BEST PRACTICES TO ACHIEVING PEACE JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS (SDG 16)

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ABSTRACT

Low socio-economic development can support the conditions for social violence and conflict, but it is also a consequence of violence and conflict. Through Goal 16, the SDGs recognize the long reaching consequences of conflict and violence for development outcomes. Not only is violence a severe hindrance for development, it can reverse many years of development gains. A whole of society approach is required to proactively address on and offline misinformation networks, ensuring that government, civil society, private sector and vulnerable populations work together to inform policies and programming that balances freedom of expression with the need to curb mis/disinformation. Recognizing the centrality of Goal 16 as an enabler and accelerator for the 2030 Agenda, further efforts are required to strengthen national capacities for data collection, analysis and data prioritization. As with many other Sustainable Development Goals it is also urgent to address the lack of data disaggregated by sex, race, colour, age, language, religion, national, ethnic or social origin, disability, migration or other status.

KEYWORD: *crime, peace, SDG16, conflict, sustainable development, COVID-19*

INTRODUCTION

Both developed and developing countries face challenges in addressing corruption, crime and human rights violations for everyone which is threatening the foundation of peaceful societies (United Nations, 2020). Since conflict greatly affects economic development by reducing foreign direct investment and the broader macro-economic environment, whereby increasing poverty, reducing life expectancy and education outcomes(Daron & Robinson 2013), as well as indicators which are essential for longer term development like infant mortality and access to services, that is to say it has great impacts on the economy in the immediate term, potentially destroying entire industries, the impact of conflict is also long term, reducing future development opportunities (Ebrahimian, 2003).

Outbreak of COVID-19 and accompanying lockdowns, data and reports from frontline workers indicate that crime intensified, with access to life-saving services and support, as well as justice, reduced. Furthermore, the United Nations Secretary-General warned of the increased risk of violence against children due to lockdowns, and UNICEF has reported on the severe disruption to child protection and response services due to COVID-19. The COVID-19 crisis has also exposed underlying issues of exclusion, racism and xenophobia in many countries but national human rights institutions have played a proactive role in monitoring and advocacy particularly on rights of minorities. As COVID-19 exacerbates underlying bottlenecks to access to justice, these figures are projected to shift as personal access to dispute resolution platforms continues to be limited as a result of the global crisis.

The SDGs build upon the foundation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and call for action by all countries at all stages of development to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They bring an increased focus on the root causes of poverty and development while recognizing that an integrated approach is crucial for progress across the multiple goals. The SDGs reflect that conflict and instability are significant impediments for development.

Goal 16 is dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels. The Goal is the outcome of the international community's acknowledgement that peace is fundamental to development. By annually measuring the levels of peace in 163 countries and territories worldwide through the Global Peace Index, IEP has shown that peace is not an abstract concept but something that can be tracked and actioned. The recognition by the international community that peace can and should be measured for development outcomes is indeed a very positive transition (Stefan & Paul, 2002)

Corruption in all its forms hinders sustainable development, fosters inequality and undermines the rule of law in the region Danesh (2004). Tracking progress towards SDG16 is impeded by limitations in available quality data across different targets and indicators in SDG16. SDG16 includes 12 targets and 24 indicators, with many targets from other SDGs

linked to the aspiration of peace, justice, and strong institutions of the 24 indicators, six are Tier II, 17 are Tier I and one is under both Tier I and Tier II. In addition, there are some indicators that only recently have a globally endorsed methodology, including SDG 16.7.1b and c, on representation in public service and the judiciary, SDG 16.7.2 on influence in public decision making and SDG 16.6.2 on satisfaction with governance services.

WHY TAKE ACTION?

People everywhere need to be free of fear from all forms of violence and feel safe as they go about their lives whatever their ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation Edward, (2012).

Conflict, insecurity, weak institutions and limited access to justice remain threats to sustainable development Daron, James & Robinson (2013). In 2019, the number of people fleeing war, persecution and conflict exceeded 79.5 million, the highest level ever recorded. One in four children continues to be deprived of legal identity through lack of birth registration, often limiting their ability to exercise rights in other areas. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to amplify and exploit fragilities across the globe.

WHAT WOULD BE THE COST OF NOT TAKING ACTION NOW?

Armed violence and insecurity have a destructive impact on a country's development, affecting economic growth and often resulting in long-standing grievances among communities (Civicus, 2020).

Violence affects children's health, development and well-being, and their ability to thrive. It causes trauma and weakens social inclusion.

Lack of access to justice means that conflicts remain unresolved and people cannot obtain protection and redress. Institutions that do not function according to legitimate laws are prone to arbitrariness and abuse of power, and less capable of delivering public services to everyone (Ebrahimian, 2003).

To exclude and to discriminate not only violates human rights, but also causes resentment and animosity, and could give rise to violence (Borer, Darby & McEvoy-Levy, 2007).

WHAT CHANGES NEED TO HAPPEN TO ACHIEVE PEACE JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS? (PROMISING INNOVATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES)

Conflict, insecurity, weak institutions and limited access to justice remain threats to sustainable development (Danesh, 2004). SDG16 marks the intersection between sustaining peace and the 2030 Agenda. At the core of the 2030 Agenda lies a clear understanding that human rights, peace and security, and development are deeply interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Promising innovations and best practices in achieving sdg16 effectively includes:

Building awareness of the critical situation requires enhanced monitoring at country level, including collecting disaggregated data. Related legislation must meet international human rights standards, and effective implementation of legislation on access to information is required.

Equal access to justice for all during and after the COVID 19 pandemic. Barriers to equal access to justice increased with the onset of the pandemic and led to the suspension of court hearings and further restricted access to legal assistance and legal aid services.

Innovations on e-justice or digital justice can increase access to justice in the region. However, particular attention must be paid to accessibility of digital technologies for all, including persons with disabilities, and to the technical, economic, and social constraints which exist. More broadly, international standards relating to human rights and rule of law, including space for traditional justice mechanisms, must be upheld by Member States.

Strengthen environmental rule of law and protect environmental defenders to build back better from COVID-19. Environmental rule of law must be strengthened through effective legal frameworks, strong institutions, access to information and justice in environmental matters, recognizing and addressing the digital divide, and a by providing safe enabling environment for environmental human rights defenders, including indigenous peoples, children, youth and local communities, in order to sustainably recover from COVID-19, in order to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and meet globally agreed environmental commitments.

Address discrimination and stigma. Public communication and public support campaigns that promote non-violence and rejects xenophobia, racism and all forms of intolerance, play a key role in countering the alarming spike in intolerance and hate speech that has fueled longstanding challenges with discrimination and stigma including on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (Lant, Michael & Matt, 2010).

Improve the collection and quality of data, particularly disaggregated data. Recognizing the centrality of Goal 16 as an enabler and accelerator for the 2030 Agenda, further efforts are required to strengthen national capacities for data collection, analysis and data prioritization. As with many other Sustainable Development Goals it is also urgent to address the lack of data disaggregated by sex, race, colour, age, language, religion, national, ethnic or social origin, disability, migration or other status (Government of Kenya 2000).

Strengthen efforts towards providing a legal identity for all through universal civil registration and vital statistics. Accurate, complete and timely vital statistics from civil registration records are critical for the region in order to recover from the current crisis and monitor progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNESCO2002).

SUMMARY

Strengthen responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels.

Further efforts to promote the full, equal and meaningful participation of all, especially women, children and youth,

persons with disabilities, marginalized communities, and those left behind, in decision-making at all levels and in all fields of sustainable development. This includes commitments to achieving diversity, gender parity and equitable representation in decision-making bodies in support of Goal 16, as well as Goal 5, Goal 10, core international human rights instruments and the Women, Peace & Security and Youth, Peace & Security agendas, through promotion of social innovation and digital platforms, and comprehensive understanding of cultural contexts.

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