

Chapter 5

International Review

The 2030 Agenda includes a commitment to robust follow-up and monitoring frameworks, both nationally and internationally, to enable the public to ensure that governments and other duty-bearers are held accountable for meeting the SDGs. Even if your own work is locally focused, it will be useful to remain aware of major developments at the international level so that you can identify opportunities to leverage support for your own efforts through international forums and processes as appropriate.

At the global level, the 2030 Agenda has two main accountability pillars. The first is a set of quantitative indicators and data that tracks progress towards the SDGs. The second is the qualitative follow-up, review and reporting processes at national, regional and global level. The HLPF sits at the apex of these accountability processes.⁵²

There is considerable opportunity for you to engage in these accountability processes. The UN has pledged to consider “rigorous and independent” work of non-UN actors in progress reviews, and to “champion innovative practices to engage non-state actors”⁵³. This recognition provides extra level of scrutiny on progress towards achieving the SDGs, with civil society having greater legitimacy for assessing the progress of governments.

GLOBAL INDICATORS

Global Indicators are a tool you can use to track your government’s progress towards achieving the SDGs. Global Indicators are different from national indicators, as they need to be applicable to all countries. Good global indicators are an effective way to track progress and identify which regions and issues are failing to make progress. There has never been comparable global data on justice or legal empowerment. Having this information and understanding where your country ranks globally is a useful advocacy tool when pushing for national reforms.

52 Anna Moller-Loswick, *Crowding Out Accountability: The Follow-Up and Review of the 2030 Agenda* (Saferworld: July 28, 2016), <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/news-and-views/blog-post/40-crowding-out-accountability-the-follow-up-and-review-of-the-2030-agenda>.

53 SG Report 2016

That said, the current global indicators for justice are weak. The UN body responsible for the development of indicators, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG), identified two global indicators on access to justice. The two selected focus on elements of the criminal justice system: (1) the percentage of detainees in pretrial detention and (2) the percentage of victims of violent crime who report their victimisation to competent authorities.

The indicators selected were influenced by the data that currently exists and they are not as ambitious as they should be. Alone, these global indicators do not sufficiently help monitor progress towards addressing most people’s justice problems. By focusing exclusively on criminal justice systems, they overlook the most frequent justice and development needs people face around the world and how these issues are effectively addressed.

Numerous NGOs, UN agencies, the World Bank, and a diverse coalition of civil society groups recommended survey-based indicators focused on strengthening public access to effective and just dispute resolution, and on access to effective legal aid:

- Proportion of those who have experienced a dispute in the past 12 months who have accessed a formal, informal,

Box 30: Case study: global review at the High Level Political Forum

The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development is the main UN platform on sustainable development. The HLPF provides political leadership, guidance and recommendations. It follows up and reviews the implementation of sustainable development commitments and the 2030 Agenda, addresses new and emerging challenges, promotes the science-policy interface, and enhances the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

alternative or traditional dispute resolution mechanism and who feel the process was effective and just.

- Proportion of citizens who can access effective and independent legal aid.

Unfortunately, these indicators were not adopted. However, the UN has outlined the need for indicators to be reviewed and updated over the coming years so there will be opportunities to advocate for more inclusive justice indicators. As an interim solution, the SDG 16 Data Initiative will monitor and compare progress more inclusive Goal 16 data on access to justice for all.⁵⁴

TIP

The current global indicators must not limit your national efforts for measuring justice. If you are meeting with your government, you should be prepared to discuss why these global indicators are limited and why, based on your own national experience, more inclusive justice measurement is required. In addition, you should highlight examples from countries where justice needs and services are effectively measured, the technical methodologies used for this measurement, and the benefits of having this data for policy making.

You can influence the global process by advocating for and encouraging national statistic representatives to push for more inclusive justice indicators at the UN. You can also influence the process by drafting and signing onto global civil society coalition positions.

TIP

Find out who represents your country at the UN Statistical Commission and/or on the IAEG. These representatives and the offices they represent have been tasked with a huge mandate, to report on all 17 SDGs. Statistical departments are meant to be apolitical and independent from government, and as a result they are often open to support to build capacity and develop methodologies to effectively measure justice. They can be a good ally for national reform.

GLOBAL REVIEW

The 2030 Agenda promises a systematic review process “to support accountability to our citizens”. At the first HLPF in 2016, global indicators had not been officially adopted and were not discussed in detail. Qualitative reviews were also limited and mostly focused on discussing the progress that was made towards attaining the MDGs. Many countries simply focused their reviews simply

on the work they had done in setting up structures and coordinating mechanisms for implementing the 2030 Agenda. While these implementation processes are important, it is still not clear how they will help address political, development or social challenges at the national level. Countries were reluctant to discuss challenges in a meaningful way.

On a more positive note, some countries did take steps to include civil society. National civil society actors spoke during official government presentations and posed critical questions to their governments. In some countries civil society were consulted by their governments ahead of its review, although in most countries civil society were only able to comment on almost-finalised drafts of official national reports.⁵⁵

At time of publication it is difficult to know how useful a space the HLPF will prove to be. However there is still time to influence how it functions. To be successful, the HLPF needs to become a dynamic forum for genuine and honest conversation between and among member states, civil society and other stakeholders about progress made, challenges ahead and ways to overcome them.

GLOBAL MONITORING AND REVIEW SUPPORTING NATIONAL ADVOCACY AND REFORMS

REFLECTION

Global reporting must be used as a time for genuine reflection and for real problem solving around the world. At the national level, you can use the annual HLPF to reflect on national progress made on justice and legal empowerment, critique official narratives against your own experiences, and discuss challenges to progress. It is important that civil society do not let governments control this narrative. Civil society must influence and monitor what governments are saying at the UN and ensure any facts or commitments are publicised at the national level. You should incorporate time for this annual reflection and use it to reignite discussions on justice in your country, this is particularly useful if these discussions have stalled.

CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATIONS

Every country has committed to civil society consultations as part of their HLPF review. These consultations should be a space to ensure government plans are setting the right priorities and proceeding in the right way. During the first HLPF, this happened to varying degrees. Civil society from Sierra Leone spoke of how they were pleased that their government had involved them in the drafting of

⁵⁴ “SDG16 Data Initiative.”

⁵⁵ *Crowding Out Accountability: The Follow-Up and Review of the 2030 Agenda.*