









# 'Critical agents of change' in the 2030 Agenda: Youth-inclusive governance indicators for national-level monitoring

#### Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be monitored in a way that both captures the experiences and views of youth and includes young people in processes that hold governments to account for these global commitments. The Working Group on Youth-Inclusive Governance Indicators<sup>1</sup> has identified a list of **national-level indicators** and **methods** for monitoring Goal 16 Targets 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10 of the SDGs. These targets were chosen for their focus on core aspects of governance – effective, accountable and transparent institutions; responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making; access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms – which if achieved, will enable progress across the sustainable development agenda. Our recommendations contribute to a 'basket' of Goal 16 indicators and encourage the use of multiple and diverse data sources, including civil society and citizen-generated data, to monitor progress. The recommendations seek to complement and support global-level review processes and to ensure that national-level monitoring is youth-sensitive, by **taking into account the role, position and experiences of children and young people**.<sup>2</sup>

As modalities for global-level monitoring and review are finalised, governments will need to look to their own specific context to determine which indicators will help them to develop strong implementation strategies and measure progress towards the SDGs at local, national and regional levels.<sup>3</sup> Since contexts will differ considerably, each member state will need to choose the most effective indicators (number and breadth) to measure progress, whilst maintaining the ambition of the SDGs. This document provides suggestions for what to consider when selecting indicators, including the importance of disaggregation; proposals for specific indicators that would support youth-inclusive monitoring of these key targets; and information about the role of young people, as 'critical agents of change'4, in monitoring governance commitments in the 2030 Agenda.

#### **Background**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development outlines commitments from governments around the world to a universal, comprehensive and complex agenda to integrate economic, social and environmental development in every country. Goal 16 sets out clear and ambitious targets to ensure 'effective, accountable and transparent institutions' (16.6), alongside 'responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making' (16.7), at all levels. Combined with a target to ensure public access to information and the protection of fundamental freedoms (16.10), these commitments provide a valuable framework for governance accountability. Progress on Goal 16 will enhance the quality of governance and the effectiveness and sustainability of development, as well as contribute to the empowerment of all people, including marginalised groups. Goal 16 is not only a critical aspiration in its own right, but it is also an enabling goal for the entire sustainable development agenda.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Active members of the Working Group on Youth-Inclusive Governance Indicators included: Plan International, Restless Development, UNDP, Children's Environments Research Group at CUNY, Centre for Children's Rights at Queen's University Belfast.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> We use the terms 'youth' and 'young people' to mean those aged 15-24, in alignment with the UN definition, without prejudice to national definitions. See <a href="http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf">http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf</a>
<sup>3</sup> Economic and Social Council (2015) Report of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, E/CN.3/2016/2, para 23: 'It is expected that the global indicators will form the core of all other sets of indicators... However, additional and, in some cases, different indicators might be used for regional, national and sub-national levels of monitoring. These indicators will be developed by Member States.'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, para 51.

The 2030 Agenda recognises children and youth as 'critical agents of change' in the SDGs platform and for the 'creation of a new world'. This recognition must translate into actions that governments and other stakeholders take to implement and monitor the SDGs, including in the selection of national-level indicators and the involvement of young people in monitoring progress. If made a reality, these commitments to listen to and act on young people's views, including those most likely to experience discrimination and exclusion, will fulfil young people's rights and ensure that governments develop strategies and plans that build on and learn from young people's experiences, innovation, and expertise. Young people are entitled to hold the state and its decision-makers accountable for their duties and performance. We cannot let this opportunity slip by.

#### Leave No One Behind: what to monitor and how to measure it

Governments have pledged to 'leave no one behind' in the achievement of sustainable development. Learning from the experiences of the Millennium Development Goals, States 'wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society', and they 'endeavour to reach the furthest behind first'.6

As governments begin to develop national-level plans for monitoring the SDGs, they will need to determine what is measured (indicator selection), what methods of measurement they will use in the review process (monitoring), and how data reveal how different groups are affected (disaggregation).<sup>7</sup> In all cases, monitoring should enable governments and civil society, including youth, to track how development affects all segments of society. The Working Group on Youth-Inclusive Governance Indicators believes that the commitment to 'leave no one behind' requires States to take specific steps to ensure that the monitoring process is inclusive of the issues that affect girls/young women and boys/young men and that such processes involve children and young people as active agents for change.

#### Indicator Selection

Indicators provide a framework of accountability for monitoring progress at local, national, regional and global levels and will inform implementation strategies and allocation of resources. In general, indicators should be broad enough to capture the wide picture in society but disaggregated in a way that makes it possible to see how different groups are affected by or experience development differently. Indicators should provide specific and actionable information, which can be used to 'incentivize policy action and focus attention on the people and communities who are most marginalized, deprived and discriminated against'.8

Each government will need to approach the SDGs in a way that is most relevant to their context, whilst staying true to the ambition and spirit of the Goals. In the 2030 Agenda, States committed to regular and inclusive review processes based on a global indicator framework, complemented by indicators at regional and national levels. National-level indicators will provide useful tools to assist the implementation and monitoring of SDGs commitments in relation to specific country contexts. The selection of indicators should reflect the ambition and intention of the 2030 Agenda, which states that: 'We must not limit our vision to what we can measure now, but what we want to measure by 2030, to create a broad and holistic picture of SDG progress and human rights enjoyment'.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibid., para 51.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, para 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The monitoring and review process is a critical component of accountability for the 2030 Agenda, but there are many other ways in which young people can and should be involved in holding governments accountable for their commitments to sustainable development and their pledge to 'leave no one behind'. See for example: Walker, D., and Pereznieto, P. (2014) Partners for change: Young people and governance in a post-2015 world, Overseas Development Institute, Plan International, Restless Development.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) (2015) <u>The Measure of Progress: How human rights should inform the Sustainable Development Goals indicators</u>, Human Rights Policy Brief, October 2015.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, para 55: the SDGs are 'integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable'; the goals and targets take into account 'different national realities, capacities and levels of development' and each Government will 'decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated into national planning processes, policies and strategies'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, para 75.

<sup>11</sup> CESR (2015).

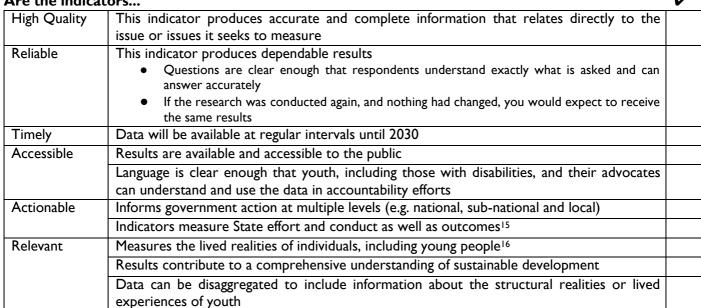
There are some general considerations that should be taken when selecting indicators in each national context, and some particular considerations when viewed from a youth-inclusive perspective. The following checklist is provided to support national-level discussions about selecting appropriate indicators for Goal 16:12

#### Measurement feasibility

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Data for this national-level target are available in existing data sources.	
National-level data on this issue exist and could be used to monitor progress.	
There are sufficient resources (time, funding, personnel) to develop high quality measurements.	

The concept of 'feasibility' is in line with the 2030 Agenda's ambition to improve data collection over time. 13 Some indicators are likely to require the collection of data that may not be available currently, while others may require additional analysis of existing data. 14 If this is the most suitable indicator, then all efforts should be taken to improve data collection to ensure monitoring captures the full picture of development for all people in all areas.

#### Are the indicators...



These criteria are suggested as aspirational, but realistic with action over time. This list is illustrative and intended to inform national-level discussions about how to select indicators that are likely to assist monitoring of, and corresponding action on, the SDGs.

#### Recommendations: national-level youth-inclusive governance indicators

The Working Group on Youth-Inclusive Governance Indicators has identified six indicators that will support youth-inclusive measurement of Targets 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10. In some cases, complementary or supplementary indicators are suggested where it was felt that a single indicator would be enhanced by additional information. Data will not be available for all indicators in all contexts, but once baseline data are established, these indicators would provide information that could assist the implementation and measurement of youth-inclusive governance.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> If a proposed indicator does not (yet) meet a specific criterion, it is hoped that the checklist will inform a discussion about improvements or modifications that will strengthen the indicator.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Target 17.18: 'to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data'. See also Center for Economic and Social Rights (2015) The Measure of Progress: How human rights should inform the Sustainable Development Goals indicators, Human Rights Policy Brief, October 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Suggestions for including citizen generated data and building on the opportunities of the data revolution are discussed later in this document.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> CESR (2015), p 3: 'outcomes alone cannot give a full understanding of a State's compliance with their human rights obligations (which encompass conduct and result). A State's policy efforts and resource allocations, and their relationship to human rights and development outcomes, must also be monitored for a more balanced and comprehensive assessment.' (CESR, The OPERA Framework: Assessing compliance with the obligation to fulfill economic, social and cultural rights, (2012)). <sup>16</sup> CESR (2015), p 4: 'People living in poverty and other marginalized groups have the most immediate insights on their own experiences with sustainable development policies. For this reason, it would be beneficial for policy makers and other stakeholders to work with people living in poverty to devise indicators that reflect what they value as measures of progress.'

Our proposals include three types of indicators: **structural** (existence of institutions and policies), **process** (activities, resources or initiatives; actions taken to achieve change) and **outcome** (change in the lived experience of the target). Process and outcome indicators can be measured by survey or qualitative data, and structural indicators can be measured by conducting legislative or policy reviews.

We support the 2030 Agenda's commitment to ensure that data are disaggregated 'by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts'. With all of the recommended indicators below, measurement should include an analysis of whether and how young people's experiences of the issue differ from the general population. 18

#### Target 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

- **Effective**: Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services, disaggregated by service
- Accountable: Existence of accessible individual complaints procedures in place for all public services at national, sub-national and local levels
- **Transparent**: (See proposal under 16.10)

### Target 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

- Inclusive/Representative: Proportions of positions (by age cohorts, sex, disability and ethnicity) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distributions
- **Responsive/Inclusive/Participatory**: Percentage of population who believe decision-making is responsive and inclusive
- Participatory/Responsive: Existence of national, sub-national and local level policy that requires public bodies to consult with citizens in decision-making

### Target 16.10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

• Access to information: Existence and implementation of constitutional and statutory guarantees for public access to information, available in accessible formats

#### **Target 16.6**: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

**Effective institutions**: Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services, disaggregated by service<sup>19</sup>

Type: Outcome indicator Source: Global, regional and national surveys; civil society

As a perception-based measure, this will collect data on the lived experience of individuals seeking access to and obtaining basic public services, such as healthcare, education, water and sanitation, as well as services provided by the police and judicial system. If disaggregated by age, gender and type of service, this measure will provide much-needed information on the views and needs of girls/young women and boys/young men, which can often be excluded.

Measurement: Government and/or civil society may report progress on this indicator. Data are currently collected by perception-based surveys such as the World Value Survey, Gallup, Afrobarometer and the other Regional Barometers, and various National Statistical Offices (NSOs). At national level, the approach has been applied and reported by several NSOs in Africa using the Strategy for the Harmonization of statistics in Africa (SHaSA) questionnaire. <sup>20</sup> For this indicator to be youth-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, target 17.18 and para 74(g).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> For example, if an indicator monitors the proportion of the population satisfied with their last experience of public services, it should be possible to determine if young people are more or less satisfied than the general population. If an indicator monitors the existence of policy or practice, the review process should assess whether young people and their experiences are included.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> A version of this indicator (16.6.2\*) has achieved widespread support and been agreed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the SDGs (IAEG-SDGs) for inclusion in a global framework of SDGs indicators. The IAEG-SDGs advice will be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission in March 2016.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> SHaSA is a joint initiative by the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (ADB) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA) to harmonize statistics across the continent. Questions on the Harmonised

sensitive, data should be disaggregated to allow for the visibility of youth, and will be necessary to include additional data sources that include respondents under age 18.

#### Alignment with other monitoring obligations:

This indicator links to monitoring the following SDG targets: 1.4 (access to basic services), 3.8 (access to quality, essential health- care services), 4.1, 4.2 and 4a (quality education, including facilities), 7.1 (access to affordable, reliable energy services), 10.2 (social inclusion), 11.1 (adequate housing), 16.3 (rule of law).<sup>21</sup>

**Accountable institutions**: Existence of accessible individual complaints procedures in place for all public services at national, sub-national and local levels

Type: Structural and Process indicator

Source: National laws and key legal and policy instruments

The existence of complaints mechanisms is an important part of rights-compliant governance, although this will not provide a complete picture of whether institutions are accountable to children and young people. Complaints mechanisms should operate on the basis of inclusivity – providing information in age, gender and disability appropriate formats, disseminating information widely and offering support and assistance when necessary. Mechanisms should include timely and effective follow-up and referral procedures.

Measurement: Government and/or civil society can measure this indicator through a review of national, sub-national and local policy and practice in the areas of education, healthcare, housing, criminal justice and immigration and asylum. In order to capture the experience of youth, this review will need to assess: a) the existence of complaints mechanisms and procedures at all levels, b) whether provision is accessible to and inclusive of all children and young people.

#### Alignment with other monitoring obligations:

This indicator is based on Indicator 5 of the Council of Europe (CoE) Child Participation Assessment Tool, 22 which includes a model for an assessment score of 0-3.23

### **Target 16.7**: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

**Inclusive/Representative decision-making**: Proportions of positions (by age cohorts, sex, disability and ethnicity) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distributions<sup>24</sup>

Type: Process and Outcome Indicator Source: Nationally collected administrative data

This indicator will measure trends on whether younger age groups (e.g. age 20-25) are hired by or elected to public institutions. At the moment, representation of youth in public institutions is significantly low, but this indicator will allow tracking of changes in the representativeness of young people alongside other groups in society. Once baseline data are established, measuring progress will be relatively easy and will provide very valuable information for youth participation at national, sub-national and local levels. Note that if based on global-level surveys, this indicator will not capture whether decision-making is inclusive of children under 18, nor will it reveal the degree of decision-making power associated with the position.

Measurement: Government and/or civil society may report progress on this indicator. Data are gathered through the following surveys: Global Barometer Study, World Values Survey, Gallup World Poll, and the SHaSA Harmonised Module on Democratic Governance. Baseline data may be needed in some areas of decision-making. At the international level, the ILO compiles data on female share of employment by occupation, by level of position, and by private/public sector. UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union compile statistical information about women parliamentarians, women members of cabinet and other relevant information.

Module on Democratic Governance ask specifically about rates of access to, and trust in, the following services/institutions: public service (in general), courts of justice, police, public hospitals and clinics, public schools, tax/customs authorities, social security system, state media, Parliament, army, President, Prime Minister, Mayor.

<sup>21</sup> For further information, see Virtual Network of Stakeholders for the Development of Indicators on Peaceful Societies, Justice and Effective Institutions for SDG16 'Sourcebook on Measuring Peace, Justice and Institutions'.

<sup>22</sup> The Council of Europe's <u>Child Participation Assessment Tool</u> provides specific and measurable indicators for all CoE member States to measure progress in implementing Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18.

<sup>23</sup> For more information, see Indicator 5: Council of Europe, Child Participation Assessment Tool.

<sup>24</sup> This indicator (16.7.1) has achieved widespread support and been agreed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the SDGs (IAEG-SDGs) for inclusion in a global framework of SDGs indicators. The IAEG-SDGs advice will be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission in March 2016.

#### Alignment with other monitoring obligations:

This indicator links to monitoring UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (S/RES/2250 (2015)) on youth, peace and security and SDGs targets: 5.5 (women's full and effective participation), 10.2 (political inclusion).

#### Responsive/Inclusive/Participatory decision-making: Percentage of population who believe decision-making is responsive and inclusive<sup>25</sup>

Type: Outcome Source: Global, regional and national surveys; civil society

Participation in public decision-making is an essential component of good governance, and a rights entitlement for children under age 18.26 This indicator is a way of measuring the perception of people of their government, focusing on 'inclusiveness' and 'responsiveness' to the population. This will assist governments to design more accurate and relevant interventions for young people and allocate resources more effectively.

Measurement: Government and/or civil society may report progress on this indicator. It will require scaling up of household surveys that collect perception based data. Measurement should be disaggregated by age and gender at a minimum to track the experiences of girls/young women and boys/young men. The indicator should measure adults' and children's views of public decision-making at all levels, especially given children's right to have their views given due weight in decision-making.<sup>27</sup>

A complementary indicator to be measured by civil society could be: 'Proportion of the public and civil society organisations that believes that the government provides them adequate time, opportunity and information to comment on policy and legal initiatives.'

#### Alignment with other monitoring obligations:

This indicator is associated with States' reporting obligations under human rights treaties and mechanisms (e.g. the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child), including the Universal Periodic Review.

#### Participatory/Responsive decision-making: Existence of national, sub-national and local level policy that requires public bodies to consult with citizens in decision-making

Type: Structural and Process Indicator Source: Review of national and local policy instruments, qualitative data

The existence of policies requiring public consultation in decision-making is a critical aspect of participatory and responsive governance. Such policies should include reference to the inclusion of children and young people's views and a commitment to consultation on the basis of inclusivity.

Measurement: Government and/or civil society can measure this indicator through a review of national and local policy instruments in the areas of public expenditure, education, health care, housing, protection, recreation, criminal justice and immigration and asylum. National-level information is available through the Sustainable Governance Indicators (societal consultation). Survey data should be complemented by qualitative data about the extent to which young people's views are given due weight in decision-making.<sup>28</sup>

A complementary indicator to be measured by civil society could be: 'the number of cases of where public policy has been developed, changed or revised based on civil society/youth feedback'.

#### Alignment with other monitoring obligations:

The proposal reflects Indicator I of the CoE Child Participation Assessment Tool, which includes a model for an assessment score of 0-3.29 This indicator links to monitoring UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Lansdown, G. (2011) Every child's right to be heard: a resource guide on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 12, UNICEF & Save the Children, p 23: 'Due weight' requires that decision-makers give children's views 'serious consideration' and that children's 'concerns, perspectives and ideas must inform decisions that affect their lives'. This is qualified by taking into consideration the 'age and maturity of the child' (art 12), which means in practice that duty-bearers should take the 'child's level of understanding of the implications of the matter' into account.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> For more information, see CoE Child Participation Assessment Tool: 'Legal protection for children's right to participate is reflected in the national constitution and legislation'.

## **Target 16.10**: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

Access to Information: Existence and implementation of constitutional and statutory guarantees for public access to information, available in accessible formats

Type: Structural and Process indicator

Source: Review of national and local policy instruments

Access to information provides the foundation for all effective, accountable and transparent decision-making. While freedom of information legislation exists in many countries, the procedures associated with timely, quality and accessible responses will determine the extent to which citizens, including girls/young women and boys/young men, benefit from such guarantees.

Measurement: Government and/or civil society can measure this indicator through a review of national law, policies and practice and a range of quantitative and qualitative assessments of implementation. Assessment will include the extent to which rules restrict access to information (e.g. exemptions, deadlines for responding to requests etc.) and whether mechanisms for appeal and oversight exist to enforce citizens' right to access information. Measurement should include an assessment of implementation and accessibility of information (on the basis of age, gender and ability appropriate formats at a minimum). Data will be available through reporting and review processes of the UN treaty monitoring bodies, including the Universal Periodic Review. National-level information is available through the Sustainable Governance Indicators (access to government information), www.freedominfo.org and through Open Government Data platforms hosted by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the UN Public Administration Programme.

A complementary (perception-based) indicator could be developed to capture young people's views of the extent to which they believe public information is available and accessible in appropriate formats.

#### Alignment with other monitoring obligations:

This indicator is associated directly with States' reporting obligations under a variety of human rights treaties and mechanisms. It also links to monitoring Target 16.6.

#### Disaggregation

The 2030 Agenda is a commitment to all the world's people, so the monitoring and review process will need to capture all views and experiences. The commitment to 'leave no one behind' 'will require going beyond averages to target efforts towards reaching the most excluded population groups'.<sup>30</sup> Data therefore needs to be disaggregated to show how different groups in society are affected by or experience development differently. Disaggregation assists States to 'design, adapt, implement and monitor measures' to achieve the SDGs and contribute to the detection of disparities in development.<sup>31</sup>

The 2030 Agenda recognises that States have different levels of data collection infrastructure in place and acknowledges the current limitations in disaggregation of data globally. However, States have committed to improve measurements to ensure that data are disaggregated 'by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts'.<sup>32</sup> In the first instance, much work is needed to ensure that youth are included in the data. Many existing measurements of governance issues overlook the experiences of children and young people.<sup>33</sup> Over time, it is important that disaggregation be harmonised across data sources so that information from multiple sources can be used to inform implementation and accountability for sustainable development. Disaggregation by age should move towards greater consistency between data sources (e.g. standardisation of 5- or 10- year age brackets), and reporting of results within each

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