IRAQ (Country Practice)

[Iraq]
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Background: The innovative Role of NGOs in Deriving Informal Data for SDG16 Indicators. The main purpose of this case study is to collect informal data for SDG 16 indicators through social media with a special focus on local NGOs inclusion in the process of the SDGs implementation in the country.

Iraq is one of the developing countries which has a lack of data availability for several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has supported a group of national NGOs, that have multi working backgrounds, to identify NGOs effective role on SDGs. This initiative was a result of series consultations meetings with NGOs and the Iraqi Government representatives towards enabling the social inclusion environment, On 2018 group of NGOs agreed to establish “Sustainable Development Network 2030” which had been working on promoting sustainable development goals with focus on SDG16 and SDG5.

During the last quarter of 2018 the Sustainable Development Network 2030 took their first step towards the innovative SDG16 data collection, this mean had been adopted by the Network after the discussions with colleagues in UNDP Botswana about their experience in this regard.

The NGO Network had used Facebook, since it is one of the most used social media platforms in Iraq, to gather data related to SDG 16 indicators, through a questionnaire form that had been developed by NGOs and reviewed by panel of academics. The Network developed the questionnaire form and shared it within various local NGOs, youth, and academic pages on Facebook, encouraging public participation to share their experience. more than 1000 people respond to the questionnaire within the first three weeks of January 2019. The collected data was sent to the Central Statistics Bureau to analyze it jointly with the panel of academics to be used for Iraq’s first VNR, which is considered as the first action towards the establishment of the principles of leaving no one behind in the country.

A team of academia in coordination with the Central Statistical Bureau found a way to review public feed-back on some of the issues that had limited data and indicators pertaining thereof, including those related to Goal 16 “Promotion of the establishment of peaceful, non-marginalized societies to accomplish sustainable development, improvement of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. As this goal associated with an important issue raised in Iraq, after years of conflict and armed violence, which caused high rate of mortality and displaced millions of people from their areas.

Below are the indicators that have been used in the informal data.

Target 16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.
Indicator 16.1.4: Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live.
The Question is: Do you feel safe when you walk in the street?

Target 16.3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.
Indicator 16.3.1: Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms.
The Question is: Can you access the court and police stations easily to report a negative situation or take your right by law?

Target 16.5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.
Indicator 16.5.2: Proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 months.
The Question is: Are you willing to give a gift or pay money to facilitate your transactions (speed up procedures, avoid paying a fine, to be safe with your family?)

Target 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.
The conflict with ISIS has caused the internally displacement of 3.0 million and the number of people in need of economy through displacement and impoverishment of millions of people, and destruction of infrastructure and assets been displaced by the country’s various conflicts (World Bank, 2017). According to IMF (2017), the conflict has hurt the significant internal displacement of the population and influx of refugees from Syria. “More than 4 in the alienation of large segments of the population from state institutions and politics. The conflict has contributed to making and weak engagement with civil society; a dysfunctional legal system; and erosion of the social fabric, resulting in the alienation of large segments of the population from state institutions and politics. The conflict has contributed to significant internal displacement of the population and influx of refugees from Syria. “More than 4 million Iraqis have been displaced by the country’s various conflicts (World Bank, 2017). According to IMF (2017), the conflict has hurt the economy through displacement and impoverishment of millions of people, and destruction of infrastructure and assets. The conflict with ISIS has caused the internally displacement of 3.0 million and the number of people in need of

### Indicator 16.6.2: Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services.
The Question is: Are you satisfied with public services?

1. **Which UNCT members have collaborated on this case study?**
   - UNDP
   - RCO

2. **Which national partners (governmental and non-governmental) were involved in developing this case study and how?**
   - Ministry of planning
   - Central Statistical Organization
   - Group of Academia
   - 4 local governates authorities including KRI
   - 28 local NGOs from the South to the North of the country

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3. **Does the case study illustrate one or several phases or levels?**
   - Adapting SDG 16
   - National level
   - Implementing SDG 16
   - Regional level
   - Monitoring & Reporting on SDG 16
   - Local level

4. **Country context for the achievement of SDG 16**

   The National Development Plan (2018-2022) of Iraq acknowledges that Iraq faced various institutional, eco-nomic, social and environmental challenges, which cannot be addressed through business as usual approach and demands effective (horizontal as well as vertical) integration and coordination. Economically, Iraq is heavily dependent on oil revenue. The oil sector contributes to more than 90 per cent of government revenue and 80 per cent of foreign exchange earnings) (CPD Iraq, 2016-2020). Due to these various challenges Iraq faced over the past decades, real GDP growth remained volatile. The dependence on oil, has created a rentier economy dominated by the oil sector, inhibiting the emergence of a strong private sector and ex-posing Iraq to oil price shocks. This has hampered job creation for a rapidly growing youth population. Combined with low international oil prices and a poorly diversified economy, vulnerable security situation and political instability continue to slow economic growth and divert government expenditures for social and economic services to defense, thus negatively affecting the sustainable development agenda that the Government is committed to pursue.

   The security situation in Iraq and the security dynamics in the neighbouring countries have affected the social, economic and environmental progress in Iraq. Many interconnected structural problems underpin these challenges at the community, governorate and national levels. Notable among these are complex regional political dynamics; a majoritarian democracy; a highly centralized government, with limited room for participatory approaches in decision-making and weak engagement with civil society; a dysfunctional legal system; and erosion of the social fabric, resulting in the alienation of large segments of the population from state institutions and politics. The conflict has contributed to significant internal displacement of the population and influx of refugees from Syria. “More than 4 million Iraqis have been displaced by the country’s various conflicts (World Bank, 2017). According to IMF (2017), the conflict has hurt the economy through displacement and impoverishment of millions of people, and destruction of infrastructure and assets. The conflict with ISIS has caused the internally displacement of 3.0 million and the number of people in need of
humanitarian assistance to 11 million (29 percent of the population), including over 241,000 Syrian refugees. (IMF, 2017) This makes implementation of SDG 16 is highly relevant to the reality of Iraq.

The institutional challenges are also manifested in the form of inefficient institutional performance due to weak administrative system and low staff productivity, and financial and administrative corruption. The weak institutional capacity has in turn contributed to inability to address the development constraints facing the country. Weak institutional performance is partly the result of the protracted conflict in Iraq. Among the underlying causes are endemic corruption, which siphons funds away from development and security priorities, and mismanagement of national assets and resources. Politically driven distribution of oil revenues and the national budget has created poorly prioritized, inequitable delivery systems for goods and services, crippled by chronically inadequate capacity and resources. The inability of the state to resolve sources of conflict, aggravated by exclusionary politics, a sectarian quota system, and ‘cleansing’ of religious and/or ethnic minorities in several provinces, have prolonged war and destruction.

The Government has made major efforts towards integrating the SDGs in the National Development Plan (2018-2022). Furthermore, the government has put in place structures to facilitate implementation of SDGs. A National Committee on Sustainable Development (NCSD), chaired by the Ministry of Planning, monitors progress on the SDGs and prepares national reports on this progress and submits such reports to the high-level follow-up group for their consideration and guidance. There are a number of specialized technical inter-ministerial committees that are supporting the NCSD including in such areas as 1) Poverty reduction (Goals 1, 2 and 10); 2) environmental sustainability (Goals 6, 13, 14, and 15); 3) The green economy (Goals 7, 8, 9, 12, and 17); 4) Cities and human settlements (Goal 11); 5) Human Development (Goals 4 and 5); 6) Population and Development (Goal 3); 7) Awareness raising; 8) Good governance (Goal 16); and 9) statistics and information. The National Committee for Sustainable Development (NCSD) is also supported by a Committee on Sustainable Development at the level of each governorate. The Governorate Level Committees on Sustainable Development (GSDC) are chaired by the governors and are comprised of representatives of line ministries at the local level. GSDC monitor progress on the SDGs at the governorate level and submit their reports to the NCSD.

SDG 16 is not only a valuable and important aspiration in its own right, but it is also an important enabling goal for the entire sustainable development agenda. As such SDG 16 is often an enabler for SDG 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11 and 17. How this can play out in Iraq is yet to be designed. When it comes to “Good governance” – which is at the heart of the NDP, which set forth 7 governance related priorities: decentralization, private sector engagement, and development, public participation, public services, e-governance, anti-corruption, rule of law, human rights, access to justice. Support to these areas is requested but this falls outside the scope of this workshop and document. SDG 16 is also of special relevance in advancing peacebuilding efforts and peaceful transformations and thus creates an opportunity to connect the sustainable development agenda with other recent national strategic frameworks such as the National framework for reconstruction and development (2018-2027), the National Security Strategy including Prevention of Violent Extremism, and National Reconciliation process. How the Government of Iraq plans to promote its National Reconciliation through the vehicle of SDG 16 is something the MOP is keen to further explore. Based on the above, mainstreaming, monitoring and reporting on SDG16 will be critical for the achievement of peaceful, just and inclusive societies, institutions and processes for delivery on the entire 2030 Agenda in Iraq. The specialized thematic committee on “good governance” (and SDG 16) has explicitly requested support on SDG 16 implementation, monitoring, and reporting, in a context of very limited availability of indicators and data for the monitoring of the 23 indicators tied to the 10 SDG 16 SDG targets.

5. Efforts to achieve SDG 16

UNDP - Iraq worked with the Central Statistical Organization to find a way to explore people’s views on some of the issues with limited data and indicators pertaining thereof, including those related to Goal 16 “Promotion of the establishment of peaceful, non-marginalized societies to accomplish sustainable development, improvement of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. A goal that is associated with an important issue for the situation in Iraq, after years of conflict and armed violence, which caused high death scores and displaced millions of people from their areas.
As Iraq will be presenting its first Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) report at the UN High-Level Political Forum HLPF in 2019 with a significant focus on leaving no one behind principles, and with the support of UNDP – CO, a group of 28 local NGOs (from all regions across the country with different working back-grounds) have established an alliance under the name “Sustainable Development Network 2030”. The first activity that has been launched by the Network, on late 2018 and January 2019, is the informal data collection for SDG 16 indicators. As one of the most uses social media platform in Iraq is Facebook, the NGOs network has used it to gather data related to SDG 16 indicators through publishing a questionnaire form. The national VNR’s team has prepared a set of yes / no questions with age, sex, and location segregations to be used for data collection purposes. The Sustainable Development Network 2030 has developed the questionnaire form through Google Form and published it on different local NGOs, youth, and academia pages (from different regions of Iraq) on the Facebook with an encouragement for the audience to share their experience through answering the questions. There were about 1000 responses to the questionnaire form within the first three weeks of January 2019. The collected data was sent to the Central Statistics Bureau to analyze it and send it back to the VNR committee to be used for first Iraq VNR. This was the first action towards the establishment of leaving no one behind principles in the country.

6. Results so far and Way Forward

Since Facebook is one of the most popular social networks in Iraq, SDN has used it to collect data on sustain-able development indicators by publishing a questionnaire.

In order to provide an inexpensive and meaningful means, an electronic survey was conducted then published on Facebook using a simple and easy way to access and understand. The questionnaire has limited questions to ensure greater response without ads and based on the spontaneous social communication, and the willing-ness to answer without urging or advertising.

The team of NGOs in cooperation of academia prepared a set of (yes / no) questions with age and gender. SDN prepared the questionnaire using Google forms and published it on Facebook pages of local NGOs, youth and academics (from different regions of Iraq) encouraging people to share their experiences by answering questions. There were about 1000 responses to the questionnaire in the first three weeks of January 2019. The data collected was sent to the team to use it in the report.

The questionnaire included seven questions, three were related to gender and province of the respondent. The other four questions were related to four SDG 16 indicators, for which no data were available.

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<tr>
<th>Table (1): The four questions on SDG 16 indicators</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Question</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel safe when you walk on the street?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can you access the court and police stations easily to report a negative situation or take your right by law?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you willing to give a gift or pay money to facilitate your transactions (speed up procedures, cut costs of procedures, avoid paying a fine, to be safe with your family)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are your satisfied with public services?</td>
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Although the questionnaire was not promoted by Facebook promotion services and prepared only in Arabic then posted on the partner NGO page, the number of respondents was 1044, a good number considering the short response time (23 days) between 31 December 2018 and 22 January 2019. The percentage of women was 40.2% and men 59.8% among Iraq’s 18 provinces. Figure 1 shows the participation among the Iraqi’s provinces with the age distribution in Figure 2.
Target 16.1 focuses on reducing all forms of violence in society. It has provided four indicators to monitor different types of violence that face individuals and communities. While two indicators have data, others do not have reliable monitoring and measurement data; therefore, Indicator 16.1.4 was intended by the question “Do you feel safe walking on the street?”. The indicator’s objective is to assess the government’s security performance and the sense of trust among individuals as a manifestation of social capital. 33% of the respondents said they felt safe, while the rest 67% said they did not feel safe. Women are less safe than men due to their sensitivity to violence against them or others (Figure 3).
Dahuk and Erbil provinces came first in sense of security, followed by Dhi-Qar, Muthanna, Najaf and Sulaymaniyah. While Basra came lowest in sense of security due to the demonstrations protesting political and service conditions taking place in the province for months (Figure 4).

The second question provides an opportunity to measure target 16.3 “To strengthen the rule of law nationally and internationally and to ensure “Equal access to justice for all” So it was put to respond to national measurement with the following wording: (Can you access the court and police stations easily to report a negative situation or take your right by law?). 42% of the respondents said they had access to courts and justice (Figure 5), but women said they had less chance than men. 16.2% of female respondents said they can be compared to 25.7% of men.
At the province level, the positive response to this question was the highest in Maysan, while the lowest percentages were in Dahuk, Muthanna, Erbil and Wasit. These provinces have rural and tribal character, which enhances access to justice through tribal ways, Maysan has a rural and tribal character as well. Baghdad came forth by positive responses (Figure 6).

The corruption suffered by Iraqis is not a secret any more, it has been ranked among the first corrupted countries according to international reports since 2003. However, away from the reasons behind this corruption and its implications on the economy and society, the following question was put: Are you willing to give a gift or pay money to facilitate your transactions (speed up procedures, cut cost of procedures, avoid paying a fine, to be safe with your family?) this question is associated with the target 16-5 (Significantly reduce corruption and bribery in all forms) and indicator 16-5-1 (Proportion of individuals having at least one contact with a government official, bribed him or were asked to pay him a bribe in the past 12 months). 56% of respondents said that they are willing to give a gift or pay extra money to facilitate their transactions. This high percentage shows part of the problem and the need to build a culture of accountability among people and encourage them to enforce the law. It is worth noting that women were less willing to pay bribes (21%) than men 34.1% (Figure 7).

Figure (7): Willingness to pay bribe by gender (%)
Satisfaction with public services is an important indication that the government is performing its economic and social role. It also reflects the effectiveness of public institutions and their response to people’s needs and expectations. Which is expressed by target 16-6 and its indicator. The question is: **Are you satisfied with public services?**

94% of all respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the services provided to them, whether by the local government or the federal government. Satisfaction among women is lower than among men 37.9% versus 56.1%, respectively. This may be due to government performance in the municipal, educational and health services where women suffer because they are often responsible for house-hold and childcare (Figure 8).

![Figure (8): Satisfaction with public services by gender (%)](image1.png)

At the province level, Kurdistan (Erbil, Sulaymaniyyah and Dahuk) ranked first in terms of satisfaction. In Qadisiyah, Dhi Qar and Baghdad, respondents had the lowest levels of satisfaction (Figure 9).

![Figure (9): Satisfaction with public services by province (%)](image2.png)
7. Lessons Learned

Learned lessons from the results of a questionnaire on Sustainable Development Goals indicators

1. Partnerships with Non-Governmental Organizations and Government institutions, especially the Ministry of Planning, can be successful under the sponsorship of United Nations organizations on a number of issues related to SDGs. Partnerships should, therefore, be strengthened and developed, particularly in the area of access to information and data where there is no internationally agreed methodology.

2. Expand the discussion on SDGs indicators, particularly those where there is no internationally agreed methodology to develop alternative methodologies where UNDP is interested in sponsoring that process at the regional level, thereby bridging the data gap in this area.

3. Development should focus on identifying areas of effective use of social media in the service of sustainable development, establishing general controls for the use of surveys, limits of use, and statistical sampling method to accommodate the development of information in this field and putting it at the service of the 2030 development agenda. This can provide opportunities to access to data and interviews, with greater flexibility because of space, time, and language provided by information technology.

4. The results of the rapid analysis submitted to this questionnaire and other possible future outcomes should be updated at meetings to discuss the results and enrich the debate on what can be effectively used to monitor the intended sustainable development indicators. Meetings should include partner parties and experts whose expertise can enhance the analysis and lessons extraction.

5. The results have shown an effective engagement of Iraqi’s from all over the country within a limited time-frame. So, this methodology of data collection can be interested to many countries with limited available resources to collect data with total freedom of responses to the questionnaire.

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