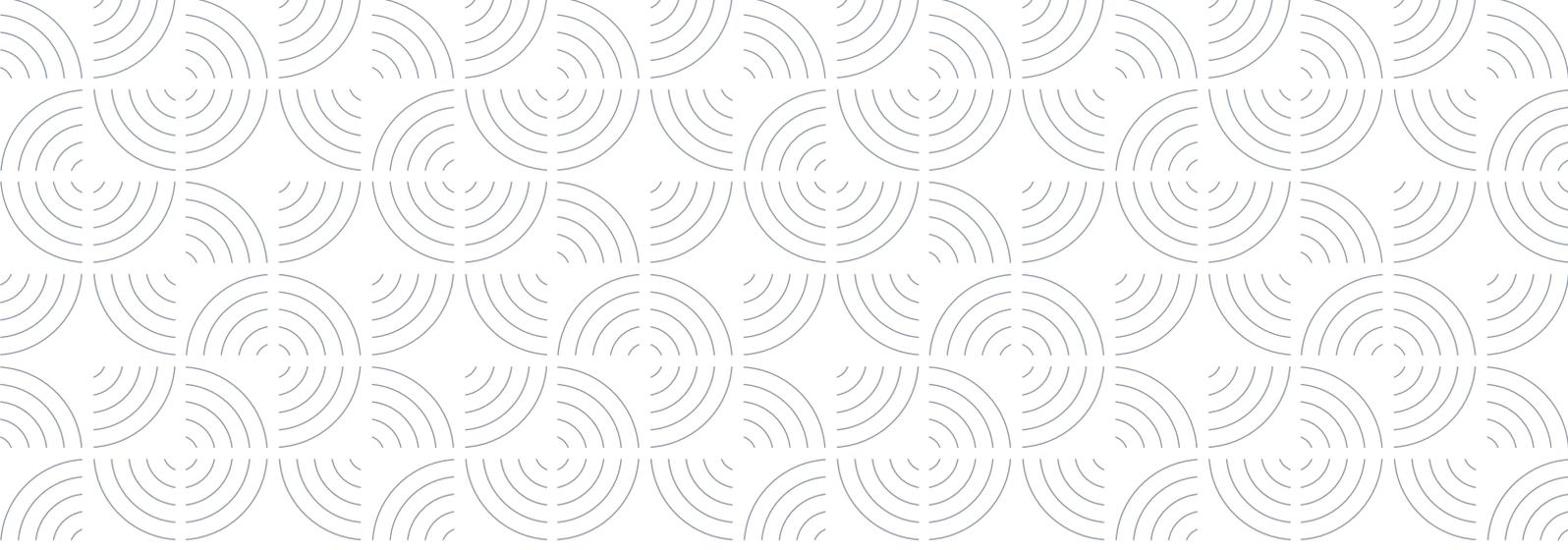
1.1. Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted its global action plan for sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda, composed of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 targets and more than 230 indicators. The SDGs drafting process was the result of two years of negotiations and was shaped by input and consultations with a range of stakeholders, such as civil society organizations (CSOs), regional and international parliamentary working groups, and others.[1] The SDGs also incorporated key lessons from efforts to implement its previous development framework, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including the need to add a goal on peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, which led to the development of SDG 16 and 12 associated targets (see Table 1).

The 2030 Agenda acknowledges the interdependency of security and development, and that 'sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development'.[2] SDG 16 is perhaps best understood as a potential catalyst to achieving other SDGs, in that it emphasizes the need for inclusive governance, responsive and strong institutions in order to realize peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. In fact, SDG 16 shares linkages with other goals and targets, collectively referred to as 'SDG 16+'. This includes 36 targets associated with seven other goals;[3] reflecting the 'integrated and indivisible' nature of all 17 SDGs.[4]

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1   Parliament's Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: A Parliamentary Handbook (UNDP, 2017), p. 15-16.

2   UN General Assembly, A/RES/70/1, para. 35.

3   SDG 16+ includes targets from SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

4   UN General Assembly, A/RES/70/1, Preamble.

Table 1. SDG 16 targets

16.1	Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
16.2	End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
16.3	Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
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
16.5	Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
16.6	Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
16.7	Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
16.8	Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
16.9	By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration
16.10	Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements
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
16.b	Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

Source: UN General Assembly, A/RES/70/1, 25–26.

National security sectors play a key role in achieving the vision of peaceful, just, and inclusive societies put forth in SDG 16. Indeed, they have the potential to either help build such an environment or contribute to escalating instability and conflict. This makes it important for states to engage in Security Sector Reform (SSR), 'a process of assessment, review and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation led by national authorities that has as its goal the enhancement of effective and accountable security for the State and its peoples without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law'.[5] Establishing good security sector governance (SSG) is the goal of SSR. The principles of good SSG include accountability, transparency, adherence to the rule of law, participation, responsiveness, effectiveness, and efficiency. Thus, SSG/R therefore closely aligns with nearly all of the SDG 16 targets (see Table 1).

Oversight actors play an essential role in ensuring that national security sectors operate within a framework of accountability, rule of law, and respect for human rights. This publication focuses on the key role of CSOs in this respect, and their contributions to both SSG/R and the realization of SDG 16. CSOs are critical actors when it comes to providing civilian oversight of security sectors, and in ensuring transparency and accountability. Further, CSOs can serve as a bridge between governments and the population, by gathering the views and interests of various constituencies and channeling these in an orderly fashion. Civil society can also support SSG/R in a variety of ways, for example by raising awareness of security issues, conveying the security needs of different constituents, monitoring compliance with laws and human rights standards, and conducting research and studies on security and governance issues.[6] The ways in which civil society can help improve SSG are summarised through the five categories of activities in Table 2: awareness raising; advocacy; monitoring and public oversight; fact-finding, research and analysis; and service provision.

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5   United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 'The United Nations SSR Perspective', Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Security Sector Reform Unit, 2012, p. 2.

6   See: Augustin Loada and Ornella Moderan, Civil Society Involvement in Security Sector Reform and Governance, Toolkit for Security Sector Reform and Governance in West Africa: Tool 6 (DCAF, 2015); OECD Development Assistance Committee, *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform (SSR): Supporting Security and Justice* (Paris: OECD, 2007), p. 11.

CSOs are also a critical actor in contributing to realizing the objectives set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As they do in the context of SSG/R, CSOs can act as a platform for the diverse views of populations, and especially of marginalized and vulnerable groups, and play a unique role in ensuring that actions taken to achieve the SDGs are people driven. In this way, they can also help promote the concept of the 2030 Agenda to 'leave no one behind'. Moreover, multistakeholder involvement which includes CSOs in advancing the 2030 Agenda can itself be regarded as contributing to some of the good governance principles encompassed in SDG 16 – particularly target 16.6 on effective, accountable, and transparent institutions; and 16.7 on responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making. Engagement by CSOs in support of the 2030 Agenda also contributes to SDG 17, which calls for increased partnership. Indeed, the Agenda acknowledges that:

"The scale and ambition of the new Agenda requires a revitalized Global Partnership to ensure its implementation. We fully commit to this. This Partnership will work in a spirit of global solidarity, in particular solidarity with the poorest and with people in vulnerable situations. It will facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources." [7]

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7   UN General Assembly, A/RES/70/1, para. 39.

Table 2. CSO activities that enhance SSG

Awareness Raising	Civil society seeks to generate mass public interest in a security issue by providing information about things people would care more about if they were aware of them. This is important because security problems sometimes stem from misunderstandings about the legal and legitimate roles and responsibilities of the security sector. Raising awareness about legal and democratic expectations, obligations and possible dilemmas improves public understanding about security and justice provision and can also generate demand for improvement. Public education, sensitization and information campaigns improve knowledge and can enhance the population's experience of security and the legitimacy of state security and justice provision. At the same time, helping those in the security sector better understand the concerns of men, women, boys and girls from different backgrounds helps the sector address the diverse needs of all groups in society.
Advocacy	Civil society can advocate for better security by presenting relevant decision-makers with solutions to specific security problems or the security concerns of a particular group. Advocacy on security issues can have a significant impact if it uses convincing arguments and demonstrates in-depth understanding of the political and operational environment. Advocacy may include networking, constituent action and public mobilization, agenda-setting and policy design, implementation and monitoring. Advocacy often means facilitating dialogue and ongoing engagement with members of parliament and government and security officials who are prepared to consider changes to security sector rules and practices. Advocacy may also involve targeted campaigns or the activation of regional and international organizations or networks to gain greater public support for a cause.
Monitoring and public oversight	By systematically examining specific security issues or practices in a transparent and consistent way, civil society can monitor and oversee the performance of the security sector. Monitoring and oversight seek to document and analyse the impact of government action and suggest ways to improve it. It is sometimes called the "watch-dog" function because civil society oversight and monitoring can raise the alarm where there is potential abuse or wrong-doing. Civil society can check whether laws are respected, policies are adhered to or standards are maintained. Because civil society stands outside government systems of oversight, its independence adds credibility and legitimacy to the state security sector while creating barriers to misuse and abuse. Civil society monitoring of the security sector enhances SSG when it involves a visible and active effort to ensure the security sector respects the rule of law and human rights within frameworks for democratic governance.
Fact-finding, research, and analysis	Civil society relies on accurate information and coherent analysis to support its engagement on security issues. Through sustained work on security and justice topics, civil society often develops specialist skills and knowledge that can inform policymaking, provide insight into community needs and interests, monitor the security sector more effectively and augment and complement government information and policymaking. A security sector that is open and receptive to civil society participation can benefit from the information, analysis and advice civil society offers. In this way, civil society can directly influence security management, oversight and provision and help inform the media and the broader public on issues of concern.
Service provision	Civil society sometimes provides services that augment and support state security and justice provision, for example, community cooperation in law enforcement though neighbourhood watches, patrols or community forums, or voluntary emergency response services, such as fire brigades, search and rescue assistance or lifeguarding. Sometimes, civil society works directly with security providers to offer assistance or services that complement state security and justice provision, for example, legal advice, victim support or medical and social services, among others. Civil society can also work with the security sector to provide training on specialist topics, for example, training for security providers or officials on identity or community issues, or community training on aspects of security or justice.

Source: DCAF, 'Civil Society', SSR Backgrounder Series, 2015, p. 4–5.

While civil society can be defined in a number of ways, for the purposes of this study, it is understood to include all the 'groups that people form around a shared interest or vision of public interest: for example, charities, philanthropic or advocacy associations, clubs, guilds, trade unions, professional organizations, business associations, community or residency groups, indigenous or ethnic interest groups, faith-based organizations, think tanks, NGOs and independent foundations'.[8] This definition underlines three key features of civil society, namely that it acts in the public interest, is freely organized, and has non-profit objectives.[9]

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of civil society in fulfilling its role in SSG/R may be influenced by any number of factors, of which a non-exhaustive list is described here. For example, CSOs must have sufficient institutional capacity to effectively perform their function including the required technical expertise, as well as human, financial, physical, and organizational resources.[10] Additionally, the efficacy of the work of CSOs is linked to the legitimacy they enjoy in a community; while, at the same time, their legitimacy with state authorities and security institutions is also relevant, since these are the actors with the legal competencies to act upon input offered by CSOs.[11] The social, political, and legal context in which CSOs operate can also present challenges that prevent or inhibit them from effectively fulfilling their role. These can include constraints on access to information, restrictions on freedom of association and freedom of speech, and limited opportunities for participation by civil society in security policy development and implementation.[12] A notable obstacle to CSOs is the fact that civic space has been shrinking across the world.[13] The CIVICUS Monitor found in 2022 that 'more people [live] in countries with closed civic space than ever'.[14] This is a considerable barrier to CSOs seeking to play their role in contributing to SSG/R and fulfilling the 2030 Agenda.

The case studies presented in this series are meant to serve as concrete examples that anchor an exploration of the ways CSOs can contribute to realizing SDG 16 and SSG/R. The first case study, provided by the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF), centres on police accountability and supporting SDG 16 indicator development, notably at the national level in South Africa. The second discusses activities of the 'Open Society Foundations' Justice Initiative (JI) to support access to criminal and civil justice, by strengthening a global indicator (16.3.2) and supporting the creation of a new indicator (16.3.3). In the third and fourth case studies, the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) and the Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) analyse engagement on good governance in the fields of peacebuilding, statebuilding, and conflict prevention, including through SSG/R activities where relevant. CSPPS describes its support to CSO engagement in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process in three countries in Sub-Saharan Africa,[15] and CECORE presents its work in Uganda to localize SDG 16+, including through activities such as the development of a spotlight report.[16]

Methodology

These four case studies showcase diverse contributions by CSOs to SSG/R and SDG 16 and were selected to reflect different levels of intervention (local, national, regional, and global), and to offer examples of direct engagement with SDG 16 and its targets. The analysis within combines a qualitative approach with some elements of participatory research and is subject to the limitations inherent to this method. These case studies focus on the experiences of individual CSOs in engaging in activities to advance SSG/R and SDG 16, and were authored by professionals (in their private capacity or not) who were involved in or led these activities. Hence, each case was developed by experts who were part of the research 'subject'. Thus, the authors narrated their own views and experiences on the focus of the research. While a template outline for the case studies was shared by DCAF, they were subsequently adapted by each author, who tailored them to individual cases. Each case study then underwent two to three rounds of review by DCAF, and was peer reviewed by another author from the publication.

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8   DCAF, 'Civil Society', SSR Backgrounder Series, 2015, 2. NB: As civil society is not a homogeneous actor, it 'is not always democratic or representative of the population's needs or interests, and its inclusion will not automatically lead to effective oversight of the security sector', p. 7.

9   Ibid., p. 3.

10   Eden Cole, Kerstin Eppert, and Katrin Kinzelbach, eds., *Public Oversight: A Handbook for Civil Society Organizations* (UNDP, 2008), 23; OECD Development Assistance Committee, *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform (SSR)*, 229.

11   Loada and Moderan, *Civil Society Involvement in Security Sector Reform and Governance*, p. 46.

12   DCAF, 'Civil Society', p. 8.

13   Liv Tørres, 'A Civil or Uncivil Civil Society?', Research Paper, Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, 2021, p. 8.

14   CIVICUS, *People Power Under Attack 2022* (Johannesburg, 2022), p. 5.

15   VNRs are an integral part of the SDG follow-up and review process. They are voluntary, state-led, and capture progress on SDG implementation. They are presented at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and offer an opportunity for experience-sharing as it relates to lessons learned, challenges, and successes (see section 2.2).

16   Independent civil society reports, often referred to as 'spotlight reports' or 'shadow reports' represent an unofficial way to hold governments accountable on SDG implementation by providing an independent assessment of implementation of the 2030 Agenda (see section 2.2).

There are other limitations that must also be acknowledged. Due to the political sensitivity of some aspects of the activities in which CSOs engaged, the authors may have chosen to omit certain details of the initiatives to protect the safety of their members or the communities where they work. It should be noted, too, that the experiences and contributions of CSOs as described in this series have inevitably been influenced by the context in which they operated at the time they carried out the activities discussed. The examples and recommendations provided herein should always be considered with this in mind, particularly when considering adapting them to another setting. Additionally, these stories and examples provide insights into the experience of four CSOs and can be used as inspiration by actors seeking to contribute to good governance, SSG/R, and the realization of SDG 16, but the activities illustrated through these case studies are not intended to comprehensively represent all the contributions CSOs can make in that regard, only to highlight examples of the diversity of actions they can undertake. This limited number of cases and their thematic diversity has implications for the generalization of findings as well, so that the recommendations should not be read as universally applicable to all CSOs. Instead, they should be viewed as insights and experiences that can serve as a resource for actors involved in or seeking to engage in SSG/R and SDG 16.

1.2. Comparative Analysis

Key themes emerged across the four case studies in relation to the contributions of CSOs to good governance, SSG/R, and achieving SDG 16. Only a select number are highlighted here, but each case study includes rich descriptions of the various activities in which featured CSOs engaged, touching upon additional themes, and even more thematic areas may be encountered by CSOs working on the nexus between SSG/R and SDG 16 more broadly.

The importance of strengthening awareness of the 2030 Agenda

To ensure a whole-of-society approach and the meaningful participation of all stakeholders in achieving the 2030 Agenda, knowledge of the Agenda itself is an essential prerequisite. However, despite efforts to disseminate information on the SDGs, in the first years of implementation of the Agenda covered in this publication, awareness of the SDGs has been modest, a shortcoming noted in all the case studies presented here. This seems to be particularly true at the community level.[17] For example, when CECORE surveyed citizens in Uganda's Kaabong district prior to developing its spotlight report (see 5.3), it found that only 12 per cent of respondents had any knowledge of the SDGs. This is a challenge to public engagement and active participation, and makes it difficult to promote shared ownership.

Knowledge of the Agenda is critical to mobilizing action on all aspects of SDG processes, including to engage in monitoring and oversight of SDG implementation. For example, CSPPS notes that it found during its Ready for Review (R4R) project that CSOs in the countries in which it worked were often unaware of how they could contribute to SDG monitoring through engagement in the VNR processes. CSOs must therefore be first sensitized to the ways they can take part in follow up and review, before they are able to mobilize and act.

Awareness raising and capacity building activities are central to addressing this challenge, and thus to supporting greater participation in and ownership of SDG implementation. The proximity of CSOs to community-level constituencies means that these organizations can play a crucial role in disseminating knowledge and promoting engagement for the realization of the SDGs. The case of APCOF illustrates this, as the organization designed an 'Accessibility Tool' to sensitize local communities to the SDGs by providing them with the knowledge and skills to meaningfully take

part in SDG 16 planning and implementation as well as monitoring and reporting at the local level. Similarly, the R4R project of CSPPS aimed to respond to a lack of awareness of the SDGs and by sensitizing and providing capacity development workshops to CSOs, particularly in the context of VNR processes. Notably, limited public awareness may especially affect SDG 16 (and thus issue areas discussed in the case studies presented here), as the more recent inclusion of the goal in the sustainable development agenda may mean that some organizations have yet to explicitly link their work to the SDG framework.[18] Engagement with CSOs and the general public on this goal specifically and the SDGs more generally should thus be promoted.

Awareness raising and knowledge dissemination of the SDGs is also an initial step to enabling greater engagement in the 2030 Agenda. However, regular and meaningful civil society involvement in both SSG/R and the realization of SDG 16 will depend on the institutional capacity of CSOs, funding support and technical capacity building, as noted in the case studies. Sustained funding assistance is critical for civil society to engage and to ensure continuity in efforts, as the absence of financial resources may lead to a lack of, or episodic engagement. Ensuring capacity development and that civil society is equipped with the relevant technical skills to take part in SDG processes over time is also important. Without these resources, the quality of engagement by civil society as an important partner in the realization of the SDGs will be at risk, as highlighted in the case studies.

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17   For example, see: United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019: Special Edition* (New York, 2019), p. 33.

18   Julia Roig, et al., *The importance of ensuring an enabling environment for civil society as it relates to the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society* (Community of Democracies and Partners Global, 2017), p. 18.

Promoting civil society engagement through formal and informal SDG mechanisms

These case studies also draw attention to different ways that civil society may contribute to the SDGs through formal and informal avenues. At the country level, national institutional SDG arrangements offer a valuable entry point for CSO engagement. These mechanisms are highly country-specific and their level of institutionalization differs in each setting, but their main roles often tend to include coordination, implementation, and follow up and review. Some countries have also developed subsidiary bodies, such as working groups or committees, as part of these institutional structures. Importantly, SDG institutional arrangements at the national level may incorporate representatives of various stakeholders, such as members of parliaments, local governments, and also civil society.[19] In this way, in addition to formalizing a whole-of-society approach to national SDG processes, these institutional structures can thus also benefit from the inputs and expertise of a wide variety of actors.

As APCOF described in its case study, the organization was invited, along with other CSOs, to contribute to South Africa's Sectoral Working Group on governance, peace, justice and security goals, to support national indicator development and VNR reporting. CSPPS also describes engagement by civil society in SDG coordination and national implementation committees, in the Central African Republic and Chad. Because these institutional mechanisms have an important function in coordinating and enabling progress towards the SDGs, civil society involvement in these structures is critical as a means of influencing policy processes at the national level.

CSOs can also contribute to monitoring and reporting on SDG implementation specifically. UN member states are encouraged to conduct inclusive and participatory reviews that draw on the inputs of various stakeholders.[20] For example, CSOs can support formal processes such as VNRs, which are an integral part of the follow-up and review process. Presented annually at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), VNRs are voluntary and state-led, and capture progress on SDG implementation. They also offer an opportunity for experience-sharing regarding lessons learned, as well as challenges and successes. As the CSPPS case study illustrates, VNR-related processes can also comprise formal opportunities for multistakeholder engagement, notably through consultations. The case study zooms in on the organization's assistance to civil society actors in various countries through sensitization and capacity

building workshops designed to support CSOs in engaging in VNR processes.

Where such types of mechanisms are not in place, and after assessing whether the domestic political context allows for it, CSOs may consider engaging in alternative monitoring processes, for instance by publishing spotlight reports (also called 'civil society reports' or 'shadow reports') – which represent an unofficial way for civil society to provide an independent assessment of SDG implementation. The CECORE case study describes how it developed, together with the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), a spotlight report focused specifically on SDG 16+ to complement Uganda's 2020 VNR. Both the CECORE and the CSPPS case studies illustrate how civil society contributions to these reporting processes offer the potential to capture local security needs expressed by CSOs and local communities when assessing progress towards SDG implementation.

CSOs may also engage at the international level by taking part in the HLPF, either as part of a government delegation (where such space for CSO participation exists), or in an independent capacity. For example, after publishing its spotlight report, CECORE took part in a side event at the 2020 HLPF and used the platform to disseminate findings of the report. The organization was able to engage in multiple follow-up and review activities, and it notes that some spotlight report findings – such as the need for greater localization of the SDGs – fed into Uganda's 2020 VNR. The CECORE case study, as well as those of the JI and CSPPS, all underline how important it is that CSOs are able to access these policy fora. They also highlight that further efforts should be made to ensure the meaningful inclusion of civil society – especially as JI and CSPPS point to challenges linked to the participation of civil society in the HLPF.

Adapting global frameworks to national and local realities

Enabling the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda requires bridging the global and local in order to effectively deliver on the SDGs in a way that responds to national and local realities. Context-sensitive approaches and inclusive and participatory methodologies are key to achieving this. Nationalizing the SDGs will therefore involve an accounting of domestic contexts and priorities. This includes processes such as the development of national indicators that are embedded in country-specific realities. This is illustrated in the APCOF case study, which describes how the organization conducted

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19   United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *National institutional arrangements for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: A five-year stocktaking – World Public Sector Report 2021* (New York, 2021), vi.

20   UN General Assembly, A/RES/70/1, paras. 74 and 79.

research and analysis to better conceptualize how justice and security issues should be contextualised into national and regional indicator development; and engaged in national indicator development for SDG 16 in South Africa.

SDG localization helps ensure that efforts are attuned to realities on the ground and can affect meaningful change in the day-to-day lives of people in local communities. The CECORE case study thus focuses on the localization of SDG 16+ in Uganda, and proposes a framework (the 'Localization Model for SDG 16+') based on the formulation of localization strategies together with local communities. The organization's effort notably resulted in the development of context-specific SDG 16+ indicators in Uganda's Kaabong district, taking into account local security needs. For example, armed cattle rustling was found to be a very important issue at the local level, while it was less relevant at the national level, and as a result their frequency was proposed as an SDG 16+ indicator for the Kaabong district. Context-sensitivity is at the heart of SDG localization, and should underpin all efforts towards advancing SDG 16 and SSG/R.

Creating space for greater synergies between security and development

The inclusion of security concerns in the 2030 Agenda through SDG 16 broke new ground in the approach to sustainable development, opening new opportunities to foster synergies between actors working on security issues and those working in the development field, as underscored in the APCOF and JI case studies. In this way, the inclusion of governance and security concerns in SDG 16 created space for engagement with a variety of stakeholders, and to broaden the audience for advocacy and awareness raising activities towards the promotion of peaceful, just and inclusive societies. This includes new avenues for engagement through participation in international policy fora, such as the HLPF, as noted in the JI case study.

Embedding security and governance issues in the SDGs also has the potential to create new entry points for promoting the mainstreaming of SSG/R in SDG planning, implementation, and monitoring, as illustrated in the APCOF case study. APCOF sought to advocate for the inclusion of security and justice concerns, and particularly police accountability, in these different aspects of the SDG process in South Africa. SDG-related mechanisms such as the VNR may present the potential to promote the accountability, responsiveness, and transparency of national security sectors as well.

Promoting multistakeholder engagement and partnerships

The 2030 Agenda acknowledges that multistakeholder engagement is important to achieving the SDGs, particularly through its call for increased partnership, in SDG 17. Meaningful collaboration with all relevant actors including governments, local authorities, the private sector, donor organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders is key. A theme that emerged in the case studies in this publication is the critical need for inclusive and participatory methodologies to underpin multistakeholder engagement and partnership, with every study emphasizing the importance of involving CSOs in SDG-related processes. Engaging with civil society promotes a participatory and whole-of-society approach that accounts for and reflects the inputs and needs of a range of stakeholders and ensures broad representation in decision-making processes, thereby supporting the concept of common ownership and helping to 'leave no one behind'. More broadly, participatory frameworks support more inclusive governance, which is also central to SSR.

The CSOs featured in these four case studies all narrate how they partnered with other actors to undertake activities towards good governance, SSG/R, and the realization of SDG 16. For example, collaboration with donor organizations is instrumental to ensuring the sustainability of CSOs from a financial and capacity perspective, but also to maintaining the continuity of their activities, as noted in the APCOF and CSPPS case studies. Collaboration in the context of the 2030 Agenda also includes engagement with governments, for instance as part of formal SDG coordination structures and other official or unofficial mechanisms. Efforts to foster an enabling environment that allows for civic engagement, and to create space for meaningful cooperation between governments and civil society should therefore be promoted. The JI case study offers an example of collaborative state-society partnerships in Sierra Leone, where the government worked with CSOs to prioritize SDG 16 implementation, including indicator 16.3.2 on pretrial detention, and ensured a collaborative and inclusive approach to VNR development. Importantly, engagement may include authorities in national governments, but also local government officials, as highlighted in the CECORE case study.

The CSPPS and CECORE case studies also suggest that multistakeholder participation in SDG reporting processes may have the potential to promote greater state-society collaboration and improve inclusive governance within countries. As the CSPPS case study points out, SDG-related engagement by CSOs in mechanisms such as VNR consultations may create space for enhancing cooperation between government

and civil society. Similarly, the CECORE case study notes that both its spotlight report and participation in the HLPF generated momentum and provided the organization an opportunity for dialogue with the government, which subsequently led to joint activities such as a national dialogue on SDG 16+, a piloting of the CECORE Localization Model, and the development of an SDG Localization Guide.

It must be emphasized here that the availability of these potential entry points depends on the context and political environment in each country. As highlighted in the CECORE case study, not all areas of sustainable development are equally easy for civil society to engage in. And in some domestic or local contexts, leveraging SDG 16 specifically may be considered too politically sensitive because of the nature of the issues it tackles.[21] Certain SDG 16 targets may also be more challenging to address in some settings, with CECORE noting that indicators linked to targets 16.4 and 16.5 can be particularly sensitive. Therefore, context-sensitivity is absolutely paramount in considering and approaching potential entry points.

Other CSOs are also critical actors for civil society to engage with. Depending on the objective, partnerships between and among CSOs can take various forms, with different levels of formality, from ad hoc agreements to networks or coalitions. Working in partnership can present a range of benefits, such as increasing the representativeness of CSOs engaged in an activity, expanding outreach to wider constituencies, providing more weight to pooled advocacy efforts, and facilitating knowledge- and skills-sharing thus broadening the scope of expertise. The case studies presented here include examples of peer-to-peer experience sharing, through which organizations gain insights from the engagement by other CSOs in SDG-related processes. In the context of SDG follow-up and review, for example, CSPPS describes how civil society representatives involved in VNR consultation were able to share experiences and lessons learned with other CSOs that were new to this process.

Some peer-to-peer learning can also take place in collaborations between civil society actors working at different levels of intervention, such as when national CSOs partner with regional or international organizations. For instance, thanks to GPPAC, an international network, CECORE partnered with another CSO based in Cameroon when it developed its spotlight report, because this organization had already engaged in a similar undertaking. Conversely, as international CSOs, JI and CSPPS have engaged with numerous national and local civil society actors, as described in their case

studies. It should be noted that activities carried out at one level of intervention may be relevant at other levels. This is illustrated by some of the initiatives undertaken by APCOF and JI, who alongside other partners engaged in advocacy at the international level on SDG indicator 16.3.2 (on pretrial detention). APCOF subsequently relied on research and advocacy undertaken on the global level in its advocacy at the national level.

CSOs working in data collection and analysis may engage with national statistical offices (NSOs) as well, as they are the primary entity mandated to measure and monitor national progress on the SDGs. National statistical systems and NSO can benefit from non-traditional data sources such as the citizen-generated data (CGD) produced notably by civil society.[22]

As CSOs often have close ties to local communities, the CGD has the potential to help capture local realities, especially important to 'leave no one behind', hence the importance of further cooperation and partnership between NSOs and the CGD producers on the development of frameworks for quality assurance. APCOF notes in its case study that Statistics South Africa has suggested that support to civil society in contributing data for official SDG reporting may involve steps to develop a national methodological mechanism. Similarly, the CECORE case study suggests that further efforts should be made towards the development of mechanisms to incorporate CGD into SDG planning, implementation, and monitoring; while the JI case study highlights the need for greater coordination between national agencies and CSOs engaged in monitoring and reporting processes.

The importance of data collection to SDG monitoring is also highlighted in the JI case study, which discusses how the organization engaged in identifying types of data to be collected that can provide a more comprehensive overview of pretrial justice, and thus inform policy decisions, based on data gathered by CSO partners across countries with different socio-economic and geographical contexts. The case study also describes how JI engaged, together with other actors, in an advocacy campaign that resulted in the development of a new civil justice indicator for SDG 16 (16.3.3). In this way, this advocacy led to the expansion of target 16.3 (on rule of law and access to justice), underlining the importance of civil justice in the context of sustainable development.

21   Roig, et al., *The importance of ensuring an enabling environment for civil society as it relates to the Sustainable Development Goals*, p. 22.

22   Karina Cázarez-Grageda, Julia Schmidt, and Rajiv Ranjan, 'Reusing Citizen-Generated Data for Official Reporting: A quality framework for national statistical office-civil society organisation engagement', PARIS21 Working Paper, November 2020, p. 7.

1.3. Recommendations

The 2030 Agenda sets out a vision for peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, as captured in SDG 16. As described in the four case studies presented here, civil society can play a critical role in advancing SSG/R and the SDGs. The following recommendations emerged from reflections on the common themes identified across these case studies and are by no means exhaustive. They should therefore be viewed primarily as insights and experiences that can serve as a resource for actors including CSOs, governments, donor organizations, international organizations, and other stakeholders who are currently engaged or are seeking to engage in SSG/R and in achieving SDG 16. However, these insights and experiences should always be adapted to the specificities of a given setting.

> **Increase efforts to raise awareness about SDG 16, especially at the community level.** Limited knowledge of the SDGs can hamper public engagement and participation and hinder common ownership of the process. This awareness is critical to mobilize action across all aspects of SDG processes, and thus represents an essential first step to enabling collective engagement in the SDGs. Further awareness raising and sensitization strategies should therefore be promoted, particularly at the local level.

> **Provide CSOs with sufficient institutional resources to effectively contribute to the SDGs.** Continuous funding support is critical for CSOs to engage in SDG processes, as the absence of financial resources may lead to a lack of, or only episodic engagement. At the same time, capacity development must also be ensured, so that CSOs are equipped with the relevant technical capacities to meaningfully take part in SSG/R and SDG processes. Without these resources, quality civil society engagement will be at risk.

> **Strengthen synergies between actors working in security and sustainable development.** The 2030 Agenda presents an opportunity to promote greater linkages, and to share knowledge, lessons learned, and expertise, in order to break through sectoral siloes. CSOs working in the fields of security, governance, and sustainable development should build on this new space for engagement by expanding peer-to-peer collaboration across different fields, towards the promotion of peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. The inclusion of security concerns into the 2030 Agenda also presents the potential to promote the importance of SSG/R in the SDGs. In this respect, localization, the development of national SDG targets, and VNRs all present opportunities to promote efforts towards transparency and accountability in national security sectors, thereby advancing the realization of SDG 16.

> **Forge and enhance partnerships among CSOs.** Among CSOs, collaboration with peers has the potential, *inter alia*, to amplify the collective voice of civil society and give it more weight in advocacy campaigns, expand representativeness by reaching diverse constituencies, pool information and expertise, and foster mutual learning and exchanges. Partnerships may also help connect CSOs that are new to SDG-related processes with organizations that have prior experience in this area. Partnerships should be considered across different levels of operation as well, including the local, national, regional, and international, to foster collective action.

> **Promote the meaningful inclusion of CSOs in national SDG institutional structures.** While these national institutional arrangements vary from country to country, their main roles often include coordination, implementation, and follow up and review, which means they play an important role in realizing the SDGs at the national level. Formalizing these spaces for multistakeholder involvement is therefore key to supporting civil society engagement in the 2030 Agenda.

> **Strengthen space more broadly for civil society engagement in SDG-related processes.** Partnerships are at the centre of the 2030 Agenda, and as noted and illustrated extensively throughout the publication, civil society plays a critical role in advancing the SDGs and SSG/R, through diverse contributions. Mechanisms for multistakeholder engagement which include civil society should therefore be fostered through an enabling environment for partnerships to promote a whole-of-society approach to the 2030 Agenda. This approach will also contribute to inclusive and participatory methodologies, which are equally central to SSR processes. That said, the space for engagement by CSOs in both SSG/R and the SDG framework must allow for quality engagement, to ensure their meaningful and iterative participation.

2. POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY AND NATIONAL SDG 16 INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF APCOF

WRITTEN BY LOUISE EDWARDS
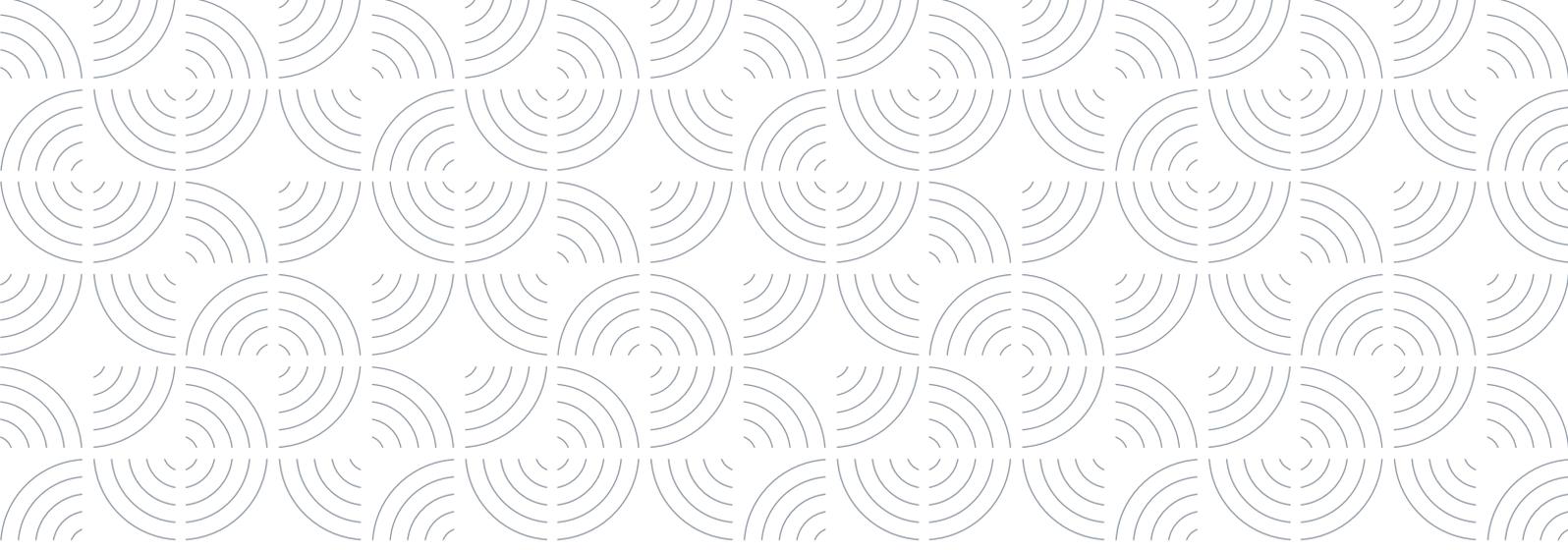
2.1. Introduction

The African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) works to promote effective coordination and cooperation between SSG/R and SDG 16 processes, at both a theoretical and practical level. This has included work to understand the transformative potential of SDG 16 for the broader African police reform agenda, for example, as well as engagement in South Africa's reporting on its implementation of SDG 16. APCOF has successfully identified entry points for this engagement, despite barriers to civil society engagement. These barriers included a lack of outreach by regional mechanisms about the domestication and reporting on indicators; the initial lack of clarity in South Africa about the process of developing national SDG indicators and producing VNR reports, and a lack of knowledge and capacity (particularly at the community level) within civil society to play a significant role in SDG 16 monitoring and reporting.

Thus, it is important to advocate for the linking of SSG/R processes and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and for methodologies aimed at achieving a more inclusive means of measuring progress, as this represents an area where civil society can contribute directly. In this case study, the ways APCOF has promoted SSG/R and SDG 16 through its work to improve police oversight and accountability are examined. Lessons learned as a consequence of engagement by APCOF with South African SDG 16 indicator development and VNR reporting are also discussed, along with recommendations directed at strengthening the role of civil society in these processes.

APCOF is a not-for-profit trust that has been working on issues of police accountability and governance in Africa since 2004. The organization emerged from a recognition of the need to improve police accountability in Africa, and its creation was driven by the view that African knowledge, expertise, and networks are essential to achieving this. In its efforts to promote police accountability, the objectives of APCOF are to:

> support the development of formal institutions and mechanisms for oversight of the police;
> create and sustain public confidence in the police;
> develop a culture of good governance, human rights, integrity, transparency, and accountability within the police; and
> foster good working relationships between the police, civil society, and the community.

APCOF operates on the assumption that police accountability can be improved through increased political support and greater capacity for police oversight, and a community of practitioners who promote accountability. This second factor is particularly central to the work of APCOF vis-à-vis the uptake and monitoring of SDG 16, which involves capacity building in a range of actors – state and non-state alike – to encourage and support more effective, accountable, and transparent security sector institutions. Indeed, it speaks directly to SDG Target 16.6, particularly to Indicator 16.6.2, as it places public satisfaction with security sector service provision at the heart of achieving institutional accountability and effectiveness.[23]

The methodology of APCOF prioritizes work at the continental, regional, and national levels, in recognition that interventions at each of these levels can both influence and mutually reinforce SSG/R.[24] APCOF has a small core staff but facilitates its operations by using a networking approach, allowing resources to be directed towards programmatic activities and adding expert capacity when required. The approach of APCOF to SDG 16 monitoring in South Africa, described below, is an illustration of how the organization has harnessed capacity within its network to draw on relevant expertise.

As part of its efforts to increase political support for accountable policing, APCOF seeks to ensure that accountability and oversight are reflected in all applicable standards, guidelines, and policies for SSG/R at various levels. The organization also engages in direct technical support and capacity building with mechanisms of police accountability as well as other state and non-state entities, to embed police accountability in SSG/R frameworks and practices. Hence, in the initial period following adoption of the SDGs, APCOF was interested in the transformative potential for SSG/R of both SDG 11 (on sustainable cities and communities) and SDG 16, and especially sought to understand how the integration of justice and security into sustainable development planning could be practically achieved in Africa.

As a first step towards developing its work in this area, APCOF was commissioned by the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) to develop a discussion paper on the relationship between the SDGs and justice and security. The resulting publication, 'Justice, Security and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Africa', reviewed the SDGs and SDG targets to identify the role of justice and security sector institutions in assisting states to achieve the 2030 Agenda (i.e., justice and security as an enabler of sustainable development), and identified the transformative potential of the SDGs in the justice and security sector (i.e., justice and security reform as an outcome of sustainable development).[25] The paper also set out issues to consider in formulating a methodology for national and regional indicator development in Africa, and made recommendations to address the need for second- and third-tier indicators that are responsive to the links between sustainable development and SSG/R.[26]

This work led APCOF to engage more deeply on target and indicator development in South Africa, through technical support to a project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aimed at facilitating more effective, efficient, and inclusive monitoring and reporting on the localization of SDG 16. The UNDP project sought to develop a strategy for mainstreaming participation by civil society in the collection, analysis, and tracking of SDG 16-related data, and to strengthen the role of non-state actors in monitoring mechanisms and reporting processes related to SDGs. This was informed by a comprehensive analysis of the indicator framework and a baseline SDG study developed by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), co-chair of the South African National SDGs Peace, Security and Governance Sectoral Working Group and coordinator of official SDG data for the country. The UNDP project also involved the development of an accessibility tool for Community Advice Offices. These Offices provide free basic legal and human rights information, advice, and services to people who are marginalized through poverty, social circumstances, and geographic location; and were thus identified as a key partner, given that they serve as a development and human rights 'one-stop-shop'.[27] This accessibility tool was designed to support civil society not only in sensitizing people to the SDGs but in offering them the necessary skills to actively participate in monitoring and reporting activities for SDG 16 in their local communities (see more in section 2.3).

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23 SDG Indicator 16.6.2 measures the proportion of the population satisfied with their last experience with public services.

24 APCOF works at an African-regional level through African Union mechanisms; at the sub-regional level through regional economic communities in Southern, Eastern, and West Africa; and in various national contexts, including through engagement with a range of stakeholders in South Africa, Malawi, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Tunisia, Nigeria, The Gambia, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire, among others.

25 Louise Edwards and Sean Tait, 'Justice, Security and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Africa', African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum and Danish Institute for Human Rights, Copenhagen, March 2016.

26 The Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators classifies indicators in three tiers, based on 'their level of methodological development and the availability of data at the global level'. Tier I indicators have an established methodology and 'data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 per cent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant'; while the methodology for Tier III indicators is under development or will be developed. See: UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs, Statistics Division, 'IAEG-SDGs: Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators', https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/ (accessed 17 November 2022).

27 For more information, see: Community Advice Office South Africa, https://caosasouthafrica.org.za (accessed 11 July 2022).

2.2. Contributions of APCOF to SSG/R

The approach of APCOF is informed by the contexts within which it operates. Its efforts to promote greater police accountability are therefore based on the understanding that good security sector governance (SSG), policing, and police accountability on the African continent all depend on achieving inclusive growth, and the recognition that inequality and poverty will remain a prominent feature of African states as long as a commitment to and the monitoring of broader development agendas and their outcomes are lacking. African countries must find the means and political will to deliver equally on security, justice, and development, or continue to experience state fragility. Still, while constraints on achieving effective SSG/R, and on the delivery of safety and crime prevention in Africa, were barriers to realizing the Millennium Development Goals[28] – particularly by countries experiencing weak governance, insecurity, and conflict – the inclusion of security and justice in the 2030 Agenda is an important acknowledgment that justice and security are at once an enabler and outcome of this agenda. This invites actors like APCOF to mainstream links between SSG/R and sustainable development and advocate for the inclusion of justice and security into SDG planning. The organization does this at various levels, employing a combination of means to achieve three interrelated aims: (i) promoting increased political support for police accountability, (ii) improving the capacity of police oversight, and (iii) supporting and expanding a network of practitioners who promote police oversight and accountability. Each of these objectives is discussed in turn below.

Promoting increased political support for police accountability

APCOF engages in ongoing monitoring of its impact as a means of adjusting its strategy to respond to emerging challenges in the governance of policing, and it recently published a study entitled, 'The African Police Accountability Agenda in the 2020s: Continuity and Disruption'. The study, which is part of wider efforts by the organization to promote research and advocacy on this issue, seeks to understand advances and regressions in police accountability in Africa over the past 20 years, and identifies opportunities to strengthen and deepen the police accountability agenda in the 2020s. It provides a high-level view of the current landscape of policing and police accountability in Africa, and confirms that African police agencies reflect the characteristics of the states they serve. In other words, where democratic governance and the rule of law are weakened or compromised, so too is respect for the rule of law, human rights, and police accountability. In isolating key factors that have shaped the policing and SSG/R environment in Africa, the study points to limits on achieving the promises of sustainable development and economic growth as having contributed significantly to instability, and thus to governance crises.

Though APCOF is most obviously active in the field of policing, its work is situated within the broader paradigm of promoting democratic governance, sustainable development, the rule of law, and human rights. Efforts to generate political support for police accountability rely on producing an evidence-base of the normative value of accountable policing, to promote both effective policing services and, more broadly, the delivery of safety and security. Increasing demand for police accountability and the mechanisms to support it must be met by political will and the capacity of state actors to implement necessary measures. Activities geared towards developing this requisite political support include research and advocacy that communicate evidence of the impact of accountable policing on efficiency and on service delivery, and which assess police accountability methods and practices – including the effectiveness of oversight structures at national and regional levels. This work is often undertaken as part of broader SSG/R programming, sometimes alongside local civil society organizations with an interest in and capacity to promote accountable policing, and sometimes alongside state institutions.

The research and advocacy of APCOF provides a foundation both for its support to legislative reform and policy development, and its technical support to state actors in implementing accountability measures on the ground. This has been true in South Africa, where APCOF has rooted its research and advocacy on the need for greater police accountability in contextual and situational analyses, which are operationalized through its provision of legal and policy advice and support to practitioners advocating for reform. As opportunities for reform have arisen, APCOF has then leveraged this work along with its expertise, providing direct technical support to improve oversight and accountability systems.

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28   Eric Muñoz, 'The Millennium Development Goals: Facing Down Challenges', Briefing Paper No. 2, Bread for the World Institute, May 2008.

The development of a normative regional framework for police accountability, through the lens of existing SSG/R, human rights, and sustainable development methods, is another vital entry point for APCOF when it comes to influencing political uptake. To that end, the organization has focused on providing technical support to the African Union (AU), as well as Regional Economic Communities (RECs) at the sub-regional level, to devise guidelines and standards based on legal and political agreements already entered into by states. This includes standards developed at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR); for example, those interpreting obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) on freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, as put forth in the Guidelines on Arrest, Police Custody and Pretrial Detention in Africa.[29] Known as the Luanda Guidelines, this document offers operational guidance to African states on how to uphold human rights obligations in the context of policing, and sets out a comprehensive oversight and accountability architecture. This is consistent with the existing obligation of states to implement not only Article 6 of the ACHPR on freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, but also Article 5 on freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and Article 3 on the right to life.

An important link was drawn by APCOF and other stakeholders between the movement to implement the Luanda Guidelines as a part of SSG/R efforts in Africa and the capacity to achieve SDG Target 16.3, promoting the rule of law and equal access to justice. SDG Indicator 16.3.2, which measures unsentenced detainees as a proportion of the overall prison population, was thus incorporated into these efforts, representing a confluence of the development agenda and pretrial justice agenda that provided additional points of leverage to promote security sector reform (SSR). As a result, the formal reporting mechanisms of the SDG process spotlighted what APCOF and others had identified as a critical but overlooked criminal justice and human rights challenge.[30]

Work at the global level by APCOF and other partners – including the Open Society Foundations – to promote a rights-based approach to pretrial detention has also been used by stakeholders to advocate internationally

for a stronger SDG 16 indicator on this topic. For instance, the 'length of time' in pretrial detention was proposed as an indicator, to provide a clearer picture of the problem, and while this was ultimately not adopted at the global level, APCOF and others utilized relevant research and advocacy materials to advocate for this measure in national indicator development in South Africa. The South African government did not add any additional pretrial detention indicators in its first reporting cycle, but the issue has been canvassed and APCOF will continue its advocacy as South Africa prepares its follow up SDG report.

Improving capacity for police oversight

The second objective of APCOF, to increase the capacity of government and civil society to play an active role in improving police accountability, has been central to the organization's work at the regional level to promote policing-specific indicators within the SDGs. This aligns with the broader mandate of APCOF to support service provision and has included programming focused on providing technical assistance to actors responsible for internal, state, or social control over the police at the national, regional, and sub-regional levels. Localizing the normative standards described above has anchored the work of APCOF in this area. For example, the organization's technical support to the ACHPR in developing Guidelines on the Policing of Assemblies by Law Enforcement Officials in Africa was a significant achievement in promoting a normative frame for rights-based and accountable public order management by police in Africa.[31] An impact review of efforts to nationalize these Guidelines in Malawi, published by APCOF, found: 'a tentative "proof of concept" that it is possible to identify shifts in attitude among police officers in Africa with respect to fundamental human rights challenges in a way that, with greater investment in more sensitive collection, could be employed to guide training and other interventions aimed at incremental improvements.'[32]

Support for capacity building by APCOF has also encompassed the development of human rights training for police at the regional, sub-regional, and national levels, particularly in contexts where robust

29   Guidelines on the Conditions of Arrest, Police Custody and Pretrial Detention in Africa, adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights during its 55th Ordinary Session, 28 April-12 May 2014, Luanda, Angola.

30   For example, see: Louise Edwards, 'Pretrial Justice in Africa: An Overview of the Use of Arrest and Detention, and Conditions of Detention', APCOF Policy Paper No. 7, February 2013; and Open Society Justice Initiative, *Presumption of Guilt: The Global Overuse of Pretrial Detention* (Open Society Foundations, 2014).

31   Guidelines on the Policing of Assemblies by Law Enforcement Officials in Africa, adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights during its 21st Extraordinary Session, 23 February-4 March 2017, Banjul, The Gambia.

32   Thomas Probert, 'Police Attitudes and Crowd Management in Africa: Exploring the Impact of Soft-Law Instruments and Training in Malawi', African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum and Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2018, p. 14.

SSR processes have resulted in legal frameworks that recognize normative human rights standards for policing but have not yet translated them into operational reform and training curricula. APCOF has also been active in building the technical capacity of police oversight mechanisms through educational support to investigators. This has included the development of an investigation manual, for which training was provided to dedicated statutory oversight bodies, and national human rights institutions, in six countries.[33]

others, on legal, policy, and operational frameworks for accountable policing in Africa. It is here that APCOF has made significant advances in utilizing SDG 16 as a framework for addressing SSG/R, by working to develop and implement an inclusive and participatory methodology to strengthen the role of civil society in monitoring SDG 16 in South Africa.

Supporting practitioners who promote police oversight and accountability

The approach of APCOF to capacity building also recognizes the importance of a network of practitioners who actively promote police accountability at both the national and regional levels. This includes a range of professionals at institutions mandated to conduct police oversight and accountability, such as statutory oversight mechanisms, ombuds and national human rights institutions (NHRIs), policing organizations, AU bodies, parliaments, and civil society organizations, along with academics amongst others. This community of practitioners takes various forms – more formally, through representation on APCOF's advisory board;[34] and less formally, through a listser, by regularly convening on issues related to policing governance, and by attending APCOF's twice-yearly advanced human rights and policing courses offered at the University of Pretoria's Centre for Human Rights.

Fostering such a network as a means to advancing police oversight and accountability complements the other two strategic approaches of APCOF – advocacy and research, and service provision. Efforts of APCOF to undertake, support, and communicate research and evidence-gathering on the status and nature of policing and police oversight, as well as activities aimed at capacity building within its network of practitioners, influence and foster national and regional political processes aimed at increasing police accountability. Importantly, APCOF also understands the value of building African knowledge and expertise on these issues, and this informs its work to promote information sharing and evidence-gathering across the African continent. Key to this has been the involvement of APCOF in delivering police accountability modules at the University of Pretoria's Centre for Human Rights, mentioned above. These courses expand the knowledge of justice and security sector officials, academics, and

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33 APCOF has worked with partners at national human rights institutions in Ghana, Kenya and Uganda, and at statutory oversight mechanisms in South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Sierra Leone.

34 See: African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum, 'About Us: Governance', https://apcof.org/about-us-2/ (accessed 25 August 2022).

2.3. SDG 16 as a framework to address SSG/R

SDG 16 targets have provided APCOF and other police accountability actors with a new mechanism for addressing SSG/R by ensuring that police oversight and accountability are incorporated into the international commitment of states to sustainable development. Indeed, SDG 16 frames SSG/R as central to sustainable development. Through this lens, APCOF has promoted police accountability, and SSG/R more generally, at three levels:

> At the African regional level, by providing a methodology and process for national and regional indicator development to ensure that policing, and SSG/R more broadly, are included in sustainable development planning in both post-conflict and peaceful societies in Africa.

> At the national level, in South Africa, by promoting civil society engagement with development of an indicator framework for SDG 16 (thereby promoting more appropriate, contextualized, and localized targets and indicators); and

> At the local level, in South Africa, by laying the foundations for community-level capacity building to ensure local engagement in monitoring the progress of SDG 16 in the country.

Engagement at the regional level

As the AU and African states began to conceptualize SDG implementation, APCOF recognized a need for knowledge sharing and technical guidance to support the development and monitoring of contextualized targets and indicators that would ensure the effective integration of justice and security issues into planning. Through its early work with the DIHR, APCOF understood that regional and national development planning should approach justice and security as both an enabler of and a distinct outcome of sustainable development. In the discussion paper commissioned by DIHR, mentioned earlier, APCOF had reviewed every SDG and its targets (not just SDG 16) in order to identify indicators meant to track the performance of justice and security sector institutions in supporting the achievement of SDGs (i.e., enabling sustainable development), and to identify the transformative potential of the SDGs on those same institutions (i.e., SSG/R as an outcome of sustainable development).[35] This comprehensive mapping exercise helped APCOF discover a relationship between development, security, and justice that extended beyond the scope of SDG 16 (or even SDG 11). It also identified other SDGs with SSG/R implications (as either enablers or outcomes), including: SDG 3 on good health and well-being, and targets related to communicable disease and the impact of detention overcrowding, and reducing road

traffic accidents through more detection, enforcement, and prevention of illegal road user activity; SDG 5 on gender equality, and targets promoting more effective prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of violence against women and girls; SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, and targets related to the protection of labour rights, the delivery of skills and safety training, the implementation of safety protocols, and the provision of debriefing and counselling services to law enforcement personnel after critical or traumatic events; and SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, and targets pertaining to the prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of human trafficking.[36]

However, the DIHR/APCOF paper focused especially on SDGs 11 and 16, analysing all the targets for each, in depth, and making specific recommendations for indicator development to engage the justice and security sector. The full analysis of all SDGs is available in Annex 1 to that paper. Below, analysis related to targets 16.3 and 16.6 has been adapted as Table 3.

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35   Edwards and Tait, 'Justice, Security and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Africa'.

36   Ibid.

Table 3. Recommendations for indicator development under SDG targets 16.3 and 16.6

SDG Goal	Relevant Targets	Relevant Draft Indicators (as of November 2015)*	Relevance to Policing in Africa
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 16.3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all	Percentage of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms (also called crime reporting rate)***	Confidence in the police as reflected in reporting rates. Performance of the police in terms of key functions, in particular: › Effective intelligence-led investigations › Crime detection rates › Investigation and clearance rates › Training, including basic and in-service training, as well as specialist training in relation to detective services › Existence of support services such as forensic laboratories
		Unsentenced detainees as percentage of overall prison population**	The proposed measure is not the best measure of pretrial detention, and should rather consider the average length of time that detainees are held in pretrial detention. Role of the police in relation to pretrial detention is important, and policing performance should be measured in relation to: › Analysis of statistics on the number of people stopped and searched, arrested, charged and held in police custody to determine the extent of arbitrary arrest, and whether the use of arrest by the police is appropriate, non-discriminatory and within the limits of the law. › Number of criminal matters that are withdrawn or struck off the court roll, versus the number which result in a conviction or acquittal, to determine the quality of police dockets (i.e., investigations) › Information on the use of police bail › Average length of detention in police custody (i.e., adherence to the 24- or 48-hour rule)
	Target 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels	Primary government expenditures as a proportion of original approved budget, by sector (or by budget codes or similar) Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public service**	Effective mechanisms for before the fact oversight: › Policy and legislation › Establishment of oversight institutions › Police instructions Effective mechanisms for after the fact oversight: › Investigations of police abuse (internal and external accountability mechanisms) › Recommendations › Disciplinary action › Prosecutions

*These indicators were current as of 2 September 2015. ** This indicator was tentatively agreed to by members of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators; meaning, less than 25% of respondents expressed concerns or a need to discuss the indicator on a priority basis, and no members had strong opposing views. *** This indicator required more in-depth discussion or methodological development.*

Source: Edwards and Tait, 'Justice, Security and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Africa'.

By incorporating detailed analysis of the relationship between the SDGs and policing, the authors of the DIHR/APCOF paper sought to provoke debate about SDG implementation in Africa and raise the importance of integrating justice and security as interrelated areas of development. This was intended to ensure that development funding and planning on the continent did not simply replicate that of MDG implementation, but instead carefully considered new justice, safety, and security targets. Research underlying the paper supported subsequent work of APCOF in South Africa to inform and support stakeholders – including civil society partners – as they grappled with these new thematic areas in sustainable development. This required significant efforts aimed at understanding and mapping the effective measurement and implementation of SDG targets related to justice and security.

Notably, the DIHR/APCOF discussion paper also proposed a process for establishing national and regional indicators, to ensure a comprehensive and practical approach to the development and measurement of indicators for justice and security. The process involves three interdependent elements, all of which must be localized: awareness raising, partnership, and mapping. The first of these, knowledge dissemination and awareness raising, recognizes the need to localize information about the SDGs generally, and particularly about targets related to justice and security. Drafting the SDGs involved significant contributions from a range of state and non-state actors, but the work of APCOF to understand how SDG 16 targets were being nationalized indicated a disconnect between SDG development at UN Headquarters and the actors responsible for development planning at regional and local levels. This disconnect manifested in a lack formal linkage between more traditional SSR-focused processes and the new entry points for reform offered by SDG 16.

Engagement in partnerships and the use of focal points were proposed to ensure that information flowed between and among those responsible for SDG indicator development and monitoring at the state level, the various state institutions responsible for implementing SDG 16, and relevant stakeholders. Further, stakeholder partnerships were envisioned as a way to capture the informed participation of a range of experts, including academics and civil society representatives working at the intersection of justice and development, so that the process of formulating national indicator frameworks is not wholly political and is designed to promote the adoption of contextualized and measurable sustainable development planning.

Finally, the third element, mapping – which especially supports localization – was proposed to ensure that SDG planning accounts for and aligns with existing and planned SSR processes. Context mapping can encourage indicator development that reflects the operational reality of a country, revealing key entry points for implementation. This may include opportunities that exist through training, auditing, or existing development or SSR plans and priorities.

Engagement at the national level

This process for integrating SSR into SDG indicator development and VNR reporting was applied by APCOF at the national level in 2017, in its work to promote civil society involvement with development of an indicator framework for SDG 16 in South Africa. To that end, APCOF supported a UNDP project to develop an inclusive and participatory methodology aimed at strengthening the role of civil society in monitoring South African implementation of SDG 16. When South Africa was one of seven countries selected for this UNDP pilot project, it presented a unique opportunity for civil society in the country to engage directly with Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) – the government agency tasked with coordinating development and reporting in accordance with the national indicator framework – and to influence the ongoing development of national-level indicators for measuring progress towards SDG 16 targets.

To help prepare South Africa for success, APCOF undertook an initial gaps analysis on the draft monitoring framework already developed by Stats SA, to assess whether proposed national-level indicators were the most suitable determinants of progress. This analysis then formed the basis for discussion during two national, multi-stakeholder consultations, held by APCOF and UNDP to facilitate engagement between state actors (including Stats SA, as the institution tasked with national SDG indicator development and reporting) and non-state actors (civil society, academics, non-governmental organizations, and community-based organizations) on the question of how to measure progress towards SDG 16 in an inclusive and participatory manner. APCOF and other civil society organizations were subsequently invited by Stats SA to be a part of the Sectoral Working Group (SWG) on governance, peace, justice and security goals, which focused on SDG 16. The SWG on governance, peace, justice and security goals was one of a number of thematic working groups comprising relevant government departments, statutory institutions, and civil society that was formed to support SDG indicator development and VNR reporting in South Africa, and it is responsible for developing and finalizing official reporting

mechanisms for SDG 16. This has provided APCOF and other civil society organizations a 'seat at the table' as indicators are refined, and as data is collected and analysed in order to measure the progress of South Africa towards achieving SDG 16 targets.[37]

There is still one area of civil society engagement that requires further attention in South Africa, as civil society must be encouraged to play an even more active role in the SDG reporting process. Currently, civil society actors contribute by providing consultation, but they should be supported in harnessing the knowledge and expertise that exists within the sector, to contribute data and other information for use in South Africa's official SDG reporting. Stats SA has suggested that this could involve efforts to develop a methodological framework designed to verify the validity and usability of data collected by civil society in official SDG monitoring and reporting. To facilitate this, a mechanism will need to be created through which data collected by civil society organizations can directly inform measures of progress and the setting of priorities within justice and security objectives of the 2030 Agenda; either on the basis of reporting directly against indicators, or by providing contextual information related to progress or limitations in achieving targets against these indicators.

Engagement at the local level

At the local level, the work of APCOF has focused on laying the foundations to promote community-based and grassroots engagement with monitoring, reporting, and implementation of SDG 16 in South Africa. This began as part of APCOF's support to the efforts of UNDP to develop an inclusive and participatory methodology to strengthen the role of civil society in monitoring SDG 16 targets in the country. The achievements of that project included the development of a draft accessibility tool for civil society organizations (CSO). The CSO Tool, intended to empower communities to play an active and meaningful role in monitoring and reporting, was launched at a community event in 2017. Aiming to realize the spirit of the SDGs and 'leave no one behind', the objective was to provide a training module that would empower South Africans to participate directly in monitoring and reporting on SDG 16 targets, and to take ownership of implementation in their communities.

This approach can help ensure that progress towards SDG 16 is measured in an inclusive way, and accounts for the needs and priorities of all South Africans. It also provides a strong link to SDG Target 16.7, which calls for community participation and engagement in decision-making. The CSO Tool was designed to sensitize communities to SDG 16 and motivate them to both appreciate and promote the implementation of priority SDG targets in their communities. Additionally, it sets out a methodology to empower communities with an understanding of what SDG 16 means for their rights and development priorities, and helps them build the skills to collect, analyse, and report on the implementation of SDG 16 targets. The CSO Tool also encourages the involvement of communities in SDG 16 planning processes by ensuring that stakeholders are prepared with the skills and information to meaningfully participate in implementing SDG 16 targets.[38] Nevertheless, the Tool has yet to attract donor support, and lacking the funding to facilitate training, its potential to galvanize community participation in SDG reporting will remain unrealized.

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37   The SWG on governance, peace, justice and security goals was dormant following the submission of South Africa's VNR in 2019, but was reinstated in 2022 as the country prepared its follow-up report.

38   The Tool is structured as a train-the-trainer manual, designed specifically for paralegals who work at Community Advice Offices, but it can be used by any organization, institution, or group working on community mobilization and development efforts. It is divided into four learning modules, each accompanied by relevant activities and reference materials: (1) What is SDG 16; (2) How does SDG 16 affect my rights as a South African; (3) What does SDG 16 mean for my community; and (4) How will I take SDG 16 forward?

2.4.Conclusions and Recommendations

It has become clear that justice and security are enablers of sustainable development, as well as outcomes of sustainable development. Hence, if the 2030 Agenda is to be achieved, it is crucial that links between SSG/R and SDG 16 are mainstreamed, and that justice and safety are integrated into SDG planning at the national level. SDG 16 provides a useful framework for addressing SSG/R, as its targets provide police oversight mechanisms with a new entry point for ensuring that police accountability forms part of a state's international commitments. It also frames SSG/R as central to sustainable development.

Civil society organizations can contribute significantly to ensuring that justice and security are integrated into any development planning related to SDG 16 and its targets and indicators. The experience of APCOF, particularly in South Africa, has proven that this requires very much the same approach that the organization has adopted more broadly in its pursuit of improved police accountability: generating sufficient political will and support, building capacity within the state, and supporting a network of practitioners who promote accountability. First, political support is necessary to facilitate effective and integrated indicator development, measurement, reporting, and planning related to SDG 16 targets. In the African context, civil society can play a key role in assisting the state to achieve that by engaging in research and advocacy that communicates the links between pre-existing investment in SSG/R and development planning, and how this planning – if integrated – can support SDG implementation.

Of course, successful implementation can only be achieved if there is capacity within the government, the security and justice sector, and civil society to engage at a technical level with SDG 16 targets and indicators. APCOF has observed that, despite significant expertise and investment on SSG/R within a development context in Africa, the discourse does not always draw important connections between SDG 16 and the broader sustainable development agenda to promote and support SSG/R in tangible ways. However, where the political will for engagement exists alongside an appreciation of the technical expertise that can be brought to bear by civil society, these linkages become more visible, as APCOF learned in South Africa.

The work of APCOF in South Africa presented a unique opportunity for multi-sector engagement that had considerable influence on the ongoing development of national SDG 16 indicators, allowing organized and formal civil society actors to engage directly with the government agency Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). Yet, at the community level, APCOF found SDG 16 literacy – which would enable greater participation – lacking. Promoting community-based and grassroots engagement with the monitoring, reporting, and implementation of SDG 16 will require not only community sensitization and capacity building, but a means of capturing the data generated by civil society in SDG 16 monitoring and reporting. Civil society organizations such as APCOF have made efforts to play an awareness raising role regarding SDG 16 in the absence of government initiatives to do so. Still, the CSO Tool developed under the auspices of the UNDP project in South Africa, which was designed to respond to this challenge, is yet to find vital donor support that would facilitate its roll out into communities.

There is also a need to fund and develop a methodological framework for the inclusion of locally generated data in measuring and reporting on SDG 16, and to promote the incorporation of this data by Stats SA into measures of progress towards the achievement of SDG 16 targets. Until such a framework is developed, the role of civil society organizations in the reporting process will remain 'advisory', and the state will have no formal mechanism by which to harness the expertise and knowledge of civil society actors to assist in improving reporting, or to provide vital context for understanding (and addressing) the successes and challenges of meeting SDG 16 targets.

The following recommendations are based on the experiences of APCOF in working to promote the integration of SSG/R into SDG 16 monitoring, and are directed towards civil society partners seeking to strengthen coordination between SSG/R and SDG 16 processes.

> Civil society organizations working on SSG/R should advocate for the inclusion of contextualized indicators on justice and security in national SDG planning. To that end, civil society actors should engage decision-makers on issues of justice, security, and development and encourage them to use a participatory and inclusive approach to developing national indicators, such as by raising awareness in communities about new justice-related objectives introduced in the 2030 Agenda. Civil society organizations should also propose a process by which national and regional indicators can be established that ensures a comprehensive and practical approach to the development and measurement of justice and security indicators specifically.

> To ensure that progress towards SDG 16 is measured inclusively and against the needs and priorities of all, civil society organizations should work together with communities and with state authorities to develop methods for the transfer of data collected by civil society into viable sources of information for reporting. This will entail the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, so that the development of indicator frameworks is more than just a political process, and promote the adoption of contextualized measures into sustainable development planning.

> More work is needed to expand on the evidence base explicitly linking the police accountability agenda to SDG 16. Further, this link is not only to Target 16.6 and the development of effective, accountable, and transparent institutions, as policing can have a direct and tangible impact on the achievement of other targets within SDG 16 (and beyond). Civil society organizations should embark on research and advocacy that is grounded in contextual and situational analyses, to build evidence of how deeply integrated the national development and police reform agendas are, which can be leveraged to provide direct support meant to improve systems of oversight and accountability.

> Civil society organizations with expertise in development, and those with expertise in SSG/R (including police accountability), should be encouraged to find openings for collaboration and knowledge sharing as well as opportunities to provide technical guidance on the integration of their respective agendas. This could include work focused on how to develop and monitor contextualized targets and indicators in order to ensure the effective integration of justice and security issues into development planning.

> APCOF also notes that the relationship between development, security, and justice goes well beyond the scope of SDG 16. In other words, other SDGs and their targets also have direct implications for SSG/R. In fact, there is an interdependence and indivisibility between and amongst the SDGs, and this should be reflected in development planning related to SSG/R. Civil society should be encouraged to undertake mapping exercises that identify linkages between the SDGs and SSG/R, which could provide a useful evidence-base for subsequent engagement with the state on furthering the integration of sustainable development and SSG/R.

3. PRETRIAL JUSTICE REFORM AND GLOBAL SDG 16 INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF THE JUSTICE INITIATIVE

WRITTEN BY MARINA ILMINSKA (IN HER PRIVATE CAPACITY)
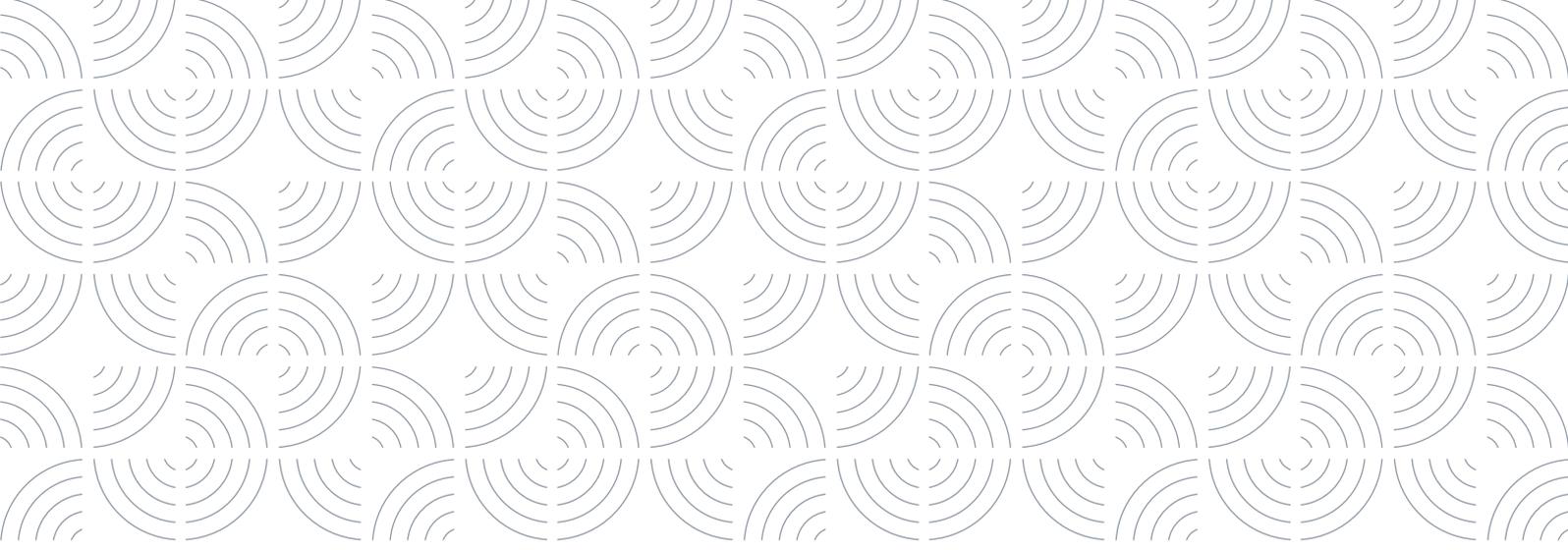
3.1. Introduction

The UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 rests on three pillars: peace, justice, and strong institutions. It is the justice pillar that is reflected in SDG Target 16.3, concerning promotion of the rule of law and equal access to justice. A state's progress in providing access to justice is assessed on the basis of several indicators, including 16.3.2 – commonly referred to as the 'pretrial detention indicator' – which captures the number of 'unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population'.[39] The inclusion of a pretrial detention indicator in the SDGs should be commended, as this phase of the justice process has traditionally been overlooked in discussions of the justice sector. Still, examples presented in this case study suggest that measuring only the number of unsentenced detainees as a proportion of the overall prison population cannot correctly diagnose the state of a criminal justice system or whether it is making adequate progress within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Accordingly, this text offers suggestions on how the pretrial detention indicator could be strengthened to better account for the functioning of criminal justice systems in practice, and also underlines how pretrial detention practices and challenges directly relate to security and to other goals incorporated into the SDGs.

Furthermore, the advocacy that led to the development of the 'civil justice indicator' (16.3.3) for SDG 16 is detailed in this study as well. The Open Society Foundations' Justice Initiative (JI) was actively involved in conceiving the indicator, which measures the 'proportion of the population who have experienced a dispute in the last two years and who accessed a formal or informal dispute resolution mechanism'.[40] The work of the JI in this area serves as an example of how civil society and other actors can engage in advancing the 2030 Agenda if they have the necessary technical expertise and capacity.

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39   See: SDG 16 Hub, 'SDG 16 Indicators', https://www.sdg16hub.org/landing-page/sdg-16-indicators (accessed 19 March 2023).
40   Ibid.

The JI is a technical assistance branch of the Open Society Foundations, a private foundation working in the field of human rights in more than 120 countries. The JI's mandate is to strive to secure legal remedies for human rights abuses and promote effective enforcement of the rule of law.[41] For almost twenty years, the work of the JI has tackled a wide variety of issues, has and has brought a special focus to civil and criminal justice through legal advocacy, legal empowerment initiatives, and the pilot testing of innovative solutions (together with civil society partners and/or government representatives, and other donors) to address malpractices on the ground, as well as by formulating and implementing litigation on a number of human rights issues. Recognizing that the justice and security sectors are closely intertwined and that actors mandated to provide security to communities (i.e., law enforcement agencies) must work hand-in-hand with actors mandated to ensure justice and accountability (i.e., courts and oversight bodies), the JI has also been actively involved in various initiatives to improve the provision of justice and security. These include the documentation of practices, advocacy and litigation aimed at ensuring effective justice provision and accountability, and efforts involving civil society and justice stakeholders to design and implement policies and reforms that improve the justice and security sectors in ways that are mutually beneficial to all.

For over a decade, the JI has also supported the development of national criminal justice reforms as a key thematic priority. Between 2008 and 2013, the organization partnered with national and regional civil society to spearhead a Global Campaign for Pretrial Justice, and it was under this umbrella that the JI focused its work on the pretrial stage – the gateway to the wider criminal justice system. The working hypothesis driving the Campaign was that any bottlenecks at the pretrial stage cause subsequent issues for judicial actors and for those in contact with the system (i.e., suspects, victims, and witnesses). This is a common challenge, given modest estimates that on any day, at least three million people are held in pretrial detention around the world.[42] On top of this, many more millions experience shorter police apprehensions before release, which are often undocumented in official police records.

Practices that create logjams in the justice system have a negative collateral effect on individuals, communities, and states in a way that directly impacts their capacity to achieve the 2030 Agenda, and particularly SDG 16. The inclusion of the pretrial detention and later on civil justice indicators in the 2030 Agenda has confirmed the importance and relevance of these processes and systems, not only to the justice and security sectors but to development more broadly. For the JI, the SDGs themselves and the SDG reporting mechanism at the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) have provided a platform to engage with a wider variety of policymakers and stakeholders in order to elevate justice sector issues and possible solutions, and to explore synergies with other actors that share an interest in implementing the 2030 Agenda. In this context, the JI has advocated for the prioritisation and strengthening of the pretrial detention indicator on the global (i.e., UN), regional, and national levels.

The JI and its partners have advocated for the inclusion of more data components to strengthen analyses of the work of justice systems beyond the pretrial stage as well, and have demonstrated through work in the field that it is feasible to collect a wide variety of data in nearly all jurisdictions. Furthermore, the JI played an important role in advocating for the creation of the civil justice indicator for SDG 16, and together with partners, sought to demonstrate not only that a civil justice indicator was necessary but that it is in fact possible to measure civil justice too.

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41   See: Open Society Justice Initiative, 'Who We Are', https://www.justiceinitiative.org/who-we-are (accessed 19 March 2023).

42   See: Open Society Justice Initiative, *Presumption of Guilt: The Global Overuse of Pretrial Detention* (New York, 2014), p. 1; and Roy Walmsley, 'World Pretrial/Remand Imprisonment List', fourth edition, February 2020, p. 2.

3.2. Contributions of the JI to SSG/R

Pretrial justice is so important to consider vis-à-vis security, especially as it relates to SDG 16, because estimates put the number of people who pass through pretrial detention each year at around fifteen million.[43] A precise number is unknown, due to an absence of more accurate data that results from problems with the data collection practices of justice institutions, a failure to record pretrial detentions, and a lack of proper maintenance of case files. But it is conservatively estimated that at least three million people are in pretrial detention at any given moment.[44] Many more millions come into contact with the police every day but may be placed in relatively short-term custody before being released; and it is not uncommon that these interactions are not officially recorded, and are not reflected as an original instance of pretrial detention if charges are eventually brought and a criminal case is pursued.

On average, nearly thirty per cent of incarcerated people worldwide are awaiting trial.[45] Yet, in many countries, particularly in the Global South, this figure can exceed ninety per cent; and some people may wait years for their first trial, or between their first and final trials.[46] These statistics clearly highlight that justice systems are not functioning as they should and are overburdened. As a result, the presumption of innocence until proven guilty is not always exercised, in favour of placing and keeping people in pretrial detention. This not only strains justice institutions but often denies or delays access to justice for suspects and victims alike, which comes at a considerable socio-economic cost to society and the state,[47] and could potentially underscore the importance of security sector reform (SSR) in some contexts. It is for these reasons that the JI has advocated for improvements to the pretrial detention indicator so that it more accurately assesses the reality of criminal justice systems.

Within its criminal justice and other programmatic portfolios, the JI has also partnered with civil society actors to document abuses and human rights violations committed by state agencies, and has supported the documentation and investigation of corruption that ranges from petty (e.g., police officers demanding money for a bail application, which is free under the law) to large scale. Additionally, the JI and external partners have advanced legal empowerment in local communities in several countries, and have offered capacity building training to legal aid providers and detention officers. The civil society partners with which the JI typically collaborates include community-based organizations that provide services across a country, national and international research organizations and institutions, and advocacy-oriented organizations. In its own advocacy work, the JI has successfully brought national-level partners to regional and/or global platforms to advocate jointly on issues or for specific policies.

Engagement by the JI in pretrial justice

As noted above, it is within the framework of the Global Campaign for Pretrial Justice that the JI has supported evidence gathering through research in a number of jurisdictions to assess the operational practices of security and justice actors and their effect on individuals and communities. The Campaign served as a means by which the JI could assess the validity of the hypothesis that practices at the pretrial detention stage have ripple effects across the criminal justice system. Along with civil society partners, the JI thus undertook three strains of work: designing and implementing field research to gather evidence on actual pretrial justice practices

in several countries, co-designing pilot projects to test alternative operational solutions, and developing advocacy narratives and activities.

The research carried out by the JI specifically examined the question of access to legal assistance for pretrial detainees, and also explored decision-making and modus operandi related to pretrial detention, as well as who was most commonly subject to pretrial detention in terms of their socio-economic status and previous criminal record. For example, this research revealed that the practice of sweep arrests (i.e., the apprehension of multiple or every individual who are in a place when police arrive) and the subsequent reliance on prolonged pretrial detention did not necessarily lead to justice

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43 Open Society Justice Initiative, *Presumption of Guilt*, p. 1.

44 Ibid. Also see: Walmsley, 'World Pretrial/Remand Imprisonment List'.

45 See: UNODC, 'Monitoring SDG 16 Key figures and trends', October 2021, p. 6; and Open Society Justice Initiative, 'Why We Need a Global Campaign for Pretrial Justice', Justice Fact Sheet, September 2009.

46 Walmsley, 'World Pretrial/Remand Imprisonment List'.

47 Open Society Foundations, 'When Pretrial Justice Fails', September 2019.

for victims or security for communities. Based on the data collected, and subsequent analysis, the JI and its partners conceived innovative pilot projects that imagined new ways to address problematic practices in the justice systems in several jurisdictions in Africa and Latin America.

At the same time, the JI developed narratives for advocacy that were rooted in findings from the research and in lessons learned from these pilot projects. This messaging was focused on how flawed practices in the pretrial justice system affect governments, communities, and individuals insofar as they result in negative socio-economic[48] and health impacts.[49] It also highlighted the fact that people placed in pretrial detention – even while awaiting a first court appearance – face a higher risk of becoming victims of corruption and extortion at the hands of justice actors, of ill-treatment or torture,[50] and of exposure to radicalization.[51]

Beyond the activities of the Global Campaign, the JI has also spent over a decade advocating for improved policies and legislation to improve access to justice, on the national, regional, and global levels. The theme of the organization's messaging was that improvements in practices and policies at the pretrial stage help alleviate overburdened criminal justice systems overall, and 'filter out' any people and cases that should not be in the system in the first place or could be resolved through other legal avenues. This work of the JI to improve the effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of the criminal justice sector has positioned the organization to advocate for greater urgency in implementing a modified pretrial detention indicator, which can serve as an important measure not only of how well a given justice system functions but also how that system affects other areas of society and the goals of the broader 2030 Agenda. The JI has also played a crucial role in educating stakeholders about why it is insufficient to only measure changes in the proportion of pretrial detainees to the overall prison population, and why this can even be misleading if the objective is to understand whether actual improvements to a criminal justice system have been achieved.

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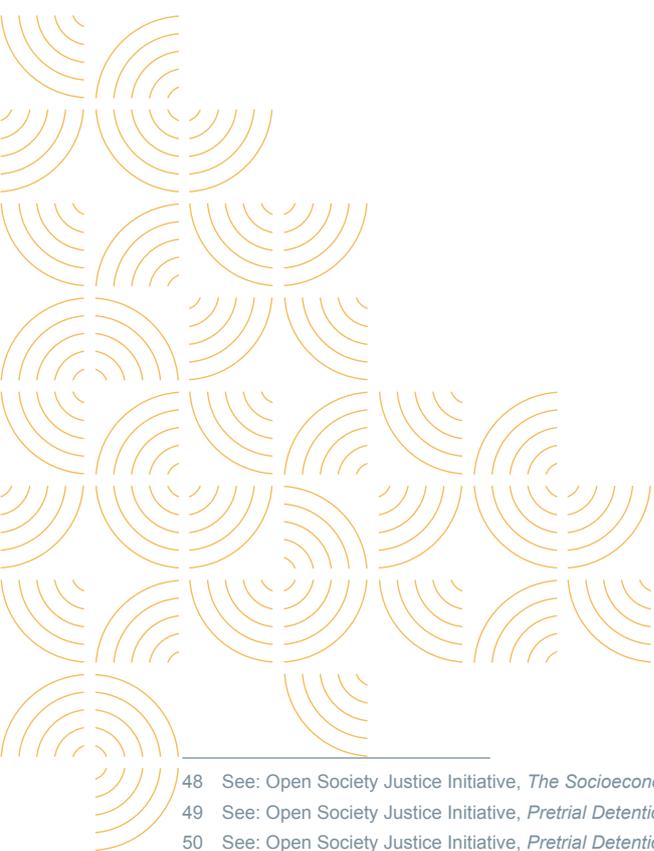
48   See: Open Society Justice Initiative, *The Socioeconomic Impact of Pretrial Detention* (New York, 2011).

49   See: Open Society Justice Initiative, *Pretrial Detention and Health: Unintended Consequences, Deadly Results* (New York, 2011).

50   See: Open Society Justice Initiative, *Pretrial Detention and Torture: Why Pretrial Detainees Are Most at Risk* (New York, 2011).

51   See: United Nations, 'United Nations System: Common Position on Incarceration', April 2021.

3.3. SDG 16 as a framework to address SSG/R

The reasons the JI sought to modify the pretrial detention indicator, and how the organization developed recommendations to do so, are worth elaborating on. During this process, the JI reached out to field partners and civil society actors to evaluate whether the implementation of changes they proposed was even possible with existing data, and if not, whether the necessary data could be collected relatively easily. The findings from this inquiry are laid out below, in sections describing the examples of Ukraine, Sierra Leone, and Brazil (as well as of India and Uganda in Appendix). Furthermore, a separate team at JI was tasked with advocating for the creation of a new civil justice indicator (which materialized as indicator 16.3.3). A synopsis of this work is also shared below, and provides another example of how civil society has engaged with the SDGs to promote justice sector reforms.

Highlighting and strengthening indicator 16.3.2.

Reflections on CSOs' awareness and involvement in the SDGs

Shortly after the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, it became apparent that the ability of civil society to effectively contribute to formal SDG monitoring and implementation processes was limited, for several reasons. While the SDGs created a new framework and platform by which civil society could raise issues with different audiences, and also offered opportunities for new collaborations, many civil society organizations did not have the institutional capacity to participate actively in discussions and in the implementation planning process, either at the country level or at the UN. In conversations with civil society actors, the JI found out that some were not even familiar with the SDGs. For organizations traditionally active in the justice field, this meant they were unaware of SDG 16 and the avenues it presents for promoting justice reform. At the same time, some civil society actors were aware of the SDGs and were eager to participate in monitoring and implementation, but were unable to do so, often due to resource constraints (i.e., their institutional capacity was limited and they lacked the financial resources to track and report on another implementation process, and thus required additional aid to engage with the SDGs and attend relevant meetings). These limitations to engagement by civil society with the SDGs has been a disadvantage to all, given that civil society organizations often possess rich technical expertise and greater access to local communities, and can be key policy analysis partners to governments, as this case study illustrates.

The JI's activities around 16.3.2.

In an effort to highlight the importance of access to and equality of justice through the prism of pretrial detention practices, in the context of the SDGs and based on the first rounds of reporting by member states to the UN HLPF, the JI launched advocacy activities at the global, regional, and national levels. The organization held advocacy events during United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) annual sessions (because UNODC is the custodian for indicator 16.3.2[52]) and other regional meetings, to draw attention to the indicator and present the JI's vision for how to improve it. These activities were shaped by in-house expertise, experience drawn from technical engagements in evidence collection, and strong relations with various civil society actors. The advocacy events and discussions that resulted were aimed at illuminating the ways pretrial detention directly affects the socio-economic welfare and security of communities and is also linked to other SDGs, and at building awareness and consensus around the need to strengthen indicator 16.3.2 during the review that was scheduled for 2020 at the UN when all originally approved indicators could be officially reviewed.

The JI argued that the existing approach was insufficient for effectively measuring whether progress was being made in criminal justice systems, especially on the issues of access to and equality of justice. Tracking only 'unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population' reveals nothing about the experiences of people in the system or how well it is managed. Table 4 (below) illustrates why this approach does not provide a comprehensive overview of criminal justice systems, as it ranks countries by their pretrial detention populations both as a percentage of their total prison populations and as a rate of their total

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52   In the context of the 2030 Agenda, custodian agencies refer to the UN bodies (and in some cases, other international organizations) responsible for compiling and verifying country data and metadata for specific SDG indicators, and for submitting that data, along with regional and global aggregates, to the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

national populations (per 100,000). For example, Nigeria (highlighted in bold for illustrative purposes), ranks 4th if its pretrial detainee population is measured against the total prison population, but ranks 13th if it is measured against its overall population. Conversely, the United States appears to rank below the global average when the assessment considers only its total prison population, but is atop the list when its pretrial detention population is viewed as a function of its national population. This exemplifies why the pretrial detention indicator (16.3.2) should be made more comprehensive, as it must evaluate more than a change in the proportion of pretrial detainees in the overall prison population to determine whether a criminal justice system is actually improving and how people within that system are impacted.

Table 4. A measure of pretrial detainee populations as a proportion of the total prison population (left) or per 100,000 of the national population (right)

Percentage of Unsentenced Prisoners		Detainees per 100,000 Persons	
Liberia	97%	United States	158
Pakistan	74%	South Africa	103
Bangladesh	69%	Russia	97
Nigeria	**65%**	Brazil	90
Turkey	51%	Turkey	84
Sierra Leone	49%	Mexico	84
Mexico	41%	Pakistan	43
Brazil	37%	Liberia	39
South Africa	31%	Bangladesh	35
United States	21%	Jamaica	26
Russia	16%	UK	23
Jamaica	15%	Sierra Leone	20
UK	15%	Nigeria	**19**

Source: Materials from the Global Campaign for Pretrial Justice, on file with the author.

To address these shortcomings, the JI has advocated that the following 'sub-indicators' be added:

> Duration of pretrial detention

> Access to legal aid (and its impact on pretrial detention-related or final outcomes)

> Breakdown by age, gender, race/ethnicity

> Type of crime vs. excessive requests for pretrial detention

The systematic collection and analysis of these categories of data would generate more accurate insights into any criminal justice system than the current indicator alone. These proposed sub-indicators were conceived to enhance the existing indicator and are based on the work of the JI, developed together with civil society partners from several countries and piloted through justice institutions (e.g., in Mexico). Table 5 (below) shows the data that should be collected and analysed by justice institutions, even outside the reporting process for SDG 16. These more detailed sub-indicators can help inform pretrial detention decision-making processes (e.g., related to its duration or frequency of use), and can help justice actors and policymakers more clearly assess their pretrial justice systems.

Table 5. Proposed 'sub-indicators', by category and category-specific indicators

Category	Indicator
Risk to liberty	Number of people arrested by the police per 100,000 of jurisdiction's population. Number of defendants subjected to pretrial detention.
Duration of pretrial detention	Average duration of pretrial detention. Number or proportion of defendants in pretrial detention in excess of a defined period.
Frequency (and exceptionality) of the use of pretrial detention	Number or rate of pretrial detention requests by the prosecution. Number of pretrial detentions ordered by judicial officers.
Defendants' compliance with the conditions of pretrial release	Number or proportion of defendants complying with judicial officers' pretrial measures.
Legitimacy of the criminal justice system	Number or proportion of acquitted pretrial detainees. Number or proportion of pretrial detainees who receive a non-custodial sentence.

Source: Open Society Justice Initiative, 'Strengthening Pretrial Justice: A Guide to the Effective Use of Indicators', 2015, p. 6.

In support of its proposal, the JI has produced several country-studies (showcasing different parts of the world and different socio-economic conditions) to demonstrate the type of data it is possible to gather (and/or should be collected) in relation to the pretrial stage of the criminal justice process. This data would then be used to inform governments and policymakers on the actual state of respective criminal justice systems. The goal was also to show that, in many countries, much of the data needed for the proposed sub-indicators is already being collected by various justice and/or civil society actors. In these places, additional technical or financial resources are not necessarily needed, but relevant actors may require support to develop better coordination and information exchange for analysis and policy planning purposes. To determine whether data required for the sub-indicators was already being collected in the countries under study, JI staff worked with local civil society partners. The outcomes of this exercise for the case of Ukraine are shown below (also see Appendix for data from Uganda and India).

In Brazil and Sierra Leone, where two different types of initiatives were piloted by JI partners based on preliminary data analysis and findings, valuable recommendations emerged as well as new understandings of what is possible even in challenging contexts. These cases are summarized below as well. Collectively, the results of this work has helped the JI tailor its own recommendations and advocacy regarding what data ought to be collected, and how, in order

to best assess a justice system. Specifically, pretrial detention data should:

> measure more than a change in the proportion of pretrial detainees to the total prison population; and

> be drawn from already existing data or collected anew in a way that is not a burden, with better coordination among various relevant agencies and organizations.

And it should not:

> create perverse incentives, such as statistical goals (quotas) for justice actors that must be met within a set time period.

Data collection in Ukraine

In 2018, the JI filed an information request with the Ukrainian Legal Aid Foundation (ULAF), a non-profit organization that collaborates with legal aid providers. The JI shared Table 5 (above) with the ULAF and requested that it be populated with any data which was already being collected, if any such data existed. A sample of the existing data that was provided, for the years 2013 to 2017, is shown in Table 6 (below).

Table 6. Data for proposed 'sub-indicators', collected in Ukraine, 2013–2017

Category	Indicator	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Risk to liberty	No. arrested by the police per 100,000 of the general population	147	132	149	164	190
	No. defendants subjected to pretrial detention (PTD)	66,738	59,745	63,761	70,062	80,749
Duration of pretrial detention	Average duration of PTD	-	-	-	-	-
	No. or % of defendants in PDT in excess of a defined period	-	-	-	-	-
Frequency (and exceptionality) of the use of pretrial detention	No. or rate of PTD requests by the prosecution	159 *(granted alternative to PTD which was originally requested by prosecution)*	623 *(granted alternative to PTD which was originally requested by prosecution)*	1445 *(granted alternative to PTD which was originally requested by prosecution)*	1750 *(granted alternative to PTD which was originally requested by prosecution)*	1805 *(granted alternative to PTD which was originally requested by prosecution)*
	No. of PTD ordered by judicial officers	-	-	-	-	-
Defendants' compliance with the conditions of pretrial release	No. or % of defendants complying with judicial officers' pretrial measures	-	-	-	-	-
Legitimacy of the criminal justice system	No. or % of acquitted pretrial detainees	45 *Number of acquitted*	142 *Number of acquitted*	193 *Number of acquitted*	174 *Number of acquitted*	157 *Number of acquitted*
	No. or % of pretrial detainees who receive a non-custodial sentence	477 *Number of cases closed based on lack of evidence*	235 *Number of cases closed based on lack of evidence*	274 *Number of cases closed based on lack of evidence*	375 *Number of cases closed based on lack of evidence*	159 *Number of cases closed based on lack of evidence*

Source: Ukrainian Legal Aid Foundation.

In addition to the data requested by the JI, the ULAF conveyed that legal aid providers in Ukraine also collect data on pro bono lawyers assigned to people in detention, the number of those who decline legal aid, and detailed data on the effectiveness of any legal aid that is provided. This is collected for internal analysis, so that legal aid organizations can assess the volume and quality of their work, and is presented in Table 7 (below) because it offers an overview of the type of data that may feasibly be collected.

Table 7. Data on the effectiveness of legal assistance provided in Ukraine

Indicator	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of granted (softer) alternative to PTD which was originally requested by prosecution	159	623	1,445	1,750	1,805
Number of cases that ended in non-custodial sentence	-	2,999	6,840	7,107	6,396
Number of decreased gravity of accusations	733	760	1,156	1,332	946
Number of cases closed based on lack of evidence to prove the crime or guilt of defendant(s)	477	235	274	375	159
Number of cases resulting in the minimal sentence or "softer" sentence than prescribed by law	-	500	2,417	2,409	2,748
Acquittals (number of cases/not %)	45	142	193	174	157

Source: Ukrainian Legal Aid Foundation

The JI engaged with civil society partners in Uganda and India to determine whether similar data was already being collected there as well. In Uganda, the JI partner Penal Reform International reported that some of the data in Table 5 was not readily available or was not being collected but that the organization was collecting other categories of data that had not been included in the Table, related to the duration of pretrial detention and the gender of detainees (see Appendix). In India, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative was also already collecting additional types of data, for example by capturing deaths in custody (and its causes), data on the provision of legal aid, and expenditures per capita for legal aid, as well as what they refer to as a measure of 'legitimacy of the criminal justice system' – which is evaluated by tracking numbers of acquitted people, and those released on appeal, bail, etc. (see Appendix).

Pilot project: Data collection in Pernambuco, Brazil

In 2018 and 2019, the JI partnered with Gestos – a civil society organization that supports the advancement of human, social, environmental, and other rights in Brazil[53] – to design and implement a pilot project aimed at collecting available data on people's access to justice and progress on SDG 16 in the state of Pernambuco. Brazil was an important location for analysis because its prison population is one of the largest in the world, for reasons that include the country's fragile public security situation, high rates of gang violence, and the authority vested in security forces. These factors make Brazil particularly illustrative of the interconnectedness of the security sector, criminal justice sector, and pretrial detention practices, and how these practices affect the work of security and justice actors and impact local communities.

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53   See (in Portuguese): Gestos, 'Quem Somos', https://gestos.org.br/ (accessed 19 March 2023).

Gestos was well-positioned to lead the implementation of this work on the ground, as its staff had actively followed the 2030 Agenda process at the UN and at the national level, and had experience in preparing monitoring reports (e.g., on the topic of public health in the framework of 2030 Agenda) and in coordinating a diverse network of stakeholders. The main objectives of the project were to assess how much of the data needed to measure the proposed sub-indicators was already available and, based on the results, to initiate policy discussions with relevant national stakeholders. Gestos found that much of the data in question was already being collected, but that it was gathered or managed by assorted state agencies. Nonetheless, the organization located and collated much of the necessary data, demonstrating that it is possible to do so even where data collection is decentralized.

Brazil: Country Background

This data revealed a clear trend, seen in Table 8 (below); namely, a steady increase in the numbers of both the convicted and pretrial detention populations in Brazil from 2000 to 2015. These numbers support the position of the JI and other partners that tracking unsentenced detainees as a proportion of an overall prison population does not necessarily infer anything about that criminal justice system, even if the proportion decreases. Indeed, in Brazil this percentage has dropped in the last decades and is within the global average (i.e., around 30 per cent of the total prison population), but measuring the number of pretrial detainees as a rate of the national population exposes that the pretrial population has more than doubled in that same time.

Table 8. Trends in pretrial and overall prison populations in Brazil, 2000–2020[54]

Year	Number in Pretrial/Remand Imprisonment	Percentage of Total Prison Population	Pretrial/Remand Populations Rate (per 100,000 of national population)
2000	80,775	34.7%	46
2005	102,116	34.4%	55
2010	164,683	36.9%	84
2015	261,786	37.5%	128
2020	234,845	28.9%	110

Source: World Prison Brief, 'Brazil', https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/brazil.

This data also offers no indication of the quality and equality of access to justice, including at the pretrial stage, or the experiences of people throughout the criminal justice process. The Brazilian state of Pernambuco was chosen as a location for the JI pilot project because it exhibits many of the criminal justice challenges that are present in communities across the country. In 2015, Pernambuco led Brazilian states with the highest rate of prison overpopulation,[55] and the longest pretrial detention duration.[56]

Through the project, Gestos and local implementing partners discovered that several public databases existed, yet data on the background of prisoners or detainees (such as age, race, their belonging to a vulnerable group, etc.) was only collected for some 20–30 per cent of the total prison population. Furthermore, despite the fact that access to legal aid is guaranteed by Brazilian law, Gestos found that 62 per cent of prisons did not provide regular access to this right, as Table 9 shows.

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54   The 'remand population' refers to those in detention who have not been convicted.

55   Human Rights Watch, 'The State Let Evil Take Over: The Prison Crisis in the Brazilian State of Pernambuco', 19 October 2015, https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/10/19/state-let-evil-take-over/prison-crisis-brazilian-state-pernambuco (accessed 20 March 2023).

56   Conselho Nacional de Justiça, 'Levantamento dos Presos Provisórios do País e Plano de Ação dos Tribunais' ['Survey of Provisional Prisoners in the Country and Action Plan for the Courts'], 23 February 2017, https://www.cnj.jus.br/levantamento-dos-presos-provisorios-do-pais-e-plano-de-acao-dos-tribunais/ (accessed 20 March 2023).

Table 9. Systematic provision of free legal assistance in prisons in Pernambuco, as of June 2016

Systematic Provision of Free Legal Assistance in Prison	Number	Percentage
Prison with no systematic provision of free legal assistance	49	62%
Prison with provision of free legal assistance by the Office of the Public Defender	25	32%
Prison with provision of free legal assistance by contracted or voluntary lawyers	4	5%
Prison with provision of free legal assistance by NGO or other non-profit entity	1	1%
Prison with free legal assistance provided in some other way	9	11%

Adapted from: Gestos, 'A Agenda 2030 e o Acesso à Justiça: Relatório sobre Audiências de Custódia em Pernambuco, Brasil', 2019, p. 11. Data source: National Penitentiary Department of the Brazilian Ministry of Justice, Infopen report by the for the state of Pernambuco, 2016.[57]

Among the outputs of the pilot project in Pernambuco was a report published by Gestos that presented the results of data analysis and captured conversations with justice sector professionals.[58] The report included a number of recommendations, including that authorities in Brazil should:

> Invest in training for criminal justice system professionals on cross-cutting themes (gender, race, age) and their impact on public security; review policies for flagrante delicto arrests and the focus on 'achieving targets', which results in 'distortions in both police and judicial practice'; and review the national training curriculum for police officers and law graduates.

> Develop trainings for community organizations to 'deepen their knowledge on access to justice and SDG 16'.

> Ensure the collection of 'disaggregated pretrial justice data' to fill key information gaps and support the monitoring of access to justice and SDG 16.[59]

Pilot project: Data collection in Sierra Leone

The case of Sierra Leone serves as a valuable example of how multiple stakeholders (government and civil society) can come together in a collaborative partnership to proactively prioritize SDG 16, and specifically the pretrial detention indicator.[60] This same partnership has facilitated joint work to prepare the country's Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), and has ensured that relevant and detailed data is regularly collected and discussed in order to assess the condition of the justice system and its impact on implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sierra Leone. The fact that Sierra Leone has been able to carry out this kind of data collection, analysis, and policy process proves that this is feasible in a context where resources are limited. Indeed, to streamline in-country collaborations, monitoring, and implementation of the SDGs, Sierra Leone opted to create a special SDG governance structure, combining a presidential body 'to provide overall policy and strategic guidance' with a steering committee 'to provide operational guidance to… government ministries, departments, and agencies' and to civil society, media, and the private sector.[61] Guided by the motto of 'Leaving No One Behind', which drives the 2030 Agenda, this structure has ensured that the 'welfare of the incarcerated and effectiveness of [the] justice system' is considered in the country's VNRs through the inclusion of relevant data. It has also developed a country-level goal for pretrial detention rates.[62]

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57   See: Portal de Dados Ministério da Justiça [Data Portal, Ministry of Justice], 'Infopen – Levantamento Nacional de Informações Penitenciárias', https://dados.mj.gov.br/dataset/infopen-levantamento-nacional-de-informacoes-penitenciarias (accessed 20 March 2023).

58   Gestos, 'A Agenda 2030 e o Acesso à Justiça: Relatório sobre Audiências de Custódia em Pernambuco, Brasil', 2019. NB : This report was published in Portuguese, but an English version is on file with the author.

59   Ibid., p. 21.

60   Government of Sierra Leone, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, 'The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Adaptation of The Goals in Sierra Leone – Progress Report', December 2015. See Annex 2, p. 28.

61   Government of Sierra Leone, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, 'The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Summary Report of Adaptation of the Goals in Sierra Leone', May 2016, p. 4.

62   Government of Sierra Leone (presentation at the UN HLPF, 'Adapting the SDGs to National Development Planning Processes in Sierra Leone', New York, 19 July 2016).

Legal Aid Board Sierra Leone, a non-profit organization that offers both civil and criminal legal assistance and is at the forefront of advancing access to justice across the country, is central to the collection of data relevant not only to indicator 16.3.2 but to the sub-indicators recommended by the JI.[63] The organization collects this data in order to assess indicators they have developed independently, for example measuring the provision of legal advice by paralegals. Importantly, the Legal Aid Board also disseminates detailed data for public discussion,

illustrating that this is indeed possible in a range of jurisdictions with various capacities and resources.

In Tables 10 and Figure 1 (below), examples of the types of data that have been collected, analysed, discussed, and publicized by Legal Aid Board Sierra Leone are presented. Some of this data has also been incorporated into the country's SDG progress reports. Table 10 shows figures relating to detainees represented by the legal aid provider(s) and disaggregates this data by gender and separate tracking of juveniles in addition to adults.

Table 10. Types of data collected in Sierra Leone, September 2015–March 2019

Indicator	Category				Total
	# of Males	# of Females	# of Boys	# of Girls	
# of legal representation	31,299	4,529	4,801	694	41,323
# of inmates discharged on court orders through LAB representation	9,625	2,005	2,116	273	14,046
# of inmates acquitted and discharged on court orders through LAB representation	3,115	1,432	902	135	5,584
# of sentenced inmates	3,823	222	146	48	4,239
# of closed files	6,561	498	651	402	8,112
# of sentenced and fined inmates	2,523	288	171	103	3,085
# of maintenance order	-	-	406	572	978
# of matters on bail	1,929	387	315	196	2,827
# of committal to high court	469	64	34	19	586
# of transfer cases	513	63	48	15	639
# of ongoing matters	1,096	61	58	12	1,227
# of HABEAS CORPUS matters represented	114	3	-	-	117

Source: Carlton-Hanciles, presentation, 'Introducing Legal Aid in Sierra Leone', 2019.

In addition, Legal Aid Board Sierra Leone disaggregates this data even further, to analyse age group trends and the types of crimes of which detainees are accused or convicted. This helps the organization better understand who is more likely to commit crimes and how they experience the justice system, starting from the first point of contact. The importance of data disaggregated specifically by

age group, as shown in Figure 1, is that it captures information about the youth population (age 15–35), among whom the crime rate is highest in Sierra Leone. Legal Aid Board leadership works from the premise that 'young people are crucial' to a state's development, and thus focuses on securing their release from detention as a means of promoting and supporting national development.[64]

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63   Claire Carlton-Hanciles, Executive Director, Legal Aid Board Sierra Leone (presentation, 'Introducing Legal Aid in Sierra Leone', World Justice Forum, The Hague, 29 April–2 May 2019). On file with author.

64   Ibid.

Figure 1. Age range of discharged inmates in Sierra Leone, September 2015–March 2019
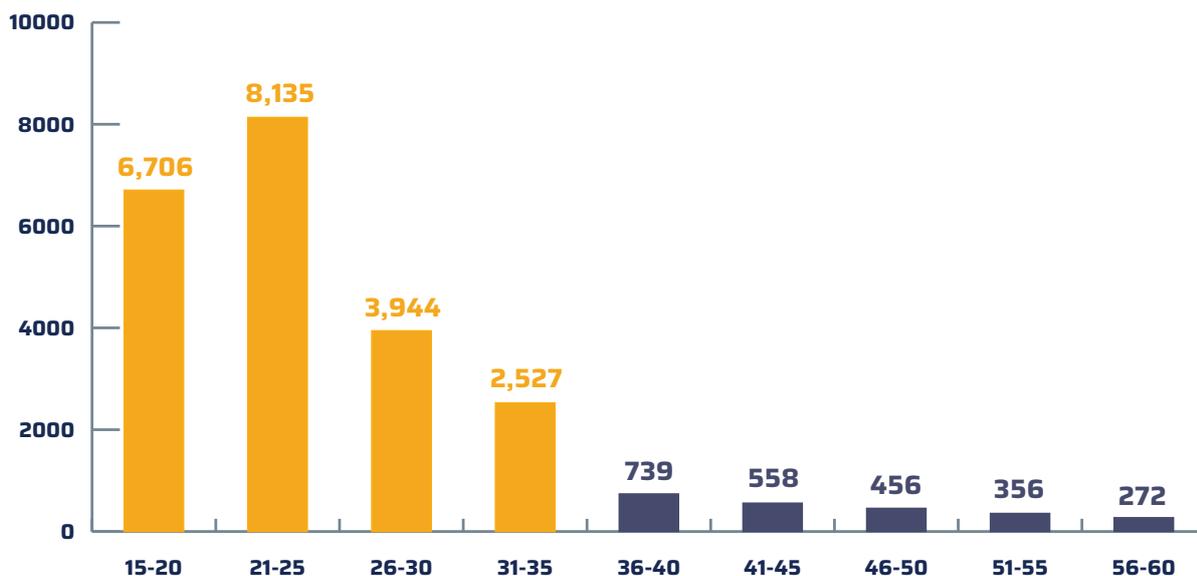
Source: Carlton-Hanciles, presentation, 'Introducing Legal Aid in Sierra Leone', 2019.

This investment in identifying who is in contact with the justice system and what they experience, and linking this to effects on the wider development aims of the country, was emphasized in Sierra Leone's 2021 VNR, which noted:

"In general, prioritising both education (SDG4) and justice (SDG 16) is central to pursuing other goals, such as 1 (ending poverty), 2 (zero hunger) and 10 (inequality), as well as 3 (healthcare) and 5 (gender). For instance, increasing access to justice as an entitlement and basic need is fundamental to stemming rural multidimensional poverty, currently estimated at 86.3 percent, as well as income poverty at 73.9 percent; compared to 37.6 and 34.8 percent for urban areas, respectively." [65]

This also reflects the interdependence of justice processes and wider human, as well as security, concerns, and the importance of the pretrial detention indicator (and proposed sub-indicators) to the broader 2030 Agenda, including effective access to justice services and SSR.

Supporting the development of the civil justice indicator (16.3.3)

When the original SDG 16 indicators for measuring access to justice relied on statistical data related to victims and pretrial detention, the focus was on criminal justice at the exclusion of civil justice. Yet, even before the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, there had already been a growing consensus among diverse stakeholders that notions of access to justice ought to be reframed to include matters of civil justice and the experiences of people in the justice system.[66] Hence, the lack of inclusion of an indicator on civil justice within SDG target 16.3 was an opportunity to launch a collaborative advocacy campaign on the need to develop and formally adopt an additional indicator to assess the state of civil justice. This was deemed critical to truly ensuring access to justice for all.[67]

Numerous organizations collaborated in this campaign with the JI, among them the World Justice Project (WJP) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). For the purposes of illustrating the campaign, only a few are named with an understanding that many more partners contributed to the process.

65   Government of Sierra Leone, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, *2021 VNR Report on SDGs in Sierra Leone* (2021), p. 14.

66   Open Society Justice Initiative, 'Justice 2015: Measuring Justice in the Post-2015 Development Framework', Factsheet, December 2013.

67   See the '16.3.3 Indicator Proposal: Access to Civil Justice', available at: https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/16.3.3%20 Flyer_Access%20to%20Civil%20Justice_final_en.pdf (accessed 20 March 2023).

For example, some governments also played an instrumental role, by advocating bilaterally for the addition of a civil justice indicator through the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), including Canada, the US, the UK, and South Africa.[68] Overall, this advocacy work aimed to:

> Demonstrate that measuring civil justice is feasible.

> Convince relevant stakeholders that a non-UN agency could act as a custodian for an SDG indicator.

> Ensure the creation, approval, and inclusion of the civil justice indicator in SDG 16.

To this end, stakeholders took on different roles in implementing a multi-level advocacy effort, including through the auspices of IAEG-SDG, as mentioned above. Alongside formal processes, the JI convened an informal working group that included representatives from the WJP and experts on statistics and data gathering, to focus specifically on work related to the civil justice indicator and to create space for dialogue between political and policy actors and professionals in the field of statistics. This connected the 'technical' side of the work to the political domain and helped demonstrate the viability of the indicator, as it had been a challenge to overcome traditional views that only 'hard' metrics were valid inputs for indicators and that measuring the provision of justice was problematic, given the absence of 'hard' metrics. [69]

To demonstrate that measuring justice was indeed feasible, the WJP took on the role of a technical partner and successfully gathered and analysed relevant data in over 100 countries. WJP proposed that civil justice experiences could be measured through four key questions:

1. Did you experience a legal problem in the last two years?
2. What was the most recent problem?
3. Did you take it to an authority to resolve the problem?
4. [IF YES] Where did you take it? [IF NO] Why not?

Through an analysis of the data that was generated, WJP was able to illustrate that the omission of a civil justice indicator in the 2030 Agenda represented a gap too large to ignore. Their findings showed that 1.4 billion people around the world have unmet civil justice needs, 'due to low levels of legal capability, problems accessing appropriate help, and poor dispute resolution processes, among other issues'.[70] Moreover, the data made clear that 'justice issues go to the heart of people's social, economic, and physical well-being'.[71] These results, along with an intensive advocacy process in 2019, persuaded the IAEG-SDG to recommend the addition of the civil justice indicator within SDG 16. Advocates also emphasized that a non-UN agency could act as custodian of the indicator; and since the OECD had been actively involved in the process of creating the civil justice indicator, it was eventually as appointed as co-custodian of the indicator, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The outcome of this work, SDG 16 indicator 16.3.3, measures the: 'Proportion of the population who have experienced a dispute in the past two years and who accessed a formal or informal dispute resolution mechanism, by type of mechanism'.[72] Obstacles encountered along the way to creating this new indicator, especially in the early stages – including institutional resistance, a lack of capacity and awareness among some national statistical officers who were unprepared to conceptualize a civil justice indicator or were sceptical it was measurable, and issues with generating a large enough dataset (which WJP managed to tackle by carrying out surveys in countries across the globe) – offer valuable lessons for future indicator development.

Time will show how actively the UN member-states and/or third parties will choose to implement and report on this indicator nationally as well as to the UN HLPF.

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68   For more on the IAEG-SDG and its mandate, see: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/ (accessed 20 March 2023).

69   This summary of advocacy work related to developing the civil justice indicator is based on an interview by the author with Aidan Harris, former Program Officer with the Advocacy Program at the Justice Initiative and lead for SDG Advocacy work, June 2022.

70   World Justice Project, *Measuring the Justice Gap: A People-Centered Assessment of Unmet Justice Needs Around the World* (Washington, DC, 2019), p. 7.

71   World Justice Project, *Global Insights on Access to Justice: Findings from the World Justice Project General Population Poll in 101 Countries* (Washington, DC, 2019), p. 4.

72   See: SDG 16 Hub, 'SDG 16 Indicators'.

3.4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Although the 2030 Agenda is time bound, thematically diverse, and ambitious, it has provided an important opportunity to raise awareness of justice issues with new audiences at the global, regional, and national levels. It has also offered a platform by which state actors can be held to their own commitments to meet or move towards the goals of the SDGs, and brings various actors together to advocate on cross-cutting issues. This is important because issues related to accessing justice cannot be addressed without accounting for the experiences of people across all parts of the justice system, civil and criminal. All stages in the legal process must also be considered and comprehensively assessed, as early contacts with the justice system – such as in pretrial detention – have wide implications and directly affect the socio-economic wellbeing of communities and societies, as well as public safety and security.

This has driven the advocacy of the JI and its partners to improve the pretrial detention indicator (16.3.2), and initiatives to showcase the kinds of data that can and should be collected in order to properly evaluate a criminal justice system, as well as the equality of and access to justice within it. This data is captured in the sub-indicators proposed by the JI (see Table 9), which are formulated to spotlight the operational practices of justice and security actors and point towards potential policy reforms, including by identifying bottlenecks in the system. Together with local civil society partners, the JI has demonstrated through in-country work that much of the data needed to measure these proposed sub-indicators is already available and should be included in VNRs and in relevant policy and reform discussions more generally.

The work of the JI to advocate for improved and altogether new indicators, and to raise awareness about the broader implications of pretrial detention practices on development, has been undertaken in a wide variety of contexts and with diverse local partners. This has added to the richness of lessons learned in this process, clarifying a number of recommendations for different categories of stakeholders:

Recommendations for policymakers

> In jurisdictions where the data points described in Table 9 are not collected, policymakers should look to already available practices used elsewhere through peer-exchange to learn about or improve their own data collection practices and applications (which can simplify and lower the cost of re-formulating those practices).

> Coordination among the national agencies (i.e., statistical bureaus or relevant ministry departments) and civil society actors involved in SDG monitoring and reporting processes should be improved to enhance the exchange and analysis of the data collected.

Recommendations for governments and/or bodies responsible for reporting to the UN HLPF

> Use the data collected for VNRs, including by civil society, to assess the state of the criminal justice system and security sector.

> On the basis of this assessment, develop a clear action plan for reform.

Recommendations for the UN

> Make the active participation of civil society in the UN HLPF more feasible and accessible by simplifying the rules of engagement.

> Include reports prepared by civil society organizations in the official monitoring process; for, as this case study shows, many of these organizations possess rich and valuable data that sheds significant light on the state of justice systems, and particularly on progress related to SDG 16 and its indicators.

Recommendations for civil society

> Develop peer networks to enhance capacities and share workloads in the process of preparing monitoring reports on SDG 16 and organizing public discussions of findings and recommendations.

> Proactively seek opportunities to create synergies with state agencies to work together on implementing SDG 16.

3.5. Appendix

Additional examples of the pretrial detention data already collected in Uganda and India

Table 11. Pretrial data from Uganda

Year	Total Polulation of Persons	Pretrial Detainees	# of Sentenced Detainees	Women Prisoners	Average Duration of Remand Detainees
2006	29,298	18,461	10,832	-	3 months - 2 years
2007	26,050	17,134	8,916	-	5 months - 3 years
2008	28,337	15,134	13,203	1,070	2 months - 4 years
2009	20,209	10,701	9,508	-	1 month - 4 years
2010	30,312	18,597	11,715	1,296	10 months - 3 years
2011	31,959	16,658	15,301	-	2 months - 3 years
2012	34,940	18,980	15,960	1,447	4 months - 3 years
2013	38,177	21,711	16,466	1,592	2 months - 2 years
2014	42,193	22,937	19,256	1,799	4 months - 1 year
2015	45,314	25,068	19,978	1,879	2 months - 10.5 months
2016	48,714	26,757	21,957	2,358	-
2017	54,059	32,443	21,616	2,579	-

Source: The Uganda office of Penal Reform International, based on a request to Ugandan authorities.

Table 12. Pretrial population in Uganda, 2005–2022

Year	Number in Pretrial/Remand Imprisonment	Percentage of Total Prison Population	Pretrial/Remand Populaions Rate (per 100,000 of national population)
2005	15,163	58.0%	53
2008	15,134	59.4%	48
2011	16,658	54.4%	49
2015	24,803	54.5%	63
2022	34,646	50.5%	71

Source: World Prison Brief, 'Uganda', https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/uganda.

Table 13. Pretrial detention rates in India

Year	Population	Proportion	Male	Female
2015				
Pretrial detainees	282,076	67.2%	270,160	11,916
Convicted	134,168	32%	128,428	5,740
2014				
Pretrial detainees	278,503	67.6%	265,815	12,688
Convicted	129,608	31.5%	124,263	5,345
2013				
Pretrial detainees	278,503	67.6%	265,815	12,688
Convicted	129,608	31.5%	124,263	5,345
2012				
Pretrial detainees	254,857	66.2%	243,055	11,802
Convicted	127,789	33.2%	122,776	5,013

Source: Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, based on data from NCRB Prison Statistics India.

Table 14. Duration of pretrial detention in India

Year	Duration	Up to 3 Months	3 to 6 Months	6 to 12 Months	1 to 2 Years	2 to 3 Years	3 to 5 Years	Above 5 Years
2015	Number	99,398	61,886	50,176	37,676	17,890	11,451	3,599
	Percent	35.2	21.9	17.8	13.4	6.3	4.1	1.3
2014	Number	98,484	62,339	50,618	36,247	19,599	12,052	3,540
	Percent	34.8	22	17.9	12.8	6.9	4.3	1.3
2013	Number	105,457	59,344	49,155	34,448	17,210	9,842	3,047
	Percent	37.9	21.3	17.6	12.4	6.2	3.5	1.1
2012	Number	96,207	56,306	44,954	31,564	15,092	8,706	2,028
	Percent	37.7	22.1	17.6	12.4	5.9	3.4	0.8

Source: Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, based on data from NCRB Prison Statistics India.

4. INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN VNRS: THE CASE OF CSPPS

WRITTEN BY PETER VAN SLUIJS
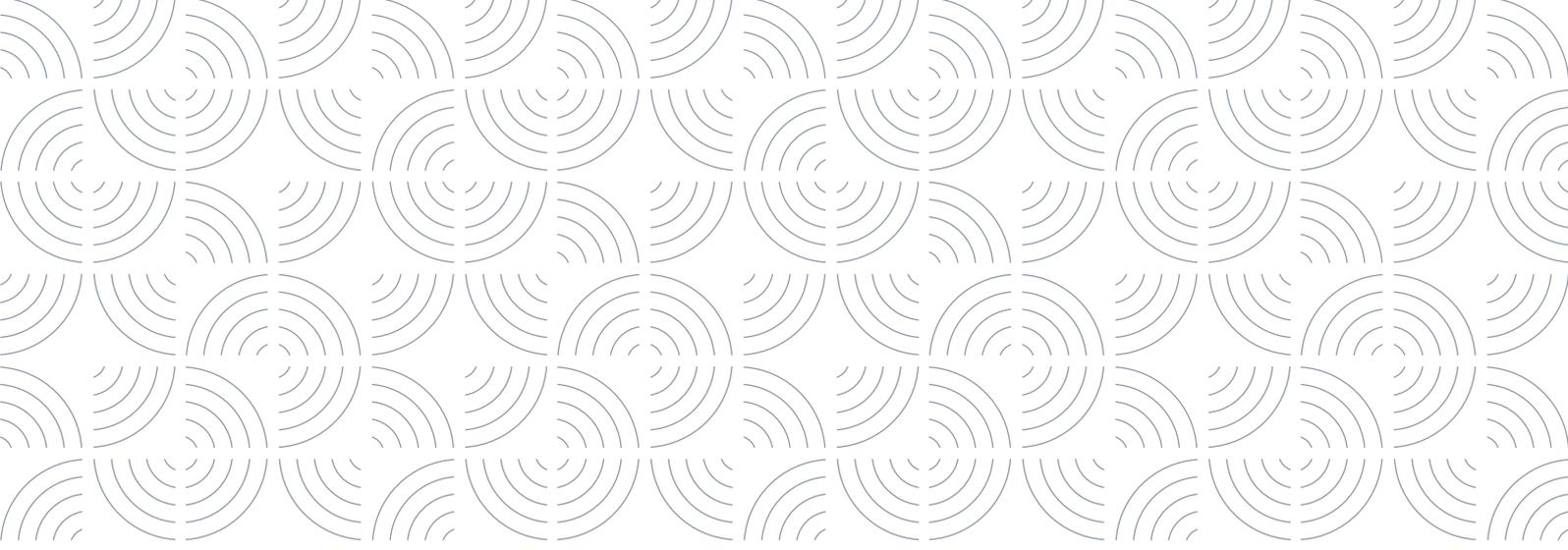
4.1. Introduction

The achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 – calling for peaceful, just and inclusive societies – as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole, rests on a civil society that is meaningfully and inclusively engaged in governance processes. In the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process, for example, through which states report on their progress in implementing the SDGs, the contribution of civil society is crucial. This is because civil society organizations are in direct contact with communities, are highly specialized in their focus, and experience crises and situational developments first-hand, making their work complementary to the more top-down approach of governmental agencies or the technical support provided by UN bodies. This study thus examines the participation of civil society in these key processes by exploring the role of the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) in supporting the VNR process and the 2030 Agenda, with a special focus on the cases of Central African Republic (CAR), Côte d'Ivoire, and Chad.

CSPPS (or 'the Platform') is a global network of civil society organizations working to build peace and prevent conflicts in fragile and conflict affected settings. CSPPS aims to amplify and strengthen the voice and agency of civil society by engaging in and influencing the development of peacebuilding and statebuilding policy in the context of the 2030 Agenda and other relevant policy forums, including the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS). The Platform unites a wide and ever-growing membership of 800+ civil society organisations in 35+ countries from both the Global South as well as the Global North. The IDPS is a tripartite partnership, wherein CSPPS represents civil society, alongside its governmental counterparts the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) and the g7+ group of fragile states. This partnership was established in 2008 in Accra at the 3rd High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, after a number of fragile states (now the g7+) requested a mechanism for dialogue in which they would have an equal say to that of development partners (i.e., INCAF) in setting peacebuilding and statebuilding priorities. Early insight of the IDPS resulted in The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, presented at the 4th High-Level Forum in 2011 in Busan, catalysing the establishment of CSPPS; with the aim to encourage the cross-fertilization of experiences, peer-to-peer learning, and strategic collaboration across a broad network of civil society organizations supporting their engagement with governments and other stakeholders worldwide towards inclusive governance, sustainable peace, and development.

CSPPS thus represents a unique collaboration in that it places civil society actors in direct, continuous, and inclusive political dialogue with government actors, ensuring that policy and action related to peacebuilding and conflict prevention are informed by contextual knowledge. It lobbies and advocates on the national, regional and global levels for policy in the areas of fragility, peace, and security, elevating the voices of those who work in contexts affected by conflict and fragility. Together with its Country Teams and individual member organizations, CSPPS settles 'on a scope of action' and works to 'foster partnership cohesion, and identify entry point opportunities to participate in national conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace initiatives'.[73] This case study discusses how these activities ensure the implementation of SDG 16 and therefore of more inclusive and peaceful systems of decision making, and how the goals of CSPPS are deeply interwoven with Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R).

SDG 16 on peaceful, just and inclusive societies speaks to the core objectives of CSPPS, which joined with its partner constituencies in the IDPS to lobby for the incorporation of a sustainable development goal relating to governance for a more peaceful and just world. This reflects the longstanding belief of member organizations within CSPPS that a sustainable world can be realized only when it is inclusively governed, and offered an entry point to CSPPS at the international policy level. Though the Platform has brought a focus to SDG 16 specifically, its members are cognizant of the interlinkages between this and other SDGs, conceptualized collectively as 'SDG 16+' to acknowledge that there is no peace without sustainable development and no sustainable development without peace. It is therefore essential to tackle issues related to peace, justice, and responsive and inclusive institutions so that progress can be achieved in other parts of the 2030 Agenda.

Hence, since the launch of the Agenda, CSPPS has been involved in initiatives such as the Global SDG 16+ Coalition,[74] and has worked to ensure that its members actively engage in processes that support the SDGs, such as the VNR process. Indeed, much of the engagement of CSPPS advances SDG 16+, and this study will highlight how the Platform has engaged with the SDG 16 framework and the VNR to ensure the

participation of civil society in governmental processes and SSG/R, highlighting experiences in Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, and Chad. As UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed noted at the 2021 UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), the annual meeting at which VNRs are presented, these voluntary reviews 'create space for governments and their partners to identify what is needed to keep the promise of the SDGs'.[75] And importantly, by offering 'a snapshot of experiences and progress made towards implementation of the SDGs', the VNRs 'constitute a valuable record of actionable policies and measures'.[76]

Producing the VNR requires a kind of national reflection that not only captures in-depth data on implementation of the 2030 Agenda but also invites reporting on sub-national progress. Member states develop these reports through inclusive government-led reviews and are encouraged to involve all relevant stakeholders (e.g. civil society, the private sector, academia, etc.) to facilitate more meaningful participation by non-state actors in political and peacebuilding processes. On its own, this active engagement of non-state actors in the VNR process contributes to achieving SDG targets 16.6 (developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions) and 16.7 (ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making). Moreover, the nature of the VNR, which reviews the performance of security actors, not only supports SDG 16 but also SSG/R, and is simultaneously a mechanism by which civil society actors can be meaningfully involved in security sector monitoring (civilian oversight). SDG 16 and SDG 16+ have thus become the framework through which CSPPS supports greater collaboration between states and societies at local levels, directed at peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

In recent years, CSSPS has observed a degree of backsliding on SDG 16+ that raises concerns, however. This became particularly acute at the beginning of 2020 and cannot be divorced from the COVID-19 pandemic, which enflamed tensions across the countries where CSPPS is active and led at the same time to a severe shrinking of civic space. Restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic also limited the extent to which civil society could participate in consultations for VNR preparation and follow-up activities, as in previous years, or take part in presenting reviews at

73   Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, 'Amplify', https://www.cspps.org/amplify (accessed 6 April 2023).

74   The Global SDG 16+ Coalition is an informal, voluntary grouping of civil society organizations, SDG 16+ initiatives, member states, UN agencies, funds and programmes, and other multilateral representatives. By uniting partners from diverse backgrounds and pooling their practical expertise, the Coalition is well-equipped to accelerate progress towards SDG 16+.

75   Amina J. Mohammed, remarks during the first session of presentations of 2021 Voluntary National Reviews at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, 12 July 2021. Available at: United Nations, UN Web TV, https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1c/k1c811cur9 (accessed 10 April 2023).

76   Alexandra Preperier, *Linking Security Sector Governance and Reform to the Sustainable Development Goals: An Analysis of Voluntary National Reviews (2016–2019)* (DCAF, 2021), p. 7.

the HLPF.[77] While some smaller NGOs found that the virtual setting dictated by the COVID-19 emergency allowed them greater access to these events (assuming they had a stable internet connection), the overall level of engagement in political discussions at the UN level decreased during this time.

This observation makes it even more crucial that civil society actors are invited into key governance processes moving forward and are offered the chance to participate and contribute fully. To illustrate how CSPPS has used the VNR process to ensure meaningful engagement by civil society in political processes that promote inclusive governance, this study will: discuss contributions to peacebuilding and statebuilding made by member organizations as well as the challenges they face amidst a crisis of representativeness; describe how CSPPS has worked towards inclusive governance through its advocacy for implementation of SDG 16, including in ways that impact SSG/R; and present three cases describing implementation of the Ready for Review Project (R4R), in CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, and Chad. Recommendations that incorporate lessons learned from the work of CSPPS are also put forth, to further facilitate the participation of civil society in political processes like the VNR and SSG/R.

77   Charlotte de Harder, Caitlin Masoliver, and Peter van Sluijs, 'Opinion: An online UN HLPF will not stop SDG 16+ from backsliding', Devex, p. 13 July 2021, https://www.devex.com/news/opinion-an-online-un-hlpf-will-not-stop-sdg-16-from-backsliding-100330 (accessed 10 April 2023).

4.2. Contributions of CSPPS to SSG/R

CSPPS offers expertise in the context of SSG/R that is generated from its engagement in inclusive governance, especially through localized processes that support participatory peace and political dialogue and use peacebuilding principles relevant to SSG/R. The Platform has focused on strengthening SSG/R by proactively encouraging the inclusion of civil society in national and international policy realms and governance structures through advocacy, awareness raising, monitoring and public oversight, and research; first by promoting the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States and by lobbying for policies to advance SDG 16 and SDG 16+ and the broader 2030 Agenda. CSPPS does this primarily through its existing partnerships in the IDPS. In collaboration with donor actors (i.e., INCAF), the Platform also plans for engagement at the international level, while using its connections with g7+ governments to secure the inclusion and participation of civil society in political processes at the local and national levels. This supports the implementation of SDG Target 16.7 by working to ensure that decision making is responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative.

Before the 2030 Agenda was unveiled in 2015, it was clear that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were not adequately addressing inclusive governance in relation to peace and security and had insufficiently accounted for the intrinsic links between peace, security, and development. This led IDPS partners to join talks on the follow-up agenda to the MDGs.[78] When a collaborative effort resulted in the addition of a specific goal for peace, justice and inclusion in the 2030 Agenda, the IDPS ensured that it remained there, lobbying up to the very last moment for SDG 16.[79]

At the country-level, the work of CSPPS to bring together local peacebuilding organizations around issues of shared concern has developed into a system of CSPPS Country Teams. These teams coordinate local agendas for peacebuilding and conflict prevention, support information exchange and the sharing of best

practices, and engage in strategic planning on the basis of information collected on the ground in local communities. This adds to the ability of participating organizations to contribute to SSG/R and to the implementation of the SDGs, through five main types of activities: awareness-raising; advocacy; monitoring and public oversight; fact-finding, research and analysis; and service provision.[80] By way of its network and by empowering its members, the objective of CSPPS is to reinforce the ability of these organizations to serve as key stakeholders in reform processes, and as engines of positive change.

For example, in the context of its role in IDPS, CSPPS has engaged its Country Teams and focal point organizations in carrying out fragility assessments in various g7+ member countries.[81] These assessments, which are often supported financially and technically by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are intended to review a country's progress and challenges, and lay out priority actions needed to help it advance towards greater resilience. The inclusion of civil society in these assessments is vital to most fully capturing the drivers and features of fragility in a country, as well as its sources of resilience. This is particularly important given that governments are encouraged to use the findings of fragility assessments to inform the development of appropriate policy. To do so effectively, governments should engage in a focused dialogue on these findings with civil society actors and the international community, not only to set policy priorities but also to sequence policy responses.

Members of CSPPS have also engaged in other activities to call attention to issues identified in fragility assessments, meant to raise awareness and spark dialogue between state and non-state actors in support of advancing shared understandings of how national cohesion, peace, and sustainable development are interconnected. A 2019 workshop on National Cohesion for Sustainable Peace and Development organized in Sierra Leone is illustrative of how civil society

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78   Erin McCandless, *Forging Coherence on Two Vital Agendas: Agenda 2030 and Sustaining Peace* (erinmccandless.nl, 2017), http://www.erinmccandless.net/blog/forging-coherence-on-two-vital-agendas-for-sustainable-peace-and-development-the-agenda-2030-and-sustaining-peace

79   Examples of lobby efforts include joint statements issued by IDPS calling for inclusion of a goal on governance for a more peaceful and just world or CSPPS' support for the direct involvement of both Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Emilia Peres in the Open Working group deliberations as well as the launch of policy statements arguing for inclusion of peace into the post-2015 development framework https://www.c-r.org/resource/%EF%BB%BFbringing-peace-post-2015-development-framework-joint-statement

80   DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, Civil Society - Roles and responsibilities in good security sector governance (SSR Backgrounders Series, 2019) https://www.dcaf.ch/civil-society-roles-and-responsibilities-good-security-sector-governance

81   For more on this, see: International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, 'Guidance Note on Fragility Assessments', Document 4, presented at the Fifth International Dialogue Working Group Meeting on New Deal Implementation, Freetown, Sierra Leone, 17 June 2014. Available as a PDF at: https://www.pbsbdialogue.org/media/filer_public/cb/15/cb15edfd-b155-4902-8ff8-168da73718b5/fragility_assessment_guidance_note.pdf

organizations can contribute to sustained dialogue on this topic and share concrete recommendations to improve governance, while also strengthening both vertical and horizontal relationships. The event, which brought state and non-state actors together to discuss challenges to national cohesion in Sierra Leone and the need for inclusive dialogue between governmental actors and civil society to ensure the preservation of a resilient social contract, produced nine concrete recommendations for making progress on sustainable peace and development at the national level.[82] Improving governance in the fields of peace and security by making it more inclusive and participatory is key in contributing to SSR processes.

CSPPS has also been active in the monitoring and review of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, measured against the commitments made by governments. Engagement by members in this process has been both official, as participants in follow-up and review activities of the government; and unofficial, via independent analysis published in spotlight reports. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the contributions of civil society to good governance were hindered by restrictions imposed in response to the crisis. This limited the participation of key stakeholders in monitoring and consultation processes at a time when the handling of the COVID-19 emergency itself was generating growing mistrust between governments and citizens.[83] In concrete terms, this translated around the world into a shrinking of civic space, driven by the desire of governments to halt the spread of the virus, and sometimes to use health control measures for political ends. In surveys provided to CSPPS members, which resulted in two reports on the wider effects of COVID-19, respondents cited increased inequality and the inability of governments to protect populations from the pandemic as two of the main reasons citizens had become more mistrustful of their leaders.[84] The exploitation of the pandemic by extremist organizations and (semi-)authoritarian regimes as a means to seize further control was also documented by organizations such as Transparency International, and has been linked to rising tensions among populations around the world.[85]

Still, since the start of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, members of CSPPS have acted where governments could not, or would not, and have sought increased collaboration and trust with governments where possible. These member organizations have raised awareness, have supported and trained communities and their governments to deepen social contracts, and continue to do so with any means available to them.[86] Despite these efforts and an unwavering commitment by CSPPS to promote SDG 16 even during the pandemic, the COVID-19 emergency nonetheless heavily impacted the ability of civil society actors to engage in dialogue on the ground, and in practical peacebuilding work. On top of this, the pandemic made it even more difficult for these actors to engage in political processes, including VNR activities. Although some countries ensured that consultations with civil society still took place in virtual space, others ended these efforts altogether, severely weakening state-society relations. Thus, beyond the immediate effects of COVID-19 on rates of violence and social tension, a longer-term outcome of the pandemic has been a severe shrinkage of civic space.[87]

82   See: Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, 'Communique: National Cohesion for Sustainable Peace and Development – Workshop at Mammy Yoko Radisson Blu Hotel, 18th-20th November 2019'. Available as a PDF at: https://cspps.org/files/2020-01/Civil%20 society%20National%20cohesion%20communique.pdf

83   See: Jia Liu, Yasir Shahab, and Hafiz Hoque, 'Government Response Measures and Public Trust during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Evidence from Around the World', *British Journal of Management* 33, no. 2 (2021), p. 571–602.

84   These reports are available on the CSPPS website. Find *Fighting COVID-19, Building Peace* (2020) at: https://www.cspps.org/Fighting-COVID19-Building-Peace-Report; and *Persistent Impact: An Urgent Call for a Conflict-Sensitive Approach to the COVID-19 Pandemic* (2021) at: https://www.cspps.org/publications/persistent-impact-urgent-call-conflict-sensitive-approach-covid-19-pandemic (accessed 10 April 2023).

85   Transparency International, 'Will the Legacy of COVID-19 Include Increased Authoritarianism?', Transparency International, 29 May 2020, https://www.transparency.org/en/news/will-the-legacy-of-covid-19-include-increased-authoritarianism (accessed 10 April 2023).

86   For example, see: Charlotte de Harder, 'A Society is Only as Strong as its Most Vulnerable Members', CSPPS, https://cspps.org/only-as-strong-as-most-vulnerable (accessed 10 April 2023).

87   See: Global Peace Index, 'World less peaceful as civil unrest and political instability increases due to COVID-19', Vision of Humanity, 2021, https://www.visionofhumanity.org/world-less-peaceful-as-civil-unrest-and-political-instability-increases-due-to-covid-19-pandemic/; Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, '*Fighting COVID-19, Building Peace* (2020); and Persistent Impact: An Urgent Call for a Conflict-Sensitive Approach to the COVID-19 Pandemic (2021).

4.3. SDG 16 as a framework to address SSG/R

The Ready for Review Project (R4R) is a good example of the work of CSPPS to support inclusive governance that engages member organizations.[88] The implementation of R4R in three local contexts – Central African Republic (CAR), Côte d'Ivoire, and Chad – is described below, as these cases underscore the importance of awareness-raising on SDG 16 through workshops and state-society dialogue to ensure the meaningful inclusion, participation, and contribution of civil society in VNR processes. The project was launched in 2019 to support civil society engagement in fragile and conflict-affected countries that participate in the VNR, and has not only built the capacities of civil society actors but also of government officials.

CSPPS introduced R4R ahead of the 2019 HLPF, where SDG 16 was reviewed for the first time under the theme of 'empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality'.[89] The project enabled the inclusion and participation of national and local civil society actors in the consultation and validation stages of the VNR process in CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Sierra Leone, and Timor-Leste, and was implemented mostly through national orientation and sensitization workshops as well as capacity development activities.[90] In partnership with the Transparency, Accountability, and Participation (TAP) Network, CSPPS also co-organized R4R workshops in Nigeria and Rwanda.[91]

The impetus for R4R was the observation that, even where progress has been made on the SDGs, knowledge of the 2030 Agenda remains limited.[92] This underscored the need to raise community-level awareness of the SDGs, which is essential to achieving them. Sensitization workshops were thus held for that purpose, and also to strengthen the strategic and thematic engagement of civil society in VNR processes. The aim was to bring civil society actors up-to-speed regarding how they could meaningfully contribute to the VNR process in their countries, and workshops incorporated exercises that forced participants to take a critical look at SDG implementation in their national contexts. Unlike governments or technical agencies such as the UNDP, civil society actors enjoy absolute proximity to the concerns, grievances, and expectations of local populations. The R4R methodology was therefore developed to highlight this qualitative added value of civil society engagement in the VNR process, acting not as a replacement but rather a complement to the more technical support provided by UNDP experts and consultants.

Ready for Review: The cases of CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, and Chad

CAR

There was an attempt made by CSPPS to tailor R4R workshops so that they were context sensitive. In CAR, despite the establishment of a National Committee for the Monitoring of the Implementation of the SDGs in 2018, which was chaired by the Ministry of Planning and included stakeholder representatives (from government, parliament, the private sector, academic institutions, technical and financial partners, and civil society), the importance and function of the SDGs and the VNR process were not appreciated by the population. This posed a challenge to ownership, as there were significant discrepancies in terms of how different parts of the population and different regions understood the SDGs or what they could bring to the community level. Hence, a first R4R workshop was held in CAR in February 2019, involving twenty local civil society organizations, with the goal of mobilizing communities by raising awareness about the VNR consultation process.

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88   This section relies on a variety of documents published in the context of the R4R Project, including the outcome report, *Reporting for the Future: Final Report Ready for Review 2019* (CSPPS, 2019). Available as a PDF at: https://www.cspps.org/files/2020-02/R4R%20Official%20 ENG%20FV_0.pdf

89   See: United Nations, 'High-Level Political Forum 2019', https://hlpf.un.org/2019 (accessed 10 April 2023).

90   CSPPS, *Reporting for the Future*.

91   The TAP Network is an international coalition of civil society organizations working towards implementation of SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda. CSPPS and the TAP Network have cooperated on many projects, including side-events at UN HLPF meetings.

92   Sebastien H. Schneider, Solvieg H. Gleser, and Martin Bruder, 'Public Opinion of the 2030 Agenda: Results of the DEval Opinion Monitor for Development Policy 2018', DEval Policy Brief 6/2018, German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), June 2018.

The workshop provided an opportunity for three of the four civil society representatives on the National Committee for the Monitoring of the Implementation of the SDGs, as well as members of the CSPPS Country Team, to share their experience and knowledge in this field with other participants. A workshop exercise also guided participants to produce policy recommendations and key messaging for public authorities and technical and financial partners on the issue of civic space in CAR, which were taken on board in subsequent phases of the VNR process. The workshop was consequential not only for encouraging knowledge-sharing on the SDGs and on SDG 16 specifically, but in helping local civil society actors define the priorities they would bring to the table in VNR consultations. It also resulted in CAR's adoption of Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) in the process of contextualizing and prioritizing SDG targets and indicators.[93] The National Committee for the Monitoring of the Implementation of the SDGs has since determined that the degree of alignment of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan for the Central African Republic (RCPCA)[94] with the SDGs averages about 50 per cent.[95]

A second R4R workshop in CAR focused more on fact finding and analysis, bringing civil society actors together to accurately assess progress on SDG 16. CSPPS has pushed for this type of assessment to be systematized, and has insisted that civil society is actively involved in monitoring and overseeing the implementation of SDG 16. Based on the assessment of workshop participants, recommendations were formulated that accounted for challenges posed by the security, political and social contexts in CAR, and tackled various themes, such as transparency and information sharing.[96] Discussions that took place during the workshop revealed just how essential civil society is to ensuring the implementation of SDG 16, but also the degree to which civil society actors need better support to build financial and technical capacities. For example, it is positive that civil society represents nearly one-third (30 per cent) of the CAR's SDG Implementation Coordination Committee – a multistakeholder and multisectoral committee that provides oversight and guidance to operationalize and implement commitments made under the 2030 Agenda – but this level of representation will only be sustainable if the technical capacities of civil society organizations within and outside the Committee are significantly

strengthened, including at the grassroots community level. Importantly, R4R workshops in CAR led to more opportunities for collaboration between CSPPS and the government, such as 'on-the-spot' meetings between government officials from the Ministry of Planning and the CSPPS Country Team that facilitated better coordination and information sharing, and 'demonstrated a clear willingness of national actors to take ownership and work together' on the 2030 Agenda.[97]

Côte d'Ivoire

Similar sensitizing workshops were organized in Côte d'Ivoire as well. They were held in the coastal capital city of Abidjan, but also in the central and second-largest city of Bouaké to bring inland civil society organizations into the consultation process that informs the VNR. Holding workshops in these two locations also allowed for a comparison of different findings to facilitate better inclusion for civil society actors across regions. It was useful that government observers from the Ivorian ministries working to implement the SDGs (i.e., of education, women's rights, economic planning, and sustainable development), attended these workshops as well, allowing them to compare ministerial perspectives on the appropriate role of civil society in implementing the SDGs.

The first of these workshops, held in Abidjan in April 2019, involved 50 participating civil society organizations. The second, held in Bouaké just days later, gathered 55 civil society organizations from 30 different localities. Recommendations formulated during these workshops were addressed to the government, technical and financial partners, and local authorities, and some were germane to SSR. Most notably, local organizations in both in Abidjan and Bouaké advocated for enhancing the good governance of the security sector, for instance by strengthening the capacity of judicial and security personnel and by incorporating a gender approach into the implementation of SSR programming.[98]

As in CAR, partnerships were key to the successful planning and implementation of R4R in Côte d'Ivoire, where the organization of workshops was made possible through the collaboration of diverse stakeholders. For example, CSPPS liaised with the UNDP Office in Côte

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93   The RIA is a tool created by the UNDP to assess local contexts and help draw a roadmap for implementation of the SDGs at the (sub)country level.

94   The National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan for the Central African Republic, or *Plan National de Relèvement et de Consolidation de la Paix*, was approved by CAR authorities in 2016. It defines the goals and needs regarding peacebuilding in the country for 2017-21 as to secure funding from the international community.

95   CSPPS, *Reporting for the Future*, p. 18. The National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan for the Central African Republic (Plan National de Relèvement et de Consolidation de la Paix) was approved by CAR authorities in 2016 and defined the country's goals and needs for peacebuilding purposes from 2017 to 2021, to secure funding from the international community.

96   CSPPS, *Reporting for the Future*, p. 18.

97   Ibid., p. 22.

98   Ibid., p. 27.

d'Ivoire and subsequently with the President of the Civil Society Initiative for the SDGs in Côte d'Ivoire (ISC/SDG-CI) before the workshops, resulting in a partnership that produced impactful and inclusive consultations with citizens, popularizing the VNR process, ensuring coordination among civil society organizations from across the country, and demonstrating to the Ivorian government that it lacked sufficient inter-ministerial coordination in the context of SDG implementation.

Chad

In Chad, towards the end of the VNR process, a R4R workshop held in N'Djamena brought together 38 civil society representatives, as well as relevant stakeholders such as the UNDP and government officials from the Ministry of Planning. The goal was to share experiences, and offer recommendations for accelerating implementation of the SDGs. Several high-level meetings were organized on the margins of the workshop to allow for more focused discussion among different stakeholders on the VNR process to date, including one between CSPPS, the CSPPS focal point in Chad and representatives from UNDP and the EU delegation, which supported a greater degree of inclusivity and comprehensiveness in the process by making civil society actors new to the VNR aware of the status of SDG implementation and by enriching the discussion with organizational expertise. The workshop created space for the voice of Chadian civil society to be amplified in relevant political processes concerning the VNR, and reiterated the essential role of civil society in implementing the SDGs and in monitoring progress towards the realization of SDG 16.

There were also representatives from the National Multisectoral Monitoring Committee (CNMS) of the SDGs at the workshop, who joined the representative from the Ministry of Planning to present an information session on the validation process for Chad's VNR.[99] This made the process more transparent for civil society actors outside the Committee. However, it also revealed a lack of internal coordination within Chadian civil society, as it became apparent that civil society organizations taking part in the official VNR process were not adequately and continuously liaising with organizations that were not a part of this process, leaving the latter without access to the information needed to validate the VNR at a later point in time.

Participants in the workshop developed recommendations that emphasized the need for justice reform in order to restore public confidence in the system. Since this cannot occur in a vacuum, it is crucial

to bring awareness to the issue of corruption, and to good governance as a response, in order to achieve successful and lasting implementation of the SDGs and of SSG/R. In Chad, economic instability has often been cited by the government as a reason that necessary actions to implement the SDGs cannot be taken, as observed by CSPPS member organisations in Chad. Therefore, building more transparent structures and processes will allow civil society and other watchdogs to better identify where improvements must be made and better hold authorities accountable for failing to establish stable, just, and inclusive institutions.

Further considerations for meaningful involvement by civil society in VNR processes

The exclusion of civil society organizations from key dialogue processes can limit the enabling potential of these organizations, and may occur as the result of government restrictions on civic space that affect relations between civil society and government, such as those which emerged in the context of the pandemic. This can impact the ability of civil society actors to engage with government and to develop awareness-raising campaigns and workshops. Thus, it is essential to capture and compile the recommendations of local civil society actors, and to ensure their inclusion and participation in national VNR consultation processes, as a means of improving transparency and accountability mechanisms in their countries.

In each country where R4R activities were carried out, insufficient knowledge about the VNR process and the SDGs more generally meant that civil society actors were largely unaware of how they could take ownership of the oversight of SDG implementation, or how to make this oversight more effective. The project also demonstrated that civil society organizations lack the funding necessary to strengthen their technical capacities. And further, they lack effective coordination mechanisms between and among them; which can be linked to funding deficits, but also to the larger issue of a shrinking civic space and the constraints on information that result. This makes it more difficult for civil society actors to raise awareness even among other civil society actors, whether it be of SDG implementation or government actions in the security sector.

It is only by working together that government and civil society can produce the best, most complete VNR, and in turn, improve implementation of the SDGs. This requires that participating civil society actors are given

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99 The CNMS provides oversight to the implementation of commitments made under the 2030 Agenda and includes civil society representatives for the purposes of monitoring and accountability.

significant access to policymaking realms, so that they are privy to key information and discussions. Otherwise, they will not be perceived as credible and legitimate stakeholders, which may diminish their institutional capacity. In fact, the R4R project confirmed that multi-stakeholder cooperation is essential to enhancing the institutional capacity of civil society, and that this is crucial to fully realizing their potential in implementing SDG 16, and thereby, the entire 2030 Agenda and SSG/R more generally.

Through R4R activities, participating civil society actors learned to assume not only the role of qualitative evaluator, but to become stakeholders of positive change by actively contributing to the VNR process and making their voices heard in the strategic review of progress towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The CSPPS Country Teams that organized consultative workshops on SDG 16 and the VNR saw an overwhelming willingness on the part of civil society actors to contribute to data collection and analysis for the VNR process, and an interest in how this data could be used in follow up activities and in future reviews. But civil society organizations in many countries must be equipped with the means, capacities, and resources to play a meaningful role in this process, ideally in time for the next review. One promising outcome of the R4R project may help facilitate this, as peer-to-peer learning – wherein civil society actors involved in VNR processes in 2019 with R4R support served as resource persons in workshops organized in 2020 – emerged as a vital tool. By sharing experiences and lessons learned, 'veterans' of the VNR process can inspire their peers in other countries to become involved in these reviews, as well as other governance processes.
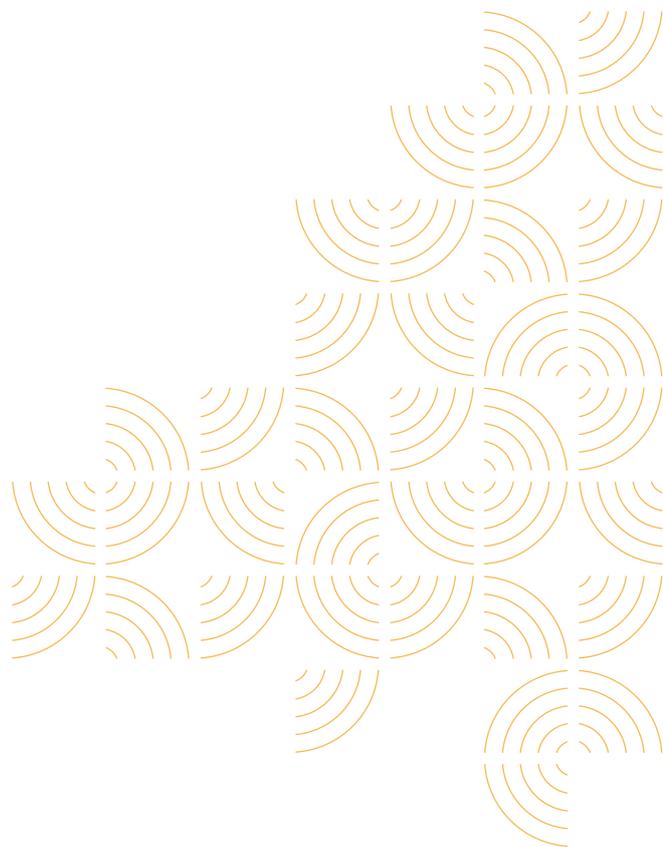
4.4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Its unique position within the tripartite IDPS partnership gives CSPPS a valuable entry point for meaningful inclusion in international and national dialogue processes that directly contribute to the implementation of SDG 16+. There are a variety of ways CSPPS makes use of this position and plays its role as part of the IDPS. Its members collaborate with national government actors in political processes such as fragility assessments and the development of national action (or development) plans, ensuring that the concerns of civil society are brought to the fore in political dialogue. Through its Country Teams, CSPPS also seeks to safeguard the ongoing inclusion of civil society in political decision-making processes, as a way to bolster state-society relations.

The goal of more inclusive governance is at the heart of all CSPPS does, driving its work to enhance and strengthen state-society relations and to promote the involvement of civil society in peacebuilding and conflict prevention policy domains. The active participation of civil society in the VNR process is a prime example of the kind of long-term state-society collaboration CSPPS strives to normalize. The process not only represents a valuable opportunity to take stock of the progress a country has made towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, but is itself vitally important to a functioning social contract and serves as the basis for a continuous dialogue between the government and civil society that helps ensure a more inclusive approach to both SDG monitoring and implementation.

The inclusion of civil society actors in VNR processes, and transparency from political stakeholders, are both essential to promoting inclusive and participatory governance, and thus the 2030 Agenda. On the ground, and at the forefront of the reality facing local communities, civil society organizations are by their nature a force of innovation. They have an acute sense of popular sentiment and can mobilize to provide policymakers with context-specific solutions to improve good governance, including within the security sector, as was the case with recommendations formulated during R4R workshops, some of which have been incorporated by national governments. Hence, the engagement of civil society in decision-making and review processes favours a more horizontal approach to SSG/R, where local security needs are taken into account, leading to more coherent, cohesive, and inclusive policies.

The aim of R4R activities has been to ensure this valuable inclusion, participation, and contribution of civil society, before, during, and after national VNR processes, through consultations and capacity strengthening workshops. Several valuable lessons have been learned over the course of the project, including the importance of preparation and awareness raising, especially for civil society actors engaging for the first time in the VNR consultation and validation process. Peer support through CSPPS has thus been instrumental to making civil society actors aware of the potential role(s) they can play in this process; a process that should serve to deepen a sense of national ownership over the SDGs, promote transparency, and facilitate broad participation.

The reality is, however, that the involvement and engagement of civil society in the VNR process is not a given. Some governments lack a process for engagement and outreach with civil society, while others lack the capacity or political will to undertake state-society consultations. Civil society actors in these contexts may consider carrying out independent consultations or producing shadow reports. In any case, civil society should seek optimal engagement in national VNR processes, and should use the access and knowledge gained through this engagement to develop proactive and coordinated messaging and ongoing consultation processes that mobilize their constituencies in support of implementing the SDGs. Civil society organizations that are more involved in the VNR process (e.g., as part of a national SDG inter-ministerial committee) have access to information and individuals that allow them to have more influence over the content of the resulting VNR report. This influence comes with an even greater responsibility to report back to their constituencies with preliminary results and updates on the process.

When civil society is meaningfully included in VNR processes, the resulting VNR reports are more holistically informed, and state-society relations are improved. So, it is unfortunate that many governments still deny or limit opportunities for the kind of state-society collaboration that can contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda and to good SSG more generally, largely due to the fear that an active civil society may emerge as a source of political contestation. Indeed, this is why the success of VNR processes relies so heavily on national political will, both to allow for the meaningful inclusion and participation of civil society actors and to incorporate their contributions into the final report and follow-up activities.

With this in mind, CSPPS offers the following recommendations for improved inclusive governance related to SDG 16+:

> **Governments and civil society** should *proactively engage in inclusive dialogue and governance processes* for the advancement of SDG 16+, to meet the mandate of the 2030 Agenda but also to set an example of a functioning social contract. The qualities, insights, and strengths of every stakeholder must be optimally considered in order to address the challenges of today, and tomorrow, and VNR consultations held in this spirit can be a segue for initiating and improving dialogue and coordination between government, civil society, and other non-state actors more broadly.

> **Civil society actors** must be aware of the value of the VNR process, and thus it is recommended that *VNR sensitization workshops* are offered to a wide range of local civil society organizations. It is important that these workshops engage not only 'the usual suspects' (i.e., prominent organizations in this field), but organizations from across national contexts, with diverse areas of specialization. Civil society actors involved in consultation processes should also work to ensure communication with other civil society organizations on the state of the VNR process. One finding from R4R activities in Chad was that such a feedback system between civil society actors, inside and outside the VNR process, did not function optimally, representing a missed opportunity to ensure greater impact by more effectively influencing the policy debate.

> **Governments and civil society** must come to a *consensus on key development issues and underlying challenges*, and must develop a well-defined roadmap to address those issues, if the VNR is to be an effective advocacy and implementation tool. Hence, VNR recommendations should be linked to national development strategies and policy priorities.

> **Governments, civil society, and technical and financial partners** should *support all VNR proposals with a financing and programming framework* that can guarantee implementation, *as well as with institutional and legal mechanisms and mandates* to assess progress, coordinate the review and development of VNRs, follow up on recommendations, and link the VNR process to other national planning and reporting mechanisms.

> **Civil society actors should** *emphasize peer-to-peer learning to overcome a lack of experience* in the VNR process. This will help these actors organize and prepare in advance, and by identifying possible engagement opportunities and entry points, will allow them to act swiftly when these opportunities arise.

> **Governments and civil society** must establish effective and efficient feedback mechanisms and communication channels, inside and outside the VNR process, so that civil society actors who are included in national SDG mechanisms (e.g., committees or other relevant bodies) can mobilize their wider constituencies and report back on that process. Failing to establish such systems will weaken the VNR consultation process, as well as its uptake in political policy domains.

> **Governments** must view the VNR process as part of a broader system of inclusive governance wherein the VNR offers a reality check by measuring the implementation of commitments made by national leaders and proposing a path forward towards full implementation of those commitments.

5. PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND SDG 16+ LOCALIZATION: THE CASE OF CECORE

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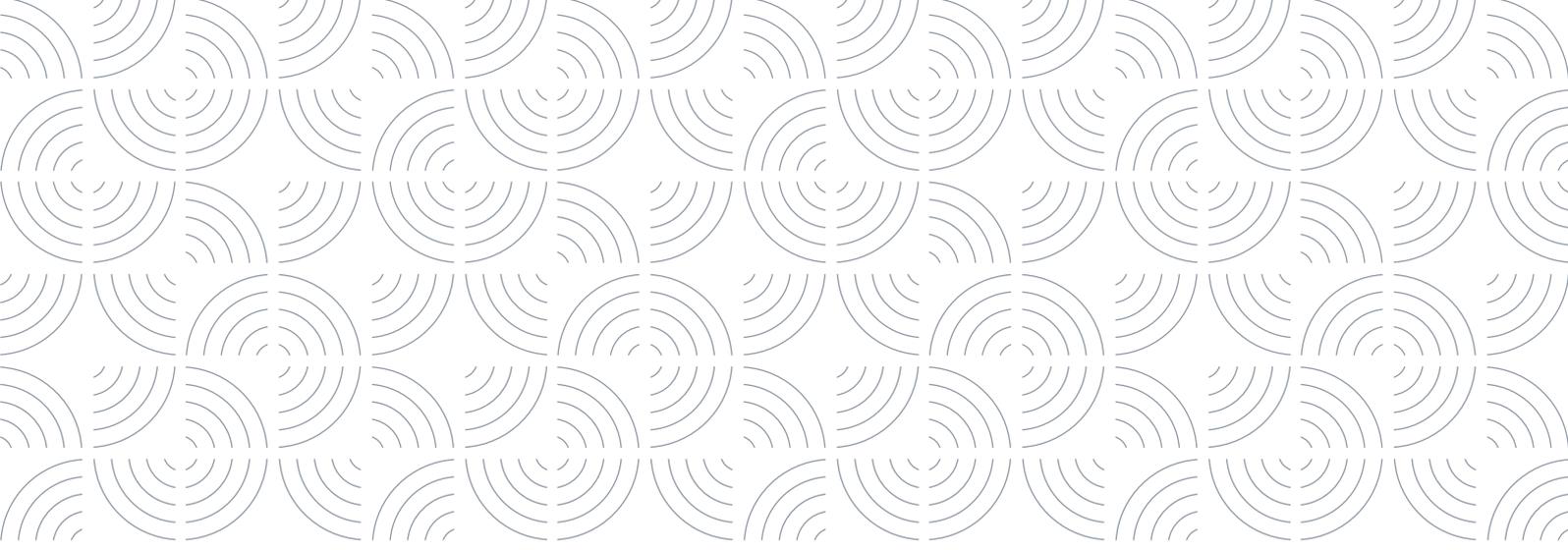
5.1. Introduction

Global frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are only valuable if they yield intended impacts at the local level. The same can be said for various instruments of international development, including security sector governance and reform (SSG/R). Despite this, experiences in Uganda indicate that global development frameworks and instruments often fail to address the needs of local communities, because they are commonly implemented through a top-down approach by practitioners with limited relevant in-country experience.

Over the last 25 years, the Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) – a Uganda-based non-governmental organization founded in 1995 to promote alternative means of preventing, managing, and resolving conflict – has consolidated its expertise in the area of peacebuilding and conflict transformation, in part through engagement on SSG/R and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). CECORE works at the community and national levels, collaborates with regional and international actors, and also works closely with the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), a worldwide network of civil society organizations focused on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Since 2017, CECORE has been the Regional Secretariat for GPPAC's Eastern and Central Africa Regional Network, tasked with coordinating peacebuilding efforts in 16 countries in Eastern and Central Africa.

In 2020, seeking to make global frameworks more relevant at the local level, CECORE developed a model for SDG 16+ localization (see Table 15, below). It proposes that global frameworks should be implemented using localized indicators, and local communities should (co-)design localization strategies. The model highlights active local participation, ownership, and awareness, all of which are also key to successful SSG/R. Several methodologies – community awareness, capacity building, dialogue facilitation, and local ownership building – are incorporated into the model and are amplified through partnerships at the local, national, and global levels.

The work of localization in Uganda demonstrates that action on SSG/R and SDG 16+ lies at the heart of sustainable peace and human security, and is inextricably interlinked. The implementation of SDG 16+ closely correlates to the responsibilities of central and local governments, particularly their role in delivering public services and providing security for all. Indeed, in the absence of such services, SDG 16+ cannot be realized. Hence, both SDG 16+ and SSG/R serve as a foundation for action in the CECORE Localization Model, and also as tools for advocacy and programme design.

The CECORE Localization Model has been put into practice in Kaabong district, a conflict-prone district in Uganda's north-eastern Karamoja region, with promising outcomes. Using the model, the SDGs have been mainstreamed into local government planning, implementation, and reporting processes at the district, sub-county, parish, and village levels. Further, by implementing the model, the active participation of local actors in addressing violent conflicts has been enhanced, which has contributed to a state of relative peace across the entire district.

The CECORE Localization Model stems from the organization's engagement with SDG 16+ in 2020. First, CECORE developed an independent national review to complement Uganda's 2020 Voluntary National Review (VNR), highlighting the importance of localization to the impactful implementation of SDG 16+ in Uganda.[100] Then, in side events during the 2020 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), CECORE advocated for the development of localized indicators as well as the inclusion of local communities in the design of localization strategies. Increased collaboration between local communities and the state emerged, resulting in the establishment of a national dialogue on SDG 16+ in Uganda. The objective was to formulate action points in order to implement recommendations in CECORE's national review report, but this dialogue also led to the development and piloting of the CECORE Localization Model in the Kaabong district and the drafting of an SDG Localization Guide.

As this case study illustrates, localization is critical to ensuring that global development paradigms such as SSG/R and SDG 16+ support meaningful change at the local level. Localization promotes integrated, inclusive, and sustainable development, and takes a pragmatic approach to advancing progress towards SDG 16+ and assisting citizens in mobilizing long-term commitments to its implementation. Here, the CECORE Localization Model and the processes that led to its development are unpacked; then, lessons learned from its implementation are discussed and recommendations on how to adapt an SDG 16+ localization model to other contexts are presented.

In Uganda, which has faced multiple interconnected conflicts and post-conflict security challenges since its independence in 1962, problems including persistent insecurity, unresolved grievances, human rights abuses, structural violence, gender-based violence, and cross-border tensions have been an obstacle to development. The perspective of CECORE is that ongoing conflict and violence in Uganda are deep-rooted in colonial and historical injustices, marginalization, ethnic rivalries, adversarial social constructions, and weak governance and security provision. These factors have a particularly negative impact in local communities, which are often the primary victims and bear the biggest brunt of violent conflict, the proliferation of illicit arms, and weak governance and institutions.

Recognizing that this context constitutes a threat to the country's developmental aspirations, the Ugandan government has taken significant legal, constitutional, and administrative steps towards SSG/R and the implementation of SDG 16+. However, these efforts have incorporated almost no localization or human security approaches, which has contributed to relatively slow progress on development and peace in Uganda. In its second (2020) VNR, the government acknowledged that, 'For SDGs on […] peace and justice Uganda's performance are stagnating – meaning their scores on relevant indicators remain stagnant or increasing at a rate below 50 percent of the growth rate needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030'.[101] Based on observations and experiences in local communities, CECORE attributes this largely to the fact that implementation of SSG/R and the SDGs is not grounded in those communities but is driven by top-down government programming.[102] It is for this reason that CECORE developed and implemented its SDG 16+ Localization Model, outlined in Table 15 (on page 65).

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100   See: CECORE and GPPAC, *Country Report: Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies – SDG 16+ in Uganda* (The Hague: GPPAC, 2020). Available at: https://www.cecore.or.ug/projects/sdg16-and-localisation-project/ (accessed 12 April 2022).

101   The Republic of Uganda, *Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (Kampala: Office of the Prime Minister, 2020), p. ix. Available as a PDF at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26352VNR_2020_Uganda_Report.pdf (accessed 11 April 2022).

102   CECORE and GPPAC, *Country Report: Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies – SDG 16+ in Uganda*.

Table 15. The CECORE Localization Model

'At the end of the day, the impact of those goals (SDGs) should be evidenced by how a common person like me in a rural community has meaningfully transformed; but we need to be part of the process' – woman in Kalapata, a sub-county of Kaabong.

Principles of SDG 16+ localization:

SDG 16+ must affect change at the community level. Peace and development challenges (e.g., violent conflict, and social, political, and economic inequalities) are felt most directly at the community level, and it is those most affected who are best positioned to lead a process of transformation. This requires a holistic and inclusive approach that brings all relevant actors along on the path of achieving every SDG 16+ target and indicator, leaving no one behind.

Ownership is key – build outwards. Local councils and other local actors should be involved, so that they have a stake in and co-own the implementation of SDG 16+. Ownership can be enhanced by building the capacity of local actors to participate in meaningful ways.

SDG 16+ strategies and implementation should be taken forward in a holistic manner. This means incorporating and/or mainstreaming the SDGs into the strategies of government structures and integrating them into programming and service delivery.

Localization needs to build on 'what is there'. In Uganda, the entry point for localization is local governance structures at the district (i.e., chief administrative officers), sub-county (i.e., chiefs), and parish (i.e., local councils) levels. As local communities generally have little knowledge and awareness of the SDGs, these local governance structures must work with local communities to foster their ownership of the 2030 Agenda, and must also develop inclusive strategies and ensure inclusive implementation.

Build broad local support structures for SDG 16+. NGOs, community-based and faith-based organizations, and elected and traditional leaders at the community level should work collectively with interest groups and local communities towards common goals.

Invest in the process of local ownership. This entails sensitization and awareness raising regarding SDG 16+, as well as efforts to invite and facilitate the involvement and participation of local communities.

Localize data. Both localized SDG 16+ indicators and localized data collection mechanisms should be developed. Doing so will provide a concrete framework for the engagement of local community leaders on SDG 16+.

While SDG 16+ is the focus of this model, these principles can be applied to the implementation of all SDGs by following the guidelines listed below.

Localization Model Guidelines:

i. Contextualize needs and responses
ii. Develop and capture context-specific but aligned indicators
iii. Sensitize and engage local actors
iv. Respect the bottom-up principle
v. Establish a coordination structure at the local level
vi. Ensure availability and access to localized SDG data
vii. Create awareness and enhance capacity for participation and inclusion
viii. Ensure active participation by local actors
ix. Focus on human security
x. Enhance local ownership
xi. Organize periodic constructive dialogues between duty bearers and rights holders

Source: CECORE and GPPAC, Country Report: Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies – SDG 16+ in Uganda, p. 46-47.

5.2. Contributions of CECORE to SSG/R

The localization approach introduced by CECORE in the context of SDG 16+ implementation supports SSG/R more broadly in a variety of ways. First, it allows local communities to engage with and strengthen existing governance structures while enhancing civil participation in ongoing local peacebuilding and security sector reform processes.

Second, in the localization model, human security complements traditional security approaches that are often criticized for emphasizing state power and privileging technocratic and managerial processes. Third, localization is enhanced by networking and partnership-building, which facilitate knowledge and experience sharing that lead to meaningful outcomes reflecting the needs of local communities.[103]

CECORE has found that localization has a critical positive impact on the security sector, and on its governance. Localization is achieved through a two-pronged approach: the capacity of community actors (rights holders) and authorities (duty bearers) to engage on the SDGs and SSG/R must be developed through awareness raising and platforms for dialogue; and partnerships must be built between these rights holders and duty bearers to facilitate engagement.

Building the capacities of local communities

It has been a priority of CECORE to empower women and men, communities, organizations, and institutions to promote justice and peace at local levels. In doing so, CECORE employs participatory and interactive methodologies aimed at helping groups understand and analyse local conflict and security issues. For instance, through trainings that centre experiential learning and mutual respect, local actors share their experiences, practices, knowledge, and skills. In response to an increased demand for such capacity building across Uganda, CECORE also delivers 'Training of Trainers' (ToT) modules as part of an initiative to create pools of trainers in local communities. The exchange of good practices and lessons learned that has resulted from this has allowed communities to ground current issues in their own experiences and develop solutions that apply to their unique local contexts.

Through its Youth Peace Champions project, CECORE provides opportunities explicitly to younger community members, empowering them to become 'champions of peace'.[104] For example, in Yumbe district, youth ToT trainees from the programme (most of whom were former child soldiers) use football as a platform for unity and sensitization, to build peace within communities as well as between host communities and refugees. In the

Kasese district, youth trainees have established catering services that operate from tents labeled with messages of peace, and which invite community members to share their own messages of peace. These approaches have been key to preventing cases of (armed) violence in communities, thus contributing to progress on SDG targets 16.1 on reducing all forms of violence and 16.4 on reducing financial and arms flows.

Recognizing that 'knowledge is power', CECORE conducts awareness raising campaigns on a variety of topics, including the SDGs, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and human security. Specifically, outreach involves 'community parliaments' (Barazas),[105] community sensitization initiatives, door-to-door campaigns, dance and drama performances, talking circles (platforms for dialogue between community members and authorities), village dialogues, radio talk-shows, and more. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when many of these efforts were moved to social media, many communities became empowered to participate more actively in SSG/R processes. Informed actors at the community level are now able to demand accountability from their leaders, which directly contributes towards the realization of SDG targets 16.10 on accessing public information and 16.7 on inclusive and participatory decision making.

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103   Paul Jackson, 'Introduction: Second-Generation Security Sector Reform', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 12, no. 1 (2018), p. 1-10.

104   For more information, see: CECORE, 'Youth Peace Champions Project – Phase II. 2022' https://www.cecore.or.ug/projects/youth-peace-champions-project-phase-ii-2022/ (accessed 14 December 2022).

105   *Baraza* is a Kiswahili word for a public meeting that serves as a platform to create awareness, respond to issues affecting a community, share vital information, and provide citizens an opportunity to identify and propose solutions to their concerns. See: Uganda Human Rights Commission, 'Human Rights Baraza: A handbook on conducting community public meetings', n.d. Available for download at: https://www.ug.undp.org/content/uganda/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/publication_2.html (accessed 14 December 2022). CECORE uses Barazas to facilitate open community-based engagement between local leaders and community members.

CECORE also works with the National Focal Point (NFP) on Small Arms and Light Weapons within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Uganda to establish and train peace committees in mitigating and preventing violent extremism and in developing early warning and early response mechanisms.[106] For instance, a joint intervention with the NFP in the Karamoja region is aimed at reducing the proliferation and use of illicit arms (especially those originating from border communities in Kenya and South Sudan). Peace committees are now actively engaged in sensitizing communities to the dangers of small arms, the detection of illicit small arms transfers within communities, and reporting to relevant security organs, while urging communities to embrace voluntary disarmament. This work directly contributes to the implementation of SDG Target 16.4 on the reduction in illicit financial and arms flows.

Despite these important achievements, persistent difficulties in implementing SSG/R and SDG 16+ in Uganda remain. As one participant in a CECORE-led reflection session in the Karamoja region put it, 'it is good that we have acquired good skills on peace and security reforms, but we cannot eat peace'. This sentiment, shared by a former Karacuna (male youth warrior) once active in armed cattle raiding until CECORE peacebuilding trainings led him to abandon criminal acts, highlights why engagement by the government with local communities is so important to identifying and addressing the underlying economic and political drivers of conflict.

Facilitating engagement between state authorities and local communities

CECORE further supports localization by facilitating appropriate and context-specific engagement among communities, local governments, community leaders, and security actors, such as through talking circles and Barazas. In the Kaabong district, for example, community members and local leaders have agreed to use community gatherings, such as markets, church services, burials, and cultural celebrations, to discuss peace restoration and raise awareness of SDG 16+. Decisions made during these kinds of engagements are informal, but they are highly respected for having emerged from active and inclusive participation, mutual agreement, and community ownership.

Engagement of this nature contributes in a variety of ways to SSG/R, including by: 1) offering equal opportunity to community members to participate in decision-making processes addressing issues of peace and conflict in their community; 2) creating room for constructive dialogue in which community members and leaders discuss critical peace and security issues affecting them, understand and empathize with each other's positions and limitations, and jointly forge solutions to address them; and 3) providing a crucial platform through which communities are able to hold their leaders accountable. Also, the fact that these engagements are participatory and inclusive advances progress towards SDG Target 16.7 on inclusive decision-making.

Indeed, dialogue in the Kaabong district has led to collaborations between communities and security organs to jointly deliver sensitization on peace and security. The close connections that have developed as a result, between community members and security officers, have restored trust and repaired fragile relationships extending from Uganda's turbulent past; and this has given community members a new confidence to directly report crimes and violence to local authorities. CECORE has learned from actors at the community and district levels that this has played a central role in the ability of those authorities to respond to security threats like armed cattle rustling. Moreover, these interventions in Kaabong have inspired security actors to pursue disarmament in the district by promoting a 'mental disarmament' aimed at transforming community attitudes.

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106   The main role of peace committees is to coordinate and promote peacebuilding and conflict resolution in their district. Committees include a district information officer, district community development officer, resident district commissioner, local council, resident state attorney, district police commander, internal security officer, military representative, and officer in charge of prisons; though, the participation of specific actors depends on the context.

5.3. SDG 16 as a framework to address SSG/R

Localization is hard to accomplish when the context on the ground is poorly understood or local actors feel unheard, as this disconnects global frameworks from local realities. Feedback to this effect from communities in Uganda was what first prompted CECORE to partner with GPPAC to engage jointly in Uganda's 2020 VNR process and produce an independent national SDG 16+ national review report, or spotlight report;[107] and to voice the concerns and recommendations of local actors on a global platform during the 2020 HLPF in New York. The spotlight report and its presentation at an HLPF side-event subsequently supported the development of CECORE's SDG 16+ Localization Model. Though the process leading to the development and implementation of the Localization Model took place in one district in Uganda, it is detailed here because it can be used to guide action in other communities.

Development of the spotlight report

This process began when CECORE, in partnership with GPPAC, carried out a comprehensive national review of SDG 16+ implementation in Uganda. The resulting spotlight report complemented Uganda's official VNR, presented at the HLPF in June 2020. The main objectives of this spotlight report were to review Uganda's progress on SDG 16+ targets and indicators from the perspective of local communities and identify ways to facilitate their realization. In dialogue with community members, CECORE identified the need for localization and thus developed its Localization Model to support SDG 16+ implementation within communities. In this way, CECORE used the VNR process itself to unpack and advocate for its Localization Model at the national and local levels.

Importantly, the approach used to develop the spotlight report was participatory and inclusive, engaging and incorporating input from community members, local government representatives, civil society, the national government, the UN, and more. Local actors were central to developing the concept, methodology, and plan for the report, and were involved in pre-testing and research as well as the launch of the report and follow-up activities (see Table 16, below). This process provided a sense of shared ownership, and stood in contrast to exclusive processes like the development of the VNR, which has rarely involved consultation with diverse local actors.

In its national review, CECORE focused on both the district and national levels, as priorities at these levels differ. For example, corruption was a key concern at the national level, but was less relevant to community members in Kaabong. Similarly, armed cattle rustling was identified as a major issue in Kaabong, but was less relevant in other contexts. Developing the spotlight report alongside communities in the Kaabong district helped ensure that their primary concerns and uniquely complex issues were addressed in follow-up actions.

Table 16. The CECORE national review methodology

The national review covered **six districts in six sub regions** of Uganda and targeted national level stakeholders that are key to implementing SDG 16+.

Both **qualitative and quantitative research methods** were employed, with an emphasis on qualitative approaches aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the opinions and feelings of stakeholders.

The research entailed **a literature review, key informant interviews, and a survey** of community members. Interviews and surveys were conducted using semi-structured questions (due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many interviews were carried out by phone and email). Stakeholders from the Kaabong district were asked a series of extra questions to assess the localization and capacity needs of SDG 16+ implementation in their community.

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107   CECORE and GPPAC, *Country Report: Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies – SDG 16+ in Uganda*.

The study involved **168 respondents: 97 men and 71 women**, including 20 from the national level, 72 from across six sample districts, and 76 local community members. Key informants at all levels were diverse, representing government ministries and institutions, local governments, local and traditional leadership structures, security institutions, the private sector, academia, NGOs, faith-based organizations, community organizations, media, political parties, and special interest groups.

Data analysis and report development was undertaken by a team of peacebuilding experts. The draft spotlight report was then reviewed by a team of national and international experts.

The findings of the report were **validated** through an online workshop and through follow-up bilateral discussions that involved stakeholders who participated in the data collection process.

Source: CECORE and GPPAC, Country Report: Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies – SDG 16+ in Uganda.

The findings of the national review indicated that SDG 16+ implementation in Uganda has been challenged by a lack of localization. This has resulted in weak coordination (especially with local community structures), a lack of localized indicators, inadequate local capacities, minimal local engagement on SSG/R and SDG 16+, and limited local data. The spotlight report provided detailed analysis of these issues and made recommendations to accelerate the implementation of SDG 16+. These recommendations were also captured in a policy brief,[108] and have been used in online campaigns and advocacy ever since the 2020 HLPF.

Presentation of the spotlight report during the 2020 HLPF, and follow-up activities

Side events at the 2020 HLPF included platforms for dialogue between civil society and global stakeholders. CECORE participated in the 'Voices of SDG 16' platform, organized by the TAP network,[109] including by sharing a video and giving a presentation.[110] In the Kaabong district, community members gathered in the CECORE coordination office, where they could access a laptop to follow the HLPF process in real time. In other words, during the HLPF itself, they demonstrated active participation, awareness, and ownership.

Even this remote participation by local actors in the 2020 HLPF provided opportunities to enhance: 1) the awareness and inclusion of local peacebuilders; 2) capacity building and partnerships; and 3) open dialogue between local communities and the government. Awareness of SDG 16+ in Uganda was limited prior

to start of the national review process undertaken by CECORE, especially at the community level. At the time, just 12 per cent of community-based respondents in the Kaabong district were knowledgeable about the SDGs. But the development of the spotlight report and participation by CECORE in the 2020 HLPF provided a foundation for the Localization Model, which has resulted in several significant concrete changes.

First, community actors continue to disseminate and mainstream SDG 16+ into their work. In follow-up review meetings in the Kaabong district, CECORE discovered that communities had adopted an ethos of 'leaving no one behind, starting with the furthest behind' and that this was helping more people feel more involved in decision-making processes. Second, partnership-building that occurred amidst the national review process has increased capacities to engage, affirming that partnerships are key to advancing localization. Indeed, CECORE has collaborated with other peacebuilding and human rights organizations to join synergies, as it did during the national review process, when it partnered with a fellow GPPAC member in Cameroon that had previously undertaken a similar process. It has also engaged in joint activities with the government, including a national dialogue aimed at formulating action points to implement some of the SDG 16+ recommendations arising from the spotlight report, the piloting of the Localization Model in the Kaabong district, and the development of an SDG Localization Guide for in country actors, described in more detail below. Third, as the HLPF process provided an opportunity for open dialogue with the government, CECORE worked with organizations like the Uganda National NGO Forum to leverage its collective strength and ability to attract the attention of government actors.

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108   CECORE and GPPAC, 'Policy brief: Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies – SDG 16+ in Uganda', September 2020. Available as a PDF at: https://www.gppac.net/files/2020-12/GPPAC%20SDG%20Policy%20report%20-%20Uganda_3%E2%80%A2Nov2020.pdf

109   TAP stands for Transparency, Accountability, and Participation. See: https://www.sdgaccountability.org/about-tap-network/

110   Voices of SDG 16+ 2020, 'CECORE (Center for Conflict Resolution) – Uganda', 13 July 2020,https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRDji8kIGVM (accessed 23 March 2022).

By building networks among like-minded partners at both the district and national levels, CECORE was able to ensure that information from communities reached national authorities and institutions, some of which were actively involved in the national review process, such as the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). For civil society groups engaged in SDG 16+ implementation, this also enhanced their ownership of the review's findings and strengthened their voice with the government. In fact, a number of findings presented in the spotlight report were incorporated into the government's 2020 VNR,[111] and among them, references to SDG localization and community participation.

Notably, and notwithstanding the many benefits of the HLPF process, CECORE has observed that there are often no concrete commitments or action plans resulting from the submission of a country's VNR. For example, Uganda's 2020 VNR acknowledged that its performance on SDG 16 had stagnated, but identified no concrete steps to advance implementation.[112] There also continues to be a lack of international support for localized data collection, despite lessons learned.[113] In this context, the engagement of national and local peace partners like CECORE, before and after the HLPF, can help to bridge gaps and ensure more inclusive governance and greater success in achieving the SDGs.

National dialogue on SDG 16+

The spotlight report produced by CECORE provided the basis for engagement between civil society and the government after the HLPF. In September 2020, when CECORE brought participants from the national review process together to identify ways that implementation of SDG 16+ in Uganda could be accelerated, a national dialogue on SDG 16+ was launched. This generated action plans and detailed strategies to revive the stalled development of a national peace policy and increase the use of localized data from civil society. Participants in the dialogue also established a joint working group, consisting of governmental and non-governmental actors, to follow-up on these plans and strategies. In the Kaabong district, local government actors responded by mainstreaming the SDGs into planning and implementation mechanisms and addressing concerns about insecurity raised by community members in the national review process. During a follow-up meeting in 2021, community members indicated that this response by local leaders has

contributed significantly to the implementation of SDG 16.7 on inclusive decision making and has resulted in improved security in their communities.

Piloting the Localization Model

The other key outcome of the spotlight report was the development of the CECORE Localization Model for SDG 16+ and its subsequent piloting in the Kaabong district. The report had emphasized that the realization of SDG 16+ is largely dependent on engaging local government officials, who are often best placed to effect meaningful change on the ground, so CECORE engaged the local government in Kaabong in dialogue on how SDG 16+ localization should function in practice. In August 2020, CECORE facilitated a two-day stakeholders meeting in the district, gathering 45 key local actors to orient them to SDG 16+ and identify the best ways to operationalize the Localization Model to meet its targets. Participants included Kaabong district leaders and other local government leaders, the Resident District Commissioner (RDC),[114] representatives of NGOs and faith-based organizations, security actors, women and youth, persons with disabilities, elders, and leaders from the private sector. CECORE shared background information on the SDGs and SDG 16+, discussed the importance and meaning of SDG 16+ localization, and suggested avenues by which the Localization Model could be put into practice.

The CECORE Localization Model was finalized following these consultations and meetings, and incorporated feedback from diverse stakeholders. Local input had resulted in the development of context-specific indicators of peace and SDG 16+ implementation in Kaabong, which included: the frequency of armed cattle raids in the region, the form of settlements (many camp-like settlements that arose due to insecurity still existed), and levels of free interaction among ethnic tribes in Karamoja and with cross-border communities in Kenya and South Sudan. This demonstrated that, by understanding local security needs and challenges, context-specific indicators for SDG 16+ can not only be developed but can directly influence local integration of the SDG framework. In Kaabong, for example, the indicator related to armed cattle raids advances progress towards SDG targets SDG 16.1 on the reduction of all forms of violence and 16.4 on the reduction of financial and arms flows.

111   The Republic of Uganda, *Voluntary National Review* (2020), p. 82.

112   Ibid.

113   See: CSO SDG Core Reference Group, Uganda National NGO Forum, 'CSO Rejoinder on Uganda's VNR report,' June 2020. Available as a PDF at: https://gcap.global/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Uganda-VNR-Rejoinder-Report-FINAL.pdf . NB: This rejoinder report was aimed at highlighting key issues missing from the government's VNR and emphasizing certain issues that CSOs felt should have been underscored more strongly. Also see: Uganda Bureau of statistics, 'SDG 16 Data Gap Analysis report', 19 November 2020. Available as a PDF at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/sdg_seminar/UBOS_SDG_16_Data_Gap_Analysis.pdf

114   An RDC is a representative of the President at the district level, and the coordinator and chair of the District Security Committee.

Another context-specific indicator developed in the Kaabong district, on the synergy between formal and informal leadership structures, contributes to SDG Target 16.1 as well, and to Target 16.6 on accountable institutions. Local actors also emphasized that communities themselves must be actively involved in collecting data for these indicators and in responding to any challenges this data may reveal, to further enhance peace. This process of consultation led to the creation of a comprehensive coordination structure for Kaabong District, to ensure effective follow-up action, which links national institutions with community processes (see Figure 1). A one-stop centre for SDG information and enhancement at the district level was established, and the District Planning Officer was appointed as the district-level SDG Focal Person, who engages directly with the national SDG Secretariat and district heads of departments to integrate SDG 16+ into their departments and programmes.[115] This appointment was a key step in addressing concerns such as the data gap and the disconnect between national and local actors and structures.

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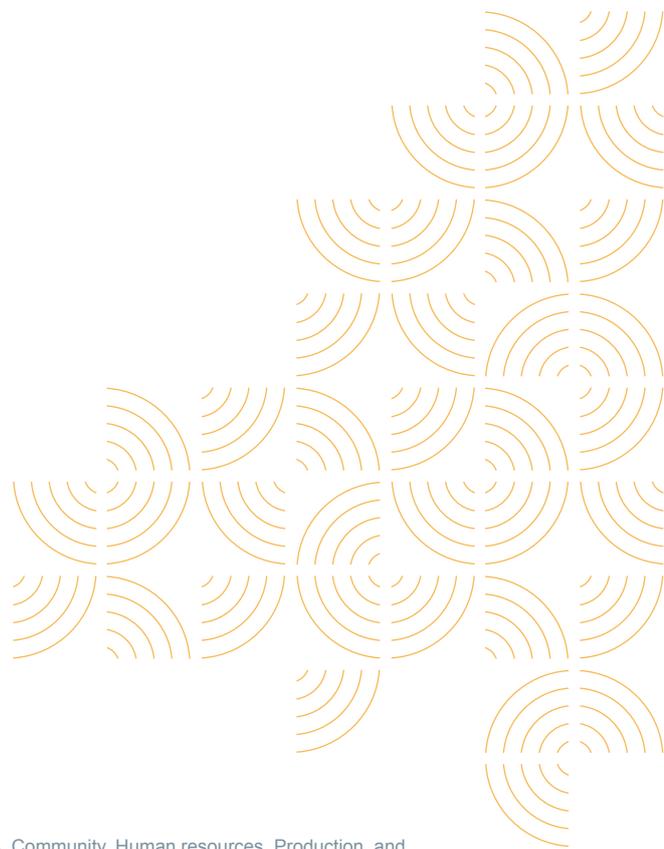
115   The following departments are involved: Health, Education, Water, Natural resources, Community, Human resources, Production, and Community services.

Figure 2. The Kaabong District SDG coordination structure
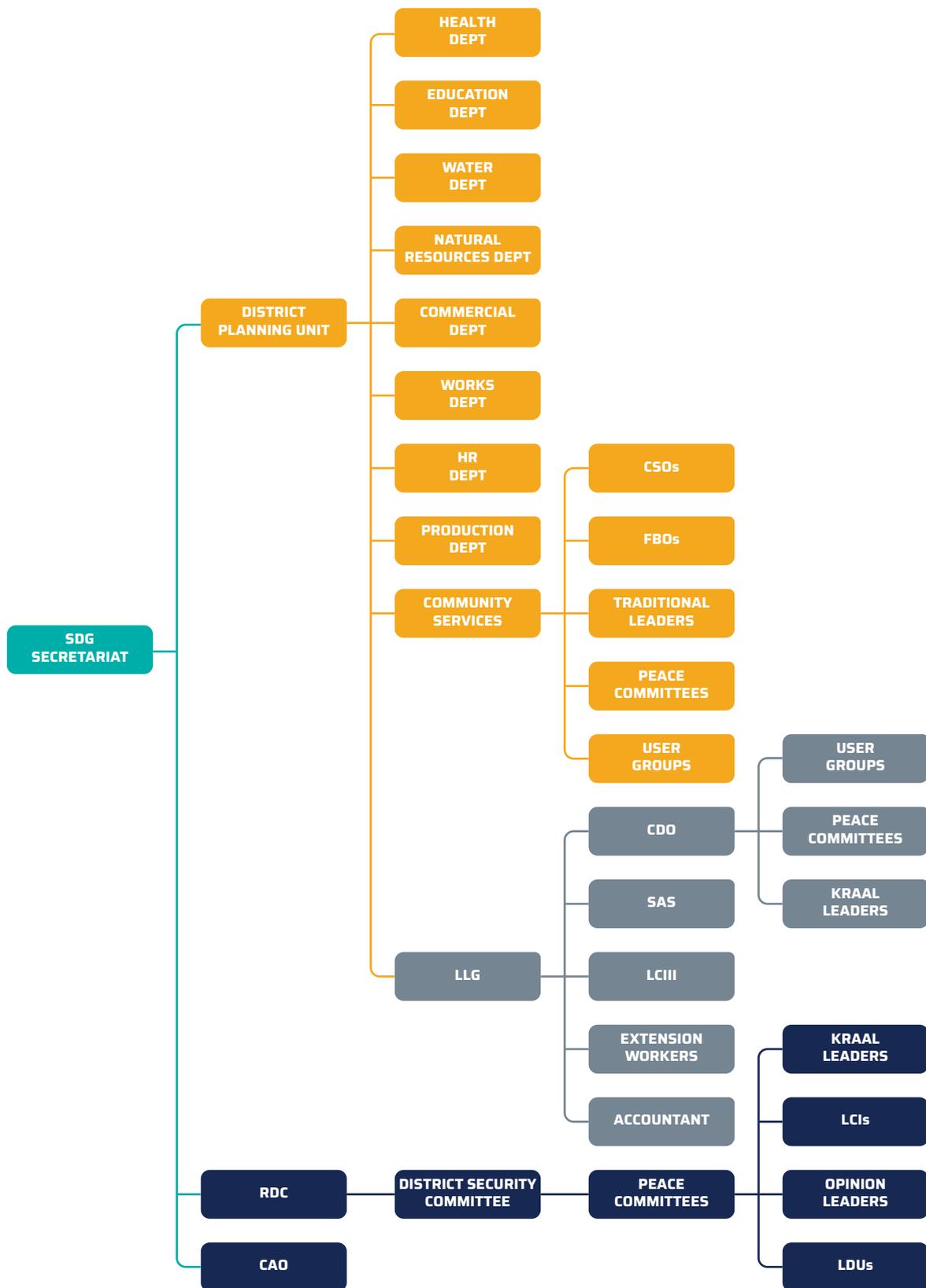
Follow-up to any action plan is always critical. Hence, to build on progress achieved, CECORE facilitated a follow-up meeting in 2021 that gathered representatives from the district, sub-county, and local communities to discuss practical strategies for ensuring implementation of the Localization Model for SDG 16+, with a particular focus on the sub-county and community levels. The objective was to identify leaders at various levels who are capable of building local ownership and taking a lead role in realizing the SDGs.

Today, the Kaabong district is becoming a model for SDG 16+ localization across Uganda, serving as an example of good practice for other districts by using the Localization Model to systematically mainstream the SDGs into local government planning, budgetary, implementation, and monitoring processes. This is true from the village level to the district level, and district-level authorities have committed to prioritizing the SDGs and allocating more resources to areas where performance is lagging. CECORE is now collaborating with the OPM to publish an SDG Localization Guide that will support the process of localizing SDGs in any context, the development of which is being spearheaded by a technical working committee.[116]

The engagement of local communities in these processes of consultation and follow-up have strengthened links between SSG/R and SDG 16+ in Kaabong, making national, sub-national, and local action to improve the peace and security of these local communities more inclusive. Further, there is now better coordination between the office of the Resident District Commissioner – who chairs the district-level security committee[117] – and the peace committees and community organizations focused on SDG 16+ implementation. Dialogue that now occurs across levels of government and between the government and community has enhanced cooperation, information sharing, and prevention vis-à-vis instances and threats of violent conflict, such as in armed cattle raiding. Moreover, traditional security actors have indicated that they appreciate the importance of human security in promoting peace and stability. This has encouraged alternative livelihood projects for former combatants, especially Karacunas, who have voluntarily handed over illicit arms to embrace peace and engage in legitimate income-generating endeavours.

Reflections on context as a factor in localization

The success of localization depends on a variety of security considerations and the positions of respective partners, and therefore requires that security contexts and existing governance structures are well understood and fully considered. Indeed, many local communities find it difficult to engage in every area of sustainable development. Experience also shows that several SDG 16 indicators (such as those related to targets 16.5 on corruption and 16.4 on arms flows) can be sensitive areas of engagement for civil society, which has often found its work on SSG/R and SDG 16+ impacted by complex and fragile local histories, a shrinking civic space, and violations of human rights. In many cases, mistrust and tension between civil society and state actors has prevented meaningful progress on SDG 16+.

CECORE approached this challenge by maintaining neutrality, impartiality, and constructive dialogue with key government actors before, during, and after the national review process. The fact that CECORE established a good working relationship with government agencies meant that conclusions presented in its spotlight report found their way into the government's 2020 VNR and spearheaded the localization process in Kaabong district. Section 5.2 of the 2020 VNR explicitly emphasizes the need for 'deeper localisation and popularisation of the SDG agenda'.[118] It is partly attributed to the discussions during the national review report validation workshop and recommendations shared with national actors. It also acknowledges that 'the SDG agenda is stronger if localisation is stronger'[119] and recommends closer collaboration and synergy within civil society and among young people across the country, as well as the adoption of a community-level rural development strategy. This is a testament to the success of CECORE in driving policy change and accelerating progress towards SDG 16+.

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116   This committee includes representatives of different departments in the OPM, members of the National NGOForum (an umbrella forum for NGOs in the country), and CECORE.

117   The committee includes the RDC, local government leaders, and representatives of the police, army, and prisons.

118   The Republic of Uganda, *Voluntary National Review* (2020), p. 82.

119   Ibid.

5.4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Localization is critical to ensuring that global agendas translate to real change at the country and local levels. The work of CECORE makes it clear that the journey to localization can be lengthy and complex but is not impossible. In Uganda, SDG 16+ localization has gained momentum as a result of the CECORE spotlight report as well as the organization's participation at the international level through the 2020 HLPF. These activities exposed gaps in SDG 16+ implementation, and the national dialogue that followed sought to identify ways to address them, leading to the piloting of the CECORE Localization Model in Kaabong and the development of the SDG Localization Guide.

A promising outcome of this process has been a greater appreciation among diverse actors across Uganda for the need to localize SDG 16+ implementation, in a context where the knowledge of local government leaders and community members about the SDGs and how to localize, interpret, and relate to them was previously limited. This lack of knowledge has been part of the reason for low engagement on SDG 16+ at the district, sub-county, and community levels; and, even in the Kaabong district, localization can only meaningfully take root if more local leaders, community members, and other actors become actively involved and take ownership of the SDG 16+ agenda. Localizing that agenda not only contributes to Uganda's capacity to fulfill the SDGs more broadly, but also supports more inclusive governance. And importantly, localization makes security more inclusive as well, by shifting relationships between security forces and the community from one of militarized control to one of partnership, thereby mutually enhancing human security.

To effectively operationalize localization using a model like the one used by CECORE to localize SDG 16+ in the Kaabong district, stakeholders (civil society, government institutions, and donors) should consider the following recommendations:

> Action on SDG 16+ must be driven by **clear localized indicators**, supported by **adequate local data collection mechanisms**. These indicators should be developed through inclusive dialogue, and these mechanisms can take the form of local 'one-stop centres' where data can be collected and accessed. It is equally important that civil society work with governments to forge paths forward on how 'non-official data' can be recognized and utilized in SDG planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

> **Local community peace mechanisms** must be strengthened and/or built. Infrastructures for peace – such as national peace policies, local peace committees, organizations led by youth and women, and cross-border dialogue mechanisms – are key avenues for localization and for ensuring a coordinated and coherent approach to implementing SDG 16+ localization on the ground.

> **Multi-stakeholder coordination and synergy** among civil society, government, local actors, and others working on SDG 16+ must be enhanced. Civil society can provide a valuable platform for constructive engagement, including through national review reports (such as the CECORE spotlight report), validation meetings, and national dialogues, which offer important opportunities for relevant stakeholders to engage productively, share ideas, and develop joint action plans for localizing SDG 16+. However, this demands a consolidated effort by governments and other partners to create space for engagement with diverse non-state actors, including women and youth.

> **Awareness raising and capacity building among local actor**s is necessary to support their meaningful engagement and active participation in SDG implementation. This can lead to a localization 'trickle down' effect within communities that empowers community members to take the lead in localization processes.

> Accelerating SDG 16+ localization requires a **mainstreaming of the SDGs into existing structures and programmes** at all levels. In Kaabong, where the SDGs are now systematically mainstreamed into government planning, budgetary, implementation, and monitoring processes, from villages to the district level, this has enabled the voices of those 'furthest behind' to be heard at the national and international levels.

> Finally, it is critical that **local actors meaningfully participate in global policy forums**, including the HLPF, to build momentum for localization as well as skills and partnerships that will advance efforts to generate progress at local levels. Local peacebuilders should also be supported by national governments, the UN, and international civil society to develop strategy and access relevant stakeholders.

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