

Producing and supporting citizen-generated data

Citizen-generated data can offer a more complete and accurate picture of progress (or lack thereof) towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies

Overview

Citizen-generated data are “data that people or their organisations produce to directly monitor, demand or drive change on issues that affect them.”¹⁴⁷ A form of non-official data,¹⁴⁸ citizen-generated data may be quantitative or qualitative and may be produced through a range of means including research, social audits, crowd-sourcing online platforms, mobile phone and SMS surveys, social media, storytelling and community radio. Citizen-generated data include both data produced directly by citizens or CSOs – such as Transparency International’s Global Corruption Barometer¹⁴⁹ – and data translated by citizens or CSOs from publicly available (open) data sets – such as Publish What You Fund’s Aid Transparency Index.¹⁵⁰

Data generated by citizens and CSOs – especially survey-based perception and experiential data – are important for SDG16+ accountability as they can offer a more complete and accurate picture of progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies. They can complement official sources of data, fill gaps in existing data and/or supplement official reporting when the quality, availability or impartiality of official data on SDG16+ is insufficient or questionable. Importantly, citizen-generated data can help to leave no one behind by ensuring that people’s perspectives and experiences – especially marginalized

communities and population groups often overlooked by official data collection processes¹⁵¹ – are documented and taken into account in monitoring progress on peace, justice and inclusion.

Despite being more than five years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, significant gaps remain in official data on SDG 16 due to methodological issues, limited resources and the limited capacity of national statistical offices (NSOs) to collect data.¹⁵² The politically sensitive nature of certain SDG16+ targets may also play a role in dissuading some governments from prioritizing the production of SDG16+ data.¹⁵³ In light of these and other challenges, citizen-generated data can make a valuable contribution to tracking progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies. As long as the methodologies to produce citizen-generated data are as robust and open to public scrutiny as those used to produce official data, citizen-generated data should be considered as valid and credible as official data.



147 CIVICUS. DataShift. Available at: <http://civicus.org/thedatashift/>

148 Non-official data are data produced by non-governmental actors such as research institutions, academia, the private sector, CSOs or citizens themselves.

149 Transparency International. ‘Global Corruption Barometer’. Available at: <https://www.transparency.org/en/gcb>

150 Publish What You Fund. ‘The Aid Transparency Index’. Available at: <https://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/the-index/>

151 For example, many SDG16+ methodologies are State and citizen-centered, and thus leave out people without citizen status, including the estimated 3.1 million asylum seekers, 25.4 million refugees, and 3.8 million plus stateless people worldwide. The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (2019). *Enabling the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through SDG 16+: Anchoring peace, justice and inclusion*, p. 35. Available at: <https://www.un-globalalliance.org/sdg16-report>

152 SDG16 Data Initiative (2019). *SDG16 Data Initiative 2019 Global Report*, p. 4. Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FuVB6Bd1mUdBnjWK18ytmDnyu3H8vGcB/view>

153 The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies and Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2020).

Mainstreaming SDG 16: Using the Voluntary National Review to Advance More Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, p. 73. Available at: <https://www.sdg16hub.org/topic/mainstreaming-sdg-16-using-voluntary-national-review-advance-more-peaceful-just-and-inclusive>

Putting it into practice

There are a number of ways that you can promote, support and/or produce citizen-generated data on SDG16+ including the following:

1. **Advocate to Member States, NSOs and UN custodian agencies¹⁵⁴ to officially recognize and accept citizen-generated data as a valid source of data to monitor SDG progress¹⁵⁵** – For example, you can urge these stakeholders to include citizen-generated data alongside official data in global, national and local monitoring of and reporting on SDG16+ implementation.
2. **Engage in partnerships with official and non-official data actors** – You can seek to establish strategic partnerships in relation to data collection on SDG16+, both with NSOs as well as other key actors such as NHRIs, academia or the private sector. For example, data generated by civil society can be validated and used by NSOs¹⁵⁶, while NSOs may be able to provide resources and tools that can assist civil society actors to collect data and improve the quality, comparability and usefulness of those data. Greater collaboration among data actors – both official and non-official – can help to address critical gaps in SDG16+ data.
3. **Promote and support basic data literacy** – SDG16+ data in itself may not be meaningful without skilled data users who can understand and translate complex information into simple messages for a broader set of actors engaged in SDG16+ implementation and/or accountability. You can promote and support basic data literacy for information intermediaries ('info-mediaries') such as the media, social media users, civil society groups and citizens. Data literacy skills include digging, collecting, cleaning, analyzing, visualizing and communicating data to the public and decision-makers.

4. Produce and support the production of citizen-generated data on SDG16+ – You can generate data or support others to do so by:

- a. Providing financial support and other resources to build the capacity of civil society actors and citizens to collect, process and analyze data on SDG16+, including disaggregated data;
- b. Working with vulnerable and marginalized groups – especially women, youth, children, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, refugees and migrants, and internally displaced and stateless persons – to engage in SDG16+ data collection and analysis;
- c. Documenting and sharing tools, protocols, and other strategies to generate data on SDG16+ with other civil society initiatives;¹⁵⁷
- d. Adopting a human rights-based approach to SDG16+ data collection (see Box X); and
- e. Taking the following factors into consideration in seeking to produce data on SDG16+:
 - i. **Data-gathering methodology** – Is the methodology clear and consistent, and does it conform with the basic principles of a human rights-based approach to data?
 - ii. **Types of measurement** – What are the types of measurement used and how can they be aligned with SDG data-gathering efforts?
 - iii. **Verification of data** – Can the data be adequately verified in accordance with key principles of data validation and verification?
 - iv. **Digital divide** – Is there a risk of creating a 'digital divide' if the data are generated through internet-based or Information and Communication Technology (ICT) applications?
 - v. **Capacity building** – Are there measures in place to ensure adequate data and methodological literacy of those collecting the data?¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Custodian agencies are the United Nations bodies (and in some cases, other international organizations) responsible for compiling and verifying country data and metadata, and for submitting the data, along with regional and global aggregates, to the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). For more information, see: United Nations. 'Roles and responsibilities of SDG monitoring and reporting'. Available at: <https://www.sdgmonitoring.org/activities/roles-and-responsibilities/>

¹⁵⁵ The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies and Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2020). *Mainstreaming SDG 16: Using the Voluntary National Review to Advance More Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, p. 73. Available at: <https://www.sdg16hub.org/topic/mainstreaming-sdg-16-using-voluntary-national-review-advance-more-peaceful-just-and-inclusive>

¹⁵⁶ The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies and Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2020). *Mainstreaming SDG 16: Using the Voluntary National Review to Advance More Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, pp. ix-x. Available at: <https://www.sdg16hub.org/topic/mainstreaming-sdg-16-using-voluntary-national-review-advance-more-peaceful-just-and-inclusive>

¹⁵⁷ Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, Open Knowledge International and Public Data Lab (2018). *Advancing Sustainability Together? Citizen-generated data and the Sustainable Development Goals*, p. 5. Available at: <https://www.data4sdgs.org/resources/advancing-sustainability-together-citizen-generated-data-and-sustainable-development>

¹⁵⁸ Danish Institute for Human Rights (2017). *Human Rights and Data*, pp. 39-40. Available at: <https://www.humanrights.dk/publications/human-rights-data>

A human rights-based approach to data¹⁵⁹

In general, all data collection on the SDGs – including SDG16+ – should be guided by the Human Rights-Based Approach to Data (HRBAD) developed by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The HRBAD guidance highlights the following principles:

- **Participation** – Data collection processes should ensure the free, active and meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders, including vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- **Data Disaggregation** – Data should be disaggregated by key characteristics identified in international human rights law in order to compare population groups and understand the situation of specific groups.
- **Self-identification** – Population groups should be self-defining, and individuals should have the option to disclose, or withhold, information about their personal characteristics. Data collection should not create or reinforce discrimination, bias or stereotypes.
- **Transparency** – Those collecting data should provide clear, openly accessible information about the process. Data collected by the State should be openly accessible to the public.
- **Privacy** – Data disclosed by individuals should be protected and kept private, and the confidentiality of individuals' responses and personal information should be maintained.
- **Accountability** – Those collecting data are accountable for upholding human rights in their processes. Data should be used to hold States and other actors accountable for human rights.

CASE STUDY:

Focusing on Corruption in Rwanda to Assist in Achieving the SDGs




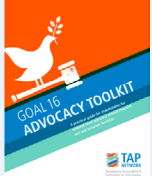
Transparency International

Starting in 2018, Transparency International (TI) Rwanda supported national efforts to produce the country's 2019 VNR. From the beginning, TI Rwanda was keen to emphasize the linkages between corruption and the SDGs, and so it produced a scoping study on the effect of corruption on national efforts to meet SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 13. While corruption was relatively high on the national agenda, key SDG implementers in line ministries were not sufficiently sensitized to the risks that corruption posed to the country's targets under the 2030 Agenda. To address this issue, TI developed a comprehensive approach intended to (1) produce evidence that corruption hinders progress towards national development goals; (2) identify innovative mechanisms to mitigate corruption risks in SDG implementation; and (3) track the effectiveness of these measures over time jointly with SDG implementers.

To read the full-length version of this case study, visit www.sdg16toolkit.org/case-studies

159 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2018). *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Data: Leaving No One Behind in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/GuidanceNoteonApproachtoData.pdf>

Key TAP Network resources:

<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. It contains a chapter on 'Data and Statistics through Official and Unofficial Sources.'</p> <p>Available at: https://www.sdg16hub.org/topic/mainstreaming-sdg-16-using-voluntary-national-review-advance-more-peaceful-just-and-inclusive</p>	
<p>SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society (TAP Network, 2018)</p>	<p>This handbook provides guidance on the different approaches and steps that can be taken by civil society to ensure national government accountability for the SDGs. It includes a chapter on 'Using and Improving Data.'</p> <p>Available at: https://sdgaccountability.org/</p>	
<p>Expanding the Data Ecosystem: The role of "Non-Official" Data for SDG Monitoring and Review (TAP Network, 2017)</p>	<p>This advocacy paper discusses the role of "non-official" data providers in SDG monitoring and review. It presents challenges to overcome between national statistical offices and civil society, and recommendations for doing so.</p> <p>Available at: https://tapnetwork2030.org/sdg-goal-16-indicators/</p>	
<p>Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit (TAP Network, 2016)</p>	<p>This toolkit provides civil society and other non-governmental stakeholders with guidance on how to engage with their governments and other local, regional or international stakeholders to support the planning, implementation, follow-up and accountability of SDG 16. It includes a section on 'Collecting and Using Citizen-Generated Data.'</p> <p>Available at: https://tapnetwork2030.org/goal-16-advocacy-toolkit/</p>	

SDG 16

Key resources:

<p>The DataShift initiative (CIVICUS)</p>	<p>An initiative of CIVICUS – in collaboration with numerous partners – to build the capacity and confidence of CSOs to produce and use citizen-generated data to monitor sustainable development progress, demand accountability and campaign for transformative change. Research, analysis and other resources on citizen-generated data are provided.</p> <p>Available at: https://www.civicus.org/thedatashift/</p>
<p>Making Use of Citizen-Generated Data (DataShift Initiative, CIVICUS, 2017)</p>	<p>This resource explores how citizen-generated data can be leveraged to support the tracking of progress on the SDGs. It draws upon existing research and case studies to explain what citizen-generated data are, their importance and how they are impacting practice on SDG-related issues. Practical ways to leverage citizen-generated data for SDG monitoring and accountability are also outlined.</p> <p>Available at: https://www.data4sdgs.org/resources/making-use-citizen-generated-data</p>
<p>Choosing and engaging with citizen-generated data: A guide (Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, Open Knowledge International and Public Data Lab, 2018)</p>	<p>This guide – aimed at stakeholders interested in developing, engaging with and supporting citizen-generated data (CGD) initiatives – seeks to help you understand if CRD is suitable for your proposed project, as well as what type of data is needed. It presents a list of distinction criteria between CGD methods, highlights the benefits and pitfalls of CGD, and provides a basis for strategic engagement with CGD. Available in English and Spanish.</p> <p>Available at: https://www.data4sdgs.org/resources/choosing-and-engaging-citizen-generated-data-guide</p>
<p>A Human Rights-Based Approach to Data: Leaving No One Behind in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (OHCHR, 2018)</p>	<p>This note provides guidance on a human rights-based approach to data, with a focus on data collection and data disaggregation. A set of principles, recommendations and good practices are outlined in relation to a number of data-related issues.</p> <p>Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/GuidanceNoteonApproachtoData.pdf</p>

