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

OUTLOOK

The starting point for achieving this goal is challenging. Poor governance in the region has a negative impact on sustainable development and is a major factor contributing to growing inequalities, political, social and economic marginalization and the exclusion of different segments of the population. Discrimination and marginalization are at the root of the increased radicalization of youth and the increasing violent extremism in the region. Without addressing the underlying governance challenges and strengthening systems and institutions, countries will face immense difficulties in achieving the other 16 SDGs.

THE PHOTO

A woman holds up her stained finger after voting in Timor-Leste’s presidential run-off poll, which followed the first round of voting in March 2012

Photo credit: Bernardino Soares/United Nations
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**INSIGHTS**

- Peaceful and inclusive societies are fundamental for sustainable development. Better governance systems allow for the development of people-centric policies, social inclusion and effective, transparent, accountable and responsive institutions, all of which are important for sustainable development. Existing methodologies and capacities to measure effectiveness, accountability, inclusion and responsiveness of institutions are limited, however. Systematic methodologies need to be developed to measure the indicators for SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7. Countries and stakeholders need to be supported to collect comparable and disaggregated data. The data also would be useful for monitoring targets for SDGs 1, 3, 4, 7, 10 and 11.

- Corruption is a major driver of inequality in the region. An estimated 40 per cent of investments in electricity, water and sanitation are lost due to corruption. Illicit financial flows from the region accounted for about 40 per cent of the total illicit outflows from developing countries from 2004 to 2013. Illicit financial flows severely limit the overall finances available for development and significantly offset international commercial resource inflows (such as foreign direct investment) into the region. (Illicit financial flows are discussed in SDG 17 Finance). SDG target 16.5 calls for reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms.

- SDG 16 has one composite target on reducing all forms of violence and related deaths. Its indicators currently focus on measuring intentional homicide (as proposed under the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes). There are calls for reporting conflict-related deaths separately because it is a “distinct phenomena with differing root causes as well as varying levels of precision in measurement”. Conflict-related deaths do not overlap with intentional homicides.

- In the estimates of forced labour, which is a proxy for human trafficking, the Asia-Pacific region has the largest number of victims, at 11.7 million people in 2012. Efforts to determine the prevalence of modern slavery (another proxy for human trafficking) suggest a larger number. SDG targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2 directly address human trafficking; these targets cut across issues, from poverty, inequality, decent work and corruption to migration, gender, youth, climate and conflict. Indicator 16.2.2 on the number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population by sex, age and form of exploitation reflects a need for much more significant efforts to identify and assist victims of trafficking.

- The dearth of data is a severe limitation for making sense of the complex governance challenges and limits the monitoring of SDG 16 targets and indicators. Investing in data collection (with a human rights-based approach) and using the disaggregated data are essential. Involving non-state actors to collect and provide supplementary data could solve some of the challenges.
Safe societies

- In 2012, the latest year for which comparable data are available for all regions of the world, Asia and the Pacific had 2.8 homicides per 100,000 population, far less than the global average of 5.4 homicides per 100,000 population. Several countries and areas in Asia and the Pacific have some of the lowest homicide rates in the world, such as Singapore and Japan, at 0.3 per 100,000 population in 2014; and Hong Kong, China, at 0.9 per 100,000 population in 2013.

Rule of law and access to justice

- The region had the smallest number of people in prisons in 2014, when compared with other regions globally, at 93.2 prisoners per 100,000 population (the global average is 140.3 prisoners per 100,000 population). However the figures vary greatly among the subregions, ranging from 48.7 in South and South-West Asia to 145.1 in South-East Asia.

- The Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking (COMMIT) Process has increased regional cooperation to address human trafficking in the Mekong subregion and collect relevant data. The efforts to address trafficking for labour exploitation in the fisheries industry, for example, reflect an understanding of the complexities in the forced labour phenomenon of migrant workers and its interaction with environmental degradation, decent work, corruption and labour migration.

Effective and inclusive societies

- The best proxy information on legal identity is the available data on birth registration coverage, although such data do not exist for all countries in the region and are rarely collected on a routine basis. Latest country data show that the proportions of children younger than 5 years whose births have been registered remain low in Afghanistan (at 37 per cent in 2011), Bangladesh (at 37 per cent in 2013) and Pakistan (at 33.5 per cent in 2013). In 2014, the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade 2015–2024 was proclaimed and efforts are being made to “get everyone in the picture”. Data on birth registrations will be increasingly available through this initiative.

Rule of law and access to justice

- On average between 2012 and 2014, more than 450,000 prisoners in the region were held without trial or awaited trial, with a low in Georgia of 4.2 per cent of all prisoners to a high of more than 60 per cent of all prisoners in the Philippines (61.6 per cent) and in India (67.6 per cent). In India, that figure equates to more than a quarter of a million prisoners.
Effective and inclusive institutions

- LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or intersex) people face widespread and often multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion in all contexts. The exclusion of LGBTI people from the design, implementation and monitoring of laws and policies that affect them perpetuates their social and economic marginalization.\(^{17}\)

- Overall, women’s political participation continues to be low, compared with other regions (see the SDG 5 profile).\(^{18}\)

- Youth have low political participation. Of the 45 countries in the region surveyed, the proportion of parliamentarians younger than 30 in lower and single houses was 1.1 per cent for Asia and 0.6 per cent for the Pacific, both of which are less than the global average of 2.1 per cent.\(^{19}\)

- With countries adopting restrictive laws that limit the space for civil society to operate and inclusion in decision-making processes, civil society engagement and participation is shrinking.\(^{20}\)

Safe societies

- Many female victims of intimate partner or family-related homicides are found in Asia and the Pacific; the estimated total number of such deaths was 19,900 in 2012, or 46 per cent of all estimated intimate partner or family-related homicides worldwide.\(^{21}\)

- In South and East Asia and the Pacific, economic forces are driving human trafficking, with 64 per cent of identified victims trafficked into forced labour, servitude and slavery.\(^{22}\) Eighty-three per cent of the identified victims of trafficking in the region are women or girls, compared with 60 per cent globally. And 40 per cent of the identified victims in South Asia and 30 per cent in East Asia are children.\(^{23}\)

- At least 13 countries are considered in a status between warning and high alert on the Fragile States Index.\(^{24}\)

**EMERGING ISSUES**

- Increased marginalization and exclusion of young people is creating conditions for the rise of violent extremism in the region. Opportunities need to be created for young people to engage in mainstream political and economic processes.

- There are 95 million international migrants in the region, with many more internally displaced.\(^{25}\) Climate change and other shocks are expected to further exacerbate conditions that could force millions of people to migrate. More needs to be done to improve safety nets and protect people’s basic rights.
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

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