Global Alliance
Reporting Progress on Peaceful,
Just and Inclusive Societies

Enabling the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through SDG 16+

2021 EPILOGUE

Introduction

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Through Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), Member States committed to "Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." SDG 16 is key to achieving the transformative 2030 Agenda. Its focus on strong institutions, justice and inclusion and peaceful societies, are necessary for achieving all SDGs. The term 'SDG 16+', coined by Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, reflects importantly how other targets across the 2030 Agenda contribute to peace, justice and inclusion.

In 2021, several challenges continue to confront the realization of SDG 16+. As the COVID-19 crisis and pandemic response efforts continue to overwhelm societies across the globe, social contracts are under stress and institutions at all levels of governance are under immense strain. Advancing SDG 16+ is crucial to rebuild and recover from the pandemic.

SDG 16 was under thematic review at the 2019 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). The review highlighted the need to step up actions to deliver SDG 16+. It was in this regard that the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (the Global Alliance) launched a seminal report 'Enabling the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through SDG16+: Anchoring peace, justice and inclusion' which highlighted the urgent need for political and financial investment to advance peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The lack of investment in SDG 16+ will reverse development gains across all the SDGs, including inequality, education, health and climate action. The Report recommends a 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' approach to ensure that inclusiveness is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda.

SDG 16 is being reviewed for a second time during the High-Level Political Forum in 2021 under the theme "*sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic*". It is imperative now to focus on what the global community has learned in responding to the pandemic and to explore what can be done further to accelerate SDG 16+ and reach those that are still being left behind. It is in this context that the Global Alliance has developed this brief – to provide providing concrete cases of what has succeeded since 2019 and in response to the pandemic and to reiterate the call for urgent attention to advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

1. A Whole-of-Government, Whole-of-Society Approach

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An effective pandemic response requires a whole of government and whole of society approach that builds on the interdependencies among multiple stakeholders, sectors and levels of government. This collaborative approach is needed to meet the multi-faceted and interrelated challenges such as conflict, increased inequalities, social and economic insecurity, and rapid technological disruption.

A 'whole of society' approach with broad and meaningful engagement, dialogue and consultation with stakeholders across all sectors of society, including representatives from young people and marginalized groups, is key to guide "people-centered" government action and ensure that all voices are heard and all needs considered in pandemic response and recovery efforts.

While governments must ensure national coordination among different national institutions and actors in anti-corruption efforts, effective engagement of the private sector, in particular of "gatekeepers" intermediaries, is necessary to prevent or interrupt illicit financial flows.

Five years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, countries' strategies to engage stakeholders are still at an early stage and sometimes partial or superficial. Shrinking civic space was a trend before the pandemic. According to the 2020 CIVICUS Monitor, only 3.4% of the world's population lives in countries with open civic space. According to the V-Dem Institute's 'Democracy Report 2021', there is an "accelerating wave of autocratization" affecting 1/3 of the world's population.

Civil society's role in delivering SDG16 ranges from delivering basic services to populations that are hard to reach, maintaining focus on cohesion and peace in times of crisis, tracking government procurement when opportunities for corruption are high, filling data gaps, and advocating for groups not otherwise seen or heard. This has been clear throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, through which civil society has contributed to innovative and effective solutions to ensure that policies and programmes reach all groups in society. Dialogue between authorities and people is more important than ever in order to guide government action and maintain social cohesion.

Yet, at this critical time, challenges to civic participation have been further exacerbated. A global survey by the Fund for Global Human Rights found that as early as May 2020, only 40 percent of 200 civil society organizations were able to continue their core activities. Virtual engagement and consultation have become the norm in the context of the pandemic. The risks and barriers associated with this reliance on digital processes, including the digital divide and hate-speech, must be addressed to ensure that stakeholder engagement is far-reaching and safe.

As representatives of their constituencies, parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to reflect and legislate societal interests and take forward a whole-of-society approach. By ensuring evidence-based and transparent budget allocations; providing accountability for government-led policy and law implementation; and integrating people's voices throughout their processes to ensure that laws and policies leave no one behind and reach those that need them the most, Parliaments contribute to effective, accountable, and inclusive decision-making.

In addition to continuing to strengthen the meaningful participation of civil society in UN processes, the UN system has an important role to play in the protection of civil society actors and the promotion of civic space in national decision-making processes.

Iraq: SDGs Network Contribution for Building Resilience Community and Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic

The "SDGs Network", formed in 2019 with the support of UNDP Iraq, is a Network of 38 Iraqi civil society organizations that aims to support the Government to implement and monitor the SDGs at national and sub-national levels, with a focus on SDG 5, SDG 16, and SDG 17.

While the network has undertaken several SDGs related initiatives, including having had an innovative role in deriving informal data on SDG 16 for Iraq's Voluntary National Review in 2019, the Network has had a particularly critical role in supporting women and girls through the COVID-19 pandemic.

In line with SDG Targets 16.1 &16.2, and with the support of UNDP Iraq, the Network launched an initiative aimed at measuring the direct and indirect psychosocial and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on the lives of women and girls. Through the initiative, and with the support of UNDP -improving social cohesion pillar, the network enhanced the skills of 95 social workers to reach 7,700 girls and women with online psychosocial support. In addition, and under the same UNDP's pillar, and in response to the recent call of the UN Secretary-General to place women and girls at the core of COVID-19 responses, the network developed a pilot study by collecting survey-responses from women in five newly liberated governorates (Ninewa, Anbar, Salah al-Din, and Kirkuk) addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their lives.

The Network's success in working in partnership with governmental entities, civil society organizations, and international organizations to support the local community has brought attention to the importance of civil society organization in the development and recovery process, providing a starting point to a 'resilience for peace' approach towards building peaceful and inclusive societies.

Source: UNDP

Credit: UNDP Iraq

India: Promoting youth engagement on crime prevention, peace and SDGs through activity-based learning

As part of UNODC's Education for Justice (E4J) initiative, the UNODC Regional Office for South Asia introduced the Lockdown Learners series of free interactive dialogues with youth and educators in India focusing on the SDGs, peace and the rule of law. These were launched in partnership and coordination with some government and non-government educational institutions in India. The series bridged socio-economic and gender divides and provided a platform for students to engage in interactive dialogues, activity-based learning, open exchange of ideas and creation of action networks. The Lockdown Learner's series seeks to complement elements of India's New Education Policy 2020, by providing youth and educators with mentorship and knowledge support to use their skills to promote awareness and critical thinking on crime prevention and the rule of law. The series includes sensitisation of students on issues such as cybercrime, misinformation, gender-based violence, discrimination, and corruption, among others. The Lockdown Learners challenged students to think about ways to address social issues through dialogue, critical skills, knowledge, and unified action, with several educators reporting positive behaviour changes among students. Students who have participated in the sessions are proactively using their skills to strengthen peace and SDGs, by designing social initiatives, building networks and producing songs, interactive videos, games, blogs and websites. Besides top schools and institutions from metropolitan cities, the series has proactively focused on reaching economically disadvantaged students and educators from low income groups, with limited internet access. The series has been featured in the prestigious UN Innovation Network's 'Best of 2020 Initiatives', UNODC-UNESCO forums, UN Crime Congress 2021 and Indian media outlets.

Source: UNODC

Credit: UNODC India

Brazil: Advocating for the SDGs on social media through the Youth Ambassadors Network

Since 2016, Brazil works to promote resilience and SDG implementation with at-risk and vulnerable youth. To this end, the Caixa Seguradora Institute and the Secretariat of Human Rights and Citizenship of São Paulo, together with UNODC, have been providing capacity-building training on the 2030 Agenda to vulnerable young leaders to become SDG spokespersons at the community and international levels. Through the Youth Ambassador Programme, in the last five years 125 young men and women from different backgrounds (indigenous persons, transgender community, people of African descendent persons, persons with disabilities, etc.) have been trained and are certified as part of UNODC Brazil Youth Network. In 2020, the Youth Ambassadors Network has undergone an ambitious advocacy intervention to raise awareness on the impacts of COVID-19 in the implementation of the SDGs, particularly those related to crime prevention and criminal justice. Through a live roundtable and social media engagement, the network reached over 8,000 beneficiaries. The exponential outreach of the initiative led to an articulated awareness raising strategy towards the 17 SDGs.

Source: UNODC

Credit: UNODC Brazil

2. Protecting Human Rights and Access to Justice

The instability and fear that the pandemic engenders is exacerbating existing human rights violations, including discrimination against certain groups, hate speech, xenophobia, gender-based and domestic violence, as well as limited access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Governments around the world have been faced with the challenge of balancing public safety and human rights as they implemented lockdowns and restrictions. 60% of countries have regressed on basic rights in 2020 because of measures to tackle the pandemic. Some national responses have affected people's civil and political rights, such as the freedom of expression and freedom to assembly and protest including by excessive use of force when addressing public protests. In addition, economic and social rights have also been vastly affected by the COVID-19 crisis including employment and labour rights, the right to social security, social and medical assistance, the right to be protected against poverty and social exclusion and the right to housing and education.

Concerns that new emergency powers are being implemented without appropriate checks and balances and that Governments will not readily relinquish their new powers at the end of the pandemic undermines the trust that communities place in measures to address the pandemic.

Particularly in times of crisis, it is important to ensure the functioning of justice systems to ensure that all members of society, including marginalized groups and people in conditions of vulnerability who most need the protection of the law are able to equally claim their rights and access remedies. This also includes prisoners and pre-trial detainees, with over 11 million people imprisoned globally in 2019, of which one third is in detention while still untried, exacerbating the prison overcrowding in several countries during the pandemic.

COVID-19 has created new opportunities for criminals and organized criminal groups, as well as posed new challenges to criminal justice in multiple aspects. Member States have expressed their commitment to decisive action-oriented measures to address these challenges, including by strengthening resilience of criminal justice institutions through multilateral cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Pandemic response and recovery efforts that are rooted in a human-rights based approach are critical to the achievement of SDG 16+, and can prepare societies now for emerging from this crisis with more equitable and sustainable societies. This includes building respect for human rights into the design, development and deployment of technological approaches to the pandemic, in particular ensuring the right to privacy and addressing the substantial digital divides.

A study of 75 percent of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) indicates that they have been remarkably resilient, adapting rapidly to COVID-19 and finding innovative ways to support governments to ensure that human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled while combating the pandemic. NHRIs have a leading role to play in ensuring that human rights are made an intrinsic part of the socio-economic recovery in every country.

Liechtenstein: The Liechtenstein Initiative on Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST)

Despite strong normative and legal frameworks, modern slavery and human trafficking are tragically common in today's world and affect virtually every country. An estimated 40 million people were living in modern slavery in 2016. Modern slavery and human trafficking are not only grave human rights violations. They also constitute lucrative illegal business models, which generate $150 billion in revenue every year. Modern slavery and human trafficking have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, by creating increased risk for those already exploited, increased vulnerabilities for others, and hampered government and civil society response.

Liechtenstein's commitment to prevent and combat illicit financial flows and protect human rights resulted in a public-private partnership, the "Liechtenstein Initiative" for a Financial Sector Commission (FSC) against Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. It aimed to identify and interrupt illicit financial flows associated with modern slavery and human trafficking. The FSC was jointly developed by the Government of Liechtenstein and the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research. Other partners include the Governments of Australia and of the Netherlands, as well as a Liechtenstein bank, the Liechtenstein banking association and philanthropic foundations.

In September 2019, the Financial Sector Commission published the Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST) Blueprint setting out five Goals for financial sector actors to address modern slavery and human trafficking:

> Goal 1. Compliance with laws against modern slavery and human trafficking;
> Goal 2. Knowing and showing modern slavery and human trafficking risks;
> Goal 3. Using leverage creatively to mitigate and address modern slavery and human trafficking risks;
> Goal 4. Providing and enabling effective remedies for modern slavery and human trafficking harms; and
> Goal 5. Investment in innovation for prevention.

The FAST Goals align with international standards and market expectations, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The Blueprint recommends actions that can help finance sector actors meet domestic legal and compliance obligations, strengthen enterprise risk management and address modern slavery.

In the COVID-19 context, the swift and widespread implementation of the FAST Blueprint goals are more necessary and urgent than ever.

The FAST initiative contributes to the implementation of SDG 16+, in particular SDG 16.2 on ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking, SDG 16.4 on significantly reducing illicit financial and arms flows, strengthening the recovery and return of stolen assets and combatting all forms of organized crime and all forms of violence against and torture of children by 2030.

Source: Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein to the UN
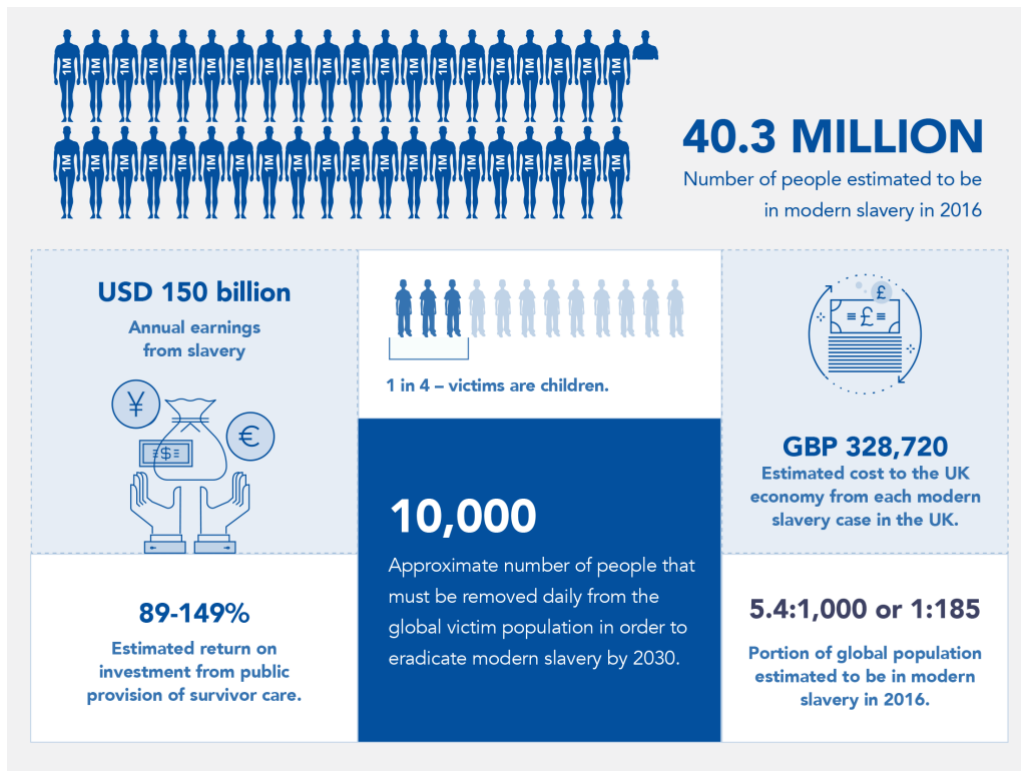
Credit: Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein to the UN

Lebanon: Municipal Police Reform

The overlapping and compounded set of crises that has struck Lebanon has put the spotlight on the vital role of the Municipal Police to ensuring community security. Whether in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, growing social unrest or the increase in security-related incidents, municipal police corps across the country have increasingly been propelled in the role of front-line responders. An ever-growing proportion of the population rely and interact on a daily basis with the municipal police, especially in rural areas.

Today, the Municipal Police is transforming into a professional, human rights-centered, and accountable police force that is at the service of local communities. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities and a specially established committee led by the head of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) academy, a strategic framework articulated around five main components has been developed with the aim of professionalizing the Municipal Police and ensuring that it ably caters to the needs of local populations. Partly initiated in response to the prolonged Syrian refugee crisis and its effects on host communities, this reform has gained undeniable traction, with now over 200 municipalities adhering to at least one of its components.

The strategic reform framework seeks to break with the military culture that has pervaded security institutions in Lebanon by putting the focus on the social function to be played by the Municipal Police, on its community-oriented role. In addition to a code of conduct and standard operating procedures that crystallize the role, responsibilities, and scope of work of the Municipal Police, the reform is centered around a specialized human rights-based training that includes protection and social skills modules. During the crux of the COVID-19 pandemic, a human rights guidance

document was developed and disseminated to further sensitize Municipal Police agents to their human rights obligations and role in protecting and promoting them in times of crisis. The reform, also has at its heart, the promotion of the recruitment of female agents, with a focus on gender sensitive policing and on building police institutions that are more reflective of the population they serve.

With over 900 Municipal Police agents having been trained, a larger number of municipalities recruiting female agents, and increasing complementarity between the Municipal Police and the ISF, the transformation of the Municipal Police - one that is FROM the community and FOR the community – is resolutely under way. This reform enables Lebanon to report on progress on key goal 16 indicators (including: 16.1.2a&b;16.3.1; 16.5.1; 16.6.2).

Source: UNDP

Credit: UNDP Lebanon

**Bangladesh: Human Rights and Justice response to COVID-19**

As part of the COVID-19 outbreak preparedness and response, the Bangladesh Supreme Court Special Committee for Judicial Reforms undertook the necessary steps to conduct virtual hearings through video conferencing. The Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme, ICT Division and UNDP launched the virtual courts platform "MyCourt" and provided technical assistance and trainings on the software "Virtual Court System", which is in operation both in the Supreme Court and subordinate courts across the country.

This digitization work helped reduce the prison population by 11.95 per cent in 3 months, a record in Bangladesh's history. It also reduced the possible spread of COVID-19 in prisons and reduced the adverse economic impact of COVID-19 by freeing thousands of pre-trial detainees to work and supported their families.

Recent studies on e-courts found that high-tech court proceedings can cut court time by 25 per cent. The MyCourt system led to annual cost savings associated with travelling by offering remote communications in the court processes and courtroom technology which empowers courts to meet core purposes and improve quality justice, public trust and confidence in courts as an institution.

Considering the positive results out of the MyCourt system and its easily accessible online features, the Supreme Court, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, National Legal Aid Services Organization, Office of Attorney General are working with UNDP to accelerate the digitalization of the justice system in Bangladesh. This will enhance and integrate a judicial Dashboard and Portal, an online cause-list in Supreme Court and Subordinate Courts, and enable digital case filing and tracking. The knowledge of, and access to, digitalized justice services will be strategically disseminated to justice seekers, especially women, who are most in-need of low-cost services through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Source: UNDP
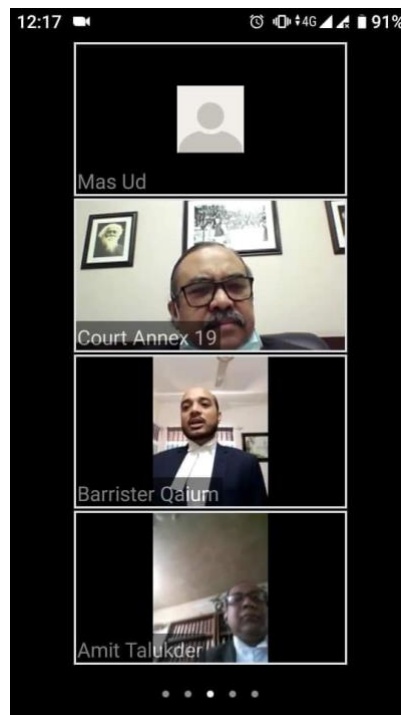
Credit: UNDP Bangladesh
Virtual bail hearing, 2020

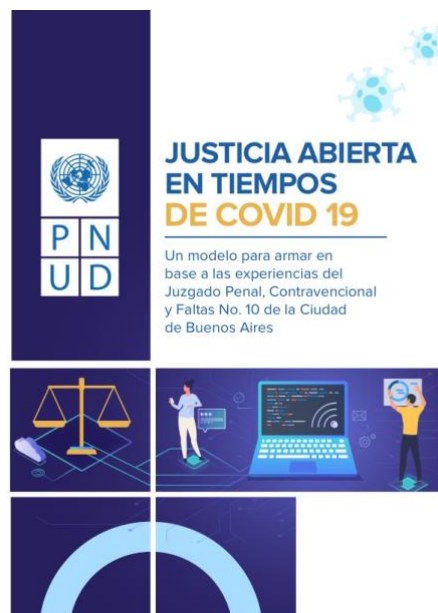**Argentina: Access to Justice in times of COVID-19**

Tackling the COVID-19 pandemic while at the same time abiding by the rule of law in public procurement as well as in the implementation of vaccine programs, was a real challenge in terms of transparency and equity for the 24 jurisdictions of Argentina.

Even though victims of gender-based violence and access to justice have been a focus of public policies in different jurisdictions, gender-based violence and femicides continued to increase during

the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, 298 femicides were reported in Argentina; 1 every 29 hours. The Line 144 -a phone number to assist victims of gender violence in the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversities of the Nation, registered an increase of 39% in consultations since the beginning of mandatory physical isolation. The lockdown measures also increased the risk of violence against children: calls to Helpline 137 – operated by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights – for domestic and/ or sexual violence against children increased by 48 % between March and September 2020, compared with the previous six months. In this matter, UNICEF facilitated access to justice for 125 children victims of sexual abuse and family violence promoting the principle of specialization through financial and technical assistance provided jointly with UNDP to the National Team of Lawyers coordinated by the Ministry of Justice. In addition, UNICEF contributed to strengthening the National Secretary of Childhood, Adolescence and Families (SENAF) by promoting its role in coordinating cases with the aforementioned National Team of Lawyers and the National Plan for the Reduction of non-intended Adolescent Pregnancy (ENIA Plan). In addition, United Nations supported civil society organizations strengthening their capacities on social monitoring and advocacy in public policies on GBV, femicide and gender equality.

To support access to services during the pandemic, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights strengthened its policies in access to legal aid and justice services including through the development of a hotline devoted to providing focused social and legal aid to the country's 4,416 poorest neighborhoods. UNDP and the Consejo de la Magistratura of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires has just launched the Report: Open Justice in times of COVID19: showcasing the experience of the Criminal and Correctional Court №10, one of the few subnational courts providing justice services in times of lockdown.

Source: UNDP

Credit: UNDP Argentina
Open Justice in times of COVID19 report cover

Mexico: Promoting action to protect human rights of groups in vulnerable situations

In 2020, the Government of Mexico undertook actions aimed to protect numerous vulnerable groups in the country. For instance, Mexico launched the second edition of the campaign #JusticiaSinDiscriminacion (Justice without Discrimination) with the support of UNODC. The initiative promotes messages to react against violence and discrimination towards the LGBT+ community and advocates for the human rights of this group and their access to justice. Moreover, the Mexican Government worked in partnership with UNODC on building the resilience of indigenous communities by promoting activities related to the prevention of human trafficking, with a particular focus on women and girls. Through a multi-level cooperation with the NGO My World Mexico, UNODC and voluntary indigenous boys and girls, a comic book series ("Chuka") developed by UNODC's Education for Justice (E4J) initiative focusing on gender-based violence was translated into five indigenous languages and special reading sessions were organized virtually.

Source: UNODC

Tanzania: Improving access to justice through legal aid

The Legal Aid Act (2017) and related regulations aim to improve access to justice for all in Tanzania, including women, children, and other disadvantaged groups, in accordance with principle of Leaving No One Behind.

The law increases oversight and coordination of legal aid services by reinforcing collaboration between the Ministry of Constitutional and Legal Affairs, assorted development partners and Legal Aid Providers. Legal Aid Providers have a code of conduct which guides them on ethical legal aid service provision, as well as a web-based registration and performance monitoring system. Assistant registrars have been appointed country-wide to register Legal Aid Providers in every district and to coordinate between the formal and informal sectors on legal aid services.

In 2020 a baseline study was conducted mapping legal aid services and their accessibility in Zanzibar. The mapping provides bench marks with recommendations for further improvement.

COVID-19 has brought on a number of challenges, including the temporary closure of legal aid providers offices at the height of the outbreak limiting access to legal aid services. In response, the Judiciary promptly rolled out e-justice platforms and adoption of written submissions by lawyers and prosecutors. Joint inspection visits to detention centers were sustained in 2020 and 2021 through the COVID-19 pandemic. These have played a pivotal role in identifying prisoners on prolonged detentions, and providing recommendations for the decongestion of prisons and implementation of COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures within detention centers.

Source: UNDP

Uruguay: Institutional responses to combatting crime

In light of the increase in domestic violence and female homicides in recent years, the Government of Uruguay developed an Action Plan to Combat Gender Violence 2016-2019. In 2018, after

comprehensive discussions with many stakeholders in the Parliament a law on violence against women was ratified. The law defines various types of violence against women, the impact on womens' human rights and includes measures by different state bodies to combat Gender Based Violence. It makes a point of also addressing the most vulnerable populations such as elderly women, women with disabilities, transwomen and minorities.

In March 2020 the Vice President of Uruguay , the Office of the General Prosecutor and the Centre for Judicial Studies of Uruguay, with support from the UN Country Team, developed technical guides for the judiciary to better understand gender stereotypes and international standards to improve women's access to justice. Judges and attorneys from all parts of the country were also trained on the use of the guides. The law and these trainings could not have been timelier because of the increase in gender based violence due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Source: UNDP

Credit: UNDP Uruguay

Nigeria: Incorporating the gender dimension in the criminal justice response to terrorism

Terrorism hinders the economic and social development of countries and leads to regional instability and insecurity. Therefore, action by Member States to prevent terrorism and address conditions conducive to terrorism are crucial for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2020, through a partnership between the National Association of Women Judges of Nigeria and UNODC, more than 300 Nigerian judges and prosecutors received training based on the newly developed Nigeria Training Module on Gender Dimensions of Criminal Justice Responses to Terrorism. The manual aims to support officials in addressing the issues of gender in the counter-terrorism context. Furthermore, in January 2020, upon the request of the Federal Ministry of Justice of Nigeria, the programme also conducted a scoping mission on preventing and responding to violence against children by terrorist and violent extremist groups.

Source: UNODC

3. Access to Services and Leaving no One Behind

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The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the vulnerability of the least protected in society. It is highlighting deep economic and social inequalities and inadequate health and social protection systems that require urgent attention.

Ensuring that no one is left behind in the recovery requires equitable, timely, and effective delivery of public services, including health, education, and social services. This will require addressing inequalities in access to public services, and making services responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Innovative ways of working have been necessary to ensure that service delivery is sustained through the pandemic. Governments together with other actors have created and strengthened social innovation and digital platforms to co-create solutions and deliver essential public services. Institutional innovations during the pandemic have also included mutual aid, volunteerism, and new partnerships such as collaboration between religious entities and health services. These innovative practices have provided us with invaluable lessons as we build resilience for the future. Action is needed to address digital divides, including ensuring equitable access to technology and promoting digital literacy and skills to ensure that digital services are inclusive.

Corruption has a detrimental impact on every aspect of the social and economic performance of a country, with millions of people every day asked to pay bribes to access essential public services such as healthcare, education, water, electricity, or the judiciary. The disproportionate social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic may further exacerbate these inequalities on those who rely on essential public services.

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North Macedonia: Institutional reforms for more inclusive society

The human rights approach to disability inclusion in North Macedonia has gained traction with the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol in 2011. Working closely with the Government, independent human rights institutions, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations (Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, or OPDs), the UNCT, with support from OHCHR, has accelerated systemic reforms through mainstreamed and disability-specific interventions across multiple sectors. Changes to make schools fully inclusive, introduction of a new assessment model, closure of large-scale institutions for children without parental care, deinstitutionalization, accessibility of support services, and shift of attitudes are some of the results achieved.

North Macedonia, with support from the UNCT, continues to enhance the preconditions for disability inclusive development. It focuses on empowering people with disabilities as right holders and agents of change, especially those most likely to be left behind, to exercise their rights and participate in all sphere of public life. The capacities, inclusiveness and accountability of government and independent institutions responsible to promote, monitor and protect human rights were further strengthened.

North Macedonia has established   a national monitoring framework for a strategic partnership between the Ombudsperson, as a national human rights institution, and people with disabilities, OPDs, and civil society. The national monitoring framework was formally launched following a nation-wide advocacy strategy, which encouraged more than 20 organizations covering all forms of disabilities to join. As a new institutional mechanism, it amplifies opportunities for meaningful and effective participation of persons with disabilities and civil society in the promotion, monitoring and protection of human rights. It contributes to the North Macedonia's aspiration to build a truly inclusive society where every person can pursue their rights with dignity and develop transparent, inclusive and accountable institutions.

Source: OHCHR

Ukraine: Access to online court hearings during the COVID-19 pandemic

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on 30 March 2020, the Parliament of Ukraine amended legislation to allow for participation in court hearings via videoconference in civil, administrative and commercial proceedings.

On 8 April, the State Judicial Administration introduced the procedure and software to enable application of the amendments in practice. However, the software only enabled individuals that possess State-recognised digital signatures to participate in virtual court hearings. The COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine measures significantly limited people's ability to obtain a digital signature, which would have denied access of many people to justice online.

OHCHR facilitated a discussion of the amendments that brought together judges, lawyers, and human rights defenders at a virtual meeting of a human rights working group. The participants, including a Member of Parliament, shared concerns that the requirement for digital signature were excessive. Judges also shared their experience of adjudicating cases via free videoconference software prior to the adoption of the procedure requiring a digital signature.

On 13 April, OHCHR sent an advocacy letter to the State Judicial Administration and recommended they not rely exclusively on digital signatures to authorise participation in the judicial videoconference system. OHCHR also published a Facebook post to bring the attention of other relevant stakeholders to the issue. Following joint advocacy with members of Parliament and civil society, these by-laws were revised to include access for individuals who could not obtain digital signatures, thus enabling much broader access to justice online. According to the State Judicial Administration, between 1 April and 30 November 2020, courts held 37,860 virtual hearings.

Source: OHCHR

Pakistan: Strengthening the response of the justice system to women and girls victims of gender-based violence (GBV)

In 2020, Pakistani authorities worked with several UN entities, including UNODC, to organize a Consensus Building Workshop and launch the Essential Services Package to develop a shared vision towards protection of women and girls survivors and victims of GBV. The workshop aimed to

enhance essential justice and policing services in Punjab. During the two-day workshop, experts gathered in Lahore and brought in experience and knowledge to understand and recommend how to address the distinct needs of women and girls through a broad range of justice options that need to be available for victims and survivors. The event covered matters related to criminal, civil, land, and family law, including divorce and child custody. As a result, the participants from the Punjab Police underscored the need for extending effective support to the survivors of GBV and committed to applying actionable standards for the development of quality services across all sectors to improve their response to violence against women.

Source: UNODC

Indonesia: Vocational training for the social reintegration of female prisoners

In March 2020, a new project in the Semarang Female Correctional Facility in Indonesia was established by the Second Chance Foundation and Indonesian Directorate General of Corrections. Prison-based rehabilitation and social reintegration projects, such as vocational and work training, play an essential role in preparing prisoners for their return to the community and reducing recidivism. Women in prison are often at a disadvantage, with few prisons meeting their basic needs or adequately preparing them for release. The programme transferred knowledge around the ancient technique of batik dyeing (a method of dyeing and decorating fabric with wax and dye), which resulted in female prisoners acquiring commercially viable skills that they can use post-release. The aim of this vocational training project was to provide prisoners with adequate professional skills and knowledge, including by providing official certificates to increase their employment possibilities after release with the objective of preventing reoffending. The project also promoted their social reintegration including by offering a way to provide for themselves and their families during their imprisonment through the remuneration of their work.

Source: UNODC

Credit: UNODC Indonesia

4. Access to Information and Protection of the Media
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The crisis has exposed, and in many cases amplified, false, manipulated, and misleading information on the nature of the pandemic and the efficacy of crisis response efforts. Misinformation must be addressed to prevent polarization and intolerance, particularly in fragile contexts where disinformation can result in losses of livelihoods and lives, political tension, and conflict.

The pandemic has also underscored the importance of information in times of crisis. Access to accurate and timely information, including on their rights, availability of services and how to access them, helps people make safe choices, for themselves and their communities and builds trust between people and governments.

Access to reliable information for all, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable d groups, is foundational for people's participation in the decisions that affect them and for increased public trust. A free and independent media and a vibrant civil society including academia and the private sector in the analysis and dissemination of information on issues of public concern contributes greater transparency and accountability. Access to information on the impact of COVID-19, and on the Government response, can enhance democratic debate around the management of COVID-19, and combat the spread of mis/disinformation about the pandemic.

Certain groups are disproportionately disadvantaged in the exercise of their right to information. Governments should proactively disclose and disseminate information through a variety of channels tailored to specific groups utilizing social media platforms, and local languages to ensure that information is fairly accessible to all.

Media freedom and journalist safety are prerequisites for ensuring responsive, accountable and transparent institutions. Freedom House found that 91 out of 192 countries imposed some form of restriction on media as part of their official pandemic response. The International Press Institute's COVID-19 Press Freedom Tracker reports 646 press freedom violations linked to COVID-19 to date.

Journalists were often at the frontline of reporting on the pandemic, exposed to physical safety risks as well as high risks to mental health. As of June 2021, 1521 journalists have died of COVID-19. Governments have adopted measures which have restricted press freedom and threatened journalists' safety, under the pretext of tackling the spread of disinformation on the pandemic. 119 killings of journalists globally were registered by UNESCO in 2019-2020 which is an increase from 57 in 2019. Impunity for killings of journalists remains high, with 87% of all cases between 2006 and 2019 remaining unresolved.

An increased dependence on digital communication channels, as well as prolific COVID-19 disinformation online have meant that online attacks against journalists have worsened during the pandemic, with women journalists exposed to online violence more than ever.

Paraguay: Freedom of expression and access to information laws

In 2020 the Paraguay Supreme Court of Justice issued a historic judgment establishing that the affidavits of assets of public officials at the highest levels of management be freely accessible to the

public. The Supreme Court has ruled in favor of the publication, after an Action of Unconstitutionality filed by the Comptroller General of the Republic (CGR) against judicial decisions of previous years that recognized the right of access to public information on the affidavits. The judgment was issued within the framework of an action that was non constitutional which was further supported by the Comptroller General of the Republic (CGR). This constituted a critical milestone for the right to public transparency in the country, encouraging the CGR to make the necessary adaptations in its information systems so that data on the sworn statements may be available. This also facilitated journalists investigation of alleged acts of corruption and illicit enrichment of authorities.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the Government also created a data transparency platform named "Doing Accountability". The platform updates the daily public expenditures and includes details of the programs and projects oriented to addressing health, social and economic aspects of the COVID-19 crisis. The platform has enabled journalists and citizens to access relevant, timely and accurate information therefore strengthening the democratic debate around the management of COVID-19 in the country.

Source: UNDP

Credit: UNDP Ukraine
Recently inaugurated building of the Judicial Power in Ciudad del Este, Honduras

Mexico: Promoting proactive transparency during COVID-19

As part of its policy on proactive transparency, the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information Protection of Personal Data (INAI) of Mexico has developed a platform to promote the dissemination of useful and reliable information about the COVID-19 pandemic to the general public and the authorities.

Developed in March 2020, the platform – also called the "COVID-19 microsite" – processes, systematizes, publishes and disseminates information about the pandemic. With one of the aims

being to generate reassurance among the public during the health crisis, the platform makes visible the strategies, actions and measures that are part of the public health policy adopted by the Federal Government in Mexico.

The platform also allows visitors to consult statistics related to access to information (ATI) requests about COVID-19 and the type of information that are frequently requested. This way, public authorities can identify the kind of information that they need to publish proactively, while anticipating the responses they need to provide. As of 15 May 2021, as many as 43,556 requests have been analyzed. The information are updated every 15 days to generate the following statistics: a) top 5 requests by categories; b) status of responses to requests; c) type of response provided by the obligated entities (public authorities who are under obligation to respond the requests); d) top 10 obligated entities with the highest number of requests; and e) historical behavior of the ATI requests per day. Indeed, by making available information on the performance of the authorities, as well as the measures and strategies implemented for the management of health crisis, the platform has also stimulated the accountability among public authorities.

Visitors can also access the open data section, where the complete database containing the ATI requests can be downloaded and repurposed for analysis and other uses. The platform also incorporates national and local transparency portals that concentrate useful information on COVID-19. As of today, portals of 14 oversight agencies have been integrated into the platform: Morelos, Nuevo León, Quintana Roo, Oaxaca, Estado de Mexico, Veracruz, Jalisco, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Guerrero, Durango, Chiapas and Puebla.

All in all, not only that this effort has contributed to an informed society, it has also strengthened national measures to prevent, contain and combat COVID-19 in Mexico.

Source: UNESCO

COVID-19 Microsite platform interface

Ukraine: Access to information for strengthening public administration to build forward better after COVID-19

Access to reliable information related to COVID-19 is of critical importance to provide the opportunity for the public to make informed decisions about their health and security. For this reason, the regional network of the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights conducted a rapid monitoring on how local authorities are publishing information about protective measures against COVID-19, and how they address citizens' freedom of information requests. Through this monitoring exercise, regional coordinators assessed the work of 74 subnational authorities through analysis of the local authorities' responses to the freedom of information requests and evaluation of their official websites.

The survey concluded that information holders mostly publish information about protective measures against COVID-19 systematically and on time, however, some local authorities need to take measures for the improvement of access to information, namely its comprehensiveness. Based on the findings of the survey, UNDP experts provided recommendations on how local authorities can enhance the provision of access to public information and widely promoted them through the regional network of the Ombudsperson's Office.

Source: UNDP
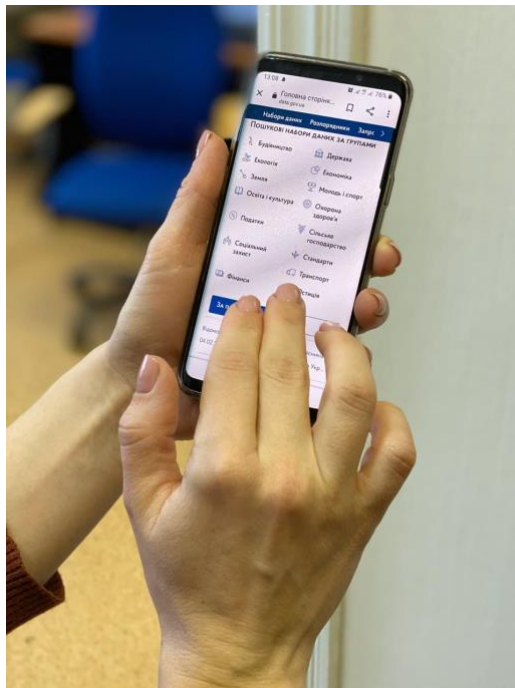
Credit: UNDP Ukraine
Photo of data.gov.ua portal with open data

5. Data Production, Dissemination and Use

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Significant data gaps remain across SDG 16 indicators due to lack of resources for regular data collection, limited capacities and resources within the national statistical system and restricted access to official data kept by government institutions. Analysis of the VNRs makes clear that the lack of reliable and disaggregated statistics is one of SDG 16's biggest challenges.

These challenges have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with traditional data collection becoming increasingly untenable. The COVID-19 crisis is disrupting routine operations for data production throughout the global statistical and data system, with delays in planned censuses, surveys and other data programmes.

A human rights-based approach to data collection can ensure that no one is left behind as a result of the pandemic, as well as for long-term efforts to achieve SDG 16. This requires disaggregated data that reveals the specific lived experiences of people and their multiple and intersecting identities. In addition, this means that human rights principles of transparency, accountability, privacy and self-identification must be considered, and that the meaningful participation of marginalized groups should be prioritized in the production, dissemination, analysis and use of data.

Member States should enhance their preparedness to address the mid- and long-term impact of COVID-19, through multistakeholder partnerships for the continued and systematic data collection analysis of the impacts. This calls for greater collaboration and coordination amongst all stakeholders in the SDG 16 data ecosystem. Partnerships between actors in the national statistical systems and regional and local governments, civil society organizations, youth organizations and academia as well as the private sector and international organizations are needed to enhance countries' abilities to gather, analyze and use data. Broadening global and national monitoring of SDG 16 to include non-official data sources alongside official data sources, especially those representing local and marginalized voices, will be critical.

Somalia: Peacebuilding and the Rule of Law

After more than two decades of civil war and conflict, Somalia has made progress towards political and security stabilization. The establishment of the Federal Government of Somalia in 2012, the first national elections in 2016 and the provisional constitution have provided opportunities for stability, peace, security and sustainable development.[1] Despite this progress, Somalia remains a fragile state and faces various challenges in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals[2], primarily because the Justice and Rule of Law sectors are still in a nascent state.

Growing at an average of 2.5% in 2012-2019, the economy is susceptible to multiple shocks,[3] including recurrent floods and droughts and, most recently, locust infestation, exacerbated by limited capacities of government institutions to deliver services and inadequate

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[1] Felbab-Brown, Vanda. "Developments in Somalia" (14 November 2018): Brookings Institute.
[2] Federal Government of Somalia. 2019. Somalia National Development Plan, 2020-2021; World Bank. 2019. Somalia Poverty and Vulnerability Assessment (Findings from Wave 2 of Somalia High Frequency Survey; Federal Republic of Somalia. 2018; Somalia Recovery and Resilience Framework; FGS. 2018. Somalia Drought Impact and Needs Assessment (DINA), Volume II: Sector Reports; World Bank. 2017. "Strengthening Somalia's Systems Smartly: A Country System Risk Benefit Analysis".
[3] World Bank, 2019. "Somalia Economic Update: Building Education to Boost Human Capital", August, Edition No.4.

infrastructure including in the justice sector[4]. The country's fragility has been further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted economic growth, food security, employment, remittances, fiscal revenue and service delivery especially to the most vulnerable populations. [5]

In 2018, the SDG 16 Monitoring & Evaluation Project for Somalia was initiated to measure the impact of the UN and the international community's investment in areas of rule of law. Since its inception, the project has focused on developing innovative methodologies for monitoring the Rule of Law sector in this fragile context, as well as making sustainable contributions to Somalia's data landscape through capacity-building efforts. To date, the project has conducted pilot assessments relating to access to justice, sexual and gender-based violence, and sentencing in detention, and with the SDG 16 Monitoring & Evaluation Project's support, the Ministry of Justice has been able to collect and analyze data for SDG Target 16.3. Over fifty civil servants in Somali Rule of Law institutions have participated in basic and advanced data training, an initiative that aimed to address the substantial gap in data and monitoring capacity. These trainings were sustained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, albeit virtually.

In response to COVID-19, the SDG 16 Monitoring & Evaluation Project developed an assessment in partnership with the Ministry of Justice to measure the wide-ranging effects of the pandemic on the justice and security sectors. The aim of the survey was to capture the shifts in the rule of law landscape in the wake of COVID-19, highlighting three aspects of what communities may face:
   a. Perceptions and behavior toward justice and security institutions
   b. Impact of COVID-19 on the existing provisions of justice and security.
   c. Providing a glimpse of what Somali society would want in their justice institutions

Preliminary findings suggest that women are exposed or witness violence more than men; and that the highest level of trust of the communities is towards their religious leaders while the trust level for the police and clan elders are of the same level, which is much lower. The assessment also confirmed that what most citizens look for in a justice institution is the enforcement of the decisions/resolution of the dispute.

Source: UNDP

Credit: UNDP Somalia/Said Fadheye

[4] Federal Republic of Somalia. 2018. Somalia Recovery and Resilience Framework.
[5] RAAGSAN. May 2020. "Socioeconomic implication of COVID-19 on micro, small and medium women-owned enterprises: A case of Mogadishu".

Honduras: Integrated Information System for Coexistence and Citizen Security (SICSC) as an input in security policies and social programs

To advance multidimensional analysis and public policy on the security of citizens in Honduras the Secretary of Security and the National Center for Social Sector Information (CENISS) received support from UNDP and USAID to develop three tools that helped provide an integrated information system for policies on coexistence and citizen security, namely the Territorial prioritization index, Situational Analyzer and Advanced Analyzer.

These three tools carry out municipal characterization by identifying where greater proportion of crimes and risk factors are taking place as well as identifying the population groups most affected by violence and crime. These tools contribute to multisectoral data analysis to develop public policies on citizen security.

The System currently integrates databases of 7 institutions {National Institute of Statistics, (INE), Public Ministry (MP) National Center for Social Sector Information, (CENISS), Secretary of Education, Secretary of International Relations, National Registry of Persons (RNP) and Secretariat of Security}, 20 citizen security indicators and more than 300,000 records on crimes against life, integrity, and property, as well as factors associated with insecurity, which are publicly accessible. It also disaggregates data by date (2013 to 2020), sex, age groups, geographic area, and other variables of interest. This is remarkable feat demonstrating effective coordination, technological digitization and a commitment to transparency and open data in the country.

The inter-institutional exchange process has broken silos in the country with its data portal open to the public. This system has improved the quality of multidimensional analysis and the public availability of official information agreed upon and disaggregated for the understanding of complex phenomena of violence. It has also contributed immensely to the analysis of the status of SDG 16: peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Source: UNDP

Credit: UNDP Honduras

Tunisia: Empowering the State mechanisms on SDGs' monitoring, evaluation and reporting to integrate a HRBA and gather disaggregated data

The COVID-19 crisis has been a stark reminder to the world that recovery will not be achieved without integrating a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to ensure that sustainable development is founded on inclusivity and "Leaving No One Behind" (LNOB); as well as a core-minimum commitment to the realization of the ESCR in order to "Build Back Better". This is also relevant to achieving the objectives of SDG 16.

However, the lack of disaggregated data remains a major challenge in Tunisia. As one of the six SDGs identified by the Tunisian government as a priority, the collection of data on SDG16 needs to be enhanced so that its implementation can be properly monitored and evaluated in accordance with the perspective of LNOB and the overall Agenda 2030.

Assessing the existing gap in disaggregated data, especially in response to the COVID-19 crisis and subsequent development efforts, OHCHR, in collaboration with UNFPA, launched in 2021 a technical capacity-building project for the National Statistical Institute (NSI). The project aims at enabling the NSI to apply a Human Rights Based Approach to statistical data collection, contextualization, and reporting with an emphasis on SDG 16 indicators, including 16.b.1 (non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development).

The Tunisian Ministry of Finance and Economy is in charge of preparing the country's second Voluntary National Report, to be presented in July 2021 at the High-Level Political Forum. With support from the OHCHR, consultation sessions were held with civil society organizations that work to promote and protect the rights and needs of the most vulnerable and discriminated groups in the country. The consultations enabled the integration of important insights in the Voluntary National Review and subsequent programming, including the hardships of people with disabilities getting access to medical and health services during the pandemic and the difficulty of children living in rural areas to getting access to education.

As a result of continuous advocacy to integrate a HRBA in these development-related discussions and processes, State mechanisms and platforms on SDG reporting and collection of statistical information are becoming more people-centric and data-driven to ensure that Tunisia's discriminated groups are not left behind (LNOB) from sustainable development plans.

Source: OHCHR

Conclusion

In 2021, several challenges continue to confront the realization of SDG 16+. As the COVID-19 crisis and pandemic response efforts continue to overwhelm societies across the globe, social contracts are under stress and institutions at all levels of governance are under immense strain. As we look ahead to rebuild and recover from the pandemic, the recommendations from the Global Alliance brought forward in its 2019 Report have never been more crucial.

Governments need to step-up political leadership and financial investment to implement SDG 16+, including through broad partnerships with traditional and non-traditional actors. A whole-of-society, and whole-of-government approach is needed to ensure policy coherence in recovering from the pandemic, and to ensure that government action is responsive to the needs of all persons. To this end, civic space must be promoted and safeguarded and multi-stakeholder consultations need to be not only inclusive, but also meaningful, participatory and safe. Advancing SDG 16 in local contexts requires ownership from sub-national stakeholders, including local authorities, civil society representatives, parliamentarians and grassroots communities. As the global community makes efforts to build forward better, investment in a human rights-based approach to data collection and disaggregation, including by working with a broad range of data producers is needed not only to monitor progress, but to identify gaps and effective solutions that leave no one behind in the post-COVID-19 future.

It has become abundantly clear that peace, justice and inclusion are fundamental pre-requisites for building back better, and without focused, accelerated efforts towards the implementation of SDG 16, none of the SDGs can be delivered in full.