

Working with the media and social media to advance SDG16+

Engaging with both traditional media and social media can be a powerful means to convey your key messages on SDG16+ to a broad public audience

Overview

“At its most fundamental, a free, independent and pluralist media sector is a prerequisite to the creation and sustaining of functioning democracies, supporting the creation of peaceful, just and inclusive societies.”⁴¹ The media’s role in supporting public access to information (SDG target 16.10) is thus valuable, in and of itself, to achieving SDG16+. Both traditional forms of media – including print, television (TV) and radio – and social media can support your efforts to advance SDG16+ implementation and accountability in a number of ways.

In relation to SDG16+ implementation, the media can educate and promote awareness of SDG16+ issues among the general public. It can provide information on the status of SDG16+ targets and influence the opinions of key decision-makers and the general public to take action for progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Importantly, the media can foster participation in SDG16+ implementation by encouraging public involvement in national and sub-national development planning and decision-making processes and by providing a platform for public debate and dialogue, ensuring that the voices of all citizens are heard.

In relation to SDG16+ accountability, the media can monitor and report on government policies and practices to advance peace, justice and inclusion, highlighting progress, challenges and gaps in implementation. It can help hold those in power accountable for SDG16+ commitments by shining a spotlight on what government actors are, or are not, doing. The media can also play a key role in promoting and supporting people’s engagement in SDG16+ follow-up and review processes, especially vulnerable or marginalized groups that may have limited opportunities for engagement due to geography, language or other restriction. It can also bring attention to the findings of national follow-up and review processes such as Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).



41 UNDP and UNESCO (2019). *Entry points for media development to support peaceful just and inclusive societies and Agenda 2030 – a background discussion note*, p. 2. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/content/oslo-governance-centre/en/home/library/entry-points-for-media-development-to-support-peaceful-just-and-.html>

TIP: Leveraging Social media: Opportunities and challenges to advance peaceful, just and inclusive societies⁴²



Social media and other online platforms offer CSOs a powerful means to promote and support SDG16+ implementation and accountability at minimal financial cost. Online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube and Instagram can be a very effective way to share information, raise awareness and mobilize supporters for action on SDG16+ issues, especially younger generations who may not engage as much with traditional forms of media.

However, the use of social media and online platforms is not without its limitations or risks. Many populations continue to be excluded from internet access due to poverty, geography and other barriers. The discussion of potentially sensitive governance-related issues via social media can result in government crackdowns on both users and networks. In some cases, social media may facilitate the distribution of inaccurate, discriminatory and even willfully violent content. These are all real challenges for civil society. Consequently, the use of social media and online platforms for SDG16+ engagement should always be carefully considered and balanced with other forms of engagement that permit the safe offline participation of excluded groups.

Putting it into practice

There are many ways that you can engage effectively with the media in order to advance the SDG16+ agenda for peaceful, just and inclusive societies, including the following actions:⁴³

- 1. Develop a strategy for engaging with the media** – Ideally, your SDG16+ media engagement strategy will include the following components:
 - a. Goals or objectives** – Identify your key objectives such as raising awareness of SDG16+, drawing attention to specific problems or gaps in SDG16+ implementation or sharing opportunities to participate in SDG16+ follow-up and review processes.
 - b. Target audience** – Identify the audience whom you wish to reach via the media. Your target audience – including their characteristics, interests and media preferences – will affect your choice of message, type of media and media outlet. For example, some policy makers may be more easily reached via traditional media such as newspapers, whereas younger generations may engage more with social media.
 - c. Key messages** – Develop compelling, short and simple messages that are limited in number and tailored for your target audience. A key message is what you want the audience to understand, remember and/or do. Try to use everyday language, avoid jargon and acronyms, and refer to real-life stories and simple statistics for impact.
 - d. Type of media** – Consider the type of media (print, television, radio, social media, etc.) to most effectively convey your SDG16+ messages to your target audience. Consider the power of radio to reach people, especially those in poorer and rural areas.
 - e. Journalists and media outlets** – Identify the journalists and media outlets that are best suited to convey your SDG16+ messages to your target audience. Conduct research to identify journalists who cover stories related to peace, justice and inclusion.

⁴² Adapted from: Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2018). *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, p. 76. Available at: <https://sdgaccountability.org/>

⁴³ Adapted from: Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network (2018). *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, pp. 76-78. Available at: <https://sdgaccountability.org/>

2. **Be proactive and contact journalists** – Contact journalists directly, express interest in the stories they cover and explain how you may be able to provide new, interesting or relevant information for stories on peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Explain how SDG16+ issues link to the types of stories they or their media outlet already cover. Confirm the best method for contacting journalists in the future and find ways to communicate regularly.
3. **Develop professional working relationships with journalists** – Seek to develop positive professional working relationships with journalists by adhering to the following:
 - a. **Make it easy for the journalist** by providing concise and clear information via press releases, opinion pieces, story pitches and press briefing information packs. Include contact information, background information on the SDG16+ issue(s), facts and statistics, quotations from experts, and photographs or infographics where relevant;
 - b. **Know and adhere to deadlines** and work within the journalist's timeframes;
 - c. **Be credible** by providing accurate, reliable and high-quality information and statistics;
 - d. **Respond promptly and professionally to media enquiries** and commit to get back to a journalist if you don't know the answer to a question. Never lie or make-up facts; and
 - e. **Develop a positive relationship over time** by getting to know what kinds of stories the journalist likes to cover and regularly inviting them to your media-friendly events.

CASE STUDY:

Teaching Journalism and Communications to Marginalized Youth, Women and the Dalit Community


Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC)

From 2013 to 2020, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) implemented a fellowship program to reduce social discrimination against disadvantaged communities and increase participation of youth from marginalized communities by teaching them skills for journalism and community radio broadcasting. The program empowered youth, women and marginalized people to become actors in their communities and increased the number of young professionals, particularly women, working in community media in Bangladesh. These empowerment efforts helped communities exercise their rights and influence local power structures and share information within their communities.

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



Key TAP Network resource:

<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 'Engaging with the Media'.</p> <p>Available at: https://sdgaccountability.org/</p>	
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Key resources:

<p>Engaging with the Media: A Companion to the Advocacy Toolkit for Influencing the Post-2015 Development Agenda (CIVICUS and Stakeholder Forum, 2014)</p>	<p>This guide provides a useful set of tools and tips to help civil society develop effective communications strategies for media engagement. It offers advice on how to target messages for broadcast, press and social media, identify and build relationships with journalists, conduct interviews, write press releases and hold press conferences.</p> <p>Available at: http://civicus.org/images/stories/Engaging%20with%20the%20Media%20-%20SD2015%20Advocacy%20Toolkit%20companion.pdf</p>
<p>UNDP's Engagement with the Media for Governance, Sustainable Development and Peace (UNDP, Oslo Governance Centre, 2019)</p>	<p>This report features 13 case studies that highlight the range and impact of UNDP's engagement with the media for the purpose of achieving development outcomes. UNDP's approach to media engagement, its thematic scope and strengths, and challenges and opportunities for media engagement are also discussed.</p> <p>Available at: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/OGC/UNDP%20Engagement%20with%20the%20Media.pdf</p>
<p>Entry points for media development to support peaceful just and inclusive societies and Agenda 2030 – a background discussion note (UNDP and UNESCO, 2019)</p>	<p>This short background discussion note suggests that the SDGs, and especially SDG 16, provide a critical entry point through which an independent, professional, diverse and pluralist media, operating in a safe environment, can contribute to the progressive vision articulated in the 2030 Agenda.</p> <p>Available at: https://www.undp.org/content/oslo-governance-centre/en/home/library/entry-points-for-media-development-to-support-peaceful-just-and-.html</p>