

An Open Letter to National Statistical Offices, UN Agencies and CSOs: TAP Network Response to UN Technical Report on SDG Indicator Framework



Dear Sir/Madam,

25 March 2015

We, the undersigned civil society organizations from the Transparency, Accountability & Participation (TAP) Network, would like to share with you some thoughts on how TAP principles of transparency, accountability and citizen participation can be effectively measured to track the proposed sustainable development goals (SDGs), and in particular towards Goal 16 to “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” We hope these recommendations will be useful as your National Statistical Office (NSO) or UN Agency or organization reviews the technical report on an indicator framework from the UN Statistical Commission over the coming week and months ahead.

As organizations working in countries from the global north and south, our evidence and experiences have demonstrated that the TAP principles as related to peace and justice and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions can and have been successfully measured, and in countries all around the world.

Measuring progress on these issues is not unprecedented - a wide variety of data currently exists from reliable sources that have been collected for a number of years and at multiple levels, including administrative information from governments, surveys (based on perceptions, facts and experiences) and assessments from a wide range of experts. This is true, for example, when it comes to corruption, bribery, access to information, budgets, illicit financial flows, levels of violence, access to justice, rule of law, and some forms of accountability and citizen participation.

Such a breadth and depth of data allows for feasible, suitable and potentially transformative indicators to be identified for TAP-oriented targets proposed for Goal 16, and others.

As your NSO, UN Agency or organization begins a technical review of indicators, it is critical that indicators are chosen which:

- are relevant for and representative of the target in question
- can capture the different elements of the goal;
- can produce reliable and timely data that can be universally measured and monitored in a responsive manner at the national, regional and global levels;
- can provide for disaggregated-level data (by gender, age, income group, territorial level, etc.);
- capture different dimensions of the delivery (input, output, outcome, impact and process/structural).
- are drawn from official and third-party data sources.

These criteria are relevant and applicable for Goal 16 and all the SDGs. This technical discussion must involve statistical experts drawn from government, UN agencies, multilateral institutions, academia and civil society to fully reflect the full range of different producers, users and beneficiaries of such data.

In addition, it will be important to strike a balance between different types of indicators. To provide an accurate picture of progress, we must measure efforts being made to address the problem (capacity/input or structural indicators), measure change on the ground (outcomes or objective indicators), and measure impact for people (experiential and perceptions indicators).

Citizen or third-party generated data complements what NSOs collect, and can help fill potential gaps. Member States and the UN appreciate and have underscored that measuring these new goals will be challenging, and that capacities for data collection, access and usability must be strengthened at all levels. This makes it critical to embrace cross-sector partnerships that can provide a more comprehensive picture of data and resources, as well as regular, transparent, accountable and participatory reviews of progress.

All stakeholders, including citizens and civil society, the private sector, international organizations, governments, NSOs and the UN System can and must work together in these efforts, and we urge you to make sure the door is left open for such partnerships. This means that modalities for the engagement of these actors must be elaborated, enhanced and preserved – particularly regarding the engagement of CSOs in the Interagency Expert Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDG) and the SDG Indicator process.

As indispensable partners in the measurement, implementation and accountability for the Post-2015 agenda, the TAP Network stands ready to support your government and your NSO on the discussion around indicators, particularly around Goal 16.

For more information on the work of the TAP Network and our work around the Post-2015 indicators, please contact the TAP Network's Coordinator John Romano at romano@wfuna.org.

Yours in Partnership,
The TAP Network



Namati, CIVICUS, Save the Children, Transparency International, Restless Development, Plan International, SaferWorld, Nonviolence International, Stakeholder Forum, UNA-USA, International Budget Partnership, Oxfam, Article 19, Global Financial Integrity, CAFOD, Policy Forum, The Ploughshare Group, Transparencia Mexicana, World Wide Web Foundation, IREX, WFUNA, Global Integrity, Publish What You Fund, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, Communitas Coalition, global campaign on Budget Transparency Accountability and Participation, Human Rights First Rwanda Association, AfroLeadership.