Making Progress on SDG 16
Unlocking the Power of Example
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# Table of Contents

## Introduction

1

## Peace

- Transforming Digital Governance in **Ukraine**
- Building A Path Forward to Peace & Social Cohesion in **South Sudan**
- Empowering Survivors of Gender Based Violence at the Local Level in **North Macedonia**
- Advancing Women, Peace and Security in the **Philippines**
- Ensuring a safe and just society in **Jamaica**
- Empowering Youth and Women as Key Drivers of Social Cohesion in **Djibouti**

3
6
9
11
14
16

## Justice

- Strengthening Institutions to Enhance Climate Resilience in **Fiji**
- Enhancing Citizen Participation and Digital Innovation to Address Conflicts in **Peru**
- Engaging the Private Sector on Corporate Human Rights Due Diligence in **Pakistan**
- Empowering Citizens to Combat Corruption in **Liberia**
- Strengthening the Human Rights Defender’s Office (HRDO) in **Armenia**

19
21
24
27
29

## Inclusion

- Pioneering citizen data in **Ghana** for more inclusive public services
- Improving Women’s Access to Participation in Public Institutions in the **Dominican Republic**
- Strengthening Public Service Delivery through Digitalization Inclusion in **Georgia**
- Innovating Public Sector E-Services in **Indonesia**
- Empowering Citizens through Digital Identities in **Malawi**

31
33
35
37
39
Introduction

The publication you have in front of you now, is essentially about the power of example. It is about hard determinate work, human ingenuity and unlocking powerful partnerships that can truly transform lives on a massive scale. It is about how governments, people and institutions are putting peace, justice and inclusion at the center of transformation. 16 examples for to inspire action on the 16th goal.

Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions, is a cornerstone for achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals. We know that it interlinks deeply with the achievement of most other parts of the Agenda 2030. As we have now crossed the halfway mark, the need to refocus efforts and to accelerate and deepen implementation has never been more urgent. Our hope is that this compilation will serve as inspiration for policy-makers, civil society and practitioners in designing the responses that are needed to ensure rapid progress.

The 2nd Global Progress Report on SDG 16 produced by the leading UN entities responsible for globally tracking progress on SDG 16 paints a bleak picture. Governance systems are indeed failing many people, the world is getting more dangerous and not safer, people are increasingly divided, and justice is being denied for too many. But there are some bright spots, the report notes the positive trend in the diversity of representation in public institutions, with more gender parity in some regions and improvements in the inclusion of young people. Governments are also increasingly prioritizing policies and initiatives which are making real and crucial progress on peace, justice and inclusion. This publication aims to shed light on these bright spots.

The examples presented in this publication show that governance systems are being strengthened so that the needs and rights of people are being met, access to justice is being advanced, and inclusion is being expanded.

In the pages that follow, the publication shows how UNDP is working hand in hand with partners to support a range of initiatives.

The Government of Ukraine, despite the ongoing war, has rapidly launched new e-services and digital tools tailored to address the needs of its citizens, including those who are most marginalized. Due to the war, there has been an increase in marginalized population groups, especially internally displaced, persons which has highlighted the importance for the people of Ukraine to be able to interact with public institutions online. Through digital solutions, internally displaced Ukrainians are being connected with the services and support they need.

The Dominican Republic has made strong commitments to implement the global initiative ‘Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions’ strengthening gender equality in public institutions and policies. The Gender Equality SEAL has developed the capacities of judges to reduce the gender bias in sentencing, it has helped to increase women’s participation in municipal electoral boards and has helped the country to improve women’s access to economic opportunities.
Armenia has made significant progress in promoting and protecting human rights. Specifically, the government has strengthened relevant national institutions through the establishment of an independent national human rights institution (NHRI) compliant with the Paris Principles adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Through support to the NHRI - the Human Rights Defender's Office (HRDO) - the country is working to protect the rights of prisoners and detainees, provide public education on human rights, women's empowerment, legislative reviews, office expansion, and system digitization.

Youth is at the forefront in Djibouti’s national development plan through the adoption of a National Youth Policy. The implementation of this policy has kickstarted various initiatives aimed at bolstering youth employment and fostering social cohesion, such as a national volunteer programme designed to enhance youth employment, through skills- and capacity-building and cultivate a spirit of civic engagement among the younger generation. The Youth Advisory Council ensures the inclusion of young people in community development and decision-making processes, thereby amplifying their voices and contributions and ensuring their right to participation.

Fiji is investing in people-centered solutions to enhance climate resilience by integrating climate change, institution strengthening, disaster management and social inclusion into all aspects of their development plans and implementation.

We hope the 16 country examples illustrated in the following pages provide inspiration for action on SDG 16 and highlight the ways that UNDP can assist countries achieve their development goals and ambitions to bring peace, justice and inclusion for all people.
In February 2022, the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine, resulting in a tremendous loss of life and livelihoods, putting stress on the economy, and forcing millions of people to leave their homes. As the fighting continues, the negative repercussions ripple across Ukraine, the region and the world.

According to the **Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights** (OHCHR), from 24 February 2022 to 31 December 2023, 29,330 Ukrainian civilian casualties have been recorded, including 10,191 killed and 19,139 injured. Efforts to rebuild continue despite the crisis. The Government of Ukraine is ensuring that immediate needs are linked to long-term sustainable impact, supporting the country’s efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Over the last five years, digital transformation has become one of the Government’s key priorities. The digitalization of the economy and IT sectors has expanded rapidly over the last decade and greatly contributed to the digital transformation of governance in the country. Despite these steps, Ukrainians face a significant digital divide, one that has been further deepened by the war.

Since 2022, Ukraine has experienced severe disruptions to internet connectivity, which is essential for the resilience and further development of the digital economy. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in 2022, **approximately 11% of the stations for mobile operators have been damaged and are currently inactive**, and the number rises as the attacks continue.

**The quality of data transmission decreased by an average of 13% over fixed Internet networks, and 26% over mobile networks.** In addition, **12.2% of the settlements in Ukraine do not have access to mobile communication, and 3.1% have only partial access.** Meanwhile, the forced internal migration caused by the war has increased population density in certain areas, thus contributing to the overload of the networks.

### SDG 16 in Action

In 2020, Ukraine stepped into a new digital era with **Diia digital** solutions, a website, and a mobile application that is part of the President’s "Your State in Your Smartphone" vision. Through Diia, the Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT) brought a host of digital services to its citizens, including marginalized groups, to improve the effectiveness of public services. In 2021, UNDP assisted the establishment of the [DIA (Digital, Inclusive, Accessible) Support project](https://www.dia.support). Designed to bridge the digital divide across generations and social groups, DIA aims to ensure that everyone in Ukraine can access new digital solutions and electronic services to ensure no one is left behind. All e-services take a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) which has helped civil servants to bring a citizen-centric attitude in service delivery.

Despite the war, the Ministry, with support from partners and donors, continues to respond effectively and has introduced services for internally displaced Ukrainians to register their status and receive financial support from the Government using the Diia app. People can also obtain support via digital tools such as the [Ministry of Social Policy’s (eAid) website](https://eaid.gov.ua), which unites people who require help with both available volunteers and much needed donors and donations.
The project continues to improve quality access of digital administrative and social services and has launched 40 e-services and digital tools tailored to address the needs of all Ukrainians including marginalized groups (e.g., the elderly and war veterans). The response has been overwhelming; by January 2024 more than 21 million people, roughly half of the country’s total population, had used one or more of the services.

Moreover, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology has conducted several national surveys to track the usage of public digital services in Ukraine. In 2023, 2,014 phone interviews were conducted and revealed strong support:

- More than 78% of applicants were satisfied with the functionality of the online services.

- Over a three-year period, the proportion of respondents using public digital services had increased from 53% to 64% (71% of men and 58% of women).

- The level of use of the Diia mobile application and web portal significantly increased from 30% to 52% (58% of men and 45% of women).

A key focus of the initiative is to improve the inclusiveness of public services, particularly for marginalized populations such as persons with disabilities and internally displaced persons. The Government initiated the development of a state standard on web accessibility and facilitated the adoption of a Cabinet Resolution on digital accessibility. According to the Resolution, all websites and mobile applications of state executive authorities, as well as electronic documents posted on them, must be accessible to people with disabilities. The initiative actively supports the implementation of the new standards, providing technical consultations and audits for various government institutions’ digital products.

At the same time, awareness-raising campaigns about e-service availability have been conducted nationwide, focusing on different audiences, including youth and the elderly. The DIA Support project significantly advanced the accessibility and relevance of e-services to meet the diverse needs of the population. These efforts led to an improved ranking in e-government standings, according to the UN E-Government Survey results, with Ukraine’s rank moving from 69 to 46 during 2020-2022. Overall, the Government focus on digital public services and digital literacy demonstrated success in enhancing the accessibility and relevance of e-services, positively impacting Ukraine’s digital resilience.

Ukraine was granted candidate status for accession to the EU in June 2022 advancing its ties with European institutions, especially in telecommunications and digitalization. Ukraine’s progress in adopting innovative technologies and earning international awards for digital achievements continues unabated, despite the challenges.

"The uninterrupted operation of registers is a matter of national security and the functioning of the state. Our priority right now is to keep all government registers up and running and secure, even during power outages. This will allow Ukrainians to receive the necessary services from the state under any conditions. Obtaining generators is one of the essential steps in this direction."

-Mykhailo Fedorov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Digital Transformation of Ukraine
Snapshot of UNDP Support

Leveraging its almost 30-year history in Ukraine and its established presence on the ground and working in close cooperation with state authorities and local communities, UNDP Ukraine prioritizes approaches that are inclusive, just and green. Throughout the war, UNDP has been working with local authorities to sustain essential service provision, facilitate access to humanitarian aid, support mine clearance and debris removal so people can return home.

UNDP is strengthening the capacities of local authorities to provide services, including through mobile offices and refurbished administrative centres. The delivery of social services to all, the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities (PwDs), support for people injured by the war, psychosocial support, and reintegration of veterans are the priorities in 2024.
South Sudan voted for independence by means of a referendum on 9 July 2011, making it the youngest nation in the world. The post-independence years, however, have been marked by civil wars that have undermined development gains and worsened humanitarian needs. The 2013 civil war was the result of a power struggle among the political elites who manipulated ethnic divisions and grievances. In 2015, the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCC) was intended to halt the civil war and open a pathway to development via the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU). One year later, the peace agreement crumbled and fighting erupted throughout the country. In 2018, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) brought renewed impetus towards stabilizing the fragile situation in the country. The R-ARCSS established the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) in February 2020, tasked with implementing the peace agreement. In 2022, the signatories to the R-ARCSS agreed on a Roadmap to a Peaceful and Democratic end of the Transitional Period in order to accelerate implementation of the R-ARCSS. To date, inadequate progress has been made in implementing the R-ARCSS, and the transitional period has been extended until February 2025. A crucial element of the transition is the upcoming elections, scheduled for December 2024.

The delay is fringed by conditions of widespread poverty, a lack of basic services such as health care and education, a lack of rule of law, and significant levels of corruption against a backdrop of deeply rooted ethnic divisions and the marginalization of women and youth. Key factors such as limited livelihood options, cattle raiding, land disputes, the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), weak local governance, politicized ethnic tensions, and misinformation are causes of inter- and intra-state conflicts at the grassroots level. These factors contribute to ongoing violent conflict hindering peaceful coexistence while impacting each marginalized community differently. In this context, young men and women are often excluded from decision-making processes, encounter intergenerational gaps, and lack viable livelihood opportunities, increasing their vulnerability and pushing them to seek alternative means of survival. Youth leaders striving to contribute positively to community development are frequently constrained by these challenges. Similarly, experienced women are marginalized due to entrenched gender norms that limit their participation in decision-making and peace processes, undermining their societal role.

**SDG 16 in Action**

Despite ongoing challenges, South Sudan has achieved significant milestones on its path to peace and inclusion. Notably, in 2021, the government drafted the Revised National Development Strategy (2021-2024) focused on "Consolidating Peace, Stabilizing the Economy." It aims to shift from reliance on humanitarian aid towards country-led development using a Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus approach, considering the whole of society to ensure effective implementation and contribute to strategic peacebuilding.

Additionally, the Ministry of Peacebuilding has developed a National Peacebuilding Policy aimed at accelerating peacebuilding interventions nationwide once ratified.
What is interesting to note is that Article 16 of the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan mandates women's rights and stipulates that women must comprise 35% of the representative bodies. To implement the 35% provision, the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare has developed the Women's Empowerment Bill to enforce gender equal representation in governance and specifically foster the inclusion of women in peace processes across the country. This is especially important while South Sudan paves its way towards elections and a permanent constitution-making process.

Local-level peace committees, under the South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Committee (SSPRC), have also been created and serve as an early warning system, playing a critical role in preventing and responding to conflicts at grassroots levels.

Cattle migration conferences are one such effort. South Sudan is home to approximately 64 nomadic tribes that migrate with their cattle across the country, increasing the risk of conflict at the community level. Cattle migration conferences bring together different communities, sometimes cross-border, to discuss and resolve elements related to peaceful migration, including the sharing of natural resources such as water and pastures, and migration routes. The conferences, and the signed resolutions, have been a crucial factor in fostering peaceful cattle migration.

Social, cultural and economic interdependency activities are also important in fostering peace at the local level. Sports for peace and cultural dances are contributing to a strengthened social fabric among different ethnicities, age and gender divides. Economic interdependency activities, such as the savings-focused Village Loan Associations, help participants become financially self-reliant. One of the social cohesion results of a VLA is that members of different communities recognize their neighbors as trading partners and not as enemies.

Taken together, these local level activities have been instrumental for the progress of peaceful coexistence and an inclusive society in the country.

Overall, the government’s policies and activities prioritize meaningful inclusion of youth, positioning them as change agents for fostering peace and inclusion. Efforts are underway to address negative stereotypes about youth among the general population and equip them with conflict management skills to further South Sudan’s development and peace efforts.

“Before the peace initiation, this place used to be violent due to recurrent fighting between the Dinka Malual and Misseriya communities. ‘After UNDP stepped in with peace committee trainings and regular cattle migration conferences, we returned to our land and started cultivating. I managed to send four kids to school from the earnings from the farm’

-Peace Committee Member in Aweil, Northern Bahr el Ghanzaal State
Snapshot of UNDP Support

UNDP South Sudan has partnered with Empower Youth Africa (EYA), a Civil Society Organization (CSO) providing entrepreneurship and conflict resolution training to young men and women along with start-up kits for small businesses. This is transforming the lives of many young people who have access to alternative incomes than violent practices like cattle raiding. For example, Dut Ding now runs a successful business selling commodities. “Having the business made me resistant to participate in violent practices like cattle raiding, it makes me feel like a peace champion”, said Dut.

The EYA start-up kit provided Awien Nlong with the skills needed to overcome initial challenges, such as securing essential supplies, for her tea service. Awien now earns enough to provide for her family and send her children to school. She is now making plans to expand her tea business into a restaurant.

An important offshoot of the programme is the formation of a support network for the participants. Weekly meetings provide an opportunity to discuss life challenges, foster social cohesion, and build friendships across their diverse backgrounds. The group assists in resolving conflicts informally within communities. Furthermore, it operates a common loan system to which members contribute monthly, providing financial support for both expansion and emergencies. As the group's positive impact spreads, more people are joining to benefit from the collective support and opportunities created by this initiative.
Empowering Survivors of Gender Based Violence at the Local Level in North Macedonia

The Republic of North Macedonia continues to grapple with numerous challenges in its pursuit of fostering peace, justice, and inclusion. While the country ranks high in human development indices (it is 78th on the Human Development Index) and has closed important gender gaps (37th on the Gender Inequality Index), chronic barriers perpetuate gender inequality and impact overall progress towards meeting the SDGs. An alarming uptick in gender-based violence (GBV) is one critical example. Investing in strengthening local governments and their capacities to deliver gender-responsive services, especially to support GBV survivors, is therefore essential to helping the country fulfill its obligations and bridge implementation gaps.

The government’s commitment to establishing a just and peaceful system that safeguards individual human rights and civil liberties shows both progress and challenges, which are reflected in reports from the Ombudsman and the country’s anti-corruption bodies. Issues include dissatisfaction with public services, a lack of citizen participation, and concerns regarding accountability.

The EU report on North Macedonia 2023 indicates that the country’s fundamental rights protection principle aligns partially with EU standards, but that it needs consistent, systematic implementation. Amendments address gender-based violence, but challenges persist in ensuring survivors of GBV have access to services. Official data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of North Macedonia shows that in 2022, 1,117 crimes related to domestic violence were registered, a 6% increase over 2021.

The most common offenses were “bodily injury” and “endangering security”, with husbands (474 cases), sons (171 cases) and intimate (extramarital) male-partners (119 cases) being the principal perpetrators. In 2023, domestic violence resulted in an alarming seven cases of murder and two cases of attempted murder.

SDG 16 in Action

The North Macedonia Government is taking an integrated and holistic approach to address GBV, developing legal and policy frameworks that respond to international commitments while building the capacities of institutions and the civil sector to prevent violence and support survivors. Partnering with local municipalities is at the core of how this support is provided, as they are critical in providing essential services to meet the needs of its citizens.

For example, in 2022, the municipalities of Radovish and Kumanovo established counseling centers to provide survivors of gender-based violence with comprehensive support including counseling, crisis intervention, and assistance with economic reintegration. The Radovish center’s work has been particularly impressive, offering a range of holistic services such as: psychological counseling, individual and group psychotherapy, assistance in navigating relevant institutions, and psychosocial support during the challenging processes of economic reintegration and rehabilitation.
It also takes a long-term approach to GBV prevention through raising awareness in schools on cyber-based and other forms of gender-based violence, holding educational meetings with parents focusing on stress and health issues for children with disabilities, and implementing dedicated workshops to provide quality services for women survivors of gender-based and domestic violence.

Over the past year, the center has helped more than 35 women to tangible effect. This includes the successful resolution of cases, women reporting positive results after psychological treatments or receiving additional treatment, and taking necessary steps, such as reporting GBV incidents to the police. A telephone hotline has proven crucial for women seeking help, reinforcing the centers’ role as an indispensable resource in their communities.

The commitment by the municipalities to invest the necessary financial and human resources reflects a proactive approach to meeting international standards and ensure the wellbeing and safety of their communities. The success of the Radovish center highlights the crucial role municipalities play in designing and delivering gender-responsive services tailored to the specific needs of women and men in the community.

*Victims of violence are often left wandering around, they don’t know where to call, who to turn to. By opening the Support Centre, we created a safe place where they know they will receive adequate help and support.*

-Ivanka Rizovska Sokolova, President of the Association “Zhenska akcija” (Women’s Action)

### Snapshot of UNDP Support

UNDP North Macedonia is committed to providing direct support and assistance to victims of gender-based violence and actively pursues this objective by fostering institutional partnerships, in line with the goals of SDG 16. This approach is focused on promoting inter-municipal cooperation and fostering close collaboration between municipalities and the civic sector by guiding them to establish clear ground rules and transparent financing and working towards the realization of the shared mission.

UNDP has developed an institutional mechanism - a community forum - to ensure the active involvement of all stakeholders in all areas of the public at the local level. This forum is explicitly incorporated into the Statutes of the local self-governments, specifying a 40% quota for the participation of women. Through this tool, the concerns of women and vulnerable groups are considered when formulating local policies and budgets. A thematic group of councilors has also been established within the Association of Local Self-Governments to focus on gender equality. This Group provides a space for ongoing coordination among local decision-makers to promote women’s rights and the advancement of women’s participation in policy and decisions.

Through these initiatives, UNDP is actively assisting North Macedonia meet the minimum standards detailed in the Istanbul Convention, which advocates for one Counseling Center per 50,000 inhabitants.
In 2014, a landmark agreement was signed between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, signifying the commitment of both parties to secure a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Bangsamoro region.[1] The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) recognized the justness and legitimacy of the Bangsamoro cause and aspiration for meaningful self-governance. The Agreement also put forward the protection and enhancement of the Bangsamoro people’s right to human dignity; the reduction of social, economic and political inequalities; the acknowledgment of the Bangsamoro people’s identity and legitimate grievances as well as the rectification of historical injustices committed against the Bangsamoro; and the removal of cultural inequities among the inhabitants within the Bangsamoro region.

Ten years after the signing of the CAB, there have been critical transitions and transformations under the two tracks of the peace agreement – the Political Transition track and the Normalization track. Under the Political Transition track, the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) has paved the way for meaningful self-governance through the legislative action passed by the Bangsamoro Transition Authority and the programs and services delivered by the BARMM Government. Aligned with the Normalization track, the transition of former combatants into peaceful and productive civilian lives and the transformation of conflict-affected areas into progressive and cohesive communities have helped facilitate the strengthening of human security in the region.

Underpinning these advances is the critical role women play as agents of change for peace and development in their respective communities. Over the course of the Bangsamoro peace agreements’ implementation, an increased number of women played crucial roles in peacebuilding and governing in the BARMM. Indeed, the history of the Bangsamoro peace process is full of stories of women taking on crucial roles as advocates, facilitators, mediators and peacebuilders. Stories of hope, agency and resilience among Bangsamoro women in the face of multiple risks and vulnerabilities arising from armed conflict, poverty, natural hazards and more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, document their significant contributions in protecting and sustaining the gains of the Bangsamoro peace process.

Since the signing of the CAB, there has also been a notable rise in women’s involvement in governance and peace processes at the national and local levels. Women are actively engaged in implementing peace mediation and peace advocacies. Notably, the Philippines stands out as the first country to have a female chief negotiator – Prof. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer – who signed a final peace accord during the negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Significant efforts are still required to empower women at the grassroots level to take charge of their own well-being, support their communities, and engage in local conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and post-conflict rehabilitation initiatives. The participation of women, particularly those directly affected by conflict, is crucial. Their diverse experiences of conflict and its consequences offer unique perspectives on political, economic, and socio-cultural issues, as well as strategies for promoting human rights and welfare, and devising solutions to end conflict and achieve lasting peace.

[1] Bangsamoro was not part of the Spanish-colonized Philippines and was annexed after the United States took power in 1898.
SDG 16 in Action

The Philippine Government is committed to deep economic and social transformation by ensuring inclusive growth through equal opportunities for all Filipinos, as outlined in its Development Plan. The Government is exerting all efforts to achieve peace and national security by ensuring that conflict-affected and conflict-vulnerable areas are protected and developed, quality of life is safeguarded from criminality, and communities are kept safe from natural hazards and other security threats. Specifically, one of the key deliverables of the Government is to ensure the completion of the commitments of the peace agreements and help former combatants, their families and conflict-affected communities return to civilian life. Recognizing the importance of peacebuilding, the government is also focused on healing, reconciliation and countering terrorism and extremism.

In 2010, after collaborative initiatives between the government and civil society organizations, the Philippines launched its first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, the first Asian country to do so. It detailed efforts to promote women’s inclusion and participation in conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and post-conflict reconstruction. In December 2023, the Philippines launched the fourth generation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security covering 2023-2033.

Additionally, under the Bangsamoro Women Commission’s leadership and with support from UNDP and UNW, the Bangsamoro Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (RAP-WPS) 2023-2028 was launched in October 2023. This plan underscores the crucial role of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and governance in the Bangsamoro region, aligned with UN SCR 1325.

More importantly, the Bangsamoro RAP-WPS 2023-2028 reiterates the Bangsamoro government's steadfast commitment to ensuring that there can be no genuine, just and sustainable peace and development without the meaningful inclusion and participation of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and governance in the region.

Snapshot of UNDP Support

UNDP Philippines plays a vital role in fostering peace in Mindanao, particularly in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region. Launched with the support of UNDP and the Bangsamoro Women Commission in March 2021, the Women Insider Mediators Rapid Action and Mobilization Platform (WIM-RAMP) is a group of community-based women peacebuilders and mediators from civil society organizations, government, Moro revolutionary fronts and indigenous peoples’ communities who are committed to changing attitudes, fostering dialogue and resolving conflicts peacefully.

The impact of WIM-RAMP is tangible. It contributed to the formulation of the Bangsamoro Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2023-2028, emphasizing women’s pivotal role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. WIM-RAMP members have been acknowledged for their contributions to maintaining peace and safety, notably during the 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections. Additionally, training programs have equipped women leaders from different groups with transformative leadership skills, enabling them to articulate their Peace, Security, and Development Agenda.

Moreover, WIM-RAMP’s achievements extend to grassroots levels, with members establishing local organizations and facilitating conflict resolution initiatives within their communities.
Their inclusivity and nuanced understanding of the regional context have been instrumental in bridging divides and fostering sustainable peace.

By embracing all stakeholders, including those perceived to be in the opposition, WIM-RAMP exemplifies effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding practices in the BARMM.

From capacity-building initiatives to information and communication dissemination to peace mediation, to local government engagement and network-building, the WIM-RAMP has been involved in an array of interventions aimed at helping cement women’s role in peace and development in the Bangsamoro. Since its launch, the WIM-RAMP has expanded its initial core membership from 30 to more than 157 women peacebuilders and mediators from all BARMM provinces, including communities in North Cotabato, Lanao del Norte and Zamboanga Peninsula.

“The value that I see is that before, women were not really recognized by men in the community. Along the way, when they saw how we have frequently engaged in community organizing and advocacy, WIM-RAMP slowly became known and women’s capacities to undertake mediation was recognized.”

-Derhana Maguid Adil, Executive Director, Women Insider for Mindanaoan Peace and Development
Jamaica, the third largest island in the Caribbean with a population of 2.73 million, has made notable strides in areas central to its vision to make Jamaica “the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business”. The Government has prioritized the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, which are aligned with the country’s Vision 2030 and its associated national planning documents. Crime and violence pose a significant threat to the country’s socioeconomic development. With the region’s highest homicide rate, Jamaica recorded 1,393 murders in 2023. Young males aged 16-24 are both the main victims and perpetrators of violent crimes. The high homicide rate is exacerbated using small arms and light weapons which are involved in approximately 80% of cases, underscoring the severe impact of illicit arms. Organized crime and violence are worsened by the illegal narcotics trade and the presence of criminal gangs. Communities that are marked by poverty and a lack of infrastructure often become hotspots for gang activity and violence. Low trust in the state and limited access to services further compound these issues, making effective law enforcement and community engagement critical.

Addressing these issues requires effective governance, law enforcement, and community engagement to foster peace, justice, and inclusion. Moreover, these are essential for achieving SDG 16.4 (significantly reduce illicit financial and firearms flows) and improving public security, which is deemed the most important growth-inducing reform for Jamaica. Additionally, sexual and gender-based violence remains a concern, with more than one in every four women experiencing intimate partner and sexual violence in their lifetime.

Justice system reform is essential to combat crime and thus remains a priority. Despite improvements, institutional capacity gaps remain, namely equitable access to and quality of justice services related to human rights and the rule-of-law institutions, especially for women and other vulnerable groups.

SDG 16 in Action

Goal 16 of the SDGs (especially the targets related to violence and crime) is aligned to Jamaica’s National Development Goal 2 - “The Jamaican society is secure, cohesive and just” - as well as other Sustainable Development Goals. The achievement of this goal is a major focus for Jamaica. During the period FY2018/19 – 2020/21 the ministries of National Security & Justice were allocated approximately $300 billion JMD to undertake various activities aimed at improving safety and access to justice.

The Government is implementing a combination of short-, medium- and long-term measures aimed at reducing and preventing crime and violence. Short term interventions include the declaration of communities as Zones of Special Operations (ZOSOs) and the declaration of States of Public Emergencies (SOEs) in police divisions. Medium to long-term interventions include legislative updates; building the technological capacity of the security forces; and social intervention programmes to provide much needed services to residents in volatile and vulnerable communities. Jamaica is also prioritizing reducing the circulation of small arms and light weapons, by improving detection capabilities, and strengthening the legislative framework.
Inter-agency cooperation is being strengthened to enhance the ability of government institutions to develop innovative solutions to reduce illicit arms flows and armed violence. Moreover, the capacities of national authorities to collect and analyse firearms-related data for the monitoring illicit arm flows have been improved.

There was a legislative review of the national legal framework related to firearms, including the draft Firearms Bill. Notably, the findings of the legislative review also provided a basis and guidance for the development of the national strategy on firearms.

Snapshot of UNDP Support

UNDP Jamaica is supporting Jamaica’s ambition for a more secure, cohesive and just society by strengthening the capacities of state and non-state actors to ensure equitable access to and delivery of justice services and capacities to reduce crime and violence. It is doing this through several programmes and initiatives including through SALIENT Jamaica - the Reducing Small Arms & Light Weapons in Jamaica joint programme (UNDP together with other UN agencies and entities) – which is geared at reducing violence and the proliferation of illicit firearms. SALIENT is undertaking the requisite legislative review and development of required national strategies while at the same time building the capacity of local law enforcement agencies. Additionally, the programme supported Jamaica’s Ministry of National Security’s efforts to research violence in vulnerable communities by piloting a violence audit in two volatile, vulnerable and inner-city communities - Norwood and Denham Town. The audit identified causal factors and programmatic entry points to address violence providing the Government of Jamaica with valuable information to inform national security strategies and targeted violence prevention and reduction programming in similar communities. Additionally, given the multi-dimensional nature of crime and violence, an upscaling of existing projects to reduce the circulation of small arms in schools and communities is being taken forward.
Djibouti, a pivotal player in the Horn of Africa and sub-Saharan Africa’s gateway to the Arab region, is a beacon of stability and peace in a region often marked by conflict. The country has sustained a remarkable economic growth trajectory, propelled by a thriving port sector, with an average growth rate exceeding 6% from 2013 to 2019 and a resilient post-pandemic recovery. Its GDP growth picked up again after a brief drop during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Djibouti has one of the lowest human development index ratings (171 out of 193 countries) in Africa, the result of limited economic diversification, and challenges such as high energy, water, and telecommunications costs, coupled with a significant national debt, which hinders efforts toward economic diversification and job creation.

Governance issues remain, particularly in the decentralization process and public service delivery. The ongoing decentralization process has not yet led to tangible improvements in public service delivery or decision-making at regional and local levels. Due to challenges concerning citizen rights, participation, accountability and public management, Djibouti's ranking in the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance dropped from 34 (out of 54 countries) in 2016 to 39 in 2021.

Inequality is a pressing issue, particularly in rural areas and female-headed households, which are disproportionately affected by poverty. Young people, who represent 70% of the population, face major challenges, particularly when it comes to unemployment. In 2022, the youth employment rate in Djibouti stood at 77.19%, while the overall unemployment rate was 27.93%.

SDG 16 in Action

The Government of Djibouti has placed youth at the forefront of its national development plans, a commitment clearly outlined in the Djibouti Vision 2035 and its five-year consecutive plan. The government has identified youth unemployment as a key player in reducing poverty. The first strategy - Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée Pour l'Emploi (SCAPE), followed by the National Development Plan 2020-2024, has helped develop a set of national policies in this regard. The country has adopted progressive policies like the National Youth Policy 2023-2027, which fosters social cohesion initiatives that significantly impact communities by bringing together and empowering youth from diverse backgrounds. While specific statistics on the impact of these policies are not currently available, the desired measurable goal includes a significant reduction in youth unemployment rates and an increase in youth participation in the economy and society. The implementation of this inclusive policy has kicked off various initiatives aimed at bolstering youth employment and fostering social cohesion, such as a national volunteer programme designed to enhance youth employment, build skills and capacity, and cultivate a spirit of civic engagement among the younger generation.

Moreover, the launch of the Youth Advisory Council represents a significant milestone in actively including young people in community development and decision-making processes, thereby amplifying their voices and contributions, ensuring their right to participation, and ensuring that their needs are met. These actions demonstrate the Government's commitment to building a more inclusive and participatory society.
The implementation of this inclusive policy has kickstarted various initiatives aimed at bolstering youth employment and fostering social cohesion, such as a national volunteer programme designed to enhance youth employment, skills- and capacity-building and cultivate a spirit of civic engagement among the younger generation.

Moreover, the launch of the Youth Advisory Council represents a significant milestone in actively including young people in community development and decision-making processes, thereby amplifying their voices and contributions, ensuring their right to participation and that their needs are met. These actions demonstrate the Government’s commitment to building a more inclusive and participatory society.

“The Dikhil Forum is a groundbreaking event in Djibouti, uniting political figures and civil society, initiated by CTID in partnership with UNDP. This forum served as a platform to address challenges related to social cohesion. As an ambassador for Social Cohesion focusing on education, I advocate for more inclusive education to cultivate a more engaged community and promote empowerment values through education and learning across Djibouti.”

-Choukri Osman, Young Ambassador for Social Cohesion and Community Resilience
Snapshot of UNDP Support

UNDP Djibouti has been at the forefront of driving transformative programmes to enhance community engagement and foster social cohesion, with a particular emphasis on empowering women and young people as agents of peace. Through strategic partnerships with local partners, such as the Centre of Technology and Innovation for Development (CTID) and youth and women-led civil society organizations such as Femme Tic, UNDP has played a pivotal role in establishing platforms for dialogue and cultural peacebuilding activities. One noteworthy initiative, the Social Cohesion Ambassadors program, equipped 18 young Djiboutians, including 9 women, with the leadership skills needed to advocate for social cohesion and civic participation within their communities.

Another significant milestone was the Intercommunity Forum of Dikhil. This collaborative effort brings together more than 100 stakeholders from diverse backgrounds – including local communities, traditional and customary leaders, local authorities, sectorial ministry representatives, and the private sector – to address local issues.

By involving a wide range of stakeholders, the Forum ensures that different perspectives and voices are considered when addressing development challenges. These recommendations were incorporated into the Charter of Dikhil, a guiding document presented to key ministers during a ceremony held on Thursday, July 13, 2023, at the Palais du Peuple in Djibouti City. The presence of Youth Ambassadors for social cohesion, CSOs from the interior regions, local authorities, and young people in the ceremony highlights the active involvement of these groups in the decision-making process.

Six ministers from key government sectors (Interior, Social Affairs and Solidarities, Health, Education, Labor, and Women and Family), signed the Charter symbolizing their dedication and commitment to increased engagement among communities in local development to strengthen their resilience. Their commitment to support the implementation of recommendations reflects a collaborative effort to address local challenges and promote inclusive development.

In addition, UNDP's support for enhancing women's digital skills, exemplified by programs like the Civic Tech training program led by Femme Tic, demonstrates a commitment to gender inclusivity and empowerment. By training 97 young women on the use of digital tools for local development and social cohesion, UNDP is promoting gender equality and creating opportunities for women to actively participate in community initiatives. The impact of these initiatives has been remarkable, as evidenced by the establishment of 18 innovative associations and projects led by program participants, underscoring the dedication and ingenuity of young women in Djibouti.

All these initiatives aim to strengthen the capacities of youth, women, communities, and institutions at the local level to contribute to conflict prevention and social cohesion, a key asset to be preserved for Djibouti.
Human development in the Pacific region has been a tale of progress, along with persistent disparities and disruptions. During the 1900s, Pacific Island nations made good progress on human development. Since the early 2000s, however, there has been a backsliding on key human development indicators. The Pacific Island region has seen its worst decline in gender equality in two decades, income inequality remains deeply entrenched, and the region is feeling the effects of the climate crisis as much -- if not more -- than most.

**SDG 16 in Action**

Effective governance, accountability, responsiveness and inclusivity are all vital for managing the complex challenges facing the region. Pacific Island governments are increasingly adopting a “whole of government approach” to address the threat of climate change. This is being achieved by strengthening the responsiveness and inclusiveness capacities of national institutions to plan for, finance and respond to climate change. This in turn is advancing the achievement of SDG16 by bolstering the effectiveness and increasing the accountability of such institutions. Pacific Island governments are working to adopt a risk informed approach to development through their governance structures.

An early adopter of this holistic approach to addressing the threat of climate change is the Government of Fiji’s Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management (MRMDDM).

By integrating climate change, institution strengthening, disaster management, and social inclusion into all aspects of planning, financing, monitoring and accountability activities, MRMDDM is setting an example for effective governance, responsive to the needs of local communities. This approach is helping to build the resilience and adaptive capacities of local communities to climate-related hazards and advancing the achievement of SDG 13 (climate action).

To demonstrate the benefits and strengthen both gender inclusion and a risk-informed approach to development, MRMDDM is supporting communities across Fiji to participate as decision-makers in community projects, empowering them to build resilience, adapt to climate change and shape their own destiny. One of these is the community of Tavuya.

In Tavuya, the local community has led work on the construction of a new foot crossing (pedestrian bridge over a flood prone water passage), opening access to service delivery year-round and providing a resilient lifeline for its people. For the residents of Tavuya, water-based transport is an essential lifeline. It connects the community to schools, health clinics, markets, and jobs. Climate change has brought coastal inundation and flash flooding, threatening this vital link. This work, spearheaded by MRMDDM, saw the upgrade of a 30-metre (32 yards) foot crossing that benefits more than 1,000 people from the local community, providing a safe and secure route of passage for subsistence farmers, schoolchildren, persons with disabilities, and those in need of access to village healthcare services.
Snapshot of UNDP Support

Recognizing that risk-informed infrastructure saves lives and money, UNDP Fiji has supported the MRMDDM in making systemic changes to ensure their entire development portfolio considers risk. Through a partnership with UNDP, the Ministry’s Strategic Development Plan now has resilience at its core, with corresponding policies and guidelines updated and partnerships established with the Ministries responsible for women and children, climate change and disaster risk management. This shift is now leading to Ministry-funded community projects being both more inclusive and resilient to climate change. UNDP’s Governance for Resilient Development in the Pacific (Gov4Res) project supports initiatives that ensure decision-making processes are responsive to the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders, including marginalized groups. This commitment to responsive governance is key to building resilience and ensuring equitable development for all Pacific communities. To date, the MRMDDM and UNDP have supported 89 risk-informed community development projects across Fiji alone and an estimated 14,200 people in rural communities have benefitted from these projects.

“...It is incredibly expensive to travel by boat from Tavuya, and not everybody in the village can afford this on a weekly, or even daily basis. The footcrossing is being used by everyone, has improved access to services, and bought the community together through the construction process.”

- Ruci Daveta, Provincial Administrator, Rewa
Peru has faced a complex political situation with six presidential successions in six years. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted institutional fragility and human rights violations, followed by the 2021 general elections which heightened political and social polarization. These trends have undermined government institutions and weakened public discourse among political and civil society actors. In late 2022, mass protests erupted, and human rights bodies reported multiple deaths and violence. This has eroded trust in authorities and the democratic system, with a high number of Peruvians dissatisfied with the performance of democracy in Peru.

More recently, electoral processes and democratic institutions have shown resilience in coping, with efforts being made to strengthen their independence and effectiveness and Peru’s public administration is focussed on the unfinished process of modernization and decentralization to better attend to the needs of its diverse population. Citizens’ rights and participation in decision-making are hampered by structural discrimination, based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, among others leading to exclusion and under representation and violence. Social conflict is prevalent, reaching 224 social conflicts at the national level, with socio-environmental conflicts being the most numerous (61.6%) up to October 2023. There are institutional shortcomings in managing conflicts through dialogue and concerns for the effective protection and safety of human rights defenders including indigenous environmental defenders in the Amazon region.

With this context, strengthening citizen participation, representation, and state institutions, along with empowering subnational governments, is crucial to addressing Peru’s challenges in the short and medium term.

**SDG 16 in Action**

The Government of Peru has integrated the SDGs into its national development policies and plans, aligning 35 national policies with the SDGs in the "Vision of Peru by 2050" and the "Strategic Plan for National Development by 2050". The General Government Policy 2021-2026 reaffirms these commitments, emphasizing dialogue, social peace, and integrity for democratic governance and economic recovery. Notably, Peru is committed to SDG 16 promoting citizen security, human rights, access to justice and combatting corruption and organized crime, as exemplified by the “National Integrity and Anti-Corruption Policy”, the “National Policy to Combat Organized Crime 2019-2030”, the “National Human Rights Plan 2018-2021” and the promotion of national dialogue through the strengthening of the National Agreement.

Peru has made important progress in strengthening its institutions in the areas of conflict management and prevention using a territorial, participatory, intercultural, climate and gender-sensitive approach. To manage and mitigate electoral conflicts and protect information integrity supporting democratic elections, the country’s electoral organizations have introduced two digital tools with a strategic, multi-stakeholder set of partners. The National Office of Electoral Processes (ONPE) now has the first early warning and response system (MACE) to monitor, assess and make decisions on incidents of violence during an election campaign. In the fight against mis/disinformation and hate speech, electoral authorities and civil society have at their disposal EMonitor+, a digital tool adapted by UNDP that uses AI to identify, analyze and raise awareness about the presence of toxic speech and gender-based violence on social networks.
The government has also strengthened its Secretariat for Social Management and Dialogue, becoming a key actor within the executive branch of government for dialogue and conflict prevention at the national and regional level. Work is also underway to formulate the first national policy on conflict management and prevention.

On conflicts related to environmental issues, Peru has made efforts to involve the affected local communities, focusing on historically marginalized populations, strengthening their capacities and enabling them to participate in decision-making. For instance, the Peruvian government carried out an independent technical study (ETI) in an oil extraction area in the Amazon region of Loreto, involving three main actors: the Ministry of Energy and Mines, 11 associations of Amazonian peoples affected by oil extraction and UNDP. This experience resulted in a successful and replicable governance model to promote multi-stakeholder participation in the prevention of social conflicts and the protection of community rights with a focus on sustainability. Beyond the exhaustive and independent information provided by the ETI, the process incorporated the voices and participation of environmental monitors, community, indigenous women and community members, which gave greater legitimacy to the process. The ETI is a unique instrument on an international scale, produced in a participatory and intercultural manner, making it a milestone in the history of the Amazon and indigenous peoples in their fight to be included in decisions affecting their living environment.

"Electoral processes require a climate of security and social peace to ensure that citizens can decide how to vote in complete freedom and independence. Projects such as this one, promoted by the UNDP and the European Union, make it possible to identify and manage situations of conflict to ensure a peaceful environment for the organization of electoral processes."

- Piero Corvetto, Head of the National Office of Electoral Processes (ONPE)
Snapshot of UNDP Support

UNDP has supported key counterparts to safeguard democratic institutions and processes. The electoral management bodies promoted the participation of underrepresented groups – emphasizing women, indigenous peoples and youth – through improved institutional communication, including in indigenous languages. Inter-institutional coordination for strengthened electoral processes was enhanced through the regular convening of multi-stakeholder roundtables. Within this framework, UNDP has supported the development of an early warning and response system for electoral conflicts and the use of EMonitor+ to combat hate speech and gender-based violence in social networks. Similarly, in the context of environmental issues and extractive industries, UNDP promotes citizen participation in conflict management and prevention by involving them in decision-making and strengthening their capacities.

UNDP Peru is working with the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MINEM) on preventing and managing social conflict and encouraging active citizen action to promote peace in the context of natural resource extraction in the Amazon. To this end, UNDP facilitated a participatory process of remediation over the effects of oil extractive industries engaging indigenous communities, the government, and extractive companies. This experience led UNDP to support environmental monitoring committees, creating the first official national network of indigenous monitors in Peru. Technical assistance has also been provided for the design of conflict management offices in four regions.

Finally, amid recurrent political crises, UNDP has continued to support key opportunities for dialogue and consensus building to avoid violence and stagnation in sustainable and democratic development.
Pakistan presents a complex governance picture marked by periodic progress and persistent challenges. While the Government has made strides in enacting legislation aligned with international human rights standards, there are significant implementation gaps that manifest across different sectors of society, including for the protection of human rights in relation to business activity.

For example, vulnerable and marginalized communities such as minorities continue to encounter systemic discrimination, face barriers in accessing justice, remain vulnerable to violent attacks, and have unequal access to equal economic opportunities. At the same time, and despite legal frameworks aimed at promoting equality, gender inequality persists, with Pakistan ranking 142nd out of 146 in the 2023 Global Gender Gap Report, and being among the worst performers in the access of women to senior positions in business activity. Furthermore, 56% of overall employment is considered vulnerable; workers do not have protection and are exposed to various labour and human rights violations. This includes over 3 million women home-based workers who are at risk of unfair and unequal wages and hazardous working conditions, with no recourse to remedy. While institutional protections for such human rights violations are present in provincial legislation such as the Sindh Home-Based Workers Act, actual implementation remains sporadic.

Additionally, it can be said that while both civil society organizations (CSOs) and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRRs) play pivotal roles in advocating for inclusive governance, there is often limited coordination between these entities on key issues. This poor coordination can be attributed to several factors, including differing approaches and priorities and resource constraints.

**SDG 16 in Action**

In September 2021, the Government of Pakistan launched a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP), a policy document describing the Government’s intended legislative, policy, and institutional actions for the strengthening of human rights protections across business activities, particularly in promoting the rights of the most vulnerable at-risk people. Now in its third year of implementation, the NAP includes several pledges applicable to the business-related human rights impacts described above. The Federal Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) has led the development of the NAP and is now continuing to support its implementation. The Government is also actively working with the private sector on corporate human rights due diligence (HRDD) through awareness-raising events, capacity-building exercises, and technical guidance sessions.

Furthermore, the Provincial Social Welfare, Local Government, and Women Development Departments are working towards integrating gender considerations into community level activities to support peacebuilding. Current knowledge, data and evidence from the field suggest that social exclusion and victimization of women in patriarchal societies create incentives for some women to seek power and mobility by aligning with conflict actors.
Therefore, the provincial governments have institutionalized Gender Desks, Women’s Advisory Groups and Girls Peer Groups to expand women’s role and participation in peacebuilding and stabilization activities at the community level. These initiatives are implemented in close coordination with CSOs in the target provinces to ensure sustainability of the initiatives.

The Government of Pakistan, both at national and provincial levels, is also promoting initiatives focused on access to justice (including environmental justice), community empowerment, the right to vote for women, as well as free and fair elections. National and provincial statutory bodies such as National Human Rights Institutions have been working closely with government actors and civil-society stakeholders to raise awareness about and address human rights violations. Finally, both federal and provincial government initiatives on inclusive policy development and implementation for the rights of the most vulnerable and at-risk populations (particularly transgender persons, persons with disabilities etc.) have directly contributed to achieving its targets for SDG 16.

Shahnaz, a home-based worker from Faisalabad, sharing her appreciation for a consultative workshop by UNDP in June 2023 which brought together textiles companies and informal workers, said, “Today we learned a lot about our fundamental rights as informal workers and how businesses are responsible for ensuring that our rights are not violated through their activities. Informal workers form the backbone of Pakistan’s textile industry, so we encourage further such events to be organized to raise our awareness so that we may stand up for our rights as informal workers.”
Snapshot of UNDP Support

In 2023, UNDP Pakistan, with support of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Islamabad and in partnership with HomeNet Pakistan, a CSO dedicated to supporting informal women workers, extended support to hundreds of home-based women workers in Pakistan’s garments and textile sector to increase awareness of their right to claim justice. UNDP developed a Human Rights Due Diligence Manual to empower home-based workers to organise themselves through community level mobilisation, access public institutions, and hold the private sector accountable.

Sadaf Perveen, from Karachi, was one of numerous women workers in Pakistan’s informal economy supported by UNDP. Since 2013, she has embroidered clothes for large garment factories, during which time she has experienced various violations of her fundamental rights, such as the withholding of payment by intermediary contractors, unfair and unequal wages, impossible deadlines, and unsafe working conditions. Sadaf is now a champion for home-based workers in Pakistan as a result of the training she received from UNDP and HomeNet, coupled with knowledge exchanges with South Asian counterparts through the South Asia Forum on Business & Human Rights.

Sadaf’s journey from a marginalized worker to a global advocate for home-based workers showcases the impact of UNDP’s initiatives, fostering South-South cooperation and empowering women to become entrepreneurs and community leaders in Pakistan while holding businesses accountable for their corporate responsibility to respect human rights.
Despite four successful credible democratic elections since the Second Liberian Civil War (1999 – 2003), Liberia’s democratic environment remains fragile, with national institutions that are characterized by limited infrastructure, a brittle political environment and limited capacity to strengthen accountability and build confidence in public institutions. The rule of law and justice sectors continue to recover from the civil conflict and suffer significant institutional capacity deficits as well. Consequently, many Liberians do not have access to justice and security or cannot afford the cost associated with accessing formal justice and security services.

While progress has been made to enhance accountability and strengthen the fight against corruption through legal and policy reforms, it remains a menace that undermines the country’s development and growth. Liberia is among the least performing countries in the fight against corruption. According to the 2023 Transparency International report, Liberia ranks 25 out of 180 countries.

The detrimental impact of corruption on public trust, foreign investment, and socio-economic progress in Liberia cannot be overstated. Scarce resources intended for crucial public services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure development are diverted due to corruption.

Beyond the economic sphere, corruption in Liberia distorts the business environment, creating challenges for companies striving to operate transparently and compete fairly. Addressing this pervasive issue is not only a necessity for economic stability but also a catalyst for attracting investments and fostering growth.

Furthermore, corruption perpetuates social inequity, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations by restricting their access to quality education, healthcare, and justice. It exacerbates income inequality and impedes poverty reduction efforts. This stark reality underscores the imperative for robust anti-corruption measures.

**SDG 16 in Action**

In 2022, the Liberian government took active steps to reevaluate the nation’s anti-corruption strategy which led to the enactment of groundbreaking laws designed to bolster the fight against corruption. The Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) can now proudly assert that it has direct prosecutorial powers, as outlined in the amended LACC Act passed by the Legislature in 2022. This new authority allows the Commission to prosecute individuals accused of corruption without needing to wait for the Ministry of Justice.

With the new act in place and despite significant financial challenges in recruiting additional investigators and lawyers, and acquiring necessary logistics, the LACC is prepared to take cases to court. Additionally, the Legislature has passed both the Whistle Blower Act and the Witness Protection Act, empowering the public to aid the LACC in reporting corrupt activities.

The new anti-corruption framework also states that all three branches of government – the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary – must now declare their assets to the LACC. This marks a significant change from the past where the asset declaration system was fragmented across different government entities.
“TALKAY facilitates citizen engagement in the fight against corruption by offering a readily accessible, anonymous, and user-friendly platform for reporting corruption alleged corruption cases. Each reported allegation undergoes thorough scrutiny by the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC), ensuring adherence to established procedures and protocols. Importantly, the LACC upholds stringent confidentiality standards, safeguarding the identities of whistleblowers while also raising public awareness about the Whistleblower Act and Witness Protection Act, offering reassurance to those stepping forward with allegations of corruption.”

-Dr. Miatta Jeh, Oversight Commissioner of Monitoring and Investigation, Liberia Anti-Corruption Commissioner.

Snapshot of UNDP Support

UNDP Liberia is partnering with the CSO Integrity Watch Liberia (IWL) to enhance the capacity of civil society, community-based groups and media organizations to advocate for and demand accountability and responsive governance.

Specifically, UNDP and IWL supported the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission by establishing the TALKWAY app. The TALKWAY platform allows citizens to anonymously report corruption cases anywhere and anytime without the fear of reprisal from alleged perpetrators. Although new, it has attracted more than 1,000 users who have registered more than 323 corruption-related cases.

Participants across several communities received training on anti-corruption measures and the use of TALKAY. Awareness and training events were also conducted in public high schools to encourage students to actively engage with the app. This hands-on leaning enhanced students’ proficiency and confidence in utilizing the technology. Its multifaceted methodology ensures a holistic approach to strengthening capacity, combining community building and collaboration, educational outreach, and hands-on training to empower participants with the knowledge and skills needed to actively contribute to anti-corruption efforts through TALKAY.
A landlocked country of 2.97 million people nestled in the Southern Caucasus, the Republic of Armenia is an upper middle-income country with a Human Development Index (HDI) score that places it in the high human development category. Despite an increase in HDI of approximately 30% since 1992, 24.8 per cent of the population still lived below the poverty line in 2022 with 2.8 per cent classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty in 2023. Disparities between urban and rural areas, gender inequality, outward migration, high climate change exposure and the complex regional context further impact the resilience, competitiveness and well-being of society.

The conflict with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region has persisted for decades. Hostilities escalated in 2023, resulting in a complex refugee crisis. The Armenian government, alongside international actors, promptly responded by providing essential assistance to the displaced population.

Apart from humanitarian assistance, dedicated, ongoing efforts towards social-economic integration are needed to support the refugees to improve their livelihoods, build their resilience and ensure equal opportunities and development for local communities. The refugee crisis resulted in a substantial increase in the workload of public services, including policing, migration services and rescue services, revealing critical capacity gaps of these institutions serving on the frontlines in the government’s crisis response.

Armenia cooperates with UN Human Rights mechanisms by submitting periodic reports on the implementation of the human rights conventions it ratified to the UN Human Rights Treaty bodies and by having issued a standing invitation for visits by the UN Special Procedures. Its efforts were assessed by the 3rd Universal Periodic Review cycle in 2020 and the next review will take place in 2025.

**SDG 16 in Action**

Armenia has undergone a profound transformation since gaining independence in 1991, including after the peaceful transition of power in 2018 which triggered renewed commitments to a human-centred governance system, human capital investments and the realization of human rights. These commitments are being operationalized through the 2021-2025 Programme of the Government, sectoral strategies, including the Human Rights Action Plan for 2023-2025, the Legal and Judicial Strategy for 2022-2026 and the Armenia Transformation Strategy 2050. The country continues to pursue ambitious human rights, judicial, police, and constitutional reforms to establish more inclusive, accountable, and responsive governance systems and institutions. These efforts have brought about positive shifts in global indices, including on voice and accountability (from 40.39% to 51.21%) and control of corruption (from 42.79% to 56.13%) as highlighted in the latest Worldwide Governance Indicators, along with an incremental increase in Armenia’s Democracy Score. The improved quality of institutions has become key to the reform agenda, and the government has embarked on a wide and complex set of reforms, proactively looking for solutions that would lead Armenia to have an efficient public sector that respects the principles of transparency and participation and is accountable to its citizens.

Significant progress has been made towards the achievement of Goal 16, in particular on SDG 16.A, which aims to strengthen relevant national institutions through the establishment of independent national human rights institutions (NHRIs) compliant with the Paris Principles adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.
Through support to the NHRI - the Human Rights Defender’s Office (HRDO) of Armenia, the country is working to protect the rights of prisoners and detainees, and provide public education on human rights, women’s empowerment, legislative reviews, office expansion, and system digitization.

“Shirak, Syunik, Tavush, Gagarkunik, and today, Lori. I am proud to note that the territorial coverage of the Defender’s institution is expanding. The newly established subdivision will play a significant role in the protection of human rights. I would like to express my gratitude to our international partners, in particular, EU and UNDP, who have diligently and devotedly supported the Human Rights Defender’s Office within the framework of various programs.”

-Anahit Manasyan, Human Rights Defender of Armenia

**Snapshot of UNDP Support**

**UNDP Armenia** is supporting the Human Rights Defender’s Office (HRDO), the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and other key institutions by reinforcing human rights protection and aligning closely with the objectives of SDG 16. Specifically, UNDP is supporting the achievement of target 16.A to strengthen relevant national institutions, including national human rights institutions.

For instance, UNDP worked with HRDO to introduce a procedural checklist to adapt to changes from the new Criminal Procedure and Penitentiary Codes. This checklist was created to support the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), which is essential for implementing the **UN Convention Against Torture** by monitoring detention facilities. In Armenia, the HRDO acts as the NPM, conducting visits to closed institutions. The checklist aims to streamline these visits, helping the NPM identify and address potential violations efficiently. To ensure effective use of the checklist, comprehensive training sessions for NPM members were conducted. These sessions prepared the NPM for their monitoring duties, enhancing their ability to assess detention conditions accurately. This approach led to improved reporting and prompt issue resolution, strengthening human rights protection in detention facilities.

Additionally, specialized training programs were held for police officers, focusing on preventing torture and ill-treatment. These sessions, informed by NPM visits and HRDO human rights complaints, aimed to foster a culture of respect for human rights within the police force, emphasizing the absolute prohibition of torture.

Through these efforts, Armenia has strengthened its human rights protection system in closed institutions and promoted accountability and respect for human rights among police officers. This comprehensive approach not only improves monitoring processes but also contributes to long-term systemic change and the prevention of future violations.
Ghana is a lower-middle income country with a population of 31 million people in 2021. The country’s Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2022 was 0.668, placing it in the medium human development category, ranking 138 out of 189 countries. There are marked regional differences in levels of development. Gender equality (as measured by the Gender Development Index) has been improving over the last few years. Despite this, women’s participation in education, employment, and public life at higher levels continues to lag that of men.

The latest Population and Housing Census by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) reports that 8% of the population has a disability. In 2022, Ghana co-hosted the Global Disability Summit, demonstrating the growing political commitment and enabling environment for disability inclusion in Ghana. While there has been significant progress, discrimination and inequality persist for persons with disabilities, particularly women and children in Ghana, across various facets of society. Ghana has been hailed as a role model for democratic governance in Africa. Ghana’s democratic foundations have grown for over two decades as the country experienced eight consecutive elections without slipping into nationwide violence.

**SDG 16 in Action**

In a pioneering move towards citizen-centric data collection, Ghana launched a groundbreaking pilot project in Ghana to measure global SDG Indicator 16.6.2 (people’s satisfaction with public services) through Citizen Data. Citizen Data is briefly defined as the participation of the public in knowledge production, whether led by scientific institutions or civil society groups. It embraces diverse approaches, methodologies, definitions and terminologies and emphasizes the key role that the members of the public and communities can play in addressing the world’s greatest challenges from climate change to increasing inequalities. Beyond addressing data gaps, Citizen Data also has further benefits. For example, it presents an opportunity to strengthen the ties between science, society, and people-centered policymaking. By increasing awareness and inspiring action, Citizen Data can help to bring about the transformative change that is necessary to address societal issues, which can facilitate behavioral change.

Ghana Statistical Service and UNDP developed a Public Services Satisfaction Survey (PSSS) App, a groundbreaking tool aimed at measuring the satisfaction of citizens with their last public service experiences.
The PSSS App empowers individuals, including those with disabilities, to actively contribute to the improvement of public services in health, education, and government-issued identification services. This Citizen Data initiative is a crucial step in achieving SDG Indicator 16.6.2, focusing on the proportion of the population satisfied with their last experience of public services. Ghana officially launched the PSSS App pilot project in two municipalities, Ga West and Suhum. The initiative, driven by Ghana’s Statistical Service and UNDP, aims to gather real-time feedback from citizens, enhancing the understanding of public service quality and accessibility. The app ensures anonymity and adherence to data protection laws. The app signifies a transformative approach to data collection and official statistics, fostering inclusivity, transparency, and empowering communities to actively participate in shaping the delivery of public services.

Through the 16.6.2 initiative, the Ghana Statistical Service and UNDP did not only gather valuable data, but they also fostered a sense of ownership, empowering of the citizens and communities.

At the global level UNDP’s Global Policy Centre for Governance is responsible for supporting the global measurement of SDG indicator 16.6.2 providing support to countries to collect data and generating global and regional analysis on the indicator. The Centre is also highly engaged in identifying innovative and cost-efficient solutions to generate evidence on the indicator as a successful piloting will provide valuable insight on the use of Citizen Data in national statistical systems. The knowledge is essential to fill the current information gaps on the indicator, but also provide a base to explore citizen data to produce other socio-economic SDG indicators.

**Snapshot of UNDP Support**

A main objective of UNDP Ghana’s assistance to Ghana is to support the consolidation of governance reforms including strengthened institutional capacities for good governance and inclusive service delivery, human rights, peace, and security. In line with the mandate to leave no one behind, the UNDP prioritizes inclusivity, through collaborations, and by ensuring that the vulnerable populations, especially persons with disabilities, are included in decision making.

The pilot was a significant step in the process of producing evidence on the importance of citizen data initiatives and there are other indicators that citizen data approaches can be leveraged. The pilot will generate a policy brief and a scientific paper for Ghanaian stakeholders ddd for other countries that can learn from the experience and be inspired.

“A citizen data approach can complement official sources by providing timelier and targeted disaggregated data that can shed light on hard-to-reach populations and communities that might be overlooked or underrepresented in traditional operations”

— Ghana Statistical Service
Improving Women’s Access to Participation in Public Institutions in the Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic ranks high on the Human Development Index (HDI) and is one of the most dynamic economies in the region, ranking first for growth and sixth in per capita GDP in Latin America.

However, economic dynamism has not translated into overall development progress. Persistent social, economic and political inequalities faced by Dominican women prior to the pandemic resulted in a loss of 44% of the country's human development potential. In the labor market, women face lower participation rates than that of men. As of the fourth quarter of 2023, the employment rate in the country was 61.70%, with a large difference between that of women (51.8%) and of men (76.1%). Moreover, the unemployment rate for women (18.8%) was three times that of men (6.5%) and the gender wage gap was 21%. There is also low representation of women in decision-making positions. In the 2024 presidential election women comprise only 36% of elected positions in congress. The overall gender gap index score for Dominican Republic is 0.7 which shows a gender gap of approximately 30%.

Furthermore, the country grapples with high incidences of femicide and teenage pregnancy, reflecting broader societal challenges. Violence against women is widespread, often goes unreported and when reported, goes unpunished, leading to a pervasive fear among women of being in public spaces significantly impacting their daily lives. According to data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), there were 150 femicides in 2021, placing the country in the top 5 in the region in terms of femicide rate in relation to its population.

According to the Experimental Survey about Women (ENESIM, 2018), 68.8% of women aged 15 and over, more than 2 out of 3, have experienced some type of violence in their lifetime. UNDP studies on gender-based violence in the workplace highlight that it usually goes unpunished since less than 5% of victims report it.

Combined, these factors contribute to higher levels of poverty and vulnerability among women, limiting their participation in public life, impeding their personal freedom, and undermining their ability to fully realize their human rights.

SDG 16 in Action

Despite these challenges, there are positive initiatives underway. The Ministry of Women has integrated a gender perspective into various policies, emphasizing gender equality as crucial for sustainable development. Under its leadership, the country has committed to the UNDP’s “Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions,” leading to significant transformations in public institutions and policies.

The judiciary, for example, strengthened the capacity of judges to recognize gender bias, reducing the presence of sexist considerations in sentencing and improving the application of the national law to punish gender-based violence perpetrators. Similarly, the Central Electoral Board contributed to a substantial increase in women’s participation in municipal electoral boards from 35% in 2019-2022 to 44% in 2022-2026 as well as establishing the National Observatory of Women's Political Participation.
The Gender Equality Seal has been instrumental towards improving women’s participation and access to economic opportunities. In accordance with the Dominican Republic’s national regulations for promoting women’s SMEs access to public procurement, the General Directorate of Public Procurement (DGCP) achieved a 43% growth between 2021 and 2023 in the number of offers made by women-led businesses to public procurement bids, and a 60% increase of overall public purchases from women-owned companies.

Additionally, the Dominican Institute of Telecommunications, through programs like the Social Digital Basket, aims to empower women economically through access to technology and training which has led to increased opportunities and income for entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the Superintendence of Banks (SB), managed to increase women’s participation in financial education programs from 28% to 41%. Finally, the General Directorate of Public and Private Partnerships (DGAPP) has made mandatory the integration of the gender perspective into the design and implementation of public-private partnerships.

While challenges persist, the Dominican Republic is taking steps towards gender equality and inclusive development, demonstrating a commitment to improving the lives of women and girls across the country.

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Snapshot of UNDP Support

UNDP’s Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions is a flagship initiative that supports and measures the progress of public institutions to develop institutional reforms aligned with internationally validated gender equality standards. Implemented in the Dominican Republic under the leadership of the Ministry of Women, with UNDP’s support, it has been instrumental to address gender inequality gaps through public administration reforms and sectoral policies, helping to show and position gender equality as an essential element for achieving sustainable development. This initiative has had a significant impact on the lives of more than 23,000 public collaborators in the country, including 56% women and 44% men.

“\textit{The Gender Equality Seal in Public Institutions represents an important tool for the mainstreaming of gender equality and promotes transformation in terms of cultural change; working to raise awareness and transform the culture that sustains stereotypes, discrimination and violence. The Seal is essential to advance within the institutions and in the fulfillment of their obligations and mandates.}\”

- Mayra Jimenez, Ministry of Women
Georgia is concertedly pursuing the SDGs having integrated 93 priority targets into its national strategies. The country has established a robust inter-ministerial mechanism, the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR), to coordinate efforts and monitor progress. The VNR’s reports were presented at the UN High-level Political Forums on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2016 and again in 2020. Georgia will submit its 3rd VNR at the HLPF in July 2024.

As Georgia celebrates over 30 years of independence, it takes pride in having achieved significant development successes in recent years. These include robust economic growth, substantial improvements in infrastructure, and notable progress in democratic governance. The country has implemented effective reforms to enhance the business environment, leading to increased foreign investment and economic diversification.

However, several challenges remain. Despite significant progress in poverty reduction, one in five Georgians live below national poverty standards, with 4.5% meeting the World Bank’s definition of extreme poverty ($1.9 per day). The pandemic highlighted concerns about marginalized groups who risk being left behind despite the country’s achievements. These include the poor, residents of rural, remote, and high-mountain areas, youth, women, persons with disabilities, minorities, conflict-affected communities, and those living in disaster-prone regions.

Georgia transitioned to a fully parliamentary system of governance in 2019 but challenges persist in consolidating democratic institutions. Although equal rights are enshrined in law and gender attitudes are shifting, women continue to face discrimination and inequality.

They hold only 14% of parliamentary seats and one out of 64 mayoral positions. In 2020 the public service parity for Georgia was 0.61 which indicates that women are largely underrepresented.

Further reforms are needed in the judicial system, law enforcement, and civil service. Georgia is focused on improving the public administration system to better coordinate efficient, transparent, and participatory policy cycle and services.

**SDG 16 in Action**

Georgia seeks to make progress on SDG 16, especially target 16.6 on effective, accountable and transparent institutions through the implementation of Public Administration Reform (PAR) focused on several key pillars. The first seeks to transform the policy planning culture within the public system to foster more effective governance and evidence-based decision-making. A second pillar is the Government’s focus on building a strong, impartial and independent civil service to enhance a whole-of-government policy planning and coordination approach. Third, the Government continues to strengthen the quality of public service delivery through e-services while also mainstreaming transparency and accountability mechanisms throughout national institutions.

The country has made good progress in public service delivery over the past decade, positioning itself as a regional leader and gaining recognition beyond its borders. Its goal is to refine the services the state offers to its citizens, to ensure the services are even more advanced, timely and accessible. Furthermore, it is vital that these services align with the evolving demands and challenges of modern technology, especially in terms of digitalization.
Streamlining the policy planning processes, coupled with a mandatory public participation component and launching the Policy Development and Coordination Management System portal has led to enhanced transparency and accountability of government institutions, as well as impacted the way public policies are designed and delivered across the country. Overall, the support provided to the government entities in policy planning significantly improves the way public institution functions.

### Snapshot of UNDP Support

During the last several years, UNDP has focused its support to Georgia by helping digitalize public service delivery. UNDP aided the development of an e-platform that has helped make it more agile, efficient, and responsive. This process includes three key accomplishments.

The first is a comprehensive Public Administration handbook that showcases achievements and updates on reform initiatives and has enabled the Government to strengthen its own institutions across local and national levels as well share the Georgian experience internationally. The second is a Policy Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation course that has been integrated into an e-learning platform for public servants. More than 30 civil servants have enrolled since its launch, improving their skills without the need to travel to major cities for training. This initiative aims to boost skills development and increase public participation in policy planning.

Thirdly, significant progress has been made on the Policy Development and Coordination Management System (PDCMS). The PDCMS will house all policy planning processes across the government of Georgia, starting from the initiation of the policy paper and ending with the monitoring and evaluation of the policy implementation.

An integral part of the software is the public consultation module, which will be mandatory for all policy documents to undergo. Currently CSOs and interested citizens can participate in policy planning process, but the procedure is inconsistent, and stakeholders must navigate through multiple ministries’ websites to find the relevant policies. Through the introduction of PDCMS, there will be a single portal, where all policy papers will be published for public participation and feedback, which is expected to increase the public’s engagement in policy planning process in Georgia, contributing to the achievement of SDG 16.

- 60% actively engaged in the development of at least one strategic document.
- 90% effectively utilized the provided training materials.

Participants engaged in the development of strategic document

![Circle Diagram showing 60% Engaged](Image)

Participants who used training materials

![Bar Chart showing 90% Used training materials](Image)
Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country globally and the fourth most populous with more than 270 million people from diverse ethnicities, religions, and cultural backgrounds living on about 6,000 (out of more than 18,000) islands or islets. Since 1998, the country transitioned to democracy overcoming years of internal conflicts in such regions as Aceh and East Timor. The 2005 Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding marked a pivotal moment in achieving peace and stability in Aceh. At the core of Indonesia’s national governance agenda is a deliberate alignment with SDG 16. In 2011, Indonesia, as one of eight [2] founding governments, formally launched the Open Government Partnership (OGP), endorsed the Open Government Declaration, and is now in its seventh OGP action plan. It contains 15 commitments which include continued efforts in areas such as open contracting, ownership transparency, access to justice, election data transparency, and local government social accountability. There are also new initiatives focused on election disinformation and inclusive digital accessibility.

However, corruption at various levels of government, business, and public service delivery remain problematic. Indonesia’s rank on the Corruption Perception Index has improved over the years but remains in the middle range. In 2023, Indonesia scored 34 out of 100, indicating perceptions of corruption persisting within the country’s institutions. Efforts such as the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) have been instrumental in investigating and prosecuting corruption cases. And while the country has made progress in public service delivery, especially in education and health, challenges remain in ensuring equitable access to quality services across regions and addressing issues such as bureaucratic inefficiencies. Sustained efforts are also needed to address systemic issues and ensure greater transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in governance and society.

SDG 16 in Action

To implement Indonesia’s OGP commitments, the Government of Indonesia set up LAPOR!, an online Government to Citizen (G2C) system that supports the national public service complaint management system (SP4N). This innovative platform was designed to increase public participation in overseeing programs, evaluating government performance, and enhancing the delivery of public services. The national complaint handling system, SP4N-LAPOR!, has become a cornerstone for citizen complaints management and since its inception in 2016 has expanded in scope and significance. SP4N-LAPOR!, managed by Kementerian Pendayagunaan Aparatur Negara dan Reformasi Birokrasi (KemenPANRB), Kantor Staf Presiden (KSP), and the Ombudsman (ORI) was instrumental in improving the efficacy and accountability of governance systems and ensuring equitable access to justice for all.

Despite notable improvements in the efficiency of the ICT system, challenges with SP4N-LAPOR! remain, such as the government’s capacity and citizens’ level of awareness. The system’s effectiveness relied on the government’s ability to enhance the ICT infrastructure, build capacity for report management, and effectively promote the platform to increase user participation.

[2] Co-founders are the United States, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Philippines and Norway.
These approaches eventually led to the achievement of improvements in the number of national and local governments connected to SP4N-LAPOR! - 460 institutions in 2018 to 544 local government and institutions in 2022. The majority of local governments, 96%, are now connected to SP4N-LAPOR! with a 150% surge in user numbers and a high citizen satisfaction rate of 73.7%, with 8 out of 10 respondents scoring SP4N-LAPOR! highly for making a positive impact on improving public services.

SP4N-LAPOR! has become the forerunner of national integrated complaints management systems in the region. Further it proved a vital G2C platform during the peak of Covid-19 pandemic.

“Hopefully, SP4N-LAPOR! will be more familiar and more accessible for PwD with various disabilities by adding numerous helpful features, namely notifications and voice assistance, to allow more PwDs in accessing the platform and conveying their aspirations for the improvement of public services.”

-Salim, PwD

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Snapshot of UNDP Support

Indonesia’s Ministry of Administrative & Bureaucratic Reform, with support from UNDP and KOICA (KemenPANRB), has spearheaded a transformative initiative in e-governance. Launched in 2019. Its purpose is to strengthen SP4N-LAPOR! as a G2C platform to increase public accountability and participation and help improve the efficiency of government programs and policies and the quality of public services. Through the formulation of a comprehensive roadmap, coupled with targeted training and a national complaint handling system, this initiative has actively enhanced the institutional capacity of ministries and agencies responsible for the SP4N-LAPOR!.

Concerted efforts have also strived to reach socially excluded groups. In 2020, UNDP helped the Government develop a disaggregated data system to ensure all needs were being met, supported by a policy formulated to elevate the accessibility of the grievance redress mechanism.

In providing this type of support UNDP Indonesia focused on promoting the G2C system to marginalized groups in society, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities, encouraging them to use SP4N-LAPOR! as a platform to voice their concerns for increased access to public services.
Empowering Citizens through Digital Identities in Malawi

Malawi’s National Registration Act (No. 13 of 2010) entered into force in August 2015, requiring all Malawians 16 years of age and older to be registered in a National Registry and to be issued with an identity card. However, the absence of an authoritative, comprehensive and accurate system of national identification undermined most citizens’ right to an identity. The consequences were multi-sectoral, where citizens’ access and entitlement to services was uncertain. Only a small percentage of the Malawian population had access to any form of legal identity, mainly because registering vital events and obtaining credentials were perceived by many as a costly and cumbersome process. In May 2017, the Government of Malawi launched a nationwide registration initiative to empower citizens to exercise their right to a legal identity. UNDP supported this effort in partnership with UK Aid (currently FCDO), the European Union, Irish Aid, USAID, and the Government of Norway. By 2018, all Malawians 16 years of age and older were registered and issued with a legal identity in the form of a SMART National ID, leading to the establishment of a National Registration and Identification System (NRIS).

Once all had been registered, the Government stepped up its efforts to establish comprehensive Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS), to register all vital events, -- births, deaths, and marriages. The establishment of these two systems (NRIS and CRVS, collectively known as a population register) provides individuals with the ability to claim their citizen’s rights and services. At the same time, it strengthens the Government’s capacity to fulfil its obligations to provide inclusive social services, accountable administrative systems, and to foster evidence-based policy formulation and decision-making.

SDG 16 in Action

Malawi has made significant strides towards achievement of SDG target 16.9 in ensuring a legal identity for all. Malawi’s foundational legal identity system sets the stage for a more efficient and responsible digital future. The speed, cost effectiveness, and success with which Malawi developed its state-of-the-art national ID system can be a model for policymakers and development practitioners in other countries. Through the joint efforts of the National Registration Bureau (NRB), UNDP, and various development partners, Malawi successfully implemented a national biometric registry within a remarkably short 2-year. With support from UNDP, the NRB achieved a registration rate that surpassed expectations, with more than 11.5 million citizens (99% of 16+ year olds) registered. This initiative not only streamlined voter registration; it also facilitated access to government and financial services and reduced fraud in social benefit programs. Furthermore, the establishment of a comprehensive identification system has laid the groundwork for improved governance and service delivery in the country.

Following its success in registering adults 16 years and older, the Government aims to register children under the age of 16, in accordance with the CRVS’s requirement to register a birth and issue a birth certificate. Other components of the national registration system include the registration and issuance of certificates for deaths, marriages and divorces.

Malawi’s experience in establishing a comprehensive national identification system serves as a model for other African Nations.
By embracing innovation and addressing challenges, Malawi’s registration systems demonstrate the transformative potential of inclusive identity initiatives, committed to enhancing governance and empowering citizens through secure and accessible digital identities.

**Snapshot of UNDP Support**

UNDP Malawi played a pivotal role in supporting Malawi’s national identification work, providing technical expertise, financial resources and strategic guidance which enhanced governance and citizen empowerment. The basket fund of US$60 million established by UNDP in partnership with the Government provided the impetus to complete the registration of adults 16+ years, which currently stand at 11.5 million registrants, representing 99% of the target population.

Following the initial success of the national ID process, the Malawian Government sought UNDP’s assistance to extend the initiative to birth registration with a Unique Identification Number (UIN) issued to children. This effort aligns with SDG 16.9, the provision of a legal identity for all, including birth registration.

This initiative strengthens service delivery and evidence-based policymaking, particularly in the areas of health, nutrition, child protection, social protection, and education sectors.

The NRB, with support from UNDP, conducted a pilot exercise in the districts of Lilongwe East, Karonga and Mwanza and registered 618,000 children (100% of the estimated number of children in these three districts) issuing birth certificates with a UID to each child. Youth with UID will be able to apply, seamlessly, for the national ID when they turn 16. UNDP is collaborating with the NRB to register all children under the age of 16 and provide them with birth certificates. Currently, approximately eight million children in Malawi remain unregistered.

In 2024 UNDP Malawi launched a new project on Inclusive Digital Transformation for Malawi (IDT4M), a successor to the National Registration and Identification Project. Building on the foundation of physical UIDs, Malawi is now transitioning to a comprehensive digital identity ecosystem. The proposed system aims to enhance security, privacy, and interoperability while enabling trusted interactions between citizens, government authorities, and the private sector. Self-sovereign identity technologies are being explored to empower citizens with secure ownership of their identity.

“The National ID changed the landscape of service provision in Malawi. Now, there’s one identity for one person and no one is invisible.”

-Mphetso Augustine Sambo, Principal Secretary, National Registration Bureau
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