SDG16DI

2020

Global Report

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Executive Summary

Five years ago, the United Nations' (UN) Member States adopted the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to reach by 2030, including Goal 16's promise of peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. Founded in the same year, the SDG16 Data Initiative (SDG16DI) is a consortium of 17 organizations dedicated to the implementation and open tracking of progress toward the SDG16 targets.

The SDG16DI is pleased to present its fourth annual Global Report, part of a series aimed at evaluating global progress towards realizing the 2030 Agenda's promise of peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. The Global Report provides governments, UN officials, and civil society stakeholders with a resource to help understand progress on the SDG16 targets. It also provides an evidence base for identifying gaps in both the implementation and monitoring of SDG16, and for altering course to accelerate implementation where needed. In addition, by relying on both official data collected by National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and robust non-official data collected by civil society, the Global Report provides a holistic view of progress under each of the SDG16 targets.

Civil society has a crucial role to play in supporting and complementing the work of governments in collecting, monitoring, and reporting on data for SDG16. There are a number of strategic advantages presented by civil society data (i.e. third-party, unofficial, or complementary data not collected by NSOs, henceforth referred to as "non-official data"). First, non-official data collected by civil society can fill methodological and conceptual data gaps in SDG16 data and reduce the capacity strain on NSOs through innovative methodologies and strategic partnerships with official data collectors. Second, many civil society data producers face fewer bureaucratic challenges to collecting and publishing data, allowing them to pilot new methodologies and produce timely, high frequency data. Lastly, civil society data producers are less likely to face less internal resistance to producing data on politically sensitive issues, such as femicide, gun violence, and corruption. For these reasons, the official data discussed in this and previous Global Reports are complemented by a peer-reviewed compilation of methodologically robust non-official data for the SDG16 targets.

Since its inception, the SDG16DI has underscored the importance of SDG16 in realizing the broader Sustainable Development Agenda and the vital role of civil society in monitoring the implementation of SDG16. The current global COVID-19 health crisis has only made this more apparent by intensifying many pre-existing challenges to achieving peace, justice, and inclusion. For example, there is a growing evidence that quarantines have increased rates of domestic violence (target 16.1),[1] and that the economic fallout from the crisis is creating more legal needs related to housing, medical debt, and bankruptcy (target 16.3)[2] Furthermore, emergency laws are delaying elections and leaving little room for parliamentary oversight (target 16.7),[3,4] and the desire to control the flow of unfavorable information about the pandemic has led to attacks on the media and whistleblowers (target 16.10)[5,6]

While these and other governance challenges are on the rise, NSOs' capacity to monitor these issues is simultaneously diminished by the global health crisis. This is due to reduced human and financial capacity for data collection, as many governments grapple with shrinking GDP and the need to direct resources to the immediate public health response. The pandemic also introduces obstacles to gathering administrative data from overwhelmed state institutions, as well as survey-based data via face-to-face methods. In light of these challenges, the importance of using non-official data to monitor SDG16 is greater now than ever.

Notwithstanding these concerning trends, the 2020 Global Report showcases positive developments at the country level across several SDG16 indicators, with a particular focus on partnerships between NSOs, civil society, and efforts to mainstream SDG16 indicators into broader data collection processes. This Global Report aims to demonstrate how these positive developments tie into the Decade of Action and Accountability, building on several insights highlighted in the three previous SDG16DI Global Reports covering the availability of data on all 12 SDG16 targets (2017); the triune aims of SDG16 for peace, justice, and inclusion (2018); and the state of SDG16 globally according to non-official data for all 12 targets (2019). This year's Global Report will also reinforce how non-official data is more important than ever in monitoring the governance impact and response to COVID-19 .

The year ahead will mark five years of data collection on SDG16 and present a vital window for producing data on the new SDG16 indicators recently adopted by the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) in 2020.

> " Using publicly available international trade data from the United Nation Comtrade database, GFI's analysis demonstrates that trade misinvoicing is a persistent challenge to significantly reducing illicit financial flows across nations, as called for in SDG 16.4."

The case studies in this report highlight a number of positive developments on the following SDG16 issues and targets:

» New sex-disaggregated data and gender-relevant analysis on armed violence is now available: This section provides recent data on trends on violent deaths (target 16.1) and analysis on gender-relevant information on armed violence from the Small Arms Survey. It describes progress made in the production, collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data on lethal violence, based on multiple sources, including official and unofficial - using the Small Arms Survey Global Violent Deaths database. It will also touch upon the link between arms trade (in relation to target 16.4) and gender, with the example of the Arms Trade Treaty and gender-based violence risk assessment.

» Use of high-resolution geo-spatial data improves data collection on violence and conflict at the local level in Syria, Colombia, Global. The sustainable development agenda incorporates an ambition to produce new and novel data on a range of topics that the international community has so far not systematically collected data on. This is especially true for SDG 16. To achieve this, the agenda sets out a clear role for civil society, academica, and NGOs in producing data. Such 'non-official' data production needs to be of the highest quality and is integral to SDG efforts. In this section we argue that the space for non-official data as a fundamental part of monitoring and tracking SDG 16 needs to be protected and supported. Without civil society, getting reliable and timely data on many SDG 16 dimensions will be impossible.

» Leveraging new and existing technologies to support more open and transparent trade in Argentina, Bangladesh and Côte d'Ivoire. Using publicly available international trade data from the United Nation Comtrade database, GFI's analysis demonstrates that trade misinvoicing is a persistent challenge to significantly reducing illicit financial flows across nations, as called for in SDG 16.4. However, new developments in price-filter and distributed ledger technology offer an array of tools for government and customs officials to create systems of open and transparent trade and overall greater financial transparency.

» Household surveys conducted by Transparency International complement governments' SDG 16 monitoring efforts by capturing corruption in a holistic manner (16.5) and illustrating the relationship between vote-buying and trust in government (16.6). Transparency International's (TI) Global Corruption Barometer interviews ordinary people worldwide and provides periodic nationally representative measures of citizens' experience and perceptions of corruption. This data is not only crucial to tracking progress towards SDG 16.5, but can also be used to provide additional insights on the interplay between corruption and other targets. The TI case study on Latin America and the Caribbean, for instance, finds some evidence that vote-buying, a form of corruption relevant to target 16.5, is negatively associated with citizens' trust in government, itself a proxy for target 16.6 on effective and accountable institutions.

» Responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making (target 16.7) is a crucial prerequisite for achieving all policy outcomes aspired by the SDGs. International IDEA has developed a set of indicators measuring target 16.7 as part of its Global State of Democracy Indices, covering 162 countries. These Indices can function as valid and viable proxy indicators of the hitherto missing official indicators

» New assessment gathers timely information on backsliding in Right to Information and Access to Information (RTI/ATI) commitments during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, Indonesia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Ukraine. With a growing majority of UN member states adopting Access to Information (ATI) laws, in accord with the official indicators for SDG16.10, the specialized NGOs in this field are increasingly focused on improving and measuring "implementation" of these statutes, as required. The Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) is coordinating efforts with local and international partner groups to conduct independent assessments of the use and enforcement of ATI laws in all regions of the world to supplement official government reporting on public access to information.

GFMD's groups also rely on reports and data from independent NGOs to monitor press freedom around the world – one of the "fundamental freedoms" which UN member states pledged to protect in SDG 16.10. In 2019, the official UN indicator for press freedom progress – documented killings of working journalists - registered a significant and welcome decline, but a worrisome deterioration in press freedom conditions in most regions of the world continued last year, including in several long-standing Western democracies.

» New survey analyzes interlinkages between SDG16 targets on responsive and inclusive decision-making, strong institutions and support for democracy in multiple countries throughout the world. The World Values Survey (WVS) in cooperation with the UNDP has conducted a pilot of a new measure of SDG indicator 16.7.2 on inclusive and responsive decision-making. The project has been implemented within the 7th round of the WVS surveyed worldwide in 2017-2020. The new WVS survey data available for scholars, policymakers and NGOs in free access allows exploring correlations between inclusive and responsive decision-making and a wide range of other Political Science concepts and indicators such as social and political trust, support for different types of regime, confidence in political institutions, as well as to evaluate the item's reliability in international context, including both democratic and authoritarian states.

Overall, the 2020 Global Report demonstrates a number of positive developments in efforts to monitor progress toward peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The year ahead will mark five years of data collection on SDG16 and present a vital window for producing data on the new SDG16 indicators recently adopted by the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) in 2020. The SDG16DI intends, therefore, for the data, methodologies, and promising case studies discussed in this and previous Global Reports to serve as a foundation for a retrospective on the first five years of gathering SDG16 data in 2021. While the global community faces unprecedented challenges for data collection and governance more broadly in 2020, it is the SDG16DI's hope that the case studies in this report offer promising and innovative approaches to monitoring these challenges and supporting the Decade of Action and Accountability that lies ahead.

Photo by Jay Rembert on Unsplash

Global violent deaths and sex-disaggregated data

The collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data on violent deaths is essential for understanding and responding to various kinds of violence.

COUNTRIES

Global

RELEVANT SDG16 TARGET(S)

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

DATA METHOD

Multiple-source database analysis

DATA SOURCE

http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/about-us/highlights/2020/highlight-gvd-update-2020.html

The Small Arms Survey is a global centre of excellence that generates impartial, evidence-based, and policy-relevant knowledge and analysis on all aspects of small arms and armed violence for governments, policymakers, researchers, and civil society. The Survey is an associated programme of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland and has monitored armed violence since its inception in 1999.

This section will provide new data on violent death trends (target 16.1) as well as offer an analysis on gender-relevant information regarding armed violence. If used to measure impacts, data should not only serve as a diagnostic, but become part of the solution. With this in mind, the role of non-official data is key in measuring armed violence, especially when it comes to gendered aspects of such violence. However, despite Agenda 2030's pledge to 'leave no one behind', sex-disaggregated data are still lacking for SDG indicators, including Target 16.1.

The collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data on violent deaths is essential for understanding and responding to various kinds of violence. Lethal violence, including firearm violence, is highly gendered, with the majority of both victims and perpetrators being male, and with most of the female victims killed as a result of gender-based violence (GBV) committed by men. The Small Arms Survey Global Violent Deaths database (GVD) estimates that 596,000 people lost their lives to lethal violence in 2018, including 93,700 (16 percent) women. In absolute numbers, this is the third highest figure of women victims since 2004[7]. This case study describes progress made in the production, collection, and analysis of sex-disaggregated data on lethal violence in conflict and non-conflict settings, based on multiple sources—both official and unofficial.

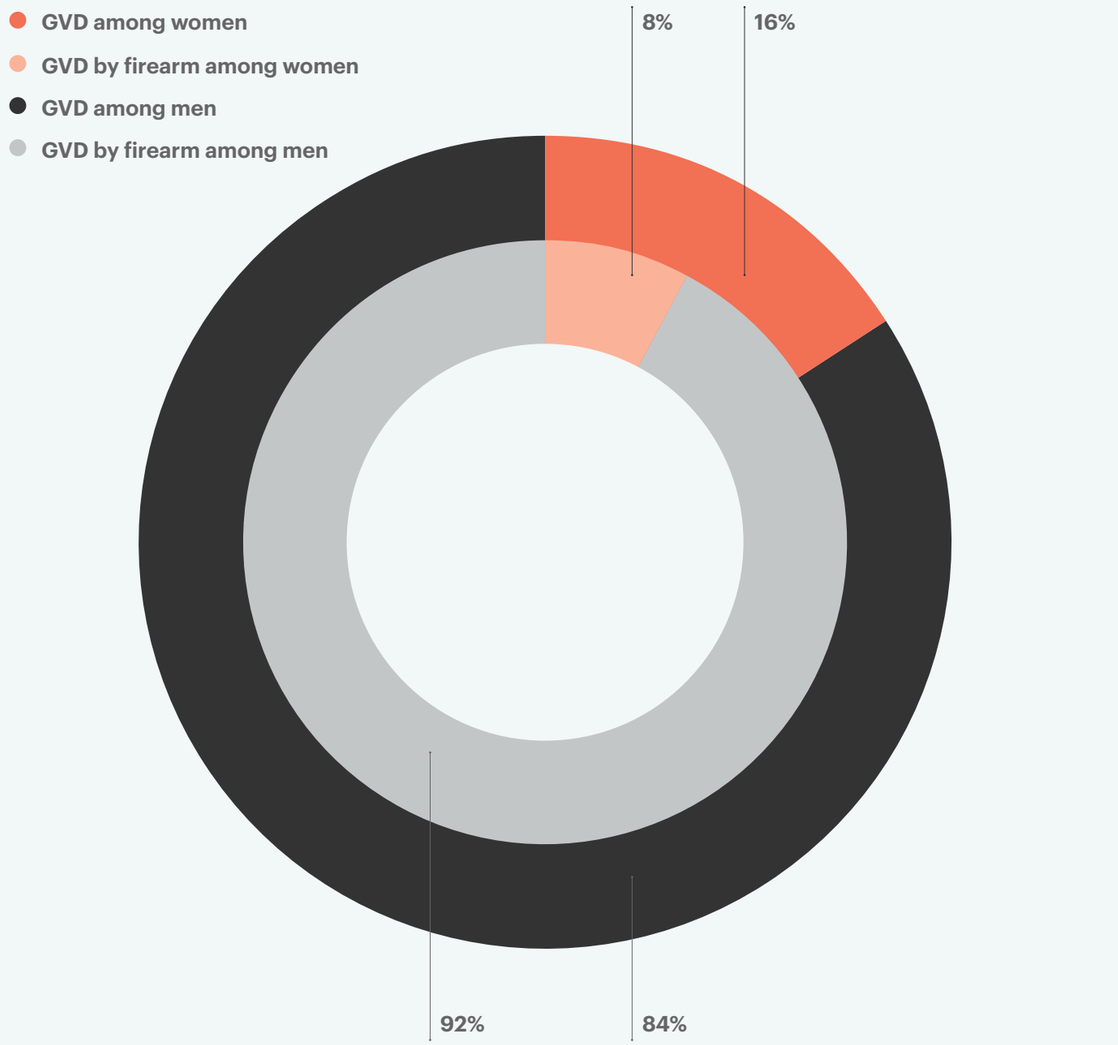
While the overall proportion of female victims of lethal violence remained at 16 per cent globally, the 93,700 women and girls who lost their life to violence in 2018 were nearly as many as in 2017, which was the highest number recorded since 2005.

" A majority of countries have only recently started to provide sex-disaggregated homicide data, while the numbers of female fatalities in ongoing armed conflicts are almost completely unknown"

The gender relevance of most violent deaths datasets is currently low. A majority of countries have only recently started to provide sex-disaggregated homicide data, while the numbers of female fatalities in ongoing armed conflicts are almost completely unknown[8]. The GVD database recorded a substantial reduction in lethal violence between 2017 and 2018. On the basis of the available data and estimates, however, the number of women killed did not decrease at the same pace. While the overall proportion of female victims of lethal violence remained at 16 per cent globally, the 93,700 women and girls who lost their life to violence in 2018 were nearly as many as in 2017, which was the highest number recorded since 2005. The reason why the substantial reduction in lethal violence from 2017 to 2018 did not translate into an equally decreased number of female victims is due to the fact that most of the reduction came from de-escalating armed conflicts. Most of those dying directly from conflict-related violence are men; thus, most of the 2018 reduction in violent deaths reflected a decrease in the number of male victims. Nevertheless, men continue to be much more likely than women to become victims of lethal violence, with a 5:1 ratio. In addition, they are also overrepresented among victims of firearm-related killings, making up 92 percent of such victims in 2018, globally[9].

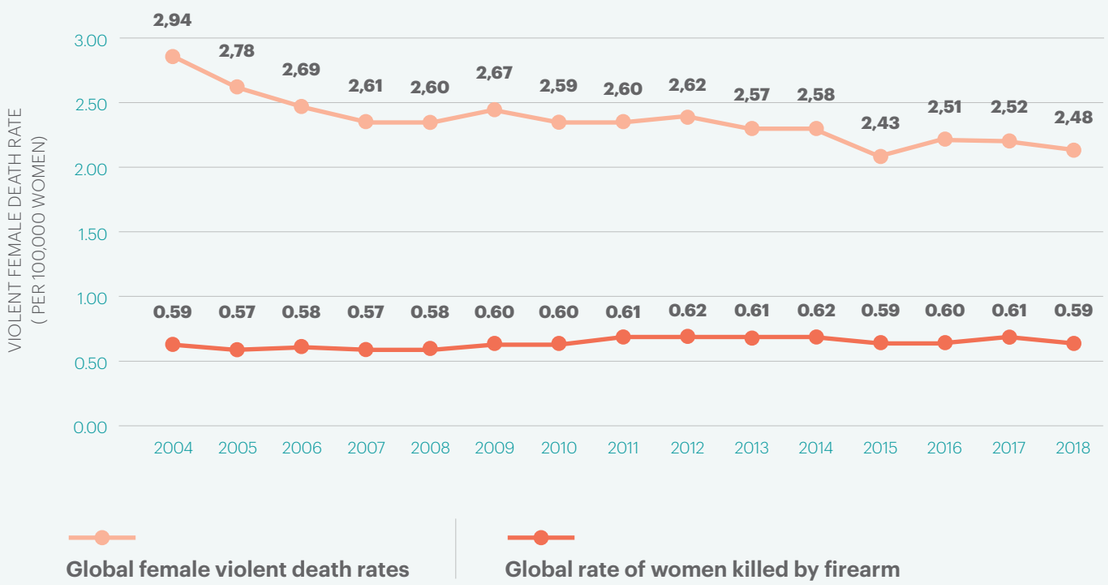
The 2020 update of the GVD database is the first edition that allows for analysing disaggregated data on female victims of firearm killings for 2004–18. While the rate observed in 2018—0.59 per 100,000 female population—is in line with women victimization trends regarding firearms killings across the time monitored, the absolute number of women killed with a firearm in 2018 (17,200 globally) is, by a small margin, the highest during this 15-year period.

FIGURE 1
Global violent deaths (GVD) disaggregated by sex and instrument, 2018.



The 2020 update of the GVD database is the first edition that allows for analysing disaggregated data on female victims of firearm killings for 2004–18.

FIGURE 2
Global female violent deaths, 2004-2018



"Currently, numerous countries collect data on femicides, either as anonymized statistics or in the form of registries (or memorials), with the latter including victims' names and the circumstances of the killings, thus acknowledging those who fall victim to such violence."

Femicide[10] is—or may be becoming— a distinct form of violence that is particularly visible in areas or countries that are otherwise relatively peaceful. In several European countries, for example, the number of women killed through homicide exceeds that of men; and a majority of homicides with women victims can be counted as femicides. Currently, numerous countries collect data on femicides, either as anonymized statistics or in the form of registries (or memorials), with the latter including victims' names and the circumstances of the killings, thus acknowledging those who fall victim to such violence. Femicide observatories have been established in many countries, as the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women has called for[11], and serve a mix of monitoring and advocacy-oriented functions[12].

In line with SDG Targets 16.1 and 16.4, small arms control instruments, such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), also highlight the gendered aspects of armed violence, as well as the need for disaggregated data and gender analysis. The ATT explicitly recognizes the connection between the arms trade and GBV, as expressed in ATT Article 7(4)[13]. In preparation for, and during, the Fifth Conference of States Parties to the ATT (CSP5) in 2019, states and civil society alike focused on the implementation and practicalities of Article 7(4), i.e. how to assess—prior to authorization for export—the risk of arms being used in GBV in the importing country. Two action points in the CSP5 final report are particularly relevant. Firstly, states parties are encouraged to: consider gender aspects; collect disaggregated data and include it in their national crime and health statistics, including disaggregated data on the gender of victims of armed violence and conflict; and make this data publicly available[14].

Secondly, states are encouraged to support research that helps to increase our understanding of the gendered impact of armed violence in the context of the ATT. These recommendations are echoed in a number of recent UN General Assembly First Committee and UN Security Council resolutions[15]. Better data in line with relevant indicators would help ATT states parties to more accurately assess GBV risks in the context of arms transfers, in line with ATT Article 7(4). While femicide is one obvious indicator that exporting states should consider, the reality is that due to sporadic reporting and recording, making risk assessments of this kind is extremely difficult[16].

Sex-disaggregated data is key for adding context and granularity to the SDG indicators. Many of the SDG 16 indicators, however, start from pioneer data collection, often lacking disaggregation. This also applies to key data on violent death rates, as per SDG Indicators 16.1.1 and 16.1.2. Civil society and academia therefore play important roles in collecting and analysing this data. Ultimately, both official and independently generated data will be needed to produce a picture of the gendered impacts of lethal violence that is simultaneously holistic and detailed. This is increasingly more pressing, as the Covid-19 pandemic may have adverse impacts on armed violence as well. A rise in demands for small arms[17], exacerbation of conflicts, and an increase of domestic violence cases[18] are all examples of negative possible effects related to lethal (armed) violence. Civil society and academia can contribute and support the collective efforts through unofficial data, research, and analysis.

Official and non-official data for conflict related deaths

Throughout its 75-year history the UN has never officially and systematically collected data on where wars are happening, how many are killed, and what the broader consequences of these wars are.

COUNTRIES

Syria, Colombia, Global

RELEVANT SDG16 TARGET(S)

SDG 16.1.2: Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause

DATA METHOD

News sources, expert coding, registry data

UN and data on war

This summer marked the 75th anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations started collecting signatures. The first line of the Charter states that we 'the peoples of the united nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war'[19] At the very heart of the of the UN's mission from the very start were attempts to prevent or, if prevention was not possible, manage wars and the destruction and carnage that follows in the wake of war. To this core effort, the UN also added an ambition to promote economic and social advancement – as a necessary tool for achieving peace. For economic and social advancement, the UN promptly and diligently built an extensive system for collecting and aggregating the data needed to track, monitor, and understand how to achieve such advancement. Yet, no comparable effort was made to extend such efforts to war and conflict.

Throughout its 75-year history the UN has never officially and systematically collected data on where wars are happening, how many are killed, and what the broader consequences of these wars are. Perhaps paradoxically, in the last decades anyone has been able to access the impressive UN data catalogue and get up to date information on a vast range of social, demographic, and economic indicators. You want to know what the population growth and infant mortality levels were in the Central African Republic (CAR) last year, no problem: just go to http://data.un.org/. But if you want to know how many people were killed in war in CAR last year, no such luck.

> " It's 'troubles' in Northern Ireland and UK, 'armed conflict' in Colombia, or invariably, terrorism (probably the modal category, from the US, via Spain, to Russia and so on and so forth)."

It's all political

The reason for this is quite simple. Though it should be straightforward, following international law, to classify something as 'a war' the act of doing this is inherently political and intensely sensitive. Consequently, the UN has never been able to compile a list of active wars. You could infer such a list, to a large extent, from Security Council discussions, but you wouldn't find it readily accessible anywhere.

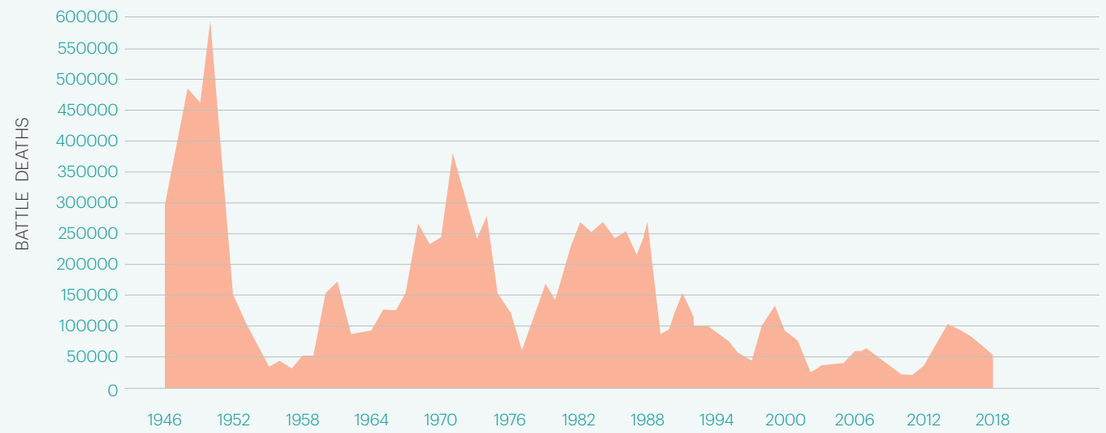
Especially when it concerns civil wars states rarely want to say that they are experiencing war. Instead they get creative. It's 'troubles' in Northern Ireland and UK, 'armed conflict' in Colombia, or invariably, terrorism (probably the modal category, from the US, via Spain, to Russia and so on and so forth). Of course, it could all simply be called war. Since the founding of the UN states have protected their right to ultimately label something as war or not. Consequently, the UN has never been allowed to say for themselves that this is war, and for the same reason they have never been able to compile a list or to monitor when and where wars happen. This doesn't mean that the UN at the country and operational level doesn't monitor, for instance, people killed in battle, but it doesn't happen systematically at the political level.

Instead someone else stepped into the void. Since the pioneering work of Lewis Fry Richardson researchers have been compiling lists and databases of conflict and war.[20] And since the advent of the University of Michigan based 'Correlates of War' project which started collecting and updating data on war in 1963, everyone has been able to access reliable, transparent, and routinely updated data on where wars occur and who are engaged in them.[21] Presently, the most widely used such database is the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Armed Conflict Database.[22] This database, which has since been expanded and made more granular and is now regularly updated by UCDP, records wars, between countries and within countries, and battle deaths for all the world's countries from the present going back to 1946. It is, of course, free and open to anyone and everyone who wants to use it. And users routinely include UN organizations, see for instance discussions of trends in conflict in the UN and World Bank Pathways for Peace report.[23]

Since the pioneering work of Lewis Fry Richardson researchers have been compiling lists and databases of conflict and war.

FIGURE 3

Battle related deaths, global aggregate, 1946 - 2018[24]



Since the escalation of violence started in Syria in 2011, the country has suffered a devastating war that has crippled infrastructure and state institutions.

Trends in conflict

Using this data, we can easily look at trends in conflict deaths over time. Note that the chart shows 'battle related deaths' which is narrower in scope than the ambition of SDG 16.1.2 to record all conflict related deaths and to disaggregate this by sex, age, and cause. We know, because of this, that since the end of the Cold War, the trend in armed conflict has been generally downward as seen in the above figure. Yet since 2011, we have seen upsurges in both the number of conflicts and the severity of war. Does this portend an end to the waning of war? We also know that battle casualties do not follow the same pattern as the number of armed conflicts. The number of battle casualties peaked in the early 1950s. Despite the low number of conflicts, this period contained some of the most deadly wars in the post–World War II era, notably the Chinese Civil War (1946–1949) and the Korean War (1950–1953). Wars, such as Vietnam, Iran-Iraq, Afghanistan, DRC, and Ethiopia-Eritrea account for the subsequent peaks. The general pattern is one of decline, with each peak falling short of its predecessor. The small rise in battle casualties evident since 2011 results mostly from the civil war in Syria, as that was winding down battle deaths are again declining.

The sustainable development agenda

No indicator on war was included in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Some countries pushed for one, but it was vetoed. In the final MDGs report, then Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon wrote that 'war remains the largest obstacle to development' and the member states were finally able to agree that such an indicator should be part of the sustainable development agenda. The academic community, in particular, was somewhat dismayed that the Inter-Agency Expert-Group on SDGs voided 50 years of cutting-edge research and decided that neither methodologies nor data existed to collect data, the official classification of a Tier III indicator, on and track the number of conflict related deaths in the world. But at least the UN member states now agreed that such data should exist.[25]

Moreover, the sustainable development declaration clearly and unequivocally gave civil society a voice and a role in production of data for the agenda. That is, production of such data is not under the essential and sole purview of states and their National statistical agencies. For conflict deaths, as well as for many other SDG 16 indicators, this role for civil society is absolutely crucial. For two reasons in particular. First, many countries most hit by for instance conflict quite simply will not have the systems, the resources, or the time to collect such data even if they wanted to. Second, for most SDG 16 indicators we can not simply trust the states to produce reliable information. They will have all manners of incentives to disguise, bias, or circumscribe data on conflict deaths, human rights abuses, or the extent to which their institutions are accountable.

For the first reason, present day Syria represents an extreme case. Since the escalation of violence started in Syria in 2011, the country has suffered a devastating war that has crippled infrastructure and state institutions. The Syrian government lost control over large parts of its territory and still does not control its entire country.

"In 2015 Human Rights Watch reported that a number of people had been killed as guerillas by Colombian armed forces when in fact they were not combatants at all"

Syria is an extreme case, but the world all routinely sees wars of this size and scope. It is absolutely inconceivable that a Syrian National statistical office would be able to collect reliable and updated data on battle casualties in such a situation. Yet, it is precisely during conflict that updated statistics on deaths is most needed, meaning we have to think differently. For the second reason, we have to acknowledge that even countries with ostensibly democratic regimes will be tempted to present biased statistics of conflict deaths. This could involve the pattern of labelling deaths as part of police actions and not as conflict casualties, thus biasing the number of deaths downward, but it could also be the opposite. In 2015 Human Rights Watch reported that a number of people had been killed as guerillas by Colombian armed forces when in fact they were not combatants at all.[26] This became known as the 'false positives' scandal where the Colombian army murdered civilians as labelled it as regular conflict casualties to boost their statistics. Thus, actually, biasing killings upwards.

In any case, both these examples highlight that it is incumbent on us, the international civil society, to produce such data, using standards just as strict and rigorous as those used by state agencies for other types of data. As the SDG 16 Data Initiative, its many members, and the many organizations working on this not part of the Data Initiative, have shown, we do that just fine.

Chapter

03

Trade-Related Illicit financial flows in Argentina, Bangladesh and Côte d'Ivoire

COUNTRIES

Argentina, Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire

RELEVANT SDG16 TARGET(S)

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; **16.4.1:** Total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows (in current United States dollars)

DATA METHOD

Partner-Country method of analyzing international trade data to identify the value gaps which are indicative of trade misinvoicing

Trade revenues are critical sources of income for developing countries.[27] However, each year money is lost to trade-related illicit financial flows, which undercuts this valuable revenue-generating activity.

The act of trade misinvoicing, in which importers and exports seek to hide illicit flows within the regular commercial trading system by either under or over-pricing their imports or exports, is a major component of illicit financial flows. Typically, trade misinvoicing is undertaken to illicitly move proceeds from illegal activities or corruption, and can also be used to evade income taxes, customs duties, value-added taxes (VAT) and currency controls. From a development perspective, it deprives developing country governments of an important source of tax revenues that could be used to fund efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the 2030 deadline.

This problem is relevant to SDG 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" and specifically indicator SDG 16.4.1 "Total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows (in current United States dollars), which suffers from a lack of officially reported data. In October 2019, at the tenth meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), indicator 16.4.1 was reclassified as a Tier II level indicator, with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) listed as potential host custodian agency(ies).[28]

UNCTAD and UNODC are currently preparing the latest assessment of the conceptual framework document that will detail the latest refinement of the indicators in a joint publication expected in July 2020. Work is progressing on actual methodological sets to be tested in-country in 2021 and based on these tests, final indicators will be developed into guidelines for countries to follow. UNCTAD and UNODC will also jointly submit a report to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2020 to provide an overview of the mix of the work being done on statistics used for the indicators and by policy colleagues in both agencies.

So far, the agencies have been delayed in part by trying to figure what the best data sets are to monitor the SDG16.4 indicators going forward. The corresponding lack of data has so far hindered the ability of experts to comprehensively assess progress on SDG 16.4 and indicator 16.4.1 on estimating the total value of illicit inflows and outflows. In this respect, while methodologies are being devised by UNCTAD and UNODC, non-official data gathered by non-governmental organizations can help supplement the data gaps in knowledge.

As part of its work to analyze non-official data pursuant to measuring progress on SDG 16.4.1, Global Financial Integrity (GFI), a Washington, D.C.-based think tank, examined 4,860 bilateral trade relationships for trade-related illicit financial flows across 135 developing countries and 36 advanced economies by trading partner, commodity, region and percent of total trade, among other indicators, to identify the scale and scope of trade misinvoicing in the global economy.[29]

Since the escalation of violence started in Syria in 2011, the country has suffered a devastating war that has crippled infrastructure and state institutions.

"For example, if Ecuador reported exporting US$20 million in bananas to the United States in 2016, but the US reported importing only $15 million in bananas, this would reflect a mismatch, or value gap, of $5 million in the reported trade of this product."

It is important to note that while the term "illicit financial flows" (IFFs) may include many types of activities, such as trade misinvoicing, smuggling, tax evasion, etc., this analysis focuses on trade misinvoicing, or the trade-related aspects of illicit financial flows. It does not address all forms of IFFs and is therefore not a full picture of the total value of IFFs, which is likely to far exceed these estimates. This point further exemplifies the need for greater official and non-official data alike in measuring the total value of IFFs globally, given that GFI's estimates of trade misinvoicing, one facet of the IFF problem, are so large.

For its analysis, GFI evaluated trade statistics supplied by individual country governments to the United Nations Comtrade database[30] in order to identify the "value gaps," or mismatches, in the reported data. For example, if Ecuador reported exporting US$20 million in bananas to the United States in 2016, but the US reported importing only $15 million in bananas, this would reflect a mismatch, or value gap, of $5 million in the reported trade of this product. While the available data is not perfect and country figures are not exact, the resulting value gap estimates provide an order of magnitude view of each country's trade misinvoicing challenge, reflecting the scale of the problem. Additionally, while the full report examines trade misinvoicing in 135 countries, this case study discusses findings for three countries chosen at random across three continents: Argentina, Bangladesh and Côte d'Ivoire, to demonstrate the breadth of trade-related IFFs.

Table A below provides three samples of GFI's value gap findings, showing the data for Argentina, Bangladesh and Côte d'Ivoire. For example, in the first row for Argentina for the year 2008 is the figure $6.1 billion, representing the sum of all of the value gaps identified within Argentina's bilateral trade relationships with each of the 36 advanced economies. In other words, there was a value gap of $6.1 billion between Argentina and all of its advanced trading partners in 2008. The far-right column provides the average US dollar amount for the sums of value gaps identified for each developing country's bilateral trade between 2008-2017.

Correspondingly, Table B shows the value gaps as a percent of a country's total bilateral trade with the 36 advanced economies for each year examined, as well as the ten-year average. For example, the first row for Argentina for the year 2008 shows 18.6 percent, meaning that the value gap denoted in Table A ($6.1 billion) is equivalent to 18.6 percent of the value of Argentina's total trade with the 36 advanced economies in 2008.

FIGURE 4

Sums of the Value Gaps Identified in Trade Between Argentina, Bangladesh and Côte d'Ivoire and 36 Advanced Economies, 2008-2017, in USD Millions

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Average
Argentina	6,105	4,055	5,404	6,476	6,246	6,496	5,693	4,765	4,473	4,717	5,443
Bangladesh	2,558	2,457	3,091	3,358	3,198	3,799	N/A	4,578	N/A	N/A	3,291
Côte d'Ivoire	1,522	1,493	1,347	1,397	1,160	1,160	1,424	1,309	1,262	1,357	1,343

Note: N/A indicates a year for which there was no reporting to UN Comtrade by the country.

FIGURE 5

Total Value Gaps Identified Between Argentina, Bangladesh and Côte d'Ivoire and 36 Advanced Economies, 2008-2017, as a Percent of Total Trade

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Average
Argentina	18.60	16.74	17.35	16.92	16.76	17.51	18.02	17.55	15.75	16.23	17.14
Bangladesh	15.62	14.57	15.30	13.82	13.25	14.58	N/A	15.18	N/A	N/A	14.62
Côte d'Ivoire	22.71	23.53	20.76	19.61	17.50	17.07	18.66	17.97	16.69	16.03	19.05

Note: N/A indicates a year for which there was no reporting to UN Comtrade by the country.

In its full analysis of 135 developing countries, GFI identified a total value gap of $8.7 trillion in trade between developing and advanced economies between 2008-2017.

"One of the most significant challenges in assessing the problem of trade misinvoicing is that those who engage in it are trying to hide it."

Analyzing value gaps as a percent of total trade is illuminating, because the size of value gaps in dollars may often reflect the size of a country's economy, and less so the amount of potential illicit activity. For instance, despite the fact that Argentina's average value gap is $4 billion greater than Côte d'Ivoire's, a larger percent of Côte d'Ivoire's total trade is routinely misinvoiced, at 19.05 percent, compared to 17.14 percent for Argentina. This indicates that despite having a smaller economy than Argentina, trade misinvoicing is happening at a higher rate in Côte d'Ivoire.

In its full analysis of 135 developing countries, GFI identified a total value gap of $8.7 trillion in trade between developing and advanced economies between 2008-2017. In just 2017 alone, the total value gap in trade between all developing and advanced economies was $817.6 billion.

One of the most significant challenges in assessing the problem of trade misinvoicing is that those who engage in it are trying to hide it. This limits even the best assessments and overall estimates of macro-level analyses of international trade data. However, it is possible to identify trade misinvoicing by using micro-level transaction data to cross-reference the invoices of importers and exporters in both the exporting and importing countries. Unfortunately, getting access to such data can be difficult, akin to a needle in a haystack.

There are, however, promising new uses of technology to help customs agencies, central banks and tax authorities to identify trade misinvoicing – in real time – when it can be stopped. Using a method known as price-filtering, new specialized database tools[31] can enable customs officials to cross-check the value of cargo as declared on an invoice submitted by an importer or exporter against the prevailing average global price for the same good.

While developing countries wait for such technology to be commercially available, viable and affordable, non-official data such as GFI's analysis of Comtrade records can help fill the gap in official SDG 16.4.1 data reporting.s.

When the declared value is more than one or two orders of magnitude off the recent prevailing global average price, it is a strong indication of attempted trade misinvoicing and thus can be flagged for further investigation. Likewise, attention has been drawn to efforts to develop distributed ledger technologies, such as blockchain, to create a new type of comprehensive international trade ledger to better track the distribution, routes and quantities of globally traded goods. In practice, all crates and containers would have scannable barcodes accessible to customs officials and investigatory agencies the world over, that would reveal the origin of the good and the destination country, along with important tax and tariff information. Trade data would be recorded in a way that is transparent, updating in real-time and very difficult to falsify. Advancements in this area are slow, but hold much promise for increasing internationally available and accessible trade data.

While developing countries wait for such technology to be commercially available, viable and affordable, non-official data such as GFI's analysis of Comtrade records can help fill the gap in official SDG 16.4.1 data reporting. Such non-official data sources and analysis can help experts better understand the problems of illicit financial flows and their corrosive impacts on financing sustainable development. Data is crucial to understanding and curtailing IFFs globally, particularly as developing countries struggle with funding shortfalls and the economic brunt of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Photo by kobby-mendez on unsplash

Chapter

04

Global corruption barometer: unveiling SDGs 16.5 and 16.6 in Latin America and the Caribbean

COUNTRIES

Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Trinidad & Tobago and Venezuela (Latin America and the Caribbean).

RELEVANT SDG16 TARGET(S)

16.5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms **16.6:** Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

DATA METHOD

Global Corruption Barometer, a nationally representative public opinion survey conducted mainly through face-to-face interviews in the local language (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing, CAPI).

The potential of bribery rates to shed light on other manifestations of corruption is limited.

Back in 2015, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) selected two official indicators for SDG target 16.5, which relates to the control of corruption. These are the proportion of persons (16.5.1) and businesses (16.5.2) within a given country that had at least one contact with a public official during the previous 12 months who either paid a bribe or were asked for a bribe by those officials.

Albeit important, these two indicators alone are insufficient to measure if and how well countries are "substantially reducing corruption and bribery *in all their forms*", as formulated in the wording of the target. Reported bribery rates are best suited to capturing the incidence of petty corruption, that is, the everyday abuse of entrusted power by public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens, who are typically trying to access basic goods or services.[32] The potential of bribery rates to shed light on other manifestations of corruption is limited.

Moreover, not only is it unrealistic to expect that multidimensional targets for broad concepts like corruption can be captured by two indicators on bribery, as is the case for target 16.5, but in many countries around the world the necessary data is simply not recorded.[33] Additionally, topics like corruption are politically sensitive, which may leave the reliability of the figures provided by national statistics offices open to question.

These three issues concerning SDG16.5 monitoring processes, namely the inadequacy of indicators 16.5.1 and 16.5.2 alone to capture the complex phenomenon of corruption, the unavailability of official data as well as the potential unreliability of data that does exist can all be at least partially addressed by incorporating data produced by civil society organisations. Apart from plugging current data gaps, the Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) developed by Transparency International (TI) illustrates the need for complementary data to reveal the extent of corruption and the effectiveness of national responses to it in both a holistic and authoritative manner.

Although Brazil presents one of the lowest bribery rates in the region, the number of respondents who have been offered money or a favour in exchange for their vote is remarkably high.

"Whereas no Latin American and Caribbean country officially reported data on SDG 16.5.1 in 2019, in the same year the GCB surveyed more than 17,000 citizens in 18 countries in the region."

Since 2003, TI has carried out ten editions of the GCB - a public opinion survey across the globe, asking ordinary citizens about their experiences and views on corruption. TI's GCB follows high survey standards and yields periodic and nationally representative measures of bribery and attitudes towards corruption, amongst many other corruption-related topics.

Whereas no Latin American and Caribbean country officially reported data on SDG 16.5.1 in 2019,[34] in the same year the GCB surveyed more than 17,000 citizens in 18 countries in the region.[35] The results revealed that the levels of bribery in the region are relatively high. First, citizens were asked whether they had contact with six key public services in their country during the previous 12 months (the police, the courts, health care, schools, identity documents, and utilities), to which 76 percent responded affirmatively. Of these, more than one in five people (21 percent) paid a bribe to obtain basic services. Venezuela, Mexico, and Peru present the highest bribery rates in the region, with 50, 34, and 30 percent respectively. On the other side of the spectrum, Costa Rica (seven percent), Barbados (nine percent) and Brazil (11 percent) are the Latin American and Caribbean countries with the lowest overall bribery rates.

The GCB 2019 explored not only Latin Americans' involvement with bribery when accessing public services but also their experiences with vote-buying. This measure helps to unveil a facet of political corruption[36] that the SDG official indicators are unable to capture: the extent to which political integrity is compromised by one form of election abuse. In Latin America and the Caribbean, almost 25 percent of the respondents were offered a bribe or a special favour to vote in a certain way during the previous five years. Countries with the highest levels of reported incidences of vote-buying are Mexico (50 percent), Dominican Republic (46 percent), Brazil, and Colombia (both with 40 percent).

Interestingly, although Brazil presents one of the lowest bribery rates in the region, the number of respondents who have been offered money or a favour in exchange for their vote is remarkably high. Similarly, whereas Venezuela presents the highest bribery rate in the entire region, vote-buying seems to be a much less widespread practice in that country when compared to its Latin American counterparts (26 percent). This brief comparison neatly illustrates the limitations of measuring complex phenomena with unidimensional indicators.

Better control of corruption requires better data.

But there is more – whereas vote-buying relates exclusively to elections, political corruption encompasses many other arenas, including fraudulent political funding, illicit lobbying, and in fact any circumstance in which political actors act for private gain to the detriment of the public interest. Political corruption as a whole is, in turn, merely one of many illicit forms of behaviour that fall under the overarching umbrella term "corruption". This complexity clearly demonstrates the need for a range of complementary data sources to provide an accurate picture of global progress towards SDG 16.5.

The data produced by the GCB is not limited to SDG 16.5. Citizens in Latin America and the Caribbean were asked whether they had "a great deal", "a fair amount", "not a lot" or "no trust at all" in the government (including politicians, public servants or any kind of government agency); the courts; and the police.[37] Measuring the levels of trust that individuals have in state institutions is a useful proxy to evaluate how effective, accountable and transparent these institutions are (target 16.6). Taking the region as a whole, a minority of people express trust in the government (21 percent), courts (27 percent) and police (33 percent); in only two countries – Barbados and Guyana – did a majority of respondents state that they trusted these institutions.

Incorporating the GCB dataset allows for not only an improved monitoring capacity of SDG targets 16.5 and 16.6, but also an assessment of the linkages between these targets. It is plausible to hypothesise that high levels of vote-buying correspond to low levels of trust in the government. Being bribed to vote might have an impact on how individuals regard the functioning of the country's government and the reliability of its politicians and other public officials. To test whether this connection exists, TI used GCB data to run logistic regressions with trust in government as the dependent variable and vote-buying as the variable of interest. These analyses controlled for the potential influences of age, gender, income, education and whether the respondent had paid a bribe for public services during the 12 months prior to being interviewed.

The regressions were performed by country and survey weights were applied.[38] The results of these analyses show that there is indeed an inverse relationship between vote-buying and trust in government that is statistically significant for *Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago and Venezuela*.[39] In other words, after controlling for bribery, socioeconomic and demographic variables, the nationals of these countries who experience vote-buying are more likely to distrust the government when compared to those who were never bribed to cast a vote for a particular candidate or party.

The detrimental effect of one form of corruption, vote-buying, on trust that this incipient analysis suggests for eight Latin American and Caribbean countries is particularly alarming when taking into consideration that dwindling citizen trust itself has the potential to cripple modern democracies, which rest upon popular legitimacy.[40] Yet vote-buying patterns in the region and their connection with citizen trust might have gone unnoticed were it not for TI's periodic surveys in the region. Better control of corruption requires better data, and progress towards SDGs 16.5 and 16.6 will be inadequately documented and understood for as long as sources of non-official data from civil society organisations are not given due consideration by national governments as part of SDG monitoring processes.

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Chapter

05

Towards a valid and viable measurement of SDG target 16.7: responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making

To provide data, significant funding will be required to conduct opinion surveys and collect administrative data with a global coverage

COUNTRIES

Hungary; 162 countries globally

RELEVANT SDG16 TARGET(S)

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

DATA METHOD

Expert assessments; coded observational data

The UN Member States have set ten specific targets for Sustainable Development Goal 16, the promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies. Of these targets, target 16.7 aims at ensuring "responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels." Among the 17 SDGs and the 169 targets defined to achieve the Goals, target 16.7 may be viewed as a key target, because it focuses on political decision-making, a crucial prerequisite for all of the desirable policy outcomes defined in SDG 16 and in the other SDGs. This chapter discusses the official indicators for monitoring target 16.7 and argues that the Global State of Democracy Indices – a set of democracy measures developed by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)[41] – can function as valid proxy indicators.

The UN Statistical Commission has selected two indicators, or more precisely: sets of indicators to measure progress on target 16.7.[42] The first set measures the extent to which the proportional representation of various demographic groups in (a) the legislature, (b) public service, and (c) the judiciary corresponds to national distributions of the same groups. This is captured in indicators 16.7.1a-c. The second indicator set measures the proportion of people who (1) believe that they have a say in what the government does and (2) feel that the political system allows them to have an influence on politics. This is captured in indicator 16.7.2. Both indicator sets are to be disaggregated by sex, age, disability status, population groups and levels of government.

According to the metadata sheet prepared by the UN Statistics Division, the choice of indicators 16.7.1 a-c is based on the assumption that when parliament, public services and the judiciary reflect "the social diversity of a nation, this may lead to greater legitimacy [of these institutions] in the eyes of citizens," as their "members resemble the people they represent in respect to gender, age, ethnicity and disability."[43]

If citizens can participate with equal political rights in elections and decide freely between different candidates, the composition of the legislature is assumed to represent the aggregate political preferences of the population.

"Indicators 16.7.1 and 16.7.2 reflect the consensus of the Statistical Commission, but they also need to be publicly perceived as sufficiently valid measures for the concepts of "responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making."

As such, this indicator set is intended to measure representative and inclusive decision-making. In contrast, the second indicator set (16.7.2) is intended to capture participatory and responsive decision-making through public opinion surveys. Its underlying assumption is that both attributes are realized if the surveyed citizens believe they can impact politics.

Indicators 16.7.1 and 16.7.2 reflect the consensus of the Statistical Commission, but they also need to be publicly perceived as sufficiently valid measures for the concepts of "responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making." One likely concern about their validity originates from the link between representation and democratic elections that has shaped notions of representation in democratic thought. Democratic theories assume that legislatures are representative if their members are elected by the citizens. If citizens can participate with equal political rights in elections and decide freely between different candidates, the composition of the legislature is assumed to represent the aggregate political preferences of the population. This widespread notion of representation views free, fair and competitive legislative elections as a necessary element of a representative legislature. Necessity implies that elections violating the aforementioned democratic standards would not lead to a legislature that represents the will of the population, even if it is representative in demographic terms. Thus, this reasoning would conclude that information on the proportions of various demographic groups in the legislature does not allow for sufficiently assessing the quality of the process followed to elect a representative legislature.

Another concern relates to the wording of the survey questions used to assess participatory and responsive decision-making. According to the definition of the first survey question provided in the metadata, "'having a say in what the government does' means having a channel to express one's demands, opinions or preferences about what the government does, and feeling listened to."[44] This definition points to ambiguities inherent to the idiom "having a say". Survey participants may understand the question in a minimalist sense of "feeling that the government is listening." Alternatively, respondents may conceive the question in a maximalist sense of "being empowered to participate in public policy-making." What it means to "have a say" is likely to vary across countries, time and respondents' sociocultural or socioeconomic backgrounds. Harmonized sampling techniques can reduce respondent-level biases but are not able to control for national cultural contexts guiding survey responses.

In addition to these conceptual concerns, there are also issues with the availability of data for the official 16.7 indicators. As of June 2020, the two official indicators for target 16.7 had not yet been available in the database of SDG indicators created by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Data on the proportions of female and younger legislators are collected by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for a large number of countries, but the IPU's new Parline database does not cover all UN Member States or extend back in time for age-disaggregated numbers of deputies. IPU has decided not to collect data on the disability and population group status of deputies, and instead plans to monitor legal provisions on the representation of these groups. International datasets on the proportions of demographic groups in public service and the judiciary are not available either. The two survey questions intended to assess participatory and responsive decision-making have so far been asked only in the European Social Survey covering 29 European countries. An Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) survey and the World Values Survey Association have asked the first survey question for a limited number of additional countries. Even if future surveys will cover more countries, they will not contain historical data points that would be needed to assess trends and developments within countries for a number of years.

To provide data, significant funding will be required to conduct opinion surveys and collect administrative data with a global coverage. In its Cape Town Global Action Plan adopted in 2017, the Statistical Commission has provided a road map for the modernization and strengthening of statistical systems. According to the UN's SDG Report 2019, 129 countries worldwide had implemented a national statistical plan by 2018. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, only 23 percent of plans were fully funded, although donor support for statistical capacity-building had increased by $400 million globally from 2006 to 2016.[45]

Given these concerns, it is necessary to re-evaluate trade-offs in the choice of official indicators selected to measure target 16.7. The Statistical Commission has refrained from relying on expert assessments to measure SDGs, which may be attributed to a skepticism regarding the validity and reliability of such assessments (see, for example, the Praia City Group's *Handbook on Governance Statistics*[46]). Such concerns may, however, also be raised for mass survey and observational data, as illustrated by the above-mentioned examples. In other words, these data types are not per se more valid than expert assessments. In contrast with observational data, both expert assessments and public opinion surveys allow to assess latent traits that are not directly measurable, but which are particularly relevant for the complex concepts of decision-making covered in target 16.7.

International IDEA has developed a set of indicators measuring these concepts — responsiveness, inclusion, participation and representation — as part of its Global State of Democracy Indices (GSoDI).

These indicators are predominantly based on expert assessments, but IDEA's methods of measurement and aggregation effectively address the validity and reliability issues associated with such assessments. Firstly, the GSoDI are based on 14 different source datasets, harnessing the combined observations of different data providers to reduce the influence of bias associated with individual sources. The most important data source is the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) survey, a large-scale scholarly democracy measurement project that relies on at least five different country experts per data point and uses advanced techniques of calibrating individual assessments in order to minimize subjectivity. As an inter-governmental organization, International IDEA is guided by rules and accountability procedures ensuring impartiality, independence and the highest quality standards in developing and maintaining the GSoDI.

Secondly, the GSoDI (like V-Dem) aggregates indicators through graded Item Response Theory models and Bayesian factor analyses — statistical models that assign greater weights to source indicators that are more correlated to the latent concepts measured, such as "representative government". Moreover, these aggregation techniques generate standard errors that quantify the measurement precision, that is, the degree to which the underlying source indicators agree.

[47]Thirdly, the GSoDI are disaggregated into four attributes, 16 subattributes, five subcomponents and 119 indicators, facilitating a differentiated and focused assessment of SDG target 16.7. For example, to measure "representative" decision-making, it is possible to focus on electoral integrity, the effective oversight function of the legislature, the share of female legislators or the extent to which political power is distributed by social group, each as separate indicators.

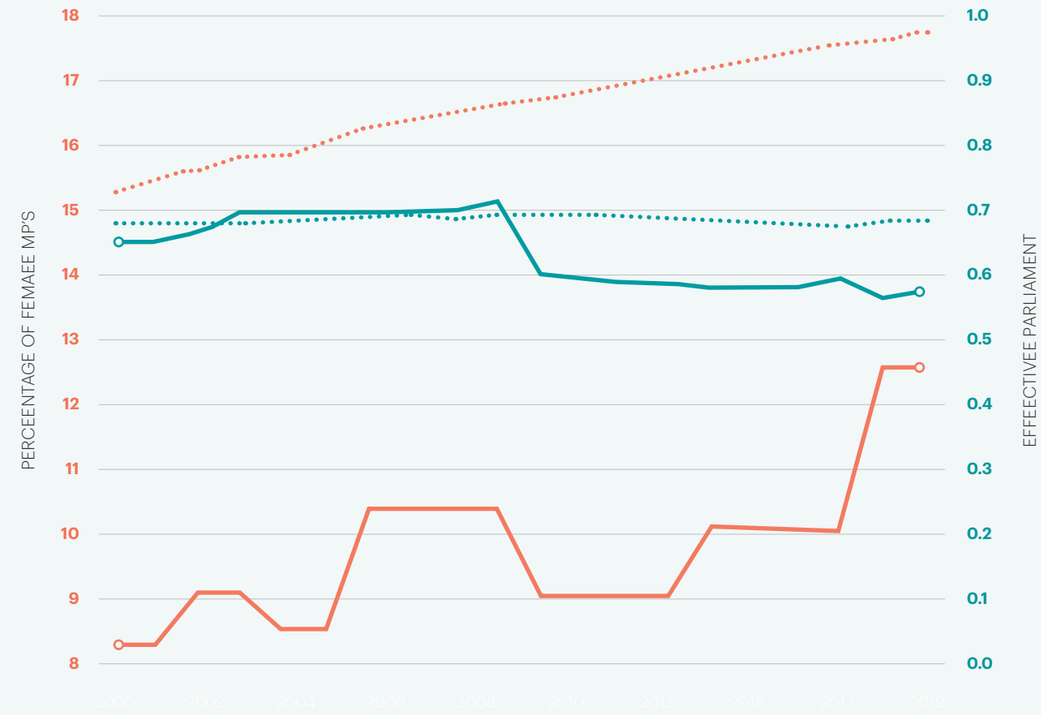
The graph below illustrates a more multifaceted assessment of representative decision-making using the GSoDI indicators. The graph compares Hungary's performance with the average of 42 European countries for two dimensions: (1) the share of female Members of Parliament (MPs) using IPU data, as envisaged by the official indicator; (2) the extent to which parliaments are capable of overseeing the executive ("Effective Parliament"). This measure is based on five indicators that monitor the extent to which parliament, in particular opposition MPs, question and investigate actions of the executive and can pose constraints on the decision-making powers of chief executives. The indicators are assessed by independent country experts selected by V-Dem and the Polity project, two renowned scholarly datasets.[48] The GSoDI aggregation method can be used to define 68 percent-confidence intervals that are shown for Hungary's parliament as shaded areas in the graph. The graph demonstrates Hungary performs below its regional peers with regards to gender representativeness, but tends to follow the European average with regard to trends over time. As for parliamentary oversight, the graph illustrates that Hungary has dropped below European average since 2010. This year marks the takeover of government by V. Orbán that has led to a widely observed deterioration of representative, inclusive and participatory decision-making in Hungary.

A key advantage of the GSoDI is that the Indices are not only available now and can be updated cost-efficiently, but also cover both 162 countries and 45 years (1975-2019). UN agencies, Member States conducting Voluntary National Reviews, non-governmental organizations, media outlets and citizens can access the dataset and create customized measures for their purposes. The GSoDI provides a retrospective view of changes over time that is not possible with the official indicators for target 16.7. However, viewing a country's current situation in time will add to the validity of assessments since it enables policy-makers and the development community to compare with benchmark years in a country's own history.

The relevance of the GSoDI dataset emerges clearly when we try to monitor progress on 16.7 in the time of COVID-19. The pandemic crisis and subsequent national and international responses are already impacting on the achievement of the SDGs. In this perspective, SDG 16.7 may indirectly provide policy-relevant information on the effectiveness of both emergency response and recovery efforts. For example, high levels of state capacity and an impartial public administration enable governments to contain infectious diseases and build more effective healthcare systems. While a few non-democracies have managed to develop relatively effective state administrations, only democratic elections and accountability provide the necessary institutional conditions to address the root causes of political corruption and clientelism or partisan bias in public administration. Valid measures of responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making would empower UN Member States to assess the institutional conditions of effective crisis management.

FIGURE 6

Representative decision-making and legislatures in Hungary and Europe



Ensuring access to information: independent national reviews for 16.10.2

GFMD calls on UN members to include nongovernmental data in evaluations of progress towards SDG16 and stresses the importance of public access to information for all seventeen of the SDGs

RELEVANT SDG16 TARGET(S)

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

DATA METHOD

Methodology developed by civil society experts in the global Network of Freedom of Information Advocates for independent assessments of national progress in SDG16.10.2[49]

Official UN Indicators

16.10.1 *"Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months"* [Source: UNESCO and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights]

16.10.2 *"Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information"* [Source: UNESCO]

The Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD[50] is a Brussels-based coalition of 200 national, regional and international CSOs dedicated to the support of independent journalism and freedom of information, with a special focus on the implementation of SDG16.10.

In 2019, GFMD spearheaded ten independent national reviews of progress to date on the 16.10 commitment to 'ensuring public access to information,' through surveys and in-country consultations with GFMD member groups and other stakeholders, in collaboration with Deutsche Welle Akademie[51] and Free Press Unlimited[52], and in consultation with the Centre for Law and Democracy[53] and the Africa Freedom of Information Centre[54]. These reviews used templates developed for this purpose by the Freedom of Information Advocates Network (FOIA-Net) with support from UNESCO[55], which is using these assessments in its own 16.10 monitoring. The NGO assessments were carried out with local GFMD partner groups in Canada, Indonesia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Ukraine.

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic heightened political and economic pressures on independent journalism in many countries, as documented in critical reports by international media groups as well as UN human rights officials.

“ In 2019, the number of documented cases of journalists killed in the line of duty dropped dramatically – to 25, as compared to 54 in 2018 – yet most media experts reported a further overall decline in press freedoms worldwide.”

The independent 16.10.2 evaluations of national Access to Information (ATI) laws and systems were designed to supplement the official Voluntary National Reviews conducted by these ten UN member states on the achievement of SDG16 and other global goals. The ten initial SDG16-10 assessments will be replicated in other countries in 2020 and 2021.

A full report on this project was published by GFMD as the “Road to 2030: Access to Information in the driver’s seat.”[56]. Among its findings were data gaps in most countries on the “implementation” of ATI laws, as called for in indicator 16.10.2; inconsistent enforcement of ATI laws attributable to both political and technical capacity factors; and a general “lack of awareness among the public, as well as government bodies, regarding the fundamental right of access to public information.

The report further “calls on UN member states to take into account nongovernmental data sources in all their evaluations of progress towards SDG16” and notes the critical importance of public access to accurate data for all seventeen of the global goals.

Overview

Public access to information and the free exchange of ideas are prerequisites for building “peaceful, accountable and inclusive societies” – the overarching aim of SDG 16. Freedom of information is equally essential for tracking and achieving progress in all 17 of the global goals.

The two mutually reinforcing components of SDG16.10 – access to information, and the broader right to freedom of expression referenced in its pledge to ‘protect fundamental freedoms’ - must be examined together in evaluating progress towards this Agenda 2030 target, both nationally and globally. Without a genuinely free and safe environment for independent media, ATI laws cannot fully serve their intended purpose of keeping the public informed about their governments’ activities and ensuring public access to official records.

Conversely, unless governments comply with their commitments to provide public access to official data and documents, press freedom provisions alone will not keep the public informed.

In 2019, the record was again mixed: Continuing progress on the adoption of Access to Information (ATI) laws was undermined by setbacks in press freedom, as authoritarian and populist leaders tightened strictures and heightened demagogic attacks against independent journalism.

The two UN indicators for monitoring progress on SDG16.10 track (1) the adoption and “implementation” of ATI statutes, as documented by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and (2) verified cases of murders and unlawful detentions of journalists, human rights advocates and labor organizers, as reported by UNESCO in conjunction with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Both of these SDG16.10 indicators require independent data as well as official statistics to measure progress towards the target’s objectives.

The GFMD 16.10.2 initiative described above is one example. Governments can be relied upon to report on the existence (or not) of national ATI laws - that is a matter of public record – but not on whether these laws are actually being enforced and used.

Nor can governments be the definitive source of information on violent attacks on journalists, some of whom would be considered critics of those governments, with public officials believed to be complicit either in the failure to investigate and prosecute these cases or, worse, in the acts themselves. Independent information sources such as the annual reports by reputable journalism and human rights organizations on the killings of journalists are essential for documenting progress – or lack of such – towards the commitment by all UN member states to “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms.”

In addition, these statistics need to be complemented and contextualized by the broader systematic evaluations of media independence and legal protections carried out by these specialized civil society institutions. It is by definition rare for countries which do not permit the free exercise of independent journalism to have cases of reporters killed or imprisoned. At the other end of the democratic spectrum, in developed countries where such physical attacks are equally rare, authorities have imposed direct or indirect constraints on independent media. In 2019, the number of documented cases of journalists killed in the line of duty dropped dramatically – to 25, as compared to 54 in 2018 – yet most media experts reported a further overall decline in press freedoms worldwide.

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic heightened political and economic pressures on independent journalism in many countries, as documented in critical reports by international media groups as well as UN human rights officials. At the same time, many governments restricted or ceased enforcement of national access to information laws during this public health emergency, prompting protests from news organizations and local and international civil society groups, including SDG16DI contributors Transparency International, ARTICLE 19, the Centre for Law and Democracy, and GFMD.

Nongovernmental data sources for UN SDG16.10 indicators

16.10.1 - Ensuring "fundamental freedoms," including press freedom

The SDG16DI database uses the authoritative annual accounting of journalists killed in the line of duty published by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an international NGO based in New York. Each such case reported by CPJ is independently researched by the organization to determine that the cause of death was attributable to the victim's profession, either deliberate murder, or deaths in conflict zones or other hazardous reporting assignments.57

CPJ's yearly figures closely align with those reported by other specialized NGOs in the press freedom field, such as Reporters san Frontières (RSF) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). Those nongovernmental organizations are important sources for the UN's own official SDG16 reporting on the killings of journalists.

It is important to note that in contrast to these annual global reports on the work-related deaths of journalists, there are no comparable comprehensive data sources – either official or nongovernmental, for both definitional and statistical reasons - for the other categories of human rights offenses and victims stipulated in indicator SDG16.10.1:"Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months."

In 2019, CPJ confirmed 25 cases of journalists killed on the job, including ten murders of reporters working in their own home countries (the majority in just one, Mexico) and six who were killed covering armed conflicts in Syria. This was the lowest number of these work-related deaths since CPJ began documenting them three decades ago, and less than half the 54 cases recorded in 2018. The significance of this welcome and unexpected departure from the patterns of recent years is difficult to assess. One factor in the 2019 decline may be an increasing reluctance by news organizations to deploy reporters in dangerous conflict zones, some experts believe.

Whether the parallel drop in homicides of local journalists in non-conflict countries is partly attributable to increased international scrutiny of such cases can only be assessed over time.

These grim annual fatality counts can also vary greatly due to single specific incidents, such as the 2015 killing of 12 journalists in the Paris offices of the satirical newsweekly Charlie Hebdo. In 2018, two such cases accounted for 13 of the deaths of journalists that year – nine in Afghanistan, in an insurgent assault on a convoy of media vehicles, and four in the United States, where a gunman attacked a small-town newsroom in the state of Maryland.

Supplementary indicators for SDG16.10.1

While unquestionably positive, the significant drop in the number of journalists' deaths between 2018 and 2019 inadvertently illustrated the deficiency of UN indicator 16.10.1 as a global barometer of press freedom. International press freedom groups and human rights organizations consistently reported further deterioration in the legal, political and personal-security environment for independent journalism in 2019, in all regions of the world. Authoritarian attacks on free media in both emerging and established democracies pose a potentially greater threat to press freedom than individual acts of violence against journalists, as the publisher of The New York Times warned in early 2020:

Around the globe, a relentless campaign is targeting journalists because of the fundamental role they play in ensuring a free and informed society. To stop journalists from exposing uncomfortable truths and holding power to account, a growing number of governments have engaged in overt, sometimes violent, efforts to discredit their work and intimidate them into silence.

This is a worldwide assault on journalists and journalism. But even more important, it's an assault on the public's right to know, on core democratic values, on the concept of truth itself.

Two of the most respected of these independent NGO assessments are summarized below, as essential contextual supplements to the official UN statistics for indicator 16.10.1.

1. **Reporters sans Frontières (RSF) 2019 World Press Freedom Index: "A Cycle of Fear"[58]**

   "The RSF Index, which evaluates the state of journalism in 180 countries and territories every year, shows that an intense climate of fear has been triggered — one that is prejudicial to a safe reporting environment. The hostility towards journalists expressed by political leaders in many countries has incited increasingly serious and frequent acts of violence that have fueled an unprecedented level of fear and danger for journalists."

   Norway is ranked first in the 2019 RSF Press Freedom Index for the third year running. Finland (up two places) was ranked second.

- Regionally, the Americas (North and South) suffered the greatest deterioration in press freedom constraints and violations (most notably in the US, Brazil, Venezuela, and Nicaragua)
- In Africa, the rankings of Ethiopia (up 40 at 110th) and Gambia (up 30 at 92nd) significantly improved from last year's Index.
- At the bottom of the Index, Vietnam (176th) and China (177th) each fell by one place. They are followed by Eritrea (178th), North Korea (179th), and Turkmenistan (down two, to the worst of the countries ranked, at 180th).

2. **Freedom House 2019 report: "Media Freedom: A Downward Spiral"[59]**

   "The fundamental right to seek and disseminate information through an independent press is under attack, and part of the assault has come from an unexpected source. Elected leaders in many democracies, who should be press freedom's staunchest defenders, have made explicit attempts to silence critical media voices and strengthen outlets that serve up favorable coverage. The trend is linked to a global decline in democracy itself: The erosion of press freedom is both a symptom of and a contributor to the breakdown of other democratic institutions and principles, a fact that makes it especially alarming. [...] Although the press is not always the first institution to be attacked when a country's leadership takes an antidemocratic turn, repression of free media is a strong indication that other political rights and civil liberties are in danger."

- Media freedom has been deteriorating around the world over the past decade.
- In some of the most influential democracies in the world, populist leaders have overseen concerted attempts to throttle the independence of the media sector.
- While the threats to global media freedom are real and concerning in their own right, their impact on the state of democracy is what makes them truly dangerous.

16.10.2 - Ensuring public access to information

For this official indicator, which tallies the number of countries that have adopted and "implemented" access to information laws or comparable legal guarantees, the SDG16DI database uses information compiled by the two leading nongovernmental organizations specialized in this field: ARTICLE 19[60], headquartered in the UK, and the Canada-based Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD)[61]. While these organizations evaluate the provisions of these statutes to ensure that they meet the basic requirements for access to information legislation, they do not yet systematically monitor the "implementation" of all such national laws.

The overall trends in this area remain encouraging. The number of countries with ATI laws and systems is increasing yearly, with 125 of the 193 UN member states having adopted legal "guarantees" of public access to information as of 2019, according to UNESCO. That is more than triple the number from just 20 years ago. An estimated 90 percent of the world's population live in countries which now have ATI laws or regulations, a dramatic paradigmatic shift in international recognition of the right to freedom of information and expression. Yet enforcement of these laws varies greatly.

UNESCO's figures - reported in its official capacity as the designated UN 'custodian' of SDG16.10 - include some countries without access-to-information laws, but with policies and mechanisms that UNESCO considers compliant with the SDG16 commitment to adopting and "implementing" official guarantees of public access to information.

ARTICLE 19's independent assessments are somewhat more stringent, counting 117 UN member states with what it considered to be "comprehensive" access-to-information laws in 2019, plus another six with decrees or administrative systems providing some comparable legal guarantees of public access to information. At least 38 other countries are currently considering the adoption of ATI laws or equivalent mechanisms, Article 19 reported.

The Global RTI Ratings[62] - compiled jointly by the Centre for Law and Democracy and AccessInfoEurope - counted 125 self-governing states with ATI laws in 2019, up from 121 in 2018. (These include Taiwan and Kosovo, which are not UN member states, and the Cook Islands, an autonomous territory of New Zealand, a UN member state.)

The RTI Ratings survey evaluates the technical provisions of national laws, using consistent legal criteria for country-by-country comparisons; it does not assess 'implementation' of the laws. Nor does ARTICLE 19. UNESCO, for its part, relies on the self-reporting of UN member states.

Going forward, with the great majority of countries having adopted formal guarantees of the public's right to official information, the challenge of monitoring and accelerating progress on this SDG16 commitment is shifting to measurements of enforcement and public use of these mechanisms. That will require both better official data on national ATI systems and systematic nongovernmental assessments from experienced users of these laws in media, academia, and civil society, in all UN member states, along the lines of the 2019 evaluations in the GFMD pilot study of ten countries summarized above.

Chapter

07

Academic survey research for SDGs: filing the data gap on peace, justice, and strong institutions

The new data for SDG 16.7.2 covering 52 countries worldwide is being collected in 2018-2021 by the World Values Survey

COUNTRIES

Multiple countries, global coverage (120 countries surveyed by the World Values Survey in 1981-2020);

RELEVANT SDG16 TARGET(S)

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

DATA METHOD

Face-to-face interview survey (national-wide random probability survey of the adult population in every country, in face to face mode);

As of 2020, 17 out of 24 SDG 16 indicators are classified as tier 2 by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, meaning the conceptual aspects are clarified and the standardized methodologies and techniques are being established to measure them[63]. However, there is no sufficient data produced by NSOs on the regular basis to estimate these indicators on a global level. This shows that there is a data gap, with the clearly articulated need to intensify adequate data collection. An important place in this discourse belongs to the role of the so called "unofficial" data providers – civil society organizations, comparative research projects and foundations, academic institutions and other stakeholders – and their possible contribution in filling this data gap for SDG16.

How can these actors contribute? First, by filling the data gaps with relevant data both for official and supplementary SDG indicators as well as for country-specific supplementary indicators. The sector of unofficial data providers is developing very dynamically and can drive innovation and countries to capacity building for the SDGs data collection. Significant popularization of social research contributed to the great increase in the amount of data collection initiatives all over the world; NSOs no longer have the monopoly over population data and statistical information. Thus, non-official data providers can offer support and reinforcement to national statistical offices with both capacity building and actual data collection. The ambition to leave no one behind involves looking at whether the goals are being met for all parts of society, not just for the average citizen. National statistics frequently provides the overall and nationwide picture and sometimes might give insufficient data on the situation for particular social groups, especially vulnerable groups such as minorities, people with disabilities, youth and children. Civil society organizations and academic research programs working with specific population segments often have the necessary capacity and resources to compensate for this and to provide additional data for groups which are sometimes under-represented in official statistics.

The World Values Survey (WVS)[64] is a global time-series study of people's values and beliefs and their contribution into the dynamics of social, political, cultural and economic development of societies around the globe. Started in 1981 and by 2020 covering over 120 countries, which include 94 percent of the world population, the WVS is among the world's largest and oldest non-commercial academic survey research programs. The WVS consists of nationally representative surveys conducted using the face-to-face interview method. Representative national samples of each society are interviewed, using a standardized questionnaire. The survey seeks to use the most rigorous and high-quality research designs in each country. All WVS data can be disaggregated by sex, age, education, and population groups. Data on values is essential for understanding the dynamics of progress towards the SDGs in different cultural contexts. WVS provides data for several hundred indicators with over 200 of them being relevant as supplementary measures for monitoring the SDGs and their targets such as survey data on the perceptions and experiences of violence (16.1, 16.2); perceptions on the respect for human rights and the rule of law (16.3); perceptions and experiences of corruption and accountability for bribery (16.5); confidence in social and political institutions such as government, parliament, judiciary, media, political parties etc. (16.6); perceptions on inclusive and responsive decision-making (16.7); knowledge and confidence in the institutions of global governance (16.8).

In 2018-2021, the World Values Survey is contributing to the pilot of the new measure for 16.7.2 indicator *"proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive."* The pilot is organized under the leadership of UNDP, custodian agency for this indicator, and the Oslo Governance Center. The pilot results have proven to be successful and the indicator was reclassification from tier 3 to tier 2 in March 2019. The proposed indicator refers to external efficacy or the political system's responsiveness, which is measured through the respondent's belief that politicians and institutions take into account opinions of ordinary citizens in their actions and decisions. The indicator reflects the respondent's answers to the question: *"How much would you say the political system in your country allows people like you to have a say in what the government does?."* A five-points scale is used to measure perceptions of inclusive and responsive decision-making (*a great deal, a lot, some, very little, not at all*). The final choice of the empirical measures for the indicator 16.7.2 has been made as a result of numerous consultations and basing on the items' relevance to the concepts of both inclusive and responsive decision-making. Prior to the WVS pilot, there was no sufficient survey data available to empirically estimate the validity of the question on a global scale.

The SDG 16.7.2 proposed measure has already been integrated into the core questionnaire of the European Social Survey (ESS)[65] which covers nearly 30 European countries and in the OECD's Adult Skills Survey (PIAAC)[66], which in its last round (2008-2019) was carried out in in 39 OECD countries and 'partner' countries. Similar piloting activities have been initiated by NSOs in a few countries outside the EU and the OECD. The World Values Survey is continuing the pilot and collecting data for the newly established measure for indicator SDG 16.7.2 (see Table X for the countries list). Unlike NSOs, the WVS is a centralized survey research effort with established procedures for questionnaire translation, sampling, and the data collection. This allowed both to collect the new data in a time-efficient manner and to deliver extensive feedback on the peculiarities of the item's translation into various world languages and any complications that emerged during the pilot. The collected survey data is available in free public access at http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/.

At the time of writing, new data for SDG 16.7.2 has been collected by the WVS in 32 countries/territories with 20 more countries scheduled for Fall 2020/Spring 2021. The WVS included the new item on SDG 16.7.2 into its core questionnaire, which contains also a wide range of indicators on social and political trust, elections, corruption, political regime perceptions, attitudes to democracy, etc. The new WVS survey data links to other Political Science concepts and indicators. It also validates the concept of responsive decision-making and people's perceptions on their involvement into the decision-making as well as evaluates the item's reliability in international context, including both democratic regimes and non-democratic authoritarian states. In the next survey round planned for 2022-2025, the WVS research program will increase the scope of included survey-based SDG indicators. Given the long-term expertise and capacities of the existing global and regional academic survey research programs, the IAEG-SDGs and SDGs custodian agencies are strongly encouraged to increase and intensify their cooperation with the academic sector as well as to consider formalization of such collaboration initiatives with the recognition of the importance of non-official and supplementary data as an integral part of the SDGs monitoring process.

FIGURE 7

Supplementary survey data for SDG 16.7.2. "Proportion of population (%) who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive" *

Country/Territory	All	Male	Female	18-29 years	30-49 years	50-95 years
Andorra	70.2	70.9	69.5	70.9	66.2	74.1
Argentina	75.1	77.5	72.8	84.1	72.1	71.5
Australia	55.5	54.2	56.6	59.5	54.9	54.5
Bangladesh	81.7	84.5	78.9	81.1	81.9	82.1
Brazil	33.8	37.6	30.3	36.9	35.8	28.9
Colombia	49.6	52.1	47.1	52.6	49.6	45.6
Cyprus	47.7	50.1	45.8	46.3	48.0	48.2
Egypt	41.6	44.0	39.0	40.0	40.9	44.2
Ethiopia	76.3	80.1	72.5	76.6	75.8	77.4
Guatemala	59.0	63.8	54.7	63.5	53.2	58.4
Hong Kong SAR	66.2	65.3	67.0	65.9	67.9	65.4
Indonesia	76.3	77.2	75.5	81.6	77.4	68.8
Iraq	50.6	53.9	47.1	50.7	47.6	56.6
Japan	65.9	72.2	60.9	59.1	62.0	68.9
Jordan	69.5	68.4	70.6	73.3	67.1	70.0
Kazakhstan	69.1	70.1	68.2	65.9	70.4	69.6
Kyrgyzstan	62.2	62.4	62.0	63.5	63.7	58.8
Lebanon	53.9	56.5	51.3	54.0	56.6	50.1
Macau SAR	78.0	77.3	78.5	80.6	78.6	71.8
Malaysia	72.3	72.1	72.4	79.7	72.0	63.8
Mexico	58.2	57.9	58.4	59.9	57.4	57.5
Myanmar	57.1	61.2	52.9	53.4	57.2	60.4
New Zealand	66.0	61.8	69.2	71.4	66.9	65.3
Nicaragua	58.0	59.3	56.8	57.7	58.3	58.0
Nigeria	47.3	48.8	45.7	48.6	46.0	44.9
Pakistan	63.3	64.9	61.5	65.1	63.2	60.7
Peru	66.0	67.6	64.6	70.3	65.0	63.1
Philippines	91.2	91.5	90.8	92.0	91.4	90.2
Taiwan ROC	62.0	64.3	59.7	67.8	59.0	62.0
Tajikistan	80.5	84.8	76.2	81.6	78.7	81.7
Vietnam	78.8	79.6	78.2	80.7	77.6	78.9
Zimbabwe	53.7	54.3	53.2	52.7	52.9	56.2

* Summarizing percentage for the positive answers (a great deal, a lot, some)

Source: World Values Survey Round 7 (2018-2020)

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