

Mainstreaming SDG16+ into development plans, policies and strategies

One of the first steps for SDG16+ implementation is to integrate the targets into national and sub-national development plans, policies, strategies and budgets

Overview

Mainstreaming SDG16+ into national and sub-national development plans is one of the first steps to translating the global aspirations of SDG16+ into concrete action. “Mainstreaming” means incorporating or integrating the SDG16+ targets into national, sub-national and local plans, policies and strategies for development, and subsequently into budget allocations.⁶³

While many countries have already mainstreamed the SDGs – including SDG 16 – into their planning documents and sustainable development policies,⁶⁴ others may be just starting out. In some cases, countries may not have prioritized the implementation of SDG16+ targets during the first five years of SDG implementation due to competing pressing priorities. In other cases, countries may not have adequately incorporated the SDG16+ agenda into all relevant development plans and processes, given the depth and breadth of the SDG16+ targets.

Regardless of the situation, it is important that all countries review how existing national, sub-national and local development plans and sectoral strategies – in content and ambition – align with the SDG16+ agenda for peaceful, just and inclusive societies.⁶⁵ Taking stock of how the SDG16+ targets are reflected in development strategies and planning processes is essential in order to identify areas that may need to be adapted for successful implementation. This process can also help to enhance policy coherence and integration among sectoral and other national, sub-national and local strategies that address peace, justice and/or inclusion.⁶⁶



SDG 16

⁶³ United Nations Development Group (UNDG) (2017). *Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Reference Guide for UN Country Teams*, p. 14. Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/mainstreaming-2030-agenda-sustainable-development-reference-guide-un-country-teams>

⁶⁴ United Nations (2019). *Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019: Special Edition*, p. 32. Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24978Report_of_the_SG_on_SDG_Progress_2019.pdf

⁶⁵ United Nations Development Group (UNDG) (2017). *Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Reference Guide for UN Country Teams*, p. 43. Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/mainstreaming-2030-agenda-sustainable-development-reference-guide-un-country-teams>

⁶⁶ United Nations Development Group (UNDG) (2017). *Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Reference Guide for UN Country Teams*, p. 43-44. Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/mainstreaming-2030-agenda-sustainable-development-reference-guide-un-country-teams>; and United Nations (2019). *Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019: Special Edition*, p. 32. Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24978Report_of_the_SG_on_SDG_Progress_2019.pdf

Putting it into practice

While governments are responsible for mainstreaming SDG16+ into existing development plans and processes, civil society and other stakeholders can and should assist government actors in undertaking this process. Since 2016, the UN has been playing a central role in helping countries to integrate the SDGs into their national development processes through its “MAPS” (Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support) approach.

The following stages of the mainstreaming process – from the UN’s “*Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Reference Guide for UN Country Teams*”⁶⁷ – are summarized below, along with recommended actions for civil society actors:

1. **Reviewing existing strategies and plans and identifying gaps** to scan the landscape at the national, sub-national and local levels and compare against the global SDGs and targets, to identify gaps and recommend areas for adjustment.
 - **Civil society action** – If you have undertaken a SDG16+ gap analysis, you can share the information you have collected with government actors. Information such as survey data, statistics and lessons learned from the implementation of previous policies related to peace, justice and inclusion can also be very useful during this stage of the process.⁶⁸
2. **Mapping SDG interconnections** to reveal potential co-benefits and trade-offs that should inform strategies and priorities.
 - **Civil society action** – You can provide expert technical advice to government actors on the interlinkages between SDG16+ and the rest of the SDGs. Many civil society actors will have a deeper understanding of the interlinkages between specific SDG16+ targets and other SDGs or targets, compared to government officials.
3. **Making initial recommendations to national leadership** for addressing SDG gaps in existing strategies and plans whilst recognizing that the SDGs “... are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental.”
 - **Civil society action** – You can share your recommendations – including from your gap analysis – with government actors on the changes that are needed to address SDG16+ gaps in strategies and plans. Sharing comparative information from other countries on how they have addressed similar gaps may be particularly useful at this stage.
4. **Setting nationally-relevant targets** for nationally-adapted and inclusive SDGs that are achievable yet ambitious.
 - **Civil society action** – You can provide recommendations on the national targets that are needed to advance peaceful, just and inclusive societies. In particular, you can help to identify short-, medium- and long-term targets for vulnerable and marginalized groups in order to track SDG16+ progress for those furthest behind.⁶⁹
5. **Using foresight, scenarios and systems thinking** to incorporate the recommendations and insights from the above steps into strategies and plans, and matching ambition and commitments with resources and capacities.
 - **Civil society action** – You can share innovative ideas with the government on the strategies and plans that are needed to achieve peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Try to propose practical ways for how existing strategies, policies and plans can be improved upon as a first step, and then redeveloped at the end of their current cycle.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ United Nations Development Group (UNDG) (2017). *Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Reference Guide for UN Country Teams*, pp. 5-6 and 44. Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/mainstreaming-2030-agenda-sustainable-development-reference-guide-un-country-teams>

⁶⁸ Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2016). *Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit: A practical guide for stakeholders for national-level advocacy around Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, p. 23. Available at: <https://tapnetwork2030.org/goal-16-advocacy-toolkit/>

⁶⁹ For more information, see: Save the Children (2015). *Leaving No One Behind: Embedding equity in the post-2015 framework through stepping stone targets*. Available at: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/leaving-no-one-behind-embedding-equity-post-2015-framework-through-stepping-stone-targets#:~:text=Stepping%20stone%20targets%20are%20interim,are%20catching%20up%20with%20more>

⁷⁰ Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2016). *Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit: A practical guide for stakeholders for national-level advocacy around Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, pp. 23-24. Available at: <https://tapnetwork2030.org/goal-16-advocacy-toolkit/>


Mainstreaming guidance for countries in complex situations⁷¹

Countries in complex situations are often inundated with overlapping humanitarian, peacebuilding and development needs.

Mainstreaming the SDGs in such contexts should consider and balance the tensions among:

- a) Striving to attain a deeper understanding of the root causes of violent conflict and fragility;
- b) Enabling a prioritization of development goals that is guided by the imperatives of countries in complex situations; and
- c) Recognizing the political dynamics of complex contexts, especially situations of protracted or continually evolving conflict.

Key TAP Network resource:

<p>Mainstreaming SDG 16: Using the Voluntary National Review to Advance More Peaceful, Just and Inclusive societies (Global Alliance and TAP Network, 2020)</p>	<p>This resource provides policy guidance, case studies and good practices on advancing SDG 16 implementation at national and subnational levels by more effectively leveraging the Voluntary National Review (VNR) and post-VNR processes.</p> <p>Available at: https://www.sdg16hub.org/topic/mainstreaming-sdg-16-using-voluntary-national-review-advance-more-peaceful-just-and-inclusive</p>	
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Key resources:

<p>Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA): To facilitate mainstreaming of SDGs into national and local plans (UNDP, 2017)</p>	<p>This tool supports countries in mainstreaming the SDGs into national and subnational planning, by helping assess their readiness for SDG implementation. The tool suggests clear steps and templates for policy makers to conduct a rapid integrated assessment (RIA) of the SDGs to determine their relevance to the country context, both at the national and subnational level, and interlinkages across targets.</p> <p>Available at: https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/sustainable-development-goals/rapid-integrated-assessment---mainstreaming-sdgs-into-national-a.html</p>
<p>Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Reference Guide for UN Country Teams (UNDG, 2017)</p>	<p>This guide assists UN country teams in helping Member States adapt the global SDGs to national contexts. It presents a comprehensive set of eight practice areas for mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda along with a special section for countries in complex situations. Specific implementation steps, practical tools, and case examples from developed and developing countries are also provided. Available in English, Spanish and French.</p> <p>Available at: https://unsdg.un.org/resources/mainstreaming-2030-agenda-sustainable-development-reference-guide-un-country-teams</p>

⁷¹ United Nations Development Group (UNDG) (2017). *Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Reference Guide for UN Country Teams*, p. 7. Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/mainstreaming-2030-agenda-sustainable-development-reference-guide-un-country-teams>