# Governance for Sustainable Development

**ISSUE BRIEF** 



**United Nations Development Programme** 

## **Bangkok Regional Hub**

## **Governance for Sustainable Development**

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by UN member states at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015 set a comprehensive agenda for political, economic, environmental and social transformation for all countries (both developed and developing). This global transformation agenda is seen as vital in an increasingly interlinked world to address the impact of climate change, protect the planet, promote inclusive and sustainable growth, and foster peaceful and inclusive societies.

The sustainable development agenda explicitly recognizes the importance of inclusive and responsive governance systems for achieving the three strands of sustainable development: **social, economic and environment.** In this instance governance becomes an "enabler" for achieving all sustainable development goals, as well as being a "goal" in and of itself. *Effective governance systems are also highlighted as critical to mobilizing and leveraging the necessary finances to deliver on the SDGs. As articulated in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda*.



Proposed **SDG 16** calls for the "promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provision of access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." The ten targets proposed under SDG 16 provide a common framework for governance that focuses on promoting rule of law, enhancing access to justice, reducing violence promoting anti-corruption, transparency and the accountability of

### Sustainable Development Goal 16

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Targets: 10 Indicators: 25

Means of implementation: 2 Timeframe: 2015—2030

## **Targets:**

- **16.1** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
- **16.2** End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- **16.3** Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
- **16.4** By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
- **16.5** Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
- **16.6** Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
- **16.7** Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
- **16.8** Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
- **16.9** By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration
- **16.10** Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

## **Means of Implementation:**

- **16.a.** Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime
- **16.b.** Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

institutions, addressing exclusion, and enhancing public participation and engagement. In short, the framework envisaged under Goal 16 is fundamental for protecting human rights and addressing multiple and complex development challenges, including those caused by climate change. In addition as UNDP's Effective Governance Cluster Strategy Note articulates, UNDP is uniquely placed

to ensure good links between Goal 16 and other SDGs with a particular focus Goals 1 on poverty, Goal 3 on health, Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 10 on equality, Goal 11 on urbanization, Goal 13 on Climate Change and Goal 17 on implementation.

This issue paper highlights the governance challenges in the Asia-Pacific and possible avenues of support where UNDP can strengthen governance for sustainable development, including supporting the implementation of SDG Goal 16: Governance for Peaceful and Inclusive Societies and associated targets in other SDGs.

## The development context in Asia-Pacific

Most countries in Asia-Pacific have witnessed significant economic growth and social transformation. The region has witnessed significant increases in financing for development with the majority of the countries of the region financing development from their own domestic revenues and international and domestic private flows. Official Development Assistance represents a shrinking relative resource for the region, except for some LDCs and SIDS. ii

Almost all countries in the region have halved their poverty rates and the region, as a whole, has made significant progress in increasing access to safe drinking water, access to primary education, and meeting health targets. Despite these gains, economic growth has not benefitted everyone equitably. Asia's (as a single unit) Gini coefficient increased from 39 in the mid-1990s to 46 in the late 2000s. Income inequality between countries in the region has risen faster than within countries. iii

The region is also home to about two-thirds of the world's poorest people. As of 2012, 569 million people were still living on less than \$1.25 per day, 21 million children were not enrolled in primary school, and more than one-fifth of under-five children (75 million) were underweight. In addition, 1.2 billion people in rural areas and 480 million in urban areas still lacked access to safe sanitation. iv Over 600 million people lack access to electricity and nearly 2 billion people rely on inefficient energy sources in the region.<sup>v</sup>

Gender based discrimination and inequality remains high in Asia-Pacific and close to 100 million women in Asia are "missing" because of discriminatory treatment in access to health and nutrition, neglect or pre-birth sex selection.vi Women's political participation in the region is less than the global average and ranges from a low of 3.6% in the Pacific region to a high of 19.7% in South Asia.vii

The region has also witnessed other development challenges such as climate change and rapid demographic shifts. While Afghanistan and Timor Leste have large populations of young people (over 50%), the rest of the region is experiencing diverging trends. South Asia's "youth bulge" is plateauing and is expected to fall from 2035 onwards. East Asia's youth population has started to shrink from a high of

20% in 2005 and, overall, the number of young people aged 15-24 years in Asia is projected to decline from 718 million in 2015 to 711 million in 2030. viii This fundamentally means the region is rapidly ageing and by 2030 an estimated 565 million people above the age of 65 will live in the region.

Climate change, rising sea levels and natural disasters are also expected to have a devastating impact—particularly for low-lying countries such as Bangladesh and Pacific Island Countries. They can trigger migration and conflict and also reverse development gains (e.g. as seen in Nepal and Vanuatu).

#### Quality governance—a factor for development

Efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have highlighted the importance of governance for developing and implementing policies and delivering quality services. ix Good governance (with a specific emphasis on human rights principles) is critical for dismantling discrimination and reducing inequalities.

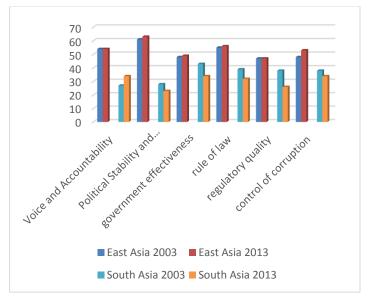
Poor governance is a factor that contributes to rising inequality and unequal development in the region.x Evidence shows that the performance of the Asia-Pacific countries on governance indicators has either stagnated or deteriorated. The overall performance of Asia-Pacific countries on Worldwide Governance Indicators (which measure the performance of countries on six governance dimensions: voice and accountability; political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, rule of law, regulatory quality, and control of corruption) has deteriorated since 1996.xi Figure 1 below compares the performance of Asia-Pacific countries (according to East and South Asian sub-regions) on governance indicators in 2003 and 2013.

While there is a sub-regional difference, the aggregate performance of Asia-Pacific countries on governance indicators has either stagnated or deteriorated over the last decade.

The implication of weak governance on sustainable development is enormous. Evidence shows that good governance is essential for countries to move towards more inclusive and sustainable and sustained growth patterns. Better governance systems allows for the development of people-centric policies, effective and transparent use of the national budget, more capable and responsive institutions, social inclusion, efficient implementation of social and economic policies and regulations, efficient division of labour, and higher productivity of investment, all of which are important for sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The correlation between voice and

accountability, rule of law, political stability and absence of violence, and development is stronger in middle and higher income countries. xii

Figure 1: Performance of Asia-Pacific countries on governance indicators



In recent years, several countries in the region have taken measures to constrain freedom of association or assembly, and clamp down on NGO activities (specifically human rights organizations). XiII But at the same time, transformation in the information and communication technology sector and growth in social media have created new platforms and avenues for public engagement and participation (e.g. Webo in China).

Whilst there are increasing finances available in the region, particularly from increasing domestic resource mobilisation, the effectiveness and transparency of the budget process and government's capacity to allocate resources towards sustainable development and to deliver services remains weak, including at the local level. There is a dearth of data related to local revenues and expenditure. Where data is available, it points to low levels of public revenue and rates of expenditure. Weakness in allocating and using resources affects ability of governments at all levels to respond to crucial issues that require immediate action, such as climate change.

Corruption is a major driver of inequality in the region. xiv An estimated 40% of investments in electricity, water and sanitation are lost due to corruption. Illicit financial flows (IFF) from the region accounts for about 40% of the total illicit outflows (US\$946.7 billion in 2011) from developing countries. xv IFF severely limits the overall finances available for development, and illicit financial outflows significantly offset international commercial resource inflows (such as foreign direct investment) into the region. For example: in East and North East Asia region, the IFF (\$152 billion) is 44% of the commercial resource inflows. xvi

Marginalization, and economic and political exclusion continues to fuel intra-state conflicts and tensions. For example, the nearly five-decade long Maoist and Naxalite movement/conflict in India is due to land rights issues and unequal economic development. Similar reasons were at the root of Nepal's Maoist insurgency, which ended in 2006. Conflicts and constitutional crisis in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Solomon Islands, and Thailand were related to access to political space. Struggle for political and economic autonomy is the underlying reason for continued conflicts in Myanmar, and Mindanao in the Philippines.

## The Asia-Pacific region and the SDGs

Asia-Pacific countries have actively engaged in discussion and working group meetings that have led to both the adoption of the Financing for Development *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* for implementation the SDGs, as well as the adoption of the SDGs themselves. For example, Indonesia co-chaired the high-level panel on SDGs and hosted regional consultations for Financing for Development (FFD)<sup>xix</sup>, while Malaysia hosted the regional workshop on SDGs and Philippines a <u>regional workshop on FFD</u>.

Goal 16 is one of the goals countries in the region consider both an "end" goal and an "enabler" that is vital for the achievement of other SDGs. \*\* That said, some countries (India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, one of the seven triumvirates representing the Asia-Pacific group in the Open Working Group for SDGs) also view that SDGs should emphasize the development agenda and the governance and rule of law agendas should be locally driven (e.g. bottom-up approach). This was confirmed by the G77 where leaders called for country-level selection of development indicators.

China's position paper on the SDGs (2013) also highlights the importance of addressing poverty and promoting sustainable development although it considers political factors, such as governance and human rights, to be domestic issues and not international goals.

Despite the above reservations on Goal 16, countries have continued to fully engage in SDGs discussions and adopt the SDGs.

Following the formal adoption of SDGs, countries are expected to go through a process of prioritization where they will align national and local development policies to achieve the SDGs. Countries will also identify indicators to measure progress against the 169 SDG targets.

In spite of all this, it is important to note that commitments at the international level have often not translated into national and local level action. Even when national development programmes are consistent with international commitments, these programmes either "do not, or inadequately, obtain their desired or targeted results when implemented on ground".xxi Governance challenges,

including weak policy prioritization that does not take into account local context or lack of institutional capacity are major bottlenecks for not achieving desired results.

Such disassociations may also prove to be a challenge in translating the SDGs into concrete plans and programmes.

## **UNDP** and the SDGs

The UN Development Group (UNDG)—through its Sustainable Development Working Group chaired by UNDP, UNICEF and WFP—has adopted a joint strategy for effective and coherent implementation support, called **Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support** (MAPS). This strategy focuses on policy coherence and multi-stakeholder engagement, paying special attention to partnerships, data and accountability.

**Mainstreaming** refers to ensuring that the new post-2015 agenda is translated at the national and local levels and integrated into national, sub-national, and local plans for development, as well as into budget allocations. United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks will be crafted to support implementation of these national plans.

**Acceleration** refers to targeting national (and UN) resources at the priority areas identified in the mainstreaming process, paying special attention to synergies and trade-offs across sectors (reflecting the integrated nature of the agenda), bottlenecks, financing, partnerships, and methods of measurement.

Through **Policy Support**, the UN development system will make sure that skills and expertise within the system are made available in a timely manner and at the lowest possible cost to countries that require assistance.

UNDP recognizes that "mainstreaming" and "acceleration" can essentially be a political process that will bring together different stakeholders to develop common national and local development agendas. Such a process could result in prioritization of all or some of the SDGs and, in turn, influence how implementation is sequenced.

Thus, within the MAPS strategy, governance will be a "supportive yet distinct element" that would allow UNDP to respond to the complexities of translating SDG goals for national and local implementation.

For UNDP, governance is one of its core areas of work and UNDP's strategic plan (2014-2017) underscores the strong correlation between democratic governance and progress towards sustainable development.

Increasingly, UNDP is taking a *systems* approach to its governance and peace-building programmes. This approach allows UNDP to consider the broader linkages between governance programmes and other priority areas. Such an approach also allows UNDP to take a leadership role in supporting the achievement of Goal 16 on peaceful

and inclusive societies and ensuring linkages between Goal 16 and other goals on the sustainable development agenda.

In implementing this systems approach, the UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub (BRH) has redefined its governance priorities so they will focus on, "strengthening political-democratic processes and governance systems that take into account voices and rights of all people for equitable and sustainable development."

To achieve the above, BRH will work across four thematic areas:

- Support political transitions for resilient, inclusive states and lasting peace;
- Strengthen the rights and voices of vulnerable, marginalized and at-risk groups;
- Maximize availability and good governance of development finance at global and national levels; and,
- Strengthen transparent and accountable national and local governance systems to provide effective and equitable services.

## **UNDP BRH support to strengthening governance** for achieving sustainable development

The above four thematic areas are in line with SDG 16. To clarify how UNDP will strengthen governance for achieving SDGs (specifically SDG 16), with the four thematic areas, BRH organized the Asia-Pacific Regional Dialogue on Governance and Peacebuilding in Bangkok, Thailand in September 2015. The dialogue brought together 80 staff from 22 UNDP country offices in the Asia-Pacific region, along with UNDP's regional and global Governance and Peacebuilding teams.

A framework, as clarified in <u>outcome document of the</u> <u>regional dialogue</u>, was adopted at the dialogue for strengthening governance for sustainable development. The framework includes three dimensions. These are:

- a) Governance for the SDGs refers to the political process of building national and local ownership of SDGs, prioritization of SDGs, and integrating SDGs with national planning and budgeting processes, and strengthening parliamentary oversight.
- b) *Governance in the SDGs* refers to relevance of governance throughout all the SDGs. Here, UNDP can strengthen the achievement of the SDGs, specifically those in line with the organisation's mandate (such as poverty reduction, and inequality), through integrated approaches that address the legal, policy, and institutional challenges.
- c) *Governance as a SDG* refers to SDG 16 on inclusive and peaceful societies, and the support UNDP will provide to achieve the SDG 16 targets.

Specific activities within the framework will include:

Holding national and local dialogues on SDG. A key lesson from MDG implementation was that "buy-in" and "ownership" of all stakeholders at national and local levels is vital for successful implementation of plans and programmes. To achieve this in relation to the SDGs, UNDP will support countries in launching national and local dialogue processes on the SDGs to inform prioritization and development of national and local development plans.

Supporting governance assessments. Legal institutional frameworks should be aligned to support the achievement of development policy aspirations, which in this case are the aspirations of the post-2015 development agenda. To this end, UNDP will support country-led governance assessments to ensure that gaps in legal, policy and institutional frameworks and capacities at all levels of government are identified and addressed. The governance assessment process will be a participatory process that can help strengthen the responsiveness and accountability of institutions.

Localizing SDGs. The localization of SDGs (as in translating global goals into national and sub-national ambitions, policies and programmes) is considered a priority. UNDP, building on the lessons from MDG localization, will focus on supporting national and subnational governments to define priorities and integrate SDGs into local planning and policy processes and service delivery systems. UNDP will also support identifying targets and priorities, developing indicators, and assessing progress. In addition, UNDP will support sub-national and local governments to prioritize goal 16 in order to strengthen local governance systems. It will also foster enabling environments for relevant non-state actors (including the private sector) to contribute to local development initiatives.

In localizing the SDGs, a human rights based approach will continue to define the programming approach and allow UNDP to support governments in addressing inequalities and improving the quality of services.

In addition, innovations will be supported—specifically einnovations—to provide better quality services to people and improve their access to decision making processes.

Strengthening participation, transparency, accountability and anti-corruption initiatives. Strengthening the transparency and accountability of governance systems will underpin all of UNDP's governance work. UNDP will support programming that increases access to information, enhances public participation (including marginalized people) in public monitoring initiatives and decision making processes, and increases the transparency and accountability of public institutions. In addition, UNDP will also support strengthening oversight institutions and anti-corruption agencies working at national and sub-national levels.

## **Piloting SDG 16: Indonesia's experience**

UNDP supported the piloting of SDG 16 in five countries including Indonesia from July 2014 to September 2015. The primary objective of the pilot project is to enhance the readiness of the country in integrating proposed SDG 16 and associated targets into national planning processes.

Under the leadership of Bappenas (the national planning agency) at the national level and Bappeda (the regional planning agency) at the sub-national level, the pilot project helped identify different sources of information to report on SDG 16 targets. For example, information on violent death rates was collected from the case management systems of national police, the attorney general and courts at the national and sub-national levels. Existing national indices such as the Indonesia Democracy Index, the Anti-corruption behavior Index, and data from the Corruption Eradication Commission provided relevant data on effective and accountable institutions and levels of corruption. All data however, was not in "ready to use" format. Consolidated data mechanisms often do not exist and data is spread over several institutions. At the sub-national level, the limited scope and capacity of local governments has led to the use of different data management systems, which makes data incomparable and challenging to use.

The pilot project helped identify gaps in existing data management systems and in the production and utilization of data in planning and budgetary processes. Based on this, one of the immediate steps for Indonesia is to collaborate with the 'Praia group on Governance Statistics' to develop relevant country-level indicators and establish integrated data systems for all SDGs. Indonesia will also share its experience on establishing working groups and stakeholder engagement to develop indicators and identify sources of data with other countries.

As part of strengthening the oversight and accountability framework for the SDGs, UNDP will also focus on strengthening parliaments (including sub-national legislatures) and civil society's role in monitoring the SDGs, as well as using data to hold governments to accounts. Where possible, partnerships will be established and capacity development support provided to produce shadow reports on SDG achievement.

Supporting inclusive processes for political transformation. Through its regional initiative on peaceful and inclusive societies, UNDP BRH will support countries in the region to increase political participation and representation of all segments of the population. This approach could reduce the high incidences of political violence (a key target of SDG 16) and lead to political transformation. Most importantly, the political participation of women and young people will be supported through UNDP's efforts. Measuring the SDGs. A robust monitoring, review and reporting framework (at the local, national, regional and global levels) is proposed for the SDGs. Each level of monitoring requires different types of indicators, and data that is collected needs to be defined, collated, analyzed and utilized for future policy setting.

The box on piloting SDG 16 in Indonesia highlights some of the challenges related to the implementation of SDGs, specifically with regards to establishing and measuring country-level targets and indicators.

UNDP will prioritize supporting governments and other stakeholders in establishing adequate systems for assessing SDG achievements, and ways of utilizing data for shaping policies and programmes at all levels of government.

## Strengthening the effectiveness of financing for sustainable development and Climate Change

Achieving the SDGs in Asia-Pacific will cost \$1 trillion a year. xxiv Resources will have to be mobilized from different sources, including national and sub-national governments, as well as the domestic and international private and public sector. Financial governance therefore, has to be strengthened to ensure that resources are raised, allocated and effectively utilized to achieve the SDGs. UNDP's development finance work can support countries in mapping available resources for development programmes, and improving systems for increasing internal revenue flows and

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resource allocation for the SDGs. Similarly in the area of climate change, UNDP's Governance of Climate Change Team can assist to strengthen governance systems to respond to climate change, and reform the budget process to be more effective and accountable for integrating a climate change response at national and local levels.

Convening regional dialogues on Governance for Sustainable Development. UNDP will support the establishment of platforms for exchange of information amongst countries in the region on Governance for Sustainable Development—including the achievement of targets under Goal 16. The regional dialogue scheduled for September 29th to October 1st will provide an opportunity to establish a platform for exchange of information amongst UNDP country offices. Where possible, UNDP will work with regional bodies to establish a regional framework on governance, and for achieving SDG 16.

Facilitating South-South exchange and strengthen multi**stakeholder partnerships**. UNDP BRH will facilitate the exchange between regions on implementing SDGs, including Goal 16. The agency will establish partnerships with a range of actors—governments, civil society, private sector and donors—to help achieve the SDGs.

indicators of good governance are voice and accountability, political stability, absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption.

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm i}$  The centrality of governance is recognized in the 2010 MDG Outcome Document and the 2012 Rio+20 Outcome Document. The two documents reaffirm the importance of good governance and protection of human rights for achieving the three strands of sustainable development (economic growth, environmental sustainability and social development) and addressing the emerging challenges of climate change. In addition, honest and responsive government was identified as a top priority in the "World We Want" survey http://data.myworld2015.org/.

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