The Challenge of Measuring SDG 16:
What Role for African Regional Frameworks?

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May 2015

Key messages

Measuring Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 provides the international community with a unique opportunity to better understand the relationship between governance, peace and security, and development. To achieve this, there is a need to develop a measurement approach that adequately reflects country dynamics, history, and priorities.

A "common but differentiated responsibility" approach to developing indicators could be a good way to measure Goal 16. Indicators, however, are not enough to measure and support progress on such a complex goal, particularly in Africa. Governance and peace and security are fundamentally political and will require a qualitative measurement tool that is capable of providing rigorous political analysis.

Regional initiatives such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) can provide in-depth analysis of country-specific targets under Goal 16, as well as highlight effective local approaches to addressing challenges. The APRM therefore has the potential to play an important role in supporting progress on Goal 16 at the country and regional levels

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Acronyms

APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
CAP	Common African Position
CR	Country review
CSA	Country self-assessment
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IEP	Institute of Economics and Peace
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NPEAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NPoAs	National Plans of Action
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OWG	Open Working Group
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHaSA	Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

Executive Summary

The inclusion of Goal 16 in the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflects the growing international consensus that governance and peace and security are important for development. There is indeed much evidence to support this claim. Government policies in countries as diverse as China, Brazil and Indonesia have helped bring millions of people out of poverty. At the same time, conflicts in places like Mali, Syria, Libya and the Central African Republic have significantly reversed development gains and threaten to undermine long-term development planning and policy implementation. Goal 16 is therefore considered an important enabling factor for achieving the post-2015 development agenda.

There is, however, no universal agreement on the precise dimensions of governance and the best approaches to peace and security that are important for development. Goal 16 as presently articulated is largely inclined towards a normative conception of "good governance", which it posits as essential for development. Yet, this position is neither universally accepted nor substantiated in practice. In Africa, seemingly participatory and representative systems of governance have in a number of cases heightened group polarisation and failed to prevent or contain communal violence. By contrast, the recent history of development in a number of Asian and African countries demonstrates that poverty alleviation is possible despite institutions that are not very inclusive or participatory. Moreover, even countries that have successfully embraced democratic forms of government continue to face challenges in achieving equitable and inclusive development.

Since Goal 16 is considered a universal factor for development, how do we measure its targets in a way that is meaningful for development at the regional and country levels? As African countries rightly maintain, "[g]overnance, peace and security are important to measure – and… they are measurable" (AU, UNDP and Saferworld 2014: 1). The principle of "common but differentiated responsibility" as described in the 1992 Rio Declaration can provide a good framework for developing indicators to measure governance at the global and national levels. A two-tiered system of measurement, with standardised indicators at the global level and country-specific indicators at the national level, could be an effective way to accommodate the differences in governance approaches between countries. For such a system to be effective there is a need to reassess the conceptual framework that underpins Goal 16 so as to create indicators that are flexible enough to capture local priorities and experiences.

Indicators, however, can provide only limited information on governance and peace and security which alone is insufficient for supporting progress in these areas. The targets under Goal 16 are complex, inherently political and country-specific. The nature of participation, understandings of the rule of law and the efficiency of institutions are the results of the political compromises and normative standards that societies agree upon, as well as their capacity constraints. This is why qualitative assessment tools are essential. Regional initiatives like the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) provide the type of in-depth political analysis that is necessary for conducting a rigorous assessment of countries' progress on Goal 16. To date, the APRM has served as a useful early warning tool for conflict resolution, and it has highlighted a number of crucial governance issues which African countries have then sought to address in national development plans. Although APRM assessments might not allow easy comparisons between countries, they do offer another noteworthy advantage: they provide a rich source of information on what particular aspects of governance and approaches to peace and security are effective for development across a diverse set of countries. Having this information is important for the success of Goal 16. The international community cannot marshal convincing arguments about governance and peace and security if they rely primarily on statistical indicators.

Introduction

The 17 proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) represent a significant evolution and conceptual shift in our understanding of development. Whereas the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) focused largely on poverty alleviation and improved social policies for the most marginalised populations, the SDGs propose a much broader multi-sectorial approach to development that applies to low-income, middle-income and high-income countries alike. This new development agenda reflects systematic changes in global dynamics, including the rise of emerging powers ready to assert their influence, the recurrence of transnational armed conflicts and the complex linkages between countries as evidenced most recently by the global financial crisis. The SDGs are therefore posited as a truly global agenda, which recognises that there are no countries that are fully "developed" while others are simply "developing". Critically, the SDGs emphasise that in our increasingly globalised and interlinked world, national development does not occur in a vacuum. It is influenced to varying degrees by international phenomena and events such as climate change, volatile financial markets, health epidemics, and conflict.

A core standard that underlies the notion of the SDGs as a truly global development agenda is the concept of universality. Here, universality conveys the idea of factors that are crucial for sustainable development in all possible contexts and across all countries. According to reports by the Open Working Group (OWG) on the SDGs and the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, one important universal factor for development is Goal 16: to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels" (OWG 2014:10).

There is ample evidence to substantiate the universal importance of governance and peace and security for development and vice versa. Assessments of the impact of the MDGs have shown that conflict-affected countries invariably experience declining growth rates and difficulty in implementing poverty alleviation and social development policies. Conflicts in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, have destroyed or made it impossible to put in place transportation infrastructure that could facilitate regional and national trade (UNEP n.d.; Denny 2012). Non-conflict related violence also poses a significant challenge for growth. A study by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Bank (2007) suggests that reducing crime by a third in the Caribbean could double per capita economic growth. Furthermore, crime and violence have intangible effects, such as psychological trauma and destruction of social cohesion, which also undermine human development and governance. Peace and security are therefore important for development because they create an enabling environment for long-term development planning and implementation. Moreover, peaceful and secure societies can direct human and capital resources towards productive endeavours that support growth. At the same time, inclusive and sustainable development can mitigate some of the underlying causes of conflict, such as, but not limited to, competition over limited resources and economic exclusion (IEP 2013).

Like peace and security, there is broad international acknowledgement of the importance of governance for socio-economic development. Effective governance systems ensure that country institutions are able, on a day-to-day basis, to make decisions and implement policies that support their national development goals and protect their citizens. As Merilee Grindle (2007) rightly explains, governance involves the mechanisms and institutions of power that structure a country's political, social and economic interactions; it is governance that determines and regulates how resources are distributed and used. Reports on the SDGs and results of the UN My World surveys further suggest that certain characteristics of governance are important for sustainable development. The My World surveys, for example, highlight that effective governments, capable of tackling poverty and resolving socio-political issues, are participatory, responsive and accountable to their populations. Access to justice, freedom from discrimination and persecution, and popular participation are also cited as critical for development.

Although governance and peace and security are undoubtedly important for sustainable development, in considering a global agenda like Goal 16 it is important to note that there is limited universal consensus on the precise dimensions of governance and the best approach to peace and security for effective development. Member states of the UN, for example, maintain that "democracy, good governance and the rule of law at the national and international levels [are] essential for sustainable development" (UN 2012). Similarly, International IDEA asserts that "democracy is the system of governance which offers the best tools to fight against corruption, poverty and inequality" (Lekvall 2014: 7). Studies by David Booth on Africa,

however, present a rather more complex picture. Under certain conditions, Booth (2012) argues, government systems that are not necessarily inclusive or participatory have been able to spur socio-economic growth much better than democratic systems, which have sometimes amplified social divisions and prevented collective action for development. In a recent study, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) notes that on further analysis of the My World surveys, "what people really prioritise [is] often the ability of governments to actually deliver things to them" (Bergh et al. 2013, cited in Wild et al. 2015: 24) rather than levels of inclusion or participation. Furthermore, studies of development in Asia, particularly China and Malaysia, show that countries have achieved increased growth and socio-economic improvements under relatively non-inclusive or non-participatory governance systems (ibid.). These different perspectives raise questions for our thinking about Goal 16. They highlight the need to look at what is effective in practice and to think of ways to measure governance and peace and security beyond simple normative understandings of what appears to be best for development.

How then do we reconcile the different perspectives described above and measure Goal 16 in a way that is both internationally comparable and locally relevant, particularly in Africa? As a starting point, it is important to note that Goal 16 can and should be measured. The post-2015 agenda offers the international community a unique opportunity to develop a rich understanding of the constraints to and progress on peace and security and to identify governance innovations and practices that can be effective for development. An emerging approach to measuring the SDGs lies in the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility" described in the 1992 Rio Declaration. The principle as applied to the SDGs calls for common goals but a differentiation of responsibilities for achieving them at the global and national levels (FES 2013). Building on this, g7+ members, many in Africa, and a number of international actors, have advanced the notion of creating a two-tiered system for monitoring targets under Goal 16. This system would include global indicators for comparability between countries alongside differentiated targets and indicators at the national level that reflect country-specific capacities and ambitions. A two-tiered system of indicators, however, is not enough. As mentioned, governance and peace and security are complex issues. Therefore, to effectively monitor and encourage improvements in governance, measurements will need (i) to utilise indicators that are adaptable and not inclined towards stylised concepts of "good" governance and (ii) to look beyond neatly packaged indicators towards more in-depth qualitative assessments, including enhanced regional peer review initiatives such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

1. Goal 16: Universality and a Global Agenda for Governance and Peace and Security

Goal 16 offers a universal agenda insofar as all states agree that effective governance and peace and security are important for development. Indeed, there is much evidence, as set out above, that governance and peace and security do matter for development. Less clear, and not adequately specified by the SDGs, are what aspects of governance and what approaches to peace and security matter most and are effective for development. Aspirations for governance and peace and security are good, but for a time-bound agenda like the SDGs there needs to be a common understanding of how to operationalise aspirations and how to differentiate responsibilities for targets at the national, regional and local levels. Perhaps the one target that is not conceptually ambiguous is Goal 16.9: "By 2030 [countries should] provide legal identity for all, including birth registration". For most other targets, there is no agreement on a common conceptual and practical approach or on the differentiation of responsibilities between countries.

With regard to the rule of law, for example, country perspectives differ on what this means in practice. Statements by g7+ countries suggest that the rule of law should be inherently consistent with international human rights standards. Yet, if human rights standards are to be applied, then how do we assess the rule of law in countries like the United States, which are not party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and can thus justifiably claim exemption from being evaluated against such a framework? These questions remain a subject of debate. On the African side, the Common African Position (CAP) on the post-2015 development agenda describes rule of law in broad terms as equality of access to justice. The standard for justice, however, is not clearly defined. Meanwhile, countries like Brazil and Nicaragua maintain that there is no basis on which to assess the rule of law, first, because it is country-specific and, second, because it cannot be used as a standard for evaluating the effectiveness of governments in implementing development policies (OWG 2014).

On peace and security there is a similar lack of agreement about how responsibilities should be differentiated at the national, regional and local levels. The CAP commits the African continent to strengthen regional cooperation in dispute resolution, post-conflict reconstruction and curbing of illicit cross-border flows of arms. However, it makes no mention of the international dimensions that contribute to conflict in Africa, including foreign financing of radical sectarian groups and flows of illegal arms (AU 2014). The G77 countries have stated that while conflict might necessitate international intervention, violence should be dealt with solely at the national level. This fails to acknowledge the regional and international dimensions of violence, particularly as it relates to human and arms trafficking and the drugs trade. There are also questions as to what types of violence should be considered legitimate in the global arena. When is international or regional intervention in a country justifiable, and how should violence be assessed in such a case. Given the asymmetries of power among countries, a clear global understanding is needed of how responsibilities for effective governance and peace and security are to be differentiated.

Table 1: Proposed Targets for Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	
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
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

Source: OWG (2014).

The difficulty is that many targets under Goal 16 are not universal enough in the sense that they are largely inclined towards a normative conception of "good governance" that is well-meaning but problematic (Table 1). Broadly speaking, governance as expressed in the SDGs echoes liberal democratic values, such as inclusiveness, participation and the rule of law, positing them as essential for sustainable growth and social development. Evidence, however, does not bear out this claim. There is also no universal consensus on the correlation between forms of government (e.g., levels of participation, inclusion and rule of law) and attainment of economic and human development goals. Victor Adetula (2011), for example, finds that the increased participation of African citizens in elections has not necessarily resulted in actual improvements in governance. In contrast, Grindle (2007) notes that China has brought millions out of poverty, improved quality of life and experienced high growth rates despite governance systems that have been exclusive and opaque. She also points to the evolution of governance in the West linked to changing relationships between citizens and elites. In an analysis of economic development in the United States, Sven Beckert reminds us that "[w]hen we marshal big arguments about the West's superior economic performance, and build these arguments upon an account of the West's allegedly superior institutions like private-property rights, lean government, and the rule of law, we need to remember that the world Westerners forged was equally characterized by exactly the opposite" (Beckert 2014). According to Booth (2012), seemingly sub-optimal standards of transparency and accountability are often considered acceptable in Africa as long as citizens feel that development is visible and public resources are fairly distributed.

Goal 16, however, prescribes a "one size fits all" approach and "what sorts of institutions countries should have" (Wild et al.: 23). The danger, especially for Africa, is that this view will advance calls for stylised conceptions of good governance, dislocated from any historical or cultural context. Over the past decade, a number of regional bodies and initiatives, including the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NPEAD) and the APRM have embraced the idea that democracy and good governance are the key to Africa's development. Although the underlying concepts themselves are good, internalising these good governance approaches overly simplifies problems of governance and their relationship to development. More importantly, insisting on a "model" form of governance for Africa may overlook underlying problems of politics and power as well as local systems of political thought, conflict resolution and problem-solving. As Booth argues, the continued insistence in development discourse on a stylised conception of governance risks promoting isomorphism and neglects to address the real problems of power, interests and collective action. In Kenya and Nigeria, for example, electoral democracy has revealed severe group polarisation and heightened zero-sum competitions for power. In such a context, corruption, for example, is not necessarily the chief problem but rather a symptom of a much deeper issue of social cohesion and collective action at the political elite and citizen level. Inclusion and participation are important, but as C. S. Momoh cautions, "the verdict of the majority might not be the solution to societal problems", especially in societies where there is a high level of mistrust and no agreement on what constitutes the nation (cited in Oyekan 2009: 218). It is counterproductive to simply assume that the nature of states in Africa is uncontested and to reduce the problem of governance and peace and security to simply a failure of state-society relations. Citizens have complicated relationships with each other, and the practical norms of society also shape how state actors behave (De Sardan 2008).

Governance and peace and security are inherently political, historical and country-specific. Goal 16's present orientation fails to acknowledge the range of regimes and institutions that have been effective in development, and how the distribution of power evolves over time in countries. Furthermore, there is a tendency with the good governance framework that underlies Goal 16 to project what it is that people need for development, though this may not correspond with what they want or what works best in practice.

Overall, a global agenda on governance is possible and should be encouraged; ineffective states pose challenges for development, not only at the local level but also regionally and internationally. Goal 16 is aspirational in a good way. However, if it seeks to guide actions on governance and on peace and security in a direction that is meaningful for development and within a set timeframe, some of its targets should be further unpacked, which is beyond the scope of the current paper. Before the international community launches into a determination of measurement approaches, there is still a need to take a step back from the SDGs and clarify (i) what universal qualities are effective for development and (ii) how is responsibility, particularly at the global level, defined. This will be key for measurement, as it is not useful to create indicators for targets that are ideal but not necessarily effective in practice in the short to medium term.

2.   Measuring Goal 16 at the Global Level

Past international agreements, such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and the Accra Agenda for Action, all acknowledge that local ownership is important and that global agendas should be aligned to country development strategies. The UN Secretary General's synthesis report on the SDGs similarly recognises the need for national ownership and differentiation at the level of measurement between national and international actors. Recent discussions within the UN Statistics Division suggest that a comprehensive monitoring framework for the SDGs would "include regional, national and thematic/sectorial monitoring levels" (UN 2015: 3). These are welcome approaches, especially for a target like Goal 16, which, as detailed above, is fundamentally political and influenced by national histories, cultures and social compromises. In view of the large number of targets under Goal 16 and in light of our recognition of the dangers of decontextualising governance and peace and security, how can indicators be developed at the global level to monitor these targets?

A first step would be for the international community to acknowledge that global indicators under Goal 16 will have to be limited. This is not only because of the number of targets but more importantly because governance and peace and security cannot be meaningfully assessed through condensed statistical tools. Indicators can provide us with valuable information to inform policy. For example, homicide rates in a country disaggregated by region and gender can inform law enforcement programmes, but they cannot tell us what the root causes of conflict are or how communities interact to influence political outcomes. In short, indicators are proxies and, as Melissa Thomas (2009) reminds us, when creating indicators, particularly for governance, we must be certain that they are conceptually as well as technically sound. This goes beyond the current discourse on differentiating targets by country or timeframes, bringing us back to the need to unpack what constitutes universality in governance and to clarify the level of responsibility for peace and security at all levels. If governance is country-specific then we must be sure that the indicators used for international comparison and to advocate governance improvements are the most important for development across all local contexts. This is a no small challenge. The outcomes are likely to be far from perfect, but they must be practical and adaptable.

One suggestion is for countries to take a very minimalist view of these concepts. This means that global indicators would measure how well countries implement their own national policies and international agreements on, for example, accountability, inclusiveness, the rule of law and participation. Gaps between performance on national and international policies and agreements would then be highlighted. The APRM, discussed in greater detail in the section below, currently employs such a strategy. It assesses each country's compliance against a list of standards. Goal 16 can also be analysed in light of indicators from other thematic areas that focus on the outputs of governance, such as health, education and economic policy. Although causal links might prove difficult to verify, comparing public service delivery to government forms might provide us with some kind of picture of what aspects of governance are important for development in a range of countries. Together, these measurements could offer a dynamic approach that considers the ways in which country policies change over time and adapt to socio-economic and political shifts. Although systems to create indicators of this sort might not fully exist at present, particularly in Africa, the post-2015 development agenda offers a unique opportunity to start building capacity in this area. Moreover, a number of think tanks and academic institutions in Africa and around the world presently do ongoing analysis of this sort. The focus of such measurement, therefore, becomes less about *looking for* good governance and more about building shared values at all levels and assessing how different systems of governance and security policies play out on the ground.

Since Goal 16 is comprised of global targets, levels of responsibility need to be differentiated between countries and at the national and international levels, with indicators determined accordingly. Unequal power dynamics, however, make differentiation on complex issues difficult. A politically viable solution might be to fashion indicators that assess country actions in line with their own legal and formal international cooperation agreements. This would be especially significant for goals like 16.1 on conflict and security. Although conflict, violence and trafficking are country-specific, they are facilitated by complex regional and international dynamics. The conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, might be the result of internal socio-economic issues, but they have been facilitated by the actions of other countries, including neighbouring states. At the same time, regional and international actors in Africa have committed themselves to resolving conflicts through specific diplomatic agreements. It is therefore important that we assess whether countries are fulfilling their own expressed and stated obligations. Global action, too, can be measured through proxies, such as weapons flows and sales, types of international support provided and the existence of bank transparency laws in countries known as destinations for illicit financial flows.

The international community must also evaluate its data sources. In order to build strong arguments about what countries require for development by way of governance and peace and security, we need internationally comparable and valid data. This means two things: (i) that we do not simply rely on existing indicators because they are "feasible" and (ii) that we strive for consistency and harmonisation at the global level. The World Governance Indicators, for example, provide composite scores of governance drawing on a range of assessment tools, each with different methodologies. Yet, as Thomas explains, these indicators might not all be conceptually valid, and the use of composite scores might not produce an accurate picture of the extent that targets have been achieved. The UN Statistics Division has proposed that indicators should come from national statistical systems insofar as possible. This is a good start in terms of building national statistical capacity, particularly in Africa, but a process is needed for developing the capacity of independent local institutions to gather data that is consistent and technically sound. There are increasingly vocal calls for a "data revolution" to underpin the monitoring of the SDGs, particularly Goal 16, at the global level. While this is a welcome development, caution is warranted. Using data to measure peace and security and governance at the global level will not ensure that the findings will be unbiased and relevant.

In sum, the international community needs to take a step back and determine a clear and shared idea of what approaches to governance and peace and security matter for development. Global indicators alone cannot produce an adequate picture of progress and problems in governance and in peace and security at the national and regional levels. Differentiation should not be solely about setting different targets at the local and international levels. Rather, it should also allow fair evaluation of different systems and approaches to governance. That necessarily means that many indicators will be incomparable across countries. This limitation should be fully acknowledged.

3. Measuring Goal 16 in Africa

There seems to be a general consensus, as detailed above, that the SDGs cannot be measured like the MDGs, using only a standard set of global indicators. In response, the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States and the 1992 Rio Declaration's concept of "common but differentiated responsibility" have been proposed as models for creating a two-tiered system of global and national indicators. Such a system could be developed in several ways:

- Requiring countries to select a number of targets to prioritise along with corresponding indicators;
- Allowing countries to select indicators that better reflect the process through which they seek meet targets; and/or;
- Allowing countries to choose a level of ambition in each target to match their starting conditions.

The idea is that national indicators would be specific but complementary to global indicators, and there would be a comprehensive "basket" of indicators for each country. African countries, working with the African Union, have proposed adapting Goal 16 to ongoing regional initiatives. Although this is a commendable means to ensure local ownership, African countries in their selected indicators have continued to simplify the complexities of governance and peace and security at the regional and national levels. To measure governance in a way that is meaningful for development in Africa, the focus should be more on in-depth qualitative assessments that can help to unpack the complexities of governance in many countries. Qualitative assessments are challenging, but so too are governance and peace and security. A sensitive and nuanced measurement approach is thus called for.

4. The African Union Proposed Regional Approach to Measuring Goal 16 and the Limits of Indicators

African states have shown strong interest in thinking about the post-2015 development agenda and proposing approaches to the measurement of Goal 16. The Common African Position (CAP) on the post-2015 development agenda recognises the importance of both governance and peace and security for development, and it commits African countries to seek improvements in both areas (Table 2). At the same time, the CAP argues that assessments of performance in meeting targets in these areas should take into account the initial conditions of each country and recognise their progress rather than simply highlighting how far they fall short of global goals. African states therefore support differentiation in levels of ambition with regard to the targets.

Table 2: Common African Position (CAP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Pillars and Governance Enablers	
Pillar I	Structural economic transformation and inclusive growth
Pillar II	Science, technology and innovation
Pillar III	People-centred development
Pillar IV	Environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management
Pillar V	Peace and security • Addressing the root causes of conflict • Preventing the outbreak of armed conflict
Pillar VI	Finance and partnerships
Enabler	Strengthen good governance • Further democratisation • Fight corruption • Promote good political and socio-economic governance, transparency and accountability, especially in the field of natural resources management • Improve the enabling environment for involvement of civil society • Accelerate decentralisation of the governance system • Reinforce rule of law frameworks and strengthen institutional capacities to protect human rights • Promote integrity and leadership that is committed to the interests of the people • Protect human rights of all citizens • Fight against all forms of discrimination • Promote the constructive management of diversity through democratic practices and mechanisms at the local, national and continental levels

Source: AU (2014).

Concerning measurement of Goal 16, countries attending a June 2014 meeting of the African Union Commission argued that "[g]overnance, peace and security are important to measure – and… they are measurable" (AU, UNDP and Saferworld 2014: 1). Accordingly, a list of indicators have been selected building largely on the ongoing work of the African Union's Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA) (see Appendix A). SHaSA's Governance, Peace and Security Working Group is assisting national statistics offices in 20 countries to standardise their approaches to data collection. Some indicators for Goal 16 have been drawn from the African Union Continental Early Warning System and from the work of the APRM (ibid.).

The proposed indicators suggest that Africa largely shares the liberal democratic framework that underpins Goal 16. The CAP defines six priority pillars for Africa (Table 2), one of which is peace and security, which it considers critical for the continent's development. It thus commits countries to address the root causes of conflict and work to prevent the outbreak of violence. In addition, "good and inclusive governance" is cited as an important criterion for creating an enabling environment for all of the other pillars. The CAP, moreover, calls on countries to further the process of democratisation at the national level, to fight corruption, to increase transparency and accountability, to reinforce the rule of law and to strengthen institutional capacity (AU 2014). However, as mentioned above, the strong emphasis on the importance of

liberal democratic processes and institutions for development in Africa might overlook the real issues of collective action at the political elite and citizen levels that make developmental governance possible.

The proposed African approach to measuring Goal 16 also fails to recognise differences in national priorities. There are between 5 and 15 indicators under each of the 12 governance targets. The African Union suggests that the proposed "basket of indicators which captures a range of issues…must be used for each target if progress in meeting them is to be accurately measured" (AU, UNDP and Saferworld 2014: 5). However, not all targets or indicators are applicable to all countries in the same way. It would be unreasonable to have Botswana track targets on conflict-related violence when homicide might be the more urgent concern. In Kenya, however, terrorism and communal violence might be as much of a concern as homicide. As such, each country will require a different set of indicators. Given capacity constraints, countries might want to start with a limited number of indicators that captures their most pressing challenges. Governance, after all, is a long-term process, and it is important to acknowledge this both in the targets set and in the way they are measured.

The proposed indicators under SHaSA might not be enough to make the measurement of Goal 16 meaningful at the national level in Africa. The African Union's extensive basket of indicators for Goal 16 points to governments' interest in gathering as much information as possible on governance and on peace and security. Indicators, however, convey little information, and they cannot adequately capture the complexities of these issues on the African continent. Aside from this, there is a need to better rationalise the indicators proposed and to allow countries to select those that are most meaningful for tracking their own progress. It is also important that in trying to capture the complexities of Goal 16, African countries do not overwhelm their present capacities by tracking all indicators. Instead, targets and indicators should evolve over time as both socio-political priorities change and national statistical capacities improve.

5. A Qualitative Approach to Measuring Goal 16: The African Peer Review Mechanism

In light of the complexities of governance and peace and security highlighted above, qualitative assessments might offer a more useful approach to measuring Goal 16. The APRM is an interesting regional initiative that could help African countries effectively set targets and monitor and assess issues related to governance and peace and security. The APRM is a voluntary assessment mechanism developed in line with the New Partnership for Africa's Development and launched in 2003. It was designed to improve governance in Africa through inclusive public assessments of national issues and peer learning among states. There are five stages in conducting an APRM review, including a participatory national self-assessment, a peer review conducted by heads of state and preparation of a national plan of action. To date, 34 countries have acceded to the APRM, and 17 have undergone peer reviews. In 2014, the African Union General Assembly decided to make the APRM an autonomous institution within the African Union and have it take a leading role in measuring governance in Africa.

Table 3: Complementarities between APRM Questions and Selected Targets under SDG 16

SDG 16 Targets	APRM Indicators and Questions
16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere	• What conditions generate conflict in your country? • What mechanisms exist for preventing, reducing and managing conflicts in your country? How effective are these? • How involved are sub-regional and regional institutions in resolving intra- and inter-state conflict in your country?

16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children	• What concrete measures have been taken to protect the rights of children?
	  – Measures against all types of child abuse including but not limited to child trafficking, labour, prostitution and pornography, as well as the compulsory and voluntary recruitment of minors into military services
	  – Assess the effectiveness of these measures in terms of trends in the overall improvement of the status of young persons in the country over the past five years. Provide evidence of measures taken to sustain progress (training, monitoring, follow-up actions, adjustment, reports available)
	• What concrete measures have been taken to promote and protect the rights of the youth?

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all	• What measures have been put in place to promote and enforce civil rights? • What steps have been taken to facilitate due process and equal access to justice for all? • What weight do provisions establishing the rule of law and the supremacy of the constitution carry in practice? • To what extent is the judiciary independent? • What measures have been taken to promote and protect the rights of women in the country?

16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms	• What is the state of corruption in the public sector?
	  – Assess whether public anti-corruption tools (such as asset declaration regimes) and anti-corruption institutions are fully in place and effective.
	  – Give details of major cases of alleged corruption prosecuted and disciplinary sanctions taken over the past five years.

16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels	• What measures have been taken in the country to strengthen institutions for efficient and effective public service delivery? • How would you rate the independence and effectiveness of the state legislative body?
16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels	• Does the political system as practiced in your country allow for free and fair competition for power and the promotion of democratic governance?* • What efforts, if any, have been made to empower local and rural communities through the devolution of political power,

		judicial authority or financial resources? – the effectiveness of the current system of devolution of power to local authorities, describe whether it enhances or hinders service delivery and whether or not it promotes greater accountability between government and citizens. – Whether traditional authorities consulted or in any way incorporated into the system of government at the local levels and does the incorporation of traditional authorities enhance or hinder accountability or service delivery at the local government level. • What measures have been put in place to enhance the role of women in the democratic process and in the governance of your country? Describe the challenges faced and the measures taken to sustain progress. • How vibrant and influential are civil society organizations in your country?
16.10	Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements	• To what extend does the state respect and protect the Access to Information rights of citizens? – Assess whether public officer anti corruption tools and anti-corruption institutions are fully in place and effective
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	• How involved are international organizations such as the UN in intra-and inter-state conflict resolution in your country? – Assess the effectiveness of these institutions in terms of the resources (human, financial and logistics) that have been deployed in your country. To what extent are the interventions of these bodies accepted and deemed legitimate.
16.b	Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development	• Identify vulnerable groups in your country and outline measures your country has taken to promote and protect the rights of permanently disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, including but not limited to, internally displaced persons, refugees and persons with disabilities? Assess the effectiveness of the measures and give details of any violation and reports available.

*One of the APRM's goals is democracy promotion. Source: OWG (2014); Revised country self-assessment questionnaire for the African Peer Review Mechanism (2003).

The APRM could become a truly important *qualitative* assessment tool for measuring and monitoring governance in Africa. APRM assessments provide an in-depth analysis of country-specific governance and security challenges, as well as of local approaches to problem-solving. This is accomplished by adapting its extensive questionnaire in alignment with country priorities. (Table 3 presents examples of complementarities between APRM questions and selected targets under SDG 16.) The APRM, therefore, offers countries an opportunity to discuss and determine some of the governance and peace and security issues that go "unseen" by other indicators and expert assessments. This has in turn made the APRM an important predictive tool. In Kenya, for example, Bronwen Manby (2008: 1) finds that APRM reports made "a remarkably frank assessment" of the country's problems and did not shy away from delicate issues. In fact, the APRM assessment foresaw the ethnic tensions that led to electoral violence in 2007 (ibid.). Similarly, five years before the 2008 attacks on African immigrants in South Africa, an APRM assessment warned of the need for South African authorities to address rising levels of xenophobia (Crush and Pendleton 2004). As Stefan Meyer explains, "In terms of foresight and scenario development, APRM reports are far more useful than standard indicator sets" (Meyer 2009: 9).

The APRM assessment process has created a space for non-state actors to engage with governments to identify pressing challenges and develop solutions. Non-state actors have used the process to draw government attention to key areas of policy concern. In Uganda, for instance, the Minority Rights Group International used the APRM process to draw attention to the status of ethnic minority groups in the country. This led to interesting insights about the link between land deprivation, political exclusion and conflict. Likewise, in Benin an AfriMap assessment found that "no study in living memory had ever been conducted so exhaustively, or had ever given Beninese society the chance to speak out to the same extent" (Badet 2008: 22). Aside from elections, there tend to be few opportunities for citizens and officials to converse in-depth about the state of governance and peace and security throughout a country. The APRM has been useful in encouraging national dialogue and empowering national actors to identify problems and proffer workable solutions. This has encouraged national ownership and thinking about governance, which itself is imperative for sustained development. The APRM process has also encouraged governments to learn from each other. Nigeria and Kenya, for example, exchanged experts during their country self-assessment processes in order to benefit from each other's insights. This has rendered the APRM much more than an assessment process. It is becoming a mechanism for national and inter-state discussions on governance and peace and security (Gruzd 2014).

Perhaps most importantly, the APRM has developed a built-in process for ensuring that its findings are incorporated into national policies and development plans. APRM National Plans of Action (NPoAs) incorporate key findings of country assessments into recommendations harmonised with country plans and policies for government action. The integration of NPoAs into the APRM process could also prove useful for operationalising Goal 16 at the national and regional levels. By creating action plans to address the issues highlighted in APRM assessments, the process creates a clear understanding of which government and nongovernmental agencies are responsible for specific reforms. In a similar way, the APRM could ensure that measurements for Goal 16 actually feed into national policies and development plans. This is a major advantage over the use of indicators. In Kenya, APRM recommendations helped to inform the new constitution, and also led to establishment of agencies to combat drug trafficking and creation of 148 peace committees for conflict resolution. Likewise in Ghana, APRM recommendations contributed to the passing of laws on human trafficking, persons with disabilities and domestic violence, and also fed into the development of a number of improved public administration agencies to combat corruption (ibid.). Box 1 presents a case study of the APRM process and policy outcomes in Uganda.

Box 1: The Ugandan Experience with the APRM

Uganda was among the first countries to embrace to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). It acceded in 2003 and was the seventh country to undergo a peer review under the process. From 2006 to 2008, the country carried out a country self-assessment (CSA) and an independent country review (CR). First, an inclusive national APRM commission composed of 21 members worked with independent research organisations to conduct field research and prepare the CSA report. Subsequently, an APRM panel of experts conducted the independent CR to verify the findings of the CSA. In June 2008, APRM participating countries conducted a peer review of the Ugandan assessment and National Plan of Action (NPoA). Overall, the Ugandan APRM experience proved fairly representative, offering diverse groups in the country an opportunity to identify and debate pressing governance challenges (Tindifa and Luutu 2011).

Findings and Policy Recommendations

The CSA and CR reports provide a relatively balanced view of governance in Uganda, highlighting successful reforms as well as a number of systematic and structural issues. The APRM NPoA recommended that the country seek to build a democratic culture more widely. Intra-party relations, it noted, were not necessarily based on ideological differences but on regional identities, which served to exclude a number of constituents (ibid.). The CR raised questions about the process of decentralisation under way in Uganda, noting that decentralisation "is not [a] social engineering tool with a universally applicable blue print". According to the report, "decentralization has the potential of being used to manage diversity", however, "[d]ecentraization has its downside – it can foster regional identity and encourage secessionism, and there is a potential for the system to revive conflict within multi-ethnic societies" (APRM 2009: 92). Both the CSA and the CR reports warned that the current trend of decentralisation in Uganda had exacerbated capacity constraints, stretching public services thin. As such, the NPoA recommended that Uganda rationalise its process of decentralisation so as to be better able to effectively manage diversity and improve public service delivery (SAIIA 2010).

Both reports also highlighted the complicated relationship between civil society and government in promoting democracy, an issue often inadequately assessed in discussions of good governance. According to the CR report, "some non-state actors have not demonstrated a participatory culture that is open to a diversity of voices" (APRM 2009: 77), and there is sometimes a lack of accountability. The NPoA therefore recommended that nongovernmental organisations commit to improve their institutional governance and public legitimacy.

Similarly, the reports note that corruption is endemic in all strata of Ugandan society. Another of the NPoA's recommendations was therefore that Uganda harmonise all laws, policies and institutions established to fight corruption within and outside of government.

Finally, a significant finding of the CSA was that land deprivation has been an underlying cause of conflict and also an important factor in the perceived exclusion of ethnic minorities. Land deprivation directly threatens the economic livelihood of many groups in Uganda, particularly minorities (ibid.). Accordingly, the Ugandan NPoA contained a number of recommendations related to conflict management and land reform. These included suggestions to review land laws and to support local initiatives towards alternative justice at the local level.

Outcomes and Policy Reforms

Although the reports highlighted a number of important areas for government attention, the NPoA did not reflect all of these. Nevertheless, the NPoA did include a number of key recommendations that the government of Uganda has implemented, despite its initial criticism of the APRM (SAIIA 2010). In part, this is due to the largely inclusive nature of the APRM, which gave civil society and academic groups an opportunity to own the process and lobby the government for reforms. Nevertheless, the Ugandan government still has a lot of work to do in prioritising and systematically implementing reforms. The APRM could also be useful in monitoring the development and implementation of reforms and in highlighting emerging issues. The table below presents some of the reforms that the Ugandan government has achieved to date.

Issues Highlighted in NPoA	Government Response and Reforms
Address land deprivation and conflict	• Land Amendment Act passed • Land Division created within the High Court to manage conflicts
Tackle corruption within and outside of government	• Anti-corruption law passed in 2009 • Anti-corruption courts operationalised • Inter-agency forum established to address corruption
Strengthen credibility of electoral process	• Electoral commission funding increased • Training for electoral officials improved
Enhance local initiatives for alternative justice and expand post-conflict reconstruction and development projects	• Government increased recognition of traditional conflict resolution systems and increased the use of traditional justice systems to resolve cases • National Reconciliation Bill passed, calling for establishment of a national reconciliation forum • Draft National Transitional Justice Bill developed

Source: SAIIA (2010) & APRM Uganda Country Report (2009).

6. Strengthening the APRM Review Process for Measuring Goal 16

Despite its strengths, the APRM has a number of significant shortcomings that will have to be addressed if it is to become an effective tool for monitoring Goal 16. First, the APRM's normative framework needs to be re-evaluated. APRM recommendations are often heavily slanted towards a "democratic and good governance" orientation, which often downplays the more nuanced insights of the country reports. Furthermore, APRM recommendations are at times superficial, seeking to fit problems squarely into issues that democracy and good governance can solve, instead of suggesting appropriate local and regional solutions that might more effectively address a problem's complexities. A shift in the APRM's profile from a democracy promotion tool to an ideologically neutral assessment of country-owned governance approaches could help address this weakness, while also convincing more African countries to undergo APRM assessments.

Similarly, the APRM will need to strengthen its business case, by prioritising activities and ensuring sufficiently in-depth assessments of governance and security issues. The post-2015 agenda provides the APRM an opportunity to better articulate its business case and its value added for African states. As described above, the APRM offers an important and customisable tool for defining and assessing governance priorities at the country level. It therefore opens policy space for African countries to define in an inclusive manner the nature of governance and the reforms required for national sustainable development plans. This is a clear added value of the APRM process. To better demonstrate this value, and in light of its capacity and financial constraints, the APRM might seek to use its strengths in a more strategic way that enables it to provide more in-depth analyses and better recommendations. With respect to monitoring Goal 16, for instance, the APRM could align some of its review focus areas to the SDG priorities identified by the country concerned. One way to accomplish this would be for the APRM Secretariat to work with the national governing council to determine specific priority areas for the country self-assessment.

Another advantage of the APRM is its potential to bring together a variety of actors in support of measures to achieve the SDGs. The APRM aspires to be participatory. By further strengthening participation and ownership of the process, the APRM could garner greater support from multiple actors (both state and non-state), which would help to ensure the implementation of measures to remedy a given challenge. National ownership is crucial to governance reform and conflict resolution. It will therefore be key to realising the targets under Goal 16. A more participatory APRM could help advance this process.

Another way that the APRM could demonstrate its added value and better support the governance targets under Goal 16 is by strengthening its peer learning process. Peer learning is a key dimension of the APRM. It offers states an opportunity to identify specific policy approaches, rather than whole systems of governance, that are suited to addressing their particular challenges. The APRM could further the impact of its peer learning activities by encouraging specific ministries and agencies from one country to work with counterparts elsewhere in order to develop national programmes of action. As a hypothetical example, the APRM assessment of, say, Ghana might identify alternative justice as an issue that needs to be addressed. The APRM Secretariat might then suggest that the Ministry of Justice of Kenya, which has an innovative alternative justice programme, might support Ghana's Ministry of Justice in developing a plan of action in this area. Such an approach could help improve the nature of recommendations included in the NPoAs, while also supporting a more action-oriented system of peer learning.

The post-2015 development agenda offers African states an opportunity to critically address governance and peace and security issues. In order to achieve real progress on development, however, governments will need to ensure that they are measuring and addressing the critical challenges of governance and peace and security in their country. Global and regional indicators and deadlines can inform countries about their progress. However, qualitative assessment tools like the APRM are also indispensable. They can help countries make sense of the data and pinpoint important issues that the data might overlook. The APRM could generate rich information related to Goal 16 that is meaningful for development at the national and regional levels.

Conclusion

The issue is not whether Goal 16 can be measured but how to measure it in a way that encourages improvements in governance and achievement of peace and security for development. There is ample evidence that governance and peace and security are important factors for development in all countries. What remains less clear is what mechanisms for peace and security and what components of governance are important for sustainable development. Goal 16 offers no guidance on this. Instead, it contains language inclined towards a certain ideological model of good governance. Before launching efforts to create indicators, the international community needs to take a step back and develop a better common understanding of the targets under Goal 16 and how responsibilities for these targets are to be differentiated by country and at the global and national levels.

A two-tiered system of measurement, with standardised indicators at the global level and country-specific indicators at the national level, could be an effective means to address the differences in governance approaches between countries. As Sally Engle Merry (2012: S85) rightly states, "indicators are a technology of governance". They assist governments with decision-making by translating complex events into clear and standardised information. This is precisely why the right kinds of indicators are important for measuring Goal 16. A two-tiered system of indicators allows for peer learning while giving countries room to approach governance and peace and security in their own way.

Good indicators and data can inform our approaches to the targets under Goal 16, but they cannot fully explain the nature of governance or how to secure peace and security in all cases. Assessing national and global progress on Goal 16 requires a more detailed measurement tool: qualitative assessments. Interestingly, Africa's proposed indicators for measuring Goal 16 at the national level draw in part from the work of the APRM. The APRM takes a qualitative approach to assessing governance, involving officials and civil society groups to analyse changes in government performance within the context of a particular country. The APRM is important as a complementary tool for measuring governance and peace and security in the SDGs because it can help contextualise indicators and offer insight into complex governance dynamics that cannot be captured by data alone. Qualitative assessments like the APRM also offer an excellent means to track local thinking and innovations in governance and peace and security. Moreover, the APRM process offers a unique knowledge bank that can be drawn on to examine changes in governance and peace and security dynamics over time and across diverse cultural and social systems. This is invaluable information that would be easily missed if measuring Goal 16 were left to the realm of numbers and statistics.

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