

11. THE ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES, INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN SUPPORTING SDG 16 AND THE VNRS

What Is It?

Four years following the Adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the

Secretary-General's 2019 SDGs

Progress Report

called for renewed efforts to realize SDG 16, noting that "advances in ending violence, promoting the rule of law, strengthening institutions and increasing access to justice are uneven and continue to deprive millions of their security, rights and opportunities and undermine the delivery of public services and broader economic development".²⁵² In his

2020 SDG Progress Report

he stressed the impact of COVID-19 on SDG 16, noting that the pandemic could lead to "an increase in social unrest and violence that would greatly undermine our ability to meet the targets of SDG 16".²⁵³ At this year's 75th anniversary of the UN, and amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, the UN-SG convened world leaders in a virtual format ("the SDG moment")²⁵⁴ to seek action and solutions for a world in crisis. A statement made by the SDG 16 community (representing a group of Member States, civil society organizations, international organizations

and global partnerships working to implement SDG 16+) stressed the urgency in making SDG 16 the foundation for reset and recovery efforts and for more ambition in building resilient societies and institutions going forward.

These SG Reports – and, indeed, the

SDG Moment

Decade of Action

²⁵⁵ and

Decade of Accountability

²⁵⁶ – are rallying calls for more collaborative and innovative action, political mobilization and investment. Political and financial investments are critical to accelerating progress on SDG 16, and development agencies, international financial institutions (IFIs) and international organizations (IOs) are fundamental to this acceleration. While their roles in supporting SDG 16 through NDPs and VNR processes differ, relevant to all three is the need for²⁵⁷

²⁵² United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNDESA) (2019). Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019 Special Edition (Rep.), p. 27. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24978Report_of_the_SG_on_SDG_Progress_2019.pdf

²⁵³ United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNDESA) (2020). Report of the Secretary-General on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, p. 20. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26158Final_SG_SDG_Progress_Report_14052020.pdf

²⁵⁴ Convened by the UN Secretary-General, the first SDG Moment of the Decade of Action was held in September 2020 to set out a vision for a Decade of Action and recovering better from COVID-19. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sdg-moment/>

²⁵⁵ United Nations Sustainable Development Group. (2020). UNSDG | Decade of Action. Retrieved 4 August 2020, from <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/decade-action>

²⁵⁶ The TAP Network 2030. (2020). SDG Accountability Portal: About the Campaign for a Decade of Accountability for the SDGs. <https://sdgaccountability.org/decade/>

²⁵⁷ Global Alliance (2019). Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion, p. 48. <https://www.sdg16hub.org/content/global-alliance-enabling-implementation-2030-agenda-through-sdg-16-anchoring-peace-justice>

political support, technical expertise and support and financing

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However, even before COVID-19, Official Development Assistance (ODA) was declining; most donors do not, and have not, lived up to their pledge of directing 0.7 percent of GDP to ODA. With only a decade left, this calls for international actors to step up and better coordinate their support for SDG 16 implementation – as an enabler for Agenda 2030 as a whole and as an important foundation for COVID-19 recovery). In helping to guide such support, SDG 16-related recommendations and findings noted within a country’s VNR, as linked to NDPs and as reflective of meaningful stakeholder engagement, provide a blueprint.

Why Is This Important?

According to the 2020 Financing for Sustainable Development Report

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even before the outbreak of COVID-19, one in five countries was likely to see per capita incomes stagnate or decline in 2020. Now, billions more are likely to be affected as governments struggle to cope with the pandemic. According to the 2018 OECD States of Fragility report, by 2030,

more than 80 percent of the world’s poorest could be living in fragile contexts

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unless more concerted action takes place²⁵⁸.

Enhanced international cooperation is needed to ensure that sufficient means of implementation exist and are well-targeted to provide countries the opportunity to

achieve the SDGs and to address the short- and long-term effects of COVID-19. Investments in SDG 16, with its focus on governance, service delivery and an improved social contract, provide a relevant conduit to do so.

As highlighted by the Secretary-General’s 2019 report,²⁵⁹

“the required level of sustainable development financing and other means of implementation are not yet available”

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Galvanizing and further spurring international actors to support SDG 16 through post-VNR processes are important, not just for SDG 16, but for all SDGs, given proven returns on investment.

In line with the Secretary-General’s²⁶⁰

prioritization of prevention

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and according to the joint UN-World Bank²⁶¹

Pathways for Peace

www

preventing violent conflict saves lives and money—up to US\$70 billion per year on average. According to the²⁶²

Taskforce on Justice

www

every dollar invested in justice is likely to return at least US\$16 in benefits from reduced conflict risk. In low-income countries, it would cost US\$20 per year to provide a person with access to basic justice services. In middle-income countries, it would cost US \$64 per person and in high-income countries US \$190.

However, fragile and low-income countries often see²⁶³

domestic resources drained by illicit outflows

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258 OECD (2018). States of Fragility Report. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/states-of-fragility-2018_9789264302075-en;jsession-id=7sbjxh3PzDBu0dKIH7Koaygq.ip-10-240-5-4

259 UNDESA (2019). Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019 Special Edition (Rep.), p. i.

260 United Nations. Priorities: Prevention Secretary-General. Retrieved August 04, 2020, from <https://www.un.org/sg/en/priorities/prevention.shtml>

261 United Nations; World Bank. (2018) Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict, p. 3.

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO

262 Pathfinders. Task Force on Justice. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.sdg16.plus/task-force-on-justice>

263 Signé L., Sow M., & Madden M. (2020). Illicit financial flows in Africa Drivers, destinations, and policy options [Policy Brief], p. 3. Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings Institute. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Illicit-financial-flows-in-Africa.pdf>

A Brief Breakdown – Development Agencies, IFIs, the UN and other IOs

Within development agencies, approaches to supporting SDG 16 and VNR/post-VNR follow-up vary. The Republic of Korea's International Cooperation Agency, for example, has mainstreamed SDG 16 into its ODA.¹ Germany, while more broadly focused on the 2030 Agenda, is specifically supporting peer-learning on monitoring and review processes in partner countries (VNRs). Though not exhaustive, others that are particularly engaged include the U.K., Switzerland, Sweden, and the Netherlands.² Development agencies also generally have more flexibility in supporting civil society actors, albeit larger outfits, as compared to IFIs. Finally, while key, development agencies do face limitations in terms of policy mandates, accountability towards taxpayers and public opinion.³

IFIs, such as the World Bank or the African or Asian Development Banks, often provide significant financial backing to member states which can support SDG 16 implementation, even if not targeted for SDG 16 but rather as related to prevention and forced displacement, for example. As such, IFIs, broadly, often have the ear of finance ministers, which relates to national budgets, NDPs and often VNRs. IFIs have also recently increased their funding for issues related to SDG 16. For example, the World Bank⁴ has significantly increased its support for fragile and conflict-affected countries and in 2018, the International Monetary Fund's Executive Board approved a new framework for enhanced on governance, including as related to governance vulnerabilities, such as corruption.⁵

The UN is critical to mobilizing action on SDG16⁶ and to responding to country demand for support at HQ and country levels. UN Development System reforms have focused on strengthening the UN at country level, incentivizing accountable leadership, partnerships and improved financing.⁷ Related to NDPs and VNRs, UN Resident Coordinators at the country level are tasked with coordinating UN operational activities (including on SDG16) and preparing UN Sustainable Development Coordination Frameworks. UNSDCFs are based on national development priorities and feature partnerships with the government and other stakeholders. UN custodian agencies for SDG 16 indicators include: UNODC, WHO, DESA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNCTAD, UNODA, OECD and UNSD, with UN Women and UNFPA acting as partner agencies.⁸

Other IOs with direct SDG 16 relevance, such as the OECD⁹ or IDLO, support their member states in achieving the SDGs and have also developed various tools and analysis to measure and strengthen progress towards the 2030 Agenda.¹⁰

1 Korea International Cooperation Agency (2018). *KOICA Briefing Paper: Achieving SDG16: The Implementation Strategy of KOICA*.

2 Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. *A Sustainable Path to the Future: The 2030 Implementation Initiative*. http://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type_of_publication/information_flyer/information_brochures/Materilie355_sustainable_path.pdf

3 Andersson, D. (2019). *A Profile of the SDG16+ Community: An Independent Study*. Retrieved from the SDG16 Hub. <https://www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2020-03/A%20Profile%20of%20the%20SDG16%2B%20Community%2C%20Final%20Draft%2012-21-19.pdf>

4 World Bank (2020). *Conflict and Fragility*. <https://ida.worldbank.org/theme/conflict-and-fragility>

5 International Monetary Fund (IMF). (2018). *IMF Executive Board Approves New Framework for Enhanced Engagement on Governance* [Press release]. <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/04/21/pr18142-imf-board-approves-new-framework-for-enhanced-engagement-on-governance>

6 Andersson, D. (2019). *A Profile of the SDG16+ Community: An Independent Study*. Retrieved from the SDG16 Hub.

7 United Nations. (2020). *Development Reform | United to Reform*. <https://reform.un.org/content/development-reform>

8 United Nations Statistics (2020). *Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators as of 17 April 2020*. https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/Tier%20Classification%20of%20SDG%20Indicators_17%20April%202020_web.pdf

9 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). *Who We Are*. <https://www.oecd.org/about/>

10 International Development Law Organization. *About IDLO*. <https://www.idlo.int/about-idlo/about-idlo>

As highlighted by the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda (2019-2021), illicit financial flows have²⁶⁴

seriously negative consequences

on financing and progress, highlighting the need to

prevent receipt, assist in repatriating,

prosecute illicit flows and enhance

sustainable financing strategies and investments

at regional and country levels.²⁶⁵

Relatedly, ODA plays an important role in complementing national efforts to mobilize domestic public and private resources, particularly in the least-developed and most-vulnerable countries. To this end, least-developed country graduates have repeatedly voiced concern on the impact of declining ODA on their development paths. However, as highlighted by the 2018 OECD States of Fragility Report,

"ODA is still too concentrated in

a handful of places and is not

always well-aligned to the unique

and multi-dimensional needs of fragile contexts".²⁶⁶ Further complicating matters, the World Bank has estimated that from²⁶⁷

20 percent to 40 percent of ODA

is lost to high levels of corruption

every year

Responding to global crises with devastating consequences, such as COVID-19, is important and needed. However, at the same time, it is important to continue supporting – in a predictable manner – building peace, providing justice and strengthening institutions in protecting the most vulnerable and marginalized. Not mutually exclusive,

new aid packages are looking to halt the

pandemic, protect the vulnerable from its

economic effects and bolster healthcare systems

while maintaining focus on the most essential ingredients to preserving social fabric, inclusion and bettering the social contract.²⁶⁸

To this end, there are partnerships that address the global pandemic and SDG 16 in crisis-affected situations. For example, UNDP and the Islamic Development Bank developed a joint COVID-19 response plan, which includes socio-economic impact assessments and recovery initiatives in Yemen, Iraq and Syria, where the compound effects of violence, instability and a global economic downturn are bringing fragile economies to a standstill and devastating people's ability to provide for their basic needs.²⁶⁹

In this current context, slinking and integrating post-VNR activities with COVID-19 socio economic recovery

264 UN: Africa Renewal (2020). Challenges: The Global Dilemma of Illicit Financial Flows: Time for Collective Action. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/global-dilemma-illicit-financial-flows-time-collective-action>

265 United Nations (2019). United Nations Secretary-General's Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 2019-2021, p. 6. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/UN-SG-Roadmap-Financing-the-SDGs-July-2019.pdf>

266 OECD (2018). States of Fragility 2018, p. 7.

267 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) (2019). United Nations World Public Sector Report 2019 Sustainable Development Goal 16: Focus on public institutions, p. xiii. <https://publicadministration.un.org/publications/content/PDFs/World%20Public%20Sector%20Report2019.pdf>

268 Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) (2020). GPPAC calls for an inclusive, people-centred peacebuilding response to the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.gppac.net/news/gppac-calls-inclusive-people-centered-peacebuilding-response-covid-19-pandemic>

269 Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) (2020). Press Release: UNDP, UNOPS, UNICEF, Islamic Development Bank and the Government of Cameroon join forces to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.isdb.org/news/undp-unops-unicef-islamic-development-bank-and-the-government-of-cameroon-join-forces-to-fight-the-covid-19-pandemic>

plans and policies, provides an important avenue for longer-term impact.²⁷⁰

In an analysis undertaken by UN DESA of the VNRs presented at the 2020 HLPF, several VNRs underlined a point also made by the UN Secretary-General, namely, that, if they had been more advanced in SDG implementation, the impact of COVID-19 might have been less severe.²⁷¹ This reinforces the critical importance of SDG 16 investments especially in strengthening responsive and effective governance systems before the COVID crisis and the opportunity for SDG 16 prioritization in the recovery plans that are being developed.

How Can This Be Used?

The below offers a brief snapshot of the different approaches used by development partners in their support to SDG implementation in regards to conflict-sensitive technical assistance, alignment with national priorities, multi-donor funding schemes and inclusive reporting.

The 2030 Agenda re-focused UN and other donors on the importance of technical assistance

(policy support, capacity development and country accompaniment), including for SDG 16 implementation.²⁷² Especially challenging areas where technical assistance is sought include conflict-sensitive policies and programmes, supporting human-rights-based approaches, participatory planning and accountability mechanisms and monitoring. Much of this assistance is provided by multilateral (including regional) and bilateral institutions and from global and regional civil society. UN country programmes are particularly geared toward 2030 Agenda outcomes, with many of them focused on SDG 16+ targets. Relatedly,

the UN Joint SDG Fund

is an interagency, pooled mechanism for strategic financing and integrated policy support, targeting programmes that work across the SDGs as a means of accelerating progress.²⁷³

However, as noted in the²⁷⁴

2019 SDGs Progress report and similar to the principles laid out in the Aid Effectiveness Agenda

development partners have room to improve in better focusing on the priorities of partner countries. “Bilateral development partners’ respect for country policies declined from 64% in 2016 to 57% in 2018. Some 76% of new development projects and programmes aligned their objectives to those defined in the country strategies and/or plans in 2018. However, only 52% of result indicators for these interventions were drawn from country-owned result frameworks and only 44 per cent of result indicators were monitored using data and statistics from government monitoring systems.”

According to the 2018 States of Fragility report

mutual accountability frameworks can ensure that all actors are working towards coherent results on nationally defined priorities.²⁷⁵ Supporting countries in their post-VNR processes may help to refocus efforts and place attention where it needs to be.

International organizations and other providers of technical assistance

270 The UN Framework for the Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 brings the UN specialized agencies and funds and programs together around an agreed set of priorities and mechanisms to support countries with a consolidated UN national response and recovery plan that complements national recovery planning. <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-framework-immediate-socio-economic-response-covid-19>

271 UN/DESA Policy Brief #85: Impact of COVID-19: perspective from Voluntary National Reviews <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-85-impact-of-covid-19-perspective-from-voluntary-national-reviews/>

272 Global Alliance (2019). *Enabling the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Through SDG 16+: Anchoring Peace, Justice and Inclusion*, p. 48.

273 United Nations Development Programme (2017). Joint SDG Fund. Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office Gateway. <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/IPS00>

274 UNDESA (2019). Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019 Special Edition (Rep.), p. 23.

275 OECD (2018). States of Fragility 2018, p. 18.

need to provide support that is grounded in local realities, sequenced, coordinated with other donors and domestic programmes, financed sustainably and do no harm.²⁷⁶ International and regional actors should support cross-country learning and exchange, accompanying countries in piloting approaches and taking these to scale.

Further, there is no standardized, global approach to mapping ODA to the SDGs or their respective targets that allows for comparable monitoring of financial contributions. The OECD developed approaches to mapping financial contributions to the SDGs²⁷⁷

Financing Lab



and to fragile states²⁷⁸

States of Fragility report



Both approaches use donor-generated data from the OECD Development Assistance Committee Creditor Reporting System on donors' ODA distribution across sectors. However, spending patterns are not strategically informing discussion on how financing actually relates to achieving certain SDGs and targets.

Such information would have significant steering potential, particularly for SDG 16 as an enabler of all other SDGs, improving alignment and prioritization of support as reflected in NDPs and VNRs.

In terms of IFIs, the

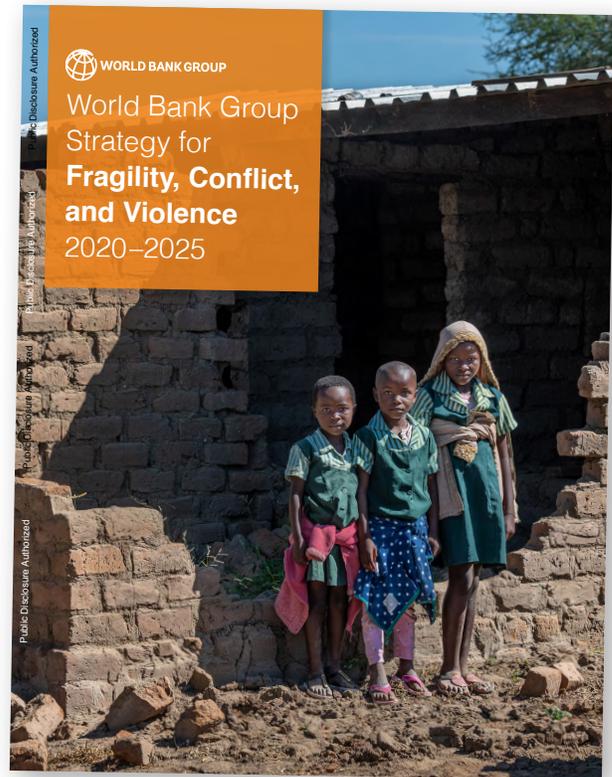
World Bank Group's recently launched

Fragility, Conflict and Violence



Strategy

(2020-2025) aims to enhance its effectiveness in supporting countries in addressing the drivers and impacts of FCV and strengthen their resilience, especially for the most vulnerable populations.²⁷⁹ To this end, the WBG is



significantly scaling up the volume and types of financial support it provides for addressing Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV) in low- and middle-income countries. Often, this translates into support for SDG 16.

More innovative funding schemes across stakeholders, such as the²⁸⁰

OGP Multi-Donor Trust Fund



the EU and the UN's Spotlight Initiative



and the²⁸¹

UN's Peacebuilding Fund



276 OECD (2018). States of Fragility 2018, p. 18.

277 OECD. The SDG Financing Lab. <https://sdg-financing-lab.oecd.org/?country=Belgium&distribution=providers&sdg=10>

278 OECD (2018). States of Fragility 2018, p. 65.

279 The World Bank (2020). Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020–2025, p. 2. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/844591582815510521/world-bank-group-strategy-for-fragility-conflict-and-violence-2020-2025>

280 Open Government Partnership. OGP Multi-Donor Trust Fund. <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/ogp-multi-donor-trust-fund/>

281 United Nations. United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/fund>

offer catalytic and targeted support. However, earmarking, a lack of flexibility and significant administrative barriers to entry, particularly for civil society, often hinder their full impact.

To this end, civil society actors are highlighting the need for similar, SDG 16 specific funding mechanisms to encourage grassroots ownership and mobilization of SDG 16+ through flexible, non-earmarked funding. There is a clear need to better support civil society and grassroots approaches in their implementation of SDG 16 and their engagement with the VNR.

In moving forward, a country's VNR, as linked to NDPs and COVID recovery priorities, and based on inclusive, multi-stakeholder processes, offers clear direction in how to best support SDG 16 implementation at national and subnational levels. This direction, as determined by partner country priorities, should be heeded. Civil society and local actors should be prioritized and

local donor delegations should see themselves as fully vested and full-fledged stakeholders



in the VNR process.²⁸² And, finally, as noted in

the Profile of the SDG 16+ Community



an Independent Study, particular attention should be paid to addressing short-term financing, earmarking and politicized commitments.²⁸³

Key Resources:

- [Pathways for Peace](#), UN-World Bank Report (2018);
- Financing for Sustainable Development Report, [Interagency Taskforce on Financing for Development](#) (2020);
- [The SDG Financing Lab](#), OECD;
- [The World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020–2025](#);
- [The UN's Secretary-General's Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda, 2019-2021](#) (2019).

Interviews: Neil Gandhi, DFID, UK and Anna-Maria Heisig, GIZ, Germany.

²⁸² Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) (2020). Reporting for the Future: Final Report Ready for Review 2019. <https://www.cspps.org/publications/reporting-future-final-report-ready-review-2019>

²⁸³ Andersson, D. (2019). A Profile of the SDG16+ Community: An Independent Study. Retrieved from the SDG16 Hub. <https://www.sdg16hub.org/system/files/2020-03/A%20Profile%20of%20the%20SDG16%2B%20Community%2C%20Final%20Draft%202012-21-19.pdf>