Key findings

From the Global Alliance Report on SDG 16+: Enabling the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through SDG 16+: Anchoring peace, justice and inclusion, prepared for the High Level Political Forum in July 2019.

1 Political and financial investment is needed to accelerate progress on SDG 16+

— SDG 16+ will be challenging to meet by 2030. Visionary and committed national leadership is essential to accelerate progress on SDG 16+ to transform societies to prevent conflict, address inequalities, reduce injustices and be more inclusive.

— SDG 16+ can enable other SDGs if governments embrace full ownership of the process and invest in the enabling and accelerating role of SDG 16+. Failure to invest in SDG 16+ will risk worsening violence, injustice and exclusion, reversing development gains across all SDGs, including education, health and climate action.

— Measuring progress in achieving SDG 16 is politically, technically and financially possible and will enhance implementation. However in many countries, institutional mechanisms at the national and local levels to gather data and monitor policy efforts and impact are weak. Partnerships between national statistical systems and regional and local governments, civil society organizations, youth organizations and academia as well as the private sector and international organizations can enhance a country’s ability to gather, analyse and use data on SDG 16+ targets and indicators.

2 SDG 16+ implementation requires a ‘whole of government’ and ‘whole of society’ approach

— National governments stress that they cannot tackle the entire 2030 Agenda alone. A ‘whole of government’ approach to localizing and achieving the SDGs is required. This would involve not just national government agencies and state institutions but also the adoption of the SDGs across local and regional governments and institutions to make them a reality for communities. Indeed local approaches to achieve the SDGs should inform national priority-setting.

— A ‘whole of society’ approach with broad and meaningful engagement and consultation with stake-holders across all sectors of society is key to ensuring that no one is left behind. This approach is most effective when institutionalized within formal structures and at different levels of government. Multi-stakeholder partnerships and platforms involving actors from government, civil society, youth, academia and the private sector are a critical mechanism for the achievement of SDG 16+. Targetted efforts are needed to build capacities and an enabling environment for such collaboration.

— For conflict-affected states, particularly where parts of a territory are outside state administrative authority, engaging with actors from the whole of society to design and implement development policies is vital. SDG 16+ not only guides countries on how to shape their institutions to achieve the SDGs, it also shapes their approach to humanitarian, development and peace actions, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected situations.
SDG 16+ is instrumental in protecting fundamental freedoms and ensuring that no one is left behind

- With shrinking civic space across the globe, many civil society actors are faced with barriers to inclusion and participation both on- and off-line. This includes threats to the personal safety of human rights activists and defenders, who are often prevented from participating meaningfully in development planning and policy making processes. This trend risks excluding from policy making the needs and voices of the most vulnerable in society, including women, children, youth, refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced and stateless people.

- Governance institutions and decision-making processes rooted in a human rights-based approach to development are critical to the achievement of SDG 16+ and to ensuring that no one is left behind. Bold reforms in making governance institutions more people-centered, responsive, effective and accountable in line with SDG 16+ principles will increase the resilience of societies to conflict by better integrating minority and marginalized voices. Institutions must not only be accountable and transparent, but also more participative, inclusive, responsive and representative. They must operate in accordance with the rule of law and human rights principles of non-discrimination and equality.

- National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) can play multiple roles in ensuring that no one is left behind. They are catalysts for sustainable development, helping to address inequality and discrimination in all its forms. They contribute to data collection and analysis processes that are more inclusive. They facilitate access to justice, redress and can remedy complaints. They promote human rights standards and the SDGs in business conduct, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. They provide a platform for dialogue in societies that are transitioning towards peace and justice. They help build trust between government institutions and people to promote transparent, participatory and inclusive national processes of SDG implementation and monitoring. They can also play an oversight role over the implementation of the SDGs to ensure that SDG planning, implementation and reporting is aligned with human rights standards and with a focus on "leaving no one behind".

- Significant investment is required in reliable disaggregated data to ensure that policy and programs reach marginalized and vulnerable groups and others who are "left behind". Data collection systems are weak when it comes to systematic coverage and data disaggregation, especially at the local and regional levels. Many SDG 16+ methodologies and national practices are state and citizen-centred, and therefore leave out people without citizen status, including the estimated 3.1 million asylum seekers, 25.4 million refugees, and 3.8 million plus stateless people worldwide. It is essential to expand the use of different data sources, including people-generated data, in addition to exploring new partnerships between data actors to further develop the national capacities for data collection, analysis and dissemination. The data revolution, and the potential of big data and artificial intelligence brings promising opportunities, but must be used responsibly.