

GOAL 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions: Factsheet 2024

APRCEM FACT SHEET ON GOAL 16 – 2024

Submitted by Asia Development Alliance



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GOAL 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

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Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal 16 of the Agenda 2030 is considered to be one of the most important goals, as it aims to address some of the key challenges the world faces, such as conflict and instability, rise of fundamentalists and security states, authoritarian governance, , political polarisation and a lack of social cohesion. By promoting peace, justice and strong institutions, Goal 16 aims to create a more sustainable, peaceful and prosperous world for all. SDG 16 is also considered an enabler and accelerator of all the other SDGs, which means if SDG 16 fails, all the other goals fail.

Our region has been at the forefront of developing innovative ways to achieve SDG 16, such as the incorporation of the goal into national development plans. For instance, countries like Indonesia have mapped SDG indicators with local indicators and integrated SDG 16 targets, recognizing the importance of addressing peace, justice, and inclusion as part of sustainable developmentⁱ. However, the region still faces challenges in achieving the targets of SDG 16, with an increase in violent crime, terrorism, insurgency, and social and political instability. Migrant populations in the Asia-Pacific region face unique obstacles related to access to justice, social inclusion, and protection from exploitation. Issues such as human trafficking, labor exploitation, and discrimination against migrants exacerbate existing challenges and threaten the achievement of SDG 16 objectives. Insufficient availability and quality of statistical information on SDG 16 remain obstacles to implementing the 2030 Agenda, hindering the generation of effective evidence-based public policies to address justice, security, and governance challenges. Despite these challenges, regional training initiatives and the SDG 16 Data Initiative are working to enhance the capacity to measure and monitor SDG 16 indicators effectively, aiming to overcome the obstacles to achieving the 2030 Agendaⁱⁱ. The successful implementation of SDG 16 in the Asia-Pacific region is crucial for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, reducing systemic & structural inequalities, and rebuilding trust between governments and people, ultimately contributing to the achievement of the wider 2030 Agenda.

Development Justice in the context of SDG 16 in the Asia Pacific Region

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The development justice framework has great significance in the Asia Pacific region as it provides a much-needed people-centred lens for assessing progress, highlighting inequalities, countering dominant neoliberal models, aligning with grassroots realities, informing policy, aiding dynamic accountability efforts, catalysing systemic reforms, connecting struggles, and imagining alternative futures. Centred on redistributive, economic, social, environmental, and accountability principles, development justice offers an emancipatory vision for the region that can guide more equitable and sustainable development policies and programming, support civil society advocacy, help monitor SDG progress, spur reforms tackling root causes of marginalisation, and ultimately mobilise collective action to transform systems and structures that perpetuate injustice across Asia Pacific. This framework resonates strongly with local worldviews and ongoing activism, bridging shared experiences of injustice to catalyse a just, equitable, and accountable development model

Today, many Asia Pacific countries are still struggling to uphold development justice in institutions and peacebuilding processes. Despite economic growth, inequalities have risen as elites capture power and resources. Corporate influence overrides environmental and social protections. Authoritarian practices and restrictions on civic voices continue to undermine accountability.

On **redistributive justice**, restricted civil society space limits public participation and advocacy for fair allocation of resources. Wealth concentrates in the hands of ruling families and cronies in countries like Cambodia. Tax avoidance by multinationals combined with weak social protection deprives the poor. Meanwhile, migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, often face marginalization, exploitation, and discrimination, exacerbating inequalities. According to a report by APRCEM, 0.001% of the population in the region owns 30% of the region's wealth, while 80% of the population still lives on lessⁱⁱⁱ. These few people own seventeen times more wealth than the least developed countries in Asia combined. This historical inequality of power between states has led to deeply inequitable economic, social, and cultural human rights obligations, creating rules that benefit multinational corporations and the wealthy at the expense of the poor and marginalized^{iv}. In the Philippines, for example, tax rates favour the wealthy. The lowest income tax rate is 20% compared to just 1% for the richest Filipinos earning over ₱8 million annually^v. Of the estimated 370 million indigenous peoples in some 70 countries across the world^{vi}, an estimated 70–80 percent^{vii} are concentrated in Asia and the Pacific.

This significant wealth inequality is a significant challenge to implementing development justice principles in the context of SDG 16 in the Asia-Pacific

region, as it perpetuates structural inequalities and undermines efforts to promote peace, justice, and strong institutions. Addressing this challenge requires concerted, coordinated, and catalytic efforts to reduce inequalities of wealth, power, and resources between countries, rich and poor, and men and women, placing the majority poor and marginalized at the heart of development. In South Korea, the declining social safety net has increased old-age poverty, with 45% of senior citizens living below the poverty line despite previous middle class status^{viii}

Regarding **economic justice**, trade and investment agreements in Asia Pacific favour corporate rights over labour and consumer protections. Developing countries experience exploitative financial flows and land grabs. Migrants, particularly those in precarious employment sectors, are vulnerable to exploitation, with limited legal protections and access to recourse. Rule of law is uneven, with the privileged enjoying impunity. For example, regional free trade deals like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) provide extensive rights for foreign investors to operate in member countries with recourse to extrajudicial tribunals, like the dangerous Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS), if their profit making ability is hindered^{ix}. However, these agreements lack strong enforcement mechanisms for labour rights or environmental standards that could mitigate negative impacts on workers and communities. Developing countries in the region are dependent on foreign investment for growth and make concessions like allowing land grabbing without informed consent from affected populations. Financial liberalisation also enables predatory lending and volatile capital flows oriented toward elites, not broad development. Overall, the unequal rules embodied in Asia Pacific's current trade and investment framework favour mobile capital over labour and developing country budgets. This upholds an uneven playing field skewed toward the privileged, who enjoy impunity for unethical practices thanks to weak rule of law, lack of transparency, and institutions co-opted by corporate lobbyists at the expense of economic justice. Also, the informal sector in many countries often lacks legal protections, leaving workers vulnerable to exploitation. Efforts to address weak economic justice require comprehensive policies that promote inclusive economic growth, equitable access to resources, and social protection mechanisms to uplift marginalized communities and create a more just economic landscape.

Illicit financial flows remained a major policy challenge across the Asia Pacific region in 2023. For instance, in Malaysia the 1MDB scandal continued to reveal graft and money laundering by political elites through the US and other jurisdictions. In Afghanistan, opium trafficking^x provides funds for Taliban activities amidst conflict. Human trafficking^{xi} syndicates in the Mekong subregion obtain payments via obscure cross-border financial channels. Tax

evasion by transnational firms with shell companies^{xii} in jurisdictions like Singapore and Hong Kong deprives developing nations of revenues. Remittances are another conduit for laundering proceeds from corruption or crime. Estimates indicate illicit outflows from Asia Pacific may approach \$1 trillion annually. Despite some bilateral cooperation and Information sharing, lack of transparency and inconsistent regulations across the region continue to enable widescale illicit financial flows.

On social and gender justice, Across the diverse tapestry of Asia-Pacific, the threads of social and gender injustice remain stubbornly present. From marginalized ethnic minorities facing discrimination and displacement to LGBTQ+ individuals denied basic rights and recognition, the fabric of inclusivity is far from seamless. Within this landscape, women including migrant women and girls bear a disproportionate burden, grappling with pervasive gender-based violence, limited access to education and healthcare, and exploitative labor conditions. Women and girls bear the brunt of this injustice, grappling with pervasive gender-based violence, unequal access to education and healthcare, and discriminatory cultural practices like early, child and forced marriages, child labour and child trafficking. The cross border and inter country trafficking of women and children didn't get the justice and effective response due to the lacking of intercountry mechanism. These interwoven threads of hardship, exemplified by Rohingya refugees denied citizenship, Women in Afghanistan denied education and mainstream jobs, and domestic abuse victims lacking effective legal support, around 13 million women in Pakistan are deprived of their right to vote, expose a region grappling with unfinished legacies of discrimination and demanding urgent action towards fostering inclusive, equitable societies where all voices can truly be heard while ingrained ethnic, caste and gender discrimination persists, overlapping with economic exclusion. Despite growing middle classes, minorities still suffer stigma and violence.

Customary justice systems reinforce patriarchal practices. While providing accessible dispute resolution, these systems frequently reinforce patriarchal norms and discriminate against women. For example, in parts of India, all-male khap panchayats (caste councils), local sharia laws and religious laws (Burqa/chadari restrictions, Hudood ordinance, Diyat laws etc) in Pakistan, Afghanistan^{xiii} issue punishments like honor killings against couples deemed to violate caste norms. In Solomon Islands^{xiv} customary approaches to resolving gender-based violence often emphasise preserving marriage over punishment, pressuring women to accept mediation over prosecution. Similarly in Papua New Guinea^{xv}, village courts applying customary law give lenient sentences for crimes like rape or wife-beating, discouraging reporting. While customary systems can play a role in plural legal frameworks, reforms are vital to align traditional justice with human rights principles and eliminate embedded gender bias that perpetuate

violence and discrimination against women and girls across Asia-Pacific

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Regarding the global labour force participation rate, it is about 47 % for women and 72 % for men,^{xvi} with a 25-percentage-point gender gap. Women are proportionately more engaged in informal, vulnerable, low-paid, or undervalued jobs than men. In South Asia, over 80 percent of women in non-agricultural jobs are in informal employment; the corresponding figures are 74 percent in sub-Saharan Africa and 54 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean^{xvii}. Additionally, the absence of women in decision-making and leadership roles is largely a result of negative gender stereotypes, encouraged by socio-cultural norms and biased justice structures. These challenges undermine efforts to achieve social and gender justice, highlighting the need for comprehensive measures to foster gender equality, remove barriers for women in higher-paying sectors, and improve working conditions. Addressing these issues is essential to promote inclusive growth, equity, and social justice in the region.

In terms of **environmental justice**, natural resources benefit elite interests. Environmental defenders face persecution for protesting land grabs or pollution. Weak oversight lets illegal wildlife trade and resource extraction continue, harming marginalised forest communities. Across Asia Pacific, marginalized communities often bear the brunt of environmental damage caused by industries exploiting natural resources, contrary to principles of environmental justice under SDG 16. For instance, in the Philippines^{xviii}, large-scale mining supported by the government has displaced indigenous Lumad peoples from their ancestral lands without consent. In Indonesia, deforestation driven by palm oil firms destroys the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities like the Orang Rimba in Sumatra^{xix}. In Indonesia, there is a trend of the emergence of forced development projects in the name of National Strategic Projects (PSN), which are coercive projects involving actors, namely the state, national and multinational companies, elites and even law enforcement without heeding local values and without effective consent and consultation. An example of this is what happened to the Rempang indigenous community in the Riau Islands.^{xx} In Pakistan Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) led by the military establishment has planned corporatisation of agricultural lands in the name of economic revival. However this is an effort to facilitate foreign corporate elite to capture the agricultural lands and resources in the name of investment, diversification and modernization^{xxi}. In Pacific island countries, illegal tuna fishing^{xxii} and climate-induced sea level rise threatens the sustainable future of coastal communities. In many cases, those impacted lack the political voice or legal recourse to hold companies and governments accountable, due to official restrictions on activism and civil society. Meaningful progress on environmental justice requires reforms enabling participatory environmental governance, access to justice for communities harmed by extractives and land development, and corporate

accountability for sustainability practices across Asia Pacific

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Finally, **democratic accountability and shrinking civic space** remains tenuous, with media crackdowns and laws constraining civil society organisations. Corporate influence on politics grows, while ordinary citizens have limited voice. Rights like peaceful assembly are selectively restricted. The most critical among them is hardly any mention of shrinking civic space in any of the voluntary national reviews^{xxiii} until 2023. In Western Asia, for example, there has been an increased surveillance and harassment of journalists, along with limitations on freedoms of the press and expression, contributing to the shrinking civic space. Additionally, the weakening of democratic governance, civil society, and human rights has presented a challenge to the region, with countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and other south and south-east Asian countries experiencing clampdowns on civil liberties, reflecting the shrinking civic space and declining democratic trends. Similarly, Thailand's and Myanmar's military junta apply strict lèse-majesté laws stifling expression. The Philippines and India have witnessed threats and killings of environmental defenders and journalists. China and Vietnam maintain one-party systems with no free elections or dissent. The dying democracy in Myanmar, Afghanistan and Myanmar^{xxiv} are alarmingly critical. Even established democracies like Australia have increased surveillance powers in ways critics argue undermine privacy and dissent. Across the region, states are using security arguments, cyber laws, foreign funding crackdowns and extrajudicial harassment to silence dissenting voices and erode checks on official power. Upholding democratic accountability and civic freedoms remains precarious across much of Asia Pacific. These examples underscore the growing concerns related to democratic accountability and the diminishing civic space in the Asia-Pacific region, highlighting the need for concerted efforts to uphold democratic principles and safeguard civic freedoms.

Data Gaps in SDG 16 Monitoring and Implementation

Effective monitoring is crucial for understanding progress on SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions - and making informed decisions to improve access to justice, combat corruption, and strengthen institutions across the Asia-Pacific region. However, significant data gaps hinder our ability to accurately assess progress and target interventions effectively. Following are the key areas of significant data gaps:

1. Lack of Disaggregated Data:

Lack of disaggregated data by gender, ethnicity, income level, and other social factors: This makes it difficult to understand how different groups

experience access to justice, corruption, and institutional effectiveness. For example, women, migrants and marginalized communities often face higher levels of discrimination and lack of access to legal resources, but comprehensive data is often unavailable in most of the Asia-Pacific countries

Limited data on minorities and vulnerable groups: Data on specific populations like refugees, migrant workers, and LGBTQ+ individuals is often scarce or unreliable, making it challenging to address their unique needs and vulnerabilities.

Unavailability of data

2. Qualitative Data:

Scarcity of qualitative data: Quantitative data (numbers and statistics) is often prioritized, but qualitative data capturing people's lived experiences, perceptions of justice, and trust in institutions is crucial for understanding the nuances of SDG 16 challenges.

3. Data Quality and Consistency:

Inconsistency in data collection and reporting methodologies: Differences in definitions, indicators, and data collection methods across countries make it difficult to compare progress and draw regional insights.

Data quality issues: Lack of robust data collection systems, reporting inaccuracies, and incomplete data sets further complicate the picture. In Indonesia, Despite progress in land rights reforms, comprehensive data on land grabbing and its impact on rural communities, particularly indigenous groups, is lacking, hindering effective advocacy and support mechanisms.

4. Emerging Issues:

Limited data on new and emerging challenges: Data on issues like cybercrime, online hate speech, and the impact of technology on access to justice and corruption is often inadequate, hindering effective responses.

Accessibility and Transparency:

Limited accessibility of data: Data is often not readily available to the public, researchers, and civil society organizations, hindering transparency and accountability in SDG 16 implementation.

Change of sub indicators's target by countries

The Asia Pacific region has a long path ahead to achieve development justice and a longer path to achieve the SDGs, especially SDG 16.. Uprooting systemic inequalities and prioritizing people's rights in governance will determine progress on institutions for true peace and sustainable development

Peoples' Solutions/CSO Initiatives

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Across the dynamic landscapes of Asia-Pacific, civil society organisations (CSOs) and community initiatives are weaving creative solutions and advocating for justice, peace, and strong institutions to propel progress on SDG 16. Civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Asia-Pacific region have been actively engaged in various initiatives to promote the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16). For example, CSOs have been partnering with organisations on research and evidence -based advocacy on SDG 16+, supporting CSO reporting on SDG 16+, and organising capacity building on SDG 16+ at national, regional^{xxv}, (SDG 16 Plus Forum Asia^{xxvi} organised by the Asia Development Alliance^{xxvii}, for the past three years.) and global levels^{xxviii}. Additionally, CSOs have been engaging with relevant actors, institutions, processes, and mechanisms at regional and international levels, such as the Asia-Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (RCEM) and the Asian Parliamentary Forum. CSOs have also been working to strengthen the capacity of CSOs working at the national level to understand and engage in Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes, particularly in the context of SDG 16 also doing the linkage the their various programs and contributing in the various reports of the state govts by giving their recommendations. These CSO initiatives reflect the region's commitment to promoting peaceful, just, and inclusive societies and achieving the SDGs, including SDG 16 . .

- The Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions works to strengthen national human rights institutions across Asia so they can better promote and monitor human rights protections^{xxix}.
- The ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights network campaigns^{xxx} for civil society access and freedoms, rule of law, and human rights protections in Southeast Asia.
- The Asia Justice and Rights NGO^{xxxi} works on access to justice issues, providing legal aid and rights awareness programs to marginalized communities in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and other Asian countries.
- Transparency International chapters in Asia Pacific^{xxxii} like Transparency International Australia, Transparency International Korea, and Transparency International PNG work on anti-corruption efforts in both public and private sectors.
- Greenpeace^{xxxiii} offices across Asia Pacific campaign and advocate against environmental injustice, including defending rights of indigenous communities against land grabbing and resource exploitation.
- The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development^{xxxiv} holds civil society conferences discussing judicial independence, business accountability, rights defenders, democracy and civic space.

- The ASEAN Youth Forum^{xxxv} provides leadership programs for youth across Southeast Asia focused on human rights, governance, and peacebuilding initiatives.
- The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network^{xxxvi} carries out advocacy and delivers services for displaced populations struggling with rights violations and statelessness.
- Local CSOs like the Women Peace Network in the Solomon Islands^{xxxvii} work at community levels on gender equity, conflict resolution and peace education
- Thailand: The "Community Legal Education Centres^{xxxviii}" The network empowers rural communities with legal knowledge and tools to defend their land rights and fight environmental degradation
- Alliance Against Trafficking in Women and Children in Nepal (AATWIN) and its member organisations are working to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children from policy level to community level.^{xxxix}
- Pakistan Development Alliance (PDA^{xl}) has developed the Pakistan Civic Space Monitor^{xli} to highlight the challenges of fundamental freedoms, right to information, political participation and civic rights in the country.
- In addition to the mentioned initiatives, organizations like the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM) and the International Migrants Alliance (IMA) play crucial roles in advocating for the rights of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons in the Asia-Pacific region. These organizations work tirelessly to address the unique challenges faced by these vulnerable populations and to promote policies and practices that uphold their rights and dignity.

Recommendations

1. Prioritise Inclusive and Equitable Development:

- National development plans should include SDG targets that are contextualized to the country's needs and priorities. This needs to be translated to the various agencies, institutionalized at all levels and translated into local languages. There is also need more engagement with local CSOs, local NGOs and others local actors, and relevant stakeholders in sustainable development, especially further marginalised communities
- Governments should develop a “**whole of government**” governance architecture, as this is essential to accelerate the implementation and

realization of the SDGs. National Oversight mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda and its individual Goals should be created through establishing multi-stakeholder national SDG working groups inclusive of all major groups including women major group. The role of oversight bodies such as the national parliaments in monitoring SDG implementation should also be strengthened. Governments must ensure that public institutions such as election bodies, national human rights institutions (NHRI), ombudsman, and anti-corruption agencies are fully engaged at the national level in the monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda^{xlii}.

- The governments should strengthen the localisation of SDGs processes not only at national but also at subnational and district levels and to the grass-root level (local government to ensure systemic and structural reforms towards the achievement of SDGs
- A significant increase in efforts by governments is needed to raise broad awareness about SDG16 and SDGs in general, and the VNR process in particular is an important first step to address this. To take this forward a key requirement is increased inclusion of and meaningful, inclusive coordination and partnership with civil society and other stakeholders, particularly the most marginalized. Governments should involve a broad range of CSOs including women and youth from the start in the elaboration and implementation of development strategies and their monitoring. This requires an open and secure environment for CSOs, particularly those working in crisis areas and conflict zones. Support is needed for ensuring effective inclusion of civil society and grassroots justice defenders in SDG16 planning, budgeting, and implementation processes
- Shift development focus from economic growth to inclusive, equitable growth that prioritizes well-being and addresses inequalities and all forms of discriminations against women and marginalized groups i.e, SOGIESC and diverse disabilities..
- Invest in social protection programs, public services, and infrastructure that benefit all citizens, especially marginalized communities.

- Ensure meaningful participation of diverse stakeholders proportionately in development planning and decision-making processes **Strengthen Access to Justice and Rule of Law:**
- Increase budget allocations for independent judiciaries and legal aid services to enhance access to justice for all.
- Combat corruption through robust anti-corruption frameworks, whistleblower protection mechanisms, and public oversight of government institutions.
- Reform legal systems to ensure non-discrimination, protect human rights, and address inequalities in legal representation for all groups of people, particularly those made marginalised and vulnerable due to violence and discrimination on any prohibited grounds of discrimination
- Ensure the victim protection rights
- Implement measures to combat discrimination and xenophobia against migrants and refugees within legal systems.
- Make the justice system accessible and speedy
- Involve women organisations in the legal process and referral mechanism

2. **Protect Vulnerable Groups and Uphold Human Rights:**

- Bottom-up approaches should be utilised in working with communities to identify pressure points, root causes of violence and crime, and to realign federal, provincial/territorial and municipal investment towards evidence based gender-responsive prevention programs.
- Enact and enforce comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and policies protecting women, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals and sexual and gender minorities, migrants and refugees and other vulnerable groups (ensuring the prohibition of violence and discrimination on any prohibited grounds of discrimination as prescribed by international human rights law
- Address increasing violations against environmental and Indigenous Peoples human rights defenders including criminalization, persecution, violence, and killing and address increasing impunity in the region.
- Strengthen mechanisms to combat human trafficking, particularly targeting vulnerable migrant populations, women gender-based

violence and provide comprehensive support services for survivors and effective response mechanisms.

- Ratify and implement international human rights treaties and ensure human rights considerations are integrated into all government policies and programs. Implementation of the treaty bodies recommendations
- Human rights and fundamental freedoms should be strengthened at the national level and awareness promoted at local as well as provincial government levels, so that human rights defenders and victims of repression and abuse are protected, as is required by SDG16. Governments should encourage and facilitate civil society engagement in monitoring and evaluation of UN treaty bodies at the national and international levels (including drafting of civil society reports and participation in reporting processes before international treaty bodies) should be strengthened.
- Follow the principle of non-discrimination, equality and state obligation - three major principles of HR in practice for realizing defacto and dejuri equality,

3. Fostering Peace and Security:

- Address the root causes of conflict, such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation, through comprehensive and conflict-sensitive development strategies.
- Invest in peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms and dialogue processes to resolve disputes non-violently.
- Strengthen democratic institutions and promote citizen participation in security sector decision-making to ensure democratic oversight and accountability.
- Human trafficking should be one of the issues of human security.
- Invest in programs that promote the social inclusion of migrants and refugees within host communities to mitigate tensions and promote social cohesion.
- Mainstreaming WPS (women peace and security) in each security and peace agencies
- Inclusive Participation in High-Level Debates: Member States must ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all discussions

related to moral repair, transitional justice, and other high-level debates, both at the national and United Nations levels.

- **Disability-Inclusive Peace and Security Responses:** Member States should utilize Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019) as a foundation to develop comprehensive guidelines addressing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, akin to existing frameworks for women and youth.
- **Integration of Persons with Disabilities in Electoral Systems:** Member States must ensure active involvement of persons with disabilities in electoral processes by ensuring that electoral support activities of UN agencies and programs prioritize their political rights and address historical exclusion from the political process.
- **Countering the weaponization of cultural and religious narratives** to incite violence and discrimination against any group or individual and promoting plurality through the protection of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression
- **Recognize the transformative role and relevance of quality education and lifelong learning** in actively respecting and promoting human rights, inclusion, culture of peace, non-violence, cultural diversity, and sustainable development. Member States must be held accountable for their commitments to fulfill fundamental human rights, including the right to education and the right to peace. Education can build and sustain peaceful societies by developing learners who can think critically, respect diversity and the planet, challenge prejudice and violent narratives, and resolve social, political, economic, and global issues.

4. Promote Transparency and Dynamic Accountability:

- Implement open-government initiatives and ensure public access to information and government data.
- Ensure that migrants and refugees have access to transparent and accurate information about their rights and available services, including in languages they understand.
- Strengthen whistleblower protection mechanisms and encourage citizen participation in monitoring government activities.
- Hold public officials accountable for misconduct and corruption through independent and transparent investigative processes.
- National governments must guarantee the right to transparent, accurate, timely, and relevant public information, so that all

development actors can fulfil their role. Clear information in citizen's language which is updated frequently should be ensured so that these SDG data platforms become increasingly known and used, not only by governments and experts, but also by CSOs, the academy, and citizens.

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5. Leverage Technology for Good:

- Utilize technology to improve access to justice, government services, and information, especially for marginalized communities.
- Combat online censorship and promote digital literacy to empower citizens and protect online freedom of expression.
- Promote responsible use of technology by governments and private companies to ensure privacy protection and prevent human rights abuses.
- **Partnerships for Knowledge**" should be recognized and supported by governments with the aim of promoting and recognizing "social innovation" and specific, valuable forms of cultural knowledge including traditional indigenous knowledge

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6. Strengthen Regional Cooperation:

- Facilitate cross-border collaboration and knowledge sharing between countries on addressing SDG 16 challenges. Enhance cross-border collaboration and information sharing between countries to address the challenges faced by migrants and refugees, including human trafficking and irregular migration.
- Develop regional mechanisms for accountability and dispute resolution regarding transnational issues like environmental degradation and human trafficking.
- Support regional CSO networks and platforms to amplify their voices and advocate for collective action on development justice under SDG 16.

7. Strengthen data, monitoring, and accountability:

- Review SDG16 annually at the HLPF, similar to SDG17, given its cross-cutting nature underpinning the whole 2030 agenda
- There is a need to address data gaps related to SDG 16, particularly in the areas of crime, governance, justice, and human rights. This

includes supporting regional training on measuring SDG 16 in the Pacific and developing innovative ways to achieve SDG 16 targets

- Governments everywhere should take the necessary steps to ensure a systematic data collection process and the development of relevant data analysis and storage platforms at national level. Data gaps need to be identified and addressed as quickly as possible for better policy formulations and realization of the SDGs at all levels. A reliable national SDG database system needs to be created with the consent of all related stakeholders including CSOs and government departments. Government must recognize and accept the results of **citizen-led data initiatives**. This could be done by using both qualitative and quantitative data in national monitoring reports.
- Include recognized and relevant CSO stakeholders in all sustainable development follow up and review processes at all levels, including at national level planning commission consultations
- Stop collecting data for data sake utilizing public fund and using it for policy and program development, as these data do not qualify by the ground reality.

8. Enabling Environment

- Governments should strengthen a supportive, enabling environment for civil society actors inclusively of all genders to actively engage in SDG monitoring and evaluation, including in reporting processes
- Expand civil society space and create an enabling environment in which civil society can freely and safely operate and assemble, in line with the 2016 UN Human Rights Council Resolution on Civil Society Space¹⁶, especially in conflict-affected and fragile contexts^{xliii}.
- Further national capacity building and awareness raising support for civil society and other stakeholders, including the development of tools and resources to support SDG16, as well as the coordination of national workshops and trainings, keeping in mind that there is no one-size-fits-all template for action. Support is needed to strengthen institutions tasked with monitoring progress. Opportunities to exchange and learn from other good practices regionally and globally
- Governments alone cannot be the primary sources on and much less the sole evaluators of the quality of their governance. Without

objective, empirical reporting from all qualified sources on the status of the many ambitious objectives of 2030 Agenda – all of which require public trust, based on publicly available and reliable information – progress on the SDGs cannot be measured, and will not be achieved. No official forum exists for collecting and analyzing the findings of **CSO spotlight reports**, nor is there a mechanism to hold governments accountable where gaps and challenges are found.

Refer to Endnotes below

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- ⁱ <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/SDG16Profile.pdf>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.sdg16hub.org/regional-training-measure-sdg-16-asia>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <http://asiapacificrcem.org/news/development-justice-principles-goals-targets-and-indicator-of-post-2015-development-agenda/>
- ^{iv} https://www2.ohchr.org/english/OMP_22_23/documents/Asia-Pacific.pdf
- ^v <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/800046/ewp-662-distributional-impacts-fiscal-policy-philippines.pdf>
- ^{vi} “Indigenous Peoples.” IFAD, http://www.ifad.org/english/indigenous/index_full.htm.
- ^{vii} https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_438853.pdf
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- ^{xii} <https://scholarship.law.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5380&context=mulr>
- ^{xiii} <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-fate-of-womens-rights-in-afghanistan/>
- ^{xiv} <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/176812/sol-country-gender-assessment.pdf>
- ^{xv} <https://sexualrightsdatabase.org/countries/439/Papua%20New%20Guinea>
- ^{xvi} The gender gap in employment: what’s holding women back? <https://www.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Employment/barriers-women#intro>. Search in Google Scholar
- ^{xvii} https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/roe-2022-0061/html?lang=en#_roe-2022-0061_ref_049
- ^{xviii} <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN1HQ033/>
- ^{xix} <https://news.mongabay.com/2023/03/palm-oil-deforestation-hits-record-high-in-sumatras-orangutan-capital/>
- ^{xx} <https://en.tempo.co/read/1769346/batam-urged-to-stop-rempang-eco-city-project>
- ^{xxi} <https://www.sifc.gov.pk/agriculture>
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