THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN SUPPORT OF REPORTING UNDER SDG 16

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16, United Nations member states committed to tracking and reporting data about the closely related issues of peace, justice, and inclusion. These issues are difficult to quantify, and successfully meeting the tracking and reporting commitments may require the creation of new partnerships for the purposes of data collection and analysis. One potential partner in overcoming these challenges is the private sector. Business actors, including large transnational corporations (TNCs), small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and business associations or collective groups, can all contribute to data collection and dissemination such as that required by SDG 16. Based on existing research, interviews with representatives from the private sector and civil society organizations, and a small survey of private-sector actors, this study finds that:

- There are already private-sector actors supporting data collection and release on issues relating to SDG 16. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's call for a "data revolution" for the SDGs necessarily means engaging with private-sector actors who generate large amounts of data through their work. Separate from this, companies can support National Statistical Offices in a number of ways in order to access data about SDG 16.

- Private-sector actors have contributed to collecting and releasing data relevant to SDG 16 through facilitating access to citizens for data collection and providing indicator-relevant data generated through their own work, among other ways.

  - Facebook has partnered with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Bank, and other partners in the "Future of Business Survey" to identify and survey small and medium enterprises using the Facebook platform internationally. This is only one example of how private-sector partners can facilitate data collection by connecting citizens with institutions that have ongoing research activities.

  - The social enterprise Ushahidi uses user-submitted data to map conflict, violence, and critical needs during disasters and conflicts. Ushahidi combines for-profit revenue-generating activities with a not-for-profit social mission to illustrate how technological platforms can be created to collect and release data. Other examples, such as Safaricom's tracking and blocking of violence-promoting messages in Kenya, or a 2017 RAND study of ambulance data used for tracking violence, support the idea that private-sector actors can directly access information relevant to SDG 16 and provide it to the government.

  - Microsoft formed a partnership with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to create better systems for tracking, analyzing, and reporting data about human rights violations. In this partnership, Microsoft is providing both technical expertise and direct funding, illustrating one way private-sector actors can support reporting of issues relating to SDG 16.

- A survey we conducted of eight representatives from private-sector companies, including seven from TNCs and one from an SME, reinforces the idea that companies can support states' collection and release of data relating to SDG 16. Six of the seven participants from TNCs (86%) believe that their company has information about at least one SDG 16 indicator. The most commonly identified indicators were related to government performance and service delivery, although political conflict was also identified by some.

  - Two of the six representatives felt that their company would share that information with no preconditions if asked. Another representative felt that their company would need a legal framework authorizing this release, two felt that the data they had was not theirs to share, and one said that they would make it available commercially.

  - When asked what would improve reporting, the most common answer was "If the data were aggregated and anonymized before submission to the government." Some kind of purchase of the data and a clear legal framework for sharing were both also identified as being important.

- There are some concerns or issues that may limit the ability of companies to support states in collecting and releasing data.

  - Business representatives identified concerns related to profitability as being a constraint. The structural, environmental, and in some cases, legal constraints faced by business entities mean that it is difficult for business actors to commit time or effort to activities that do not increase their bottom line. Actors interested in supporting engagement with businesses should work to put forward a concrete business case for participating in business reporting that connects positive engagement with profitability. Even without a positive business case, however, those who are engaging private-sector actors should recognize that business interests and concerns about profitability will be a foundation for engagement.

  - Due to concerns about what role for business in society is appropriate and how political activity may create pushback or problems, many private-sector actors note concerns about engaging with issues relating to peace and good governance. Even actors who want to work positively may not have a good initial understanding of how to do so. Identifying a clear and legitimate role will be important. Outreach by government to companies

or business associations can be important in developing pathways to engagement seen by companies as legitimate. Outreach by civil society organizations to both government and private sector can help to spur conversations and develop shared understanding and new approaches that are seen as effective and appropriate. Multisectoral partnerships incorporating participants from the government, private sector, and civil society can be useful for developing effective, impactful, and accepted pathways for engaging the private sector.

- Businesses are embedded in the local contexts in which they operate, and may be subject to pressure by the government, or implicated in political dynamics contributing to problems covered under SDG 16. Any actor—whether state or CSO—interested in supporting public–private partnerships for reporting under SDG 16 should engage in a careful mapping of the local dynamics before approaching specific businesses or business associations for participation. This mapping should ensure that the businesses are not implicated in problematic dynamics, and that the state government is not likely to pressure or punish businesses for releasing data about state performance or use the released data in the commission of further abuses. UN groups and civil society organizations interested in peace and in supporting the SDGs will be useful partners in this mapping.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

About The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (SDG 16 Alliance):

The Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (SDG 16 Alliance) was the lead on this project.

The Global Alliance is a coordinating platform for UN Member States, private sector, civil society, and international entities to work together to promote peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. The Global Alliance leverages reporting processes to enable diverse actors to define shared goals, and innovative, evidence-based action to achieve them. It is led by a Steering Committee including Cabo Verde, Mexico, Norway, Qatar, Sierra Leone, Tunisia and United Kingdom; civil society organisations; the New York University Centre on International Cooperation (NYU CIC), Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network, the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA); and private sector companies Deloitte Ltd, LexisNexis, and White & Case LLP.

Co- facilitators include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The Global Alliance logo represents all 17 partners.

About OEF Research, a program of One Earth Future:

One Earth Future is a self-funded, private operating foundation seeking to create a more peaceful world through collaborative, data-driven initiatives. We focus on enhancing maritime cooperation, creating sustainable jobs in fragile economies and our research actively contributes to thought leadership on global issues.

As One Earth Future's think tank program focused on global peace and security, OEF Research conducts empirical research on the predictors of peace and on the role of good governance in building and sustaining peace. They share that research with scholars, policy makers and all interested in a more peaceful world through their published reports, discussion papers and educational forums.

ABBREVIATIONS

CSO   Civil Society Organization

ICT   Information and Communications Technology

NGO   Nongovernmental Organization

NSO   National Statistical Office

OHCHR   Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

P3   Public–Private Partnership

SDG   Sustainable Development Goal

SME   Small and Medium Enterprises

TNC   Transnational Corporation

By committing to Sustainable Development Goal 16, UN member states agreed to track and report data about the closely related issues of peace, justice, and inclusion. These are among the more difficult issues in the SDGs to quantify, and are often difficult to measure easily or cheaply. For many states, meeting their commitments to report data on issues of violence, corruption, and inclusion will require implementing new systems and new partnerships in order to collect data. One potential source of these new partnerships can be found in the private sector. In today's information-focused global economy, many information technology or communications companies have access to data that governments and researchers are finding valuable, driving the so-called "data revolution" and "big data" approaches to analysis.[1] However, the role of the private sector in supporting state reporting under SDG 16 extends beyond just big data and information technology. Private-sector actors are increasingly visible as positive partners helping to drive changes in the complex set of issues the SDGs are designed to address, including issues of peace and good governance.[2] A 2017 report by the Sustainable Development Goal Fund argued that in the case of SDG 16 specifically, "the private sector has a catalytic role to play … at local and global levels."[3] This report and other research on public–private partnerships (P3s) have demonstrated some of the challenges to generating effective P3s. The developing work on effective P3s suggests that it can be difficult to shape the behavior of firms,[4] and that effective P3 structures require their creators to ensure aligned interests and recognition of interdependence between the different partners[5] as well as awareness of the capacities and limitations each partner brings to the table.[6]

The existing research suggests that there is a role for private-sector actors to play in supporting the development of effective reporting under SDG 16 in partnership with state governments and other sectors. **This report focuses specifically on how such partnerships may support states in meeting their (i.e. states') obligations to release data on SDG 16 indicators**, what issues may arise that would hamper effective P3 approaches to reporting, and how these issues may be overcome. It is based on a review of existing cases in the research literature, interviews with individuals from the private sector and other groups working on supporting the SDG process, and a small survey of representatives from different businesses.

Definitions and Scope

SDG 16, as adopted by the UN General Assembly, formally requires UN member states to commit 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."[7] As specified by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators and adopted by the UN General Assembly, it includes 12 subsidiary goals and a total of 23 indicators (see Table 1).

Table 1: SDG 16 Goals and Indicators[8]

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	
Goals and Targets (from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)	Indicators
16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere	**16.1.1** Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age
	16.1.2 Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause
	16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months
	16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live
16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children	**16.2.1** Proportion of children aged 1–17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month
	16.2.2 Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation
	16.2.3 Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all	**16.3.1** Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms
	16.3.2 Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population
16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime	**16.4.1** Total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows (in current United States dollars)
	16.4.2 Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments
16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms	**16.5.1** Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months
	16.5.2 Proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 months
16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels	**16.6.1** Primary government expenditures as a proportion of original approved budget, by sector (or by budget codes or similar)
	16.6.2 Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services
16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels	**16.7.1** Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distributions
	16.7.2 Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group
16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance	**16.8.1** Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations
16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration	**16.9.1** Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age
16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements	**16.10.1** Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months
	16.10.2 Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information
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.a.1** Existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles
16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development	**16.b.1** Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law

Here, the broad intended meaning of private-sector actors is any for-profit entity. Key groups with roles worth particular examination in this project include transnational corporations (TNCs), or large corporations operating in multiple countries, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), or smaller companies with more restricted operations.[9] These two groups will bring different capacities and points of engagement to the table and should therefore be considered separately. TNCs by the nature of their operations often have existing relationships with governments and well-developed systems for data collection and analysis, while SMEs are closer to the day-to-day politics and issues within a state. In order to thoroughly explore the role of the private sector in supporting reporting under SDG 16, both groups should be considered.

Is there a role for private-sector actors in supporting the SDGs? Lessons from current research and practice

In 2014, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon established an Independent Expert Advisory Group focused on the global "data revolution" and tasked with developing recommendations for how the SDG process, and the UN more broadly, could incorporate data-focused approaches in order to drive impact.[10] The final report of the Independent Expert Advisory Group drew heavily from lessons learned

Big data is frequently a byproduct of commercial services

by the private sector, which was an early adopter of data-focused analytics,[11] and called for the establishment of better systems for sharing innovation, standardizing and sharing data, and developing capacity in order to fuel the success of the SDG process.[12] Executing these recommendations requires engaging the private sector. Big data is frequently a byproduct of commercial services ,[13] meaning that, as one commentator noted, "big data is often private-sector data."[14] Because of this, it is difficult to conceptualize what a data-focused approach to the SDGs will look like if private-sector partners are not incorporated. Moreover, because the issues covered by SDG 16 touch almost every aspect of society, many businesses have information that relates directly to SDG 16, and may represent an untapped resource for data relevant to SDG 16 targets. Laura Garr, an associate at international law firm White & Case LLP, argues that "there certainly can be and should be a role of the private sector in reporting. … SDG 16 in particular is a very difficult goal to report on, and one of the biggest challenges you see in the voluntary national reports that are coming out by member states is the difficulty in having the underlying data with which to report their progress. I think there's absolutely a role for as many actors as possible—certainly civil society and definitely the private sector—in being able to pull together the resources to be able to provide the data that are useful for country reporting."[15]

In recognition of this, the SDG Fund established a Private Sector Advisory Group in 2015 to support engaging businesses with the SDGs and including a specific focus

on SDG 16. This group concluded that "SDG 16 calls for a minimum level of disclosure or transparency from all participants and, in turn, implicitly calls for honesty and candour and decision-making based on facts that are broadly disseminated among all involved constituencies."[16] A review of existing P3s suggests that there are already examples of private-sector actors engaging effectively with this call for transparency. Whether through linking National Statistical Offices (NSOs) directly with consumers or reporting data that they generate through their operations, private-sector actors can support the collection and release of data in a number of different ways. In particular, the three cases discussed below suggest that private partners can support reporting through facilitating access to citizens for data collection, providing relevant information about their own operations, and providing direct support for data collection in other ways.

The Future of Business Survey: Private-Sector Partners Supporting Data Collection

In 2016, the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) partnered with Facebook to launch the "Future of Business Survey." This survey initially focused on questions about business confidence and direct business activities;[17] later iterations added questions about specific issues such as the international integration of SMEs[18] and the role of gender in entrepreneurship.[19] The survey was executed by a professional research firm, FactWorks, using a sample identified by Facebook of SMEs who use Facebook. This sample included more than 60 million potential participants, more than 140,000 of whom participated in the survey.[20]

The authors of the study, representing partnering organizations Facebook, the World Bank, and the OECD, say the project is a direct response to Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's call for a "data revolution" for the Sustainable Development Goals, and they propose that web-based data collection and short-turnaround surveys conducted through by social media can be a valuable method of data collection.[21] In fact, they explicitly suggest that because of these tools, "detailed, accurate and timely information about fundamental issues such as citizens' ability to participate in governance, their experience of corruption, or individuals' quality of life in general are now put within reach."[22]

This example illustrates one of the pathways by which private-sector actors can support data collection and release under SDG 16. As a company engaged in direct outreach to the public for the purpose of sharing information, Facebook provides a valuable platform for identifying and contacting participants for data collection. This approach is not limited to Facebook or information technology companies, however; companies can use various points of citizen engagement as a means of data collection. Companies, if willing to work with the NSO, can allow researchers access to their employees, facilitate survey dissemination to their clients, or directly promote survey-based data collection online or electronically. One example of this comes from China, where researchers conducted a survey on perceptions of corruption in the public construction

sector. This survey relied on a snowball sampling approach where personnel within construction companies interested in supporting the research identified other participants and assisted in the distribution of the survey, resulting in a sample of 188 professionals providing information about their perceptions of the frequency and severity of corruption in the public sector.[23]

Risks of This Approach

These partnerships do not come without issues. The people accessed through business partnerships are not a random sample from the population, and it's likely that biases in the responses of some kind will be introduced. Considering, for example, the usage of Facebook and information and communications technology (ICT) companies, there remains a "digital divide" in many countries between those who have access to the internet and social media and those who do not. Even within OECD countries, World Bank data suggests that 21% of citizens lack access to or interest in using the internet, while in sub-Saharan Africa this number is reversed and 80% of people do not regularly use the internet.[24] This means that the majority of the population in these countries will not be captured by research based in these kinds of partnerships. This is particularly problematic since people that have lower incomes or are otherwise marginalized are more likely to face issues addressed in SDG 16: they have less access to justice, they participate less in decision-making processes in society and they are, overall, are more likely to experience violations of human rights[25] and access to justice. In contrast, working directly with SMEs or umbrella associations of SMEs to support data collection could provide more effective outreach to a broader population but would also introduce other biases: if, for example, there are gender differences in who interacts with businesses, these gender biases would be reflected in the sample. These issues suggest that private-sector actors may be important components of a broad approach to data collection, but NSOs and organizations interested in this approach should make sure to incorporate any partnership into a coordinated set of activities to offset biases.

Ushahidi: Data Collection as a Business Model

Another example of how private-sector partners can provide data on issues relating to SDG 16 comes from Ushahidi, a social enterprise that addresses a social problem through approaches that incorporate operations and techniques arising from both the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors.[26] Ushahidi develops and supports information technology tools that promote transparency and accountability employing data pulled from user-submitted reports. It was originally established as a Kenya-based website that tracked information about the scope and locations of post-election violence in 2007 and 2008 (hence the name Ushahidi, which means "testimony" in Kiswahili).[27] Since then, it has developed a technical platform for collating and mapping many types of information submitted by the public. This tool has been used to coordinate information-sharing for disaster response and crisis management in Haiti[28] and Sao Paulo,[29] among other locations. The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has worked with Ushahidi to support crisis mapping in conflict, with one of Ushahidi's first formal collaborations with the UN occurring during the 2011 Libyan crisis.[30]

While Ushahidi is largely a nonprofit organization, its model nevertheless demonstrates the potential for data-focused enterprises to collect and release data about conflict and human rights violations similar to the issues that need to be tracked for SDG 16. Private-sector actors, particularly those working in information technology and communications, are increasingly aware of the uses for the data that they have about peace and conflict—and the role that gives them in acting as brokers or contributors to peace and security in conflict-affected states.[31] One example is the role that Safaricom, a major cellular phone company in East Africa, played in the response to election-related violence in Kenya. Following the election-related violence of 2007, Safaricom and other telecommunications providers approached Kenya's government about developing a system for tracking and blocking SMS messages promoting violence, an approach they were hesitant to employ without formal engagement with the government due to concerns about the legality and legitimacy of unilateral action.[32] University and CSO groups have recognized this potential as well: researchers at Stanford's Peace Innovation Lab are working with industry partners to develop policy and software tools to support companies interested in collecting and releasing data relating to security.[33]

In addition to gathering information about violence and human rights abuses, there is some evidence that similar tools can be used to track indicators relating to the SDG 16 themes of inclusion, justice, and good governance—issues much harder to track by almost any means.[34] Social media and related ICT tools have been used by citizens to promote cultures of transparency and non-corrupt governance,[35] and a 2017 paper suggested that analysis of online political discourse can effectively track the relative rate of discussions about corruption in specific geographic regions as well as citizen attitudes about corruption.[36] While such analysis doesn't require a partnership with ICT companies (Twitter and other public-facing social media require only data-scraping skills to collect and analyze information), ICT companies are frequently sources of significant technical expertise as well as sources of data, and efforts to collect and analyze information could be supported significantly by engaging in such partnerships.[37]

Sectors other than ICT have information about a number of items related to SDG 16. Given the proliferation of private security companies internationally,[38] and the corresponding development of regulatory bodies for these companies,[39] NSOs and governments in many parts of the world may be able to request reporting on the activities of such companies. This can provide a direct assessment of the distribution and severity of security concerns. Similarly, in many countries, ambulance and emergency medical services are provided through for-profit businesses or through P3s.[40] There is developing evidence that emergency medical systems may be an effective adjunct to traditional forms of data collection around incidences of violence. A 2017

report from RAND Europe discussed a program in the UK which shared data on violent incidents between ambulance services and the police. That report found that only up to 34% of violent incidents captured by ambulance services were included in police reports, and noted in particular that these ambulance service data were more granular than police data in terms of describing the geographic distribution of violence.[41] This suggests that data gathered solely from police or security institutions is likely to be limited, by partnering with privately operated ambulance services, new levels of actionable data become accessible and empower governments to better develop social services appropriate to local needs.

Financial institutions are also nexuses for partnership and data collection. These firms are already key institutions targeting corruption, with financial reporting of suspicious transactions already a part of many global anticorruption efforts.[42] Currently, these reports are not always integrated into the reports prepared by NSOs, and their effectiveness remains debatable, even in their primary role of preventing money laundering.[43] However, they still represent a formal reporting structure specifically engaging the private sector in supporting indicators covered by SDG 16, and as such, provide a data point supporting the idea that there may be stronger roles for the private sector in data collection.

Microsoft's Human Rights Reporting Project: Providing Direct Support for Reporting in Other Ways

A third illustration of how private-sector partners can support SDG 16 comes from a partnership between the UN and Microsoft. In 2017, Microsoft and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) announced a new collaboration to create a system for monitoring, tracking, and reporting human rights abuses.[44] The intent of the project is to take the data collected by the OHCHR and integrate them into developing tools for data analysis and presentation. Some have emphasized the financial commitment Microsoft made to this project; there was a piece in *Philanthropy News Digest* characterizing the $5 million Microsoft committed as "the largest contribution ever to OHCHR from a private-sector entity."[45] However, the details of the partnership show that Microsoft is playing a more active role than just being the funder. In developing the details of the project, Microsoft appears to have committed to active engagement with OHCHR staff to develop the data science aspect of the work.[46]

The first focus of the project is the development of "Rights View," a simplified dashboard for collating and presenting the data gathered by the OHCHR on human rights violations.[47] While information is scarce about this project currently in development, the publicly released data suggest that this dashboard intends to use tools from data science to make it easier for UN staff to identify early warning signs of serious or persistent human rights violations as well as track the levels and severity of human rights abuses internationally.[48]

In this example, the relevant entity (the OHCHR) has access to data but lacked both the technical skills and the resources

to effectively translate those data into real-time monitoring. Microsoft as an entity is focused on exactly this kind of data analysis from a technical perspective. By partnering through both financial commitments and technical support, Microsoft unlocked the potential of the data held by the OHCHR. This partnership demonstrates the increasing trend visible among P3s in which the private-sector actor provides technical support, process expertise, or another kind of substantive contribution to the work of the public sector instead of (or in addition to) funding. In the arenas of disaster response and humanitarian aid, for example, P3s are being used to

"Humanitarian organizations are about 15 years behind their private-sector counterparts, who realized way back the importance of using efficient supply chains."

develop more effective systems for logistics and support operations in recognition of the fact that, as one analyst suggests, "humanitarian organizations are about 15 years behind their private-sector counterparts, who realized way back the importance of using efficient supply chains."[49] Due to the different operating contexts of the private sector, government, and nonprofit organizations, they have each developed different skillsets they recognize as being useful and complementary. Jenna Slotin, Senior Director for Policy at the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, sees a clear role for this kind of partnership, reporting that "there are companies now that are on the front end of the way they think about CSR [corporate social responsibility] and their core business, where they're willing to experiment, or test, or work with governments to lend analytical capacity or technology in the form of software and tools for data analysis and processing."[50]

In areas where government capacity is extremely limited, or where there are serious doubts about the ability of the government to provide accurate and unbiased data about sensitive issues such as corruption or violent crime, this capacity extension approach may reach the level of parallel data-collection or reporting. One example of this comes from Monterrey, Mexico, where local business leaders confronted rising rates of violent crime in the late 2000s. The community faced a spike in homicide and other forms of violent crime coupled with very low rates of reporting crime and a local police force that was viewed with suspicion and distrust. In response, a coalition of large businesses operating in Monterrey, the *Grupo de los 10*, or the "Group of 10," developed a set of initiatives that included a P3 to establish a new state police force and conduct regular transparency-focused opinion polls tracking public attitudes about security and the city's performance. Important for this discussion, the initiatives also included the creation of a new platform for reporting crime that helped facilitate anonymous reporting by acting as a third party between the citizens and the city. The *Centro de Integracion Ciudadana*, or Center for Citizen Integration, acts similarly to the system developed by Ushahidi to use crowd-submitted data to track and map crime rates and provide accountability by identifying which reported crimes are resolved by police.[51]

Is This Approach Viable?

The logic that lays out the role for private-sector actors in supporting SDG 16 is clear, but logic is not always consistent with reality. It is possible that the processes described herein represent unusual or atypical partnerships, and that other businesses and members of civil society would find them to be difficult or impossible to operationalize practically. To uncover whether this may be the case, a small survey of business figures associated with the project network was conducted. Participants were solicited over email sent by project partners to their professional networks, and eight representatives from the private sector completed a brief online survey tracking opinions about their connections to SDG 16. Participants were drawn from companies operating in a number of different countries. Almost all worked with major companies of 10,000+ employees, with only one self-identified SME. See Table 2 for sample descriptive information.

It is important to note that this sample is limited and biased toward institutions and individuals already engaged with partners of the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. Because participants were solicited through emails sent by project partners to their professional network, it's likely that only companies and individuals already familiar with the SDG processes and engaged with the UN and CSO community were captured. This means that it can be considered a favorable sample for polling support for this question, representing the perspective of a small group of engaged figures in the area. With that caveat, this survey suggests that members of the private sector do see a role for businesses in supporting state commitments under SDG 16.

Table 2: Characteristics of companies for whom respondents worked

Response	Company HQ	Transnational Corporation?	Considered an SME?	Number of Employees	Sector
1	N. Europe	Yes	No	10,000+	Energy & Extractives: Oil and Gas
2	N. Europe	Yes	No	10,000+	Information & Communication Technology Services
3	N. America	Yes	No	500–999	No answer given
4	N. Europe	Yes	No	10,000+	Energy & Extractives
5	N. America	Yes	No	10,000+	Information & Communication Technology
6	Central/ South America	Yes	No	10,000+	Industry & Trade: Manufacturing
7	W. Europe	Yes	No	10,000+	Public Administration: Transportation
8	E. Europe	No	Yes	20–49	Public Administration: Agriculture, Fishing & Forestry

When asked whether their company had information about each specific indicator associated with SDG 16, six of the seven respondents (86%) associated with large companies said that they did have information on at least one indicator. The SME representative felt that their company did not. The most common elements companies felt that they had information about related to government services and public expenditures, although some companies also felt that they had information about issues such as human rights violations and conflict. Direct information about deaths, weapons tracking, and other detailed elements of SDG 16 were less commonly indicated. Rates of discrimination and the distribution of small arms in particular had no participant who felt that their company had information. See Table 3 for responses.

Table 3: Did respondents feel that their company had access to information?

SDG 16 indicator	Number of respondents thinking they have this information
Government expenditures on public services in countries where you operate	4
Perception of representativeness of government in countries where you operate	4
Public access to information in countries where you operate	4
Political violence in countries where you operate	3

Public satisfaction with public services in countries where you operate	3
Existence and/or performance of human rights institutions in countries where you operate	3
Violent death in countries where you operate	2
Child abuse or violence against children in countries where you operate	2
Illicit financial flows in countries where you operate	2
Public officials in areas where you operate requesting or receiving bribes (public corruption)	2
Sexual violence in countries where you operate	1
Human trafficking in countries where you operate	1
Reporting of violence to law enforcement in countries where you operate	1
People detained without sentencing in countries where you operate	1
Proportion of children in countries where you operate who have legal identity papers	1
Violence directed against journalists, human rights workers, and/or trade unionists in countries where you operate	1
Public perception of inclusive decision-making in countries where you operate	1
Recording and tracing of small arms and light weapons in countries where you operate	0
People feeling discriminated against or harassed due to discrimination in countries where you operate	0

These answers suggest that respondents felt that the strongest role for private-sector support of data collection and dissemination relates to basic elements of government performance and effectiveness, including issues such as representativeness, expenditures, and public access to information. Many discussions focused on corruption in particular. Barbara Smith, former USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for Policy, Planning, and Learning, concurred, saying that there is a strong and clear role for "involving and engaging the business sector in things like reducing corruption and bribery; it's very clear as to why there's a business interest."[52] Sahara Foundation manager Oluseyi Ojurongbe agreed, saying: "The private sector can give information across multiple [SDG 16] issues. But in areas of corruption and governance issues, these are key areas in which we interface in our day-to-day businesses."[53]

The second most common element flagged by respondents included information about more public but also more sensitive issues such as political violence and the effectiveness of human rights–focused institutions. However, even when looking specifically at issues which are highly sensitive and often kept out of the media, such as human trafficking, sexual violence, and violence against children, at least some respondents did feel that their companies had access to related information.

When asked whether they felt that their company would be willing to share these data, two of the six representatives from companies with access to information said that they would be willing to share with no preconditions. Of the remaining companies, one representative felt that laws and regulations about such information would restrict their ability to share, and felt that they could not share without formal engagement with the government. Similarly, a second respondent indicated that they would not share information directly but that they may have access to information owned by third parties who would need to give permission. A third felt that the information they had access to was in the public domain and hence would not need to be shared. The remaining respondent indicated that they would not share it directly, but might make it available commercially for governments to purchase.

When asked what elements would facilitate the release of data, concerns revolved around the regulatory structure that would allow the release of data and the process by which data would be collected and released, as well as concerns about profitability, or the bottom line. Third-party arbiters to act as anonymizers and collective compilers of the data were seen as valuable. See Table 4.

Table 4: Perceptions of what would improve data sharing

What would facilitate the release of data?	Number of respondents reporting
The data is collected and aggregated by a national business association or chamber of commerce before being shared with government	3
A formal legal agreement between the government and company is signed stipulating how the data will be used and disclosed	2
The government purchases the aggregate data from the company at a profit to the company	2
The data is collected and aggregated by a neutral party such as a UN agency or international NGO before being shared with government	1
The company is reimbursed for staff time collecting data, but does not profit from sharing data	1
Politicians within the country publicly call for data sharing and praise companies who share data	0

Answers on these items can be grouped by the sector in which each company operates. The two representatives who indicated concrete willingness to share data without conditions were from business sectors not often seen as directly related to armed conflict: transportation and manufacturing. These industries may focus less on tracking data relevant to peace and good governance compared to other sectors. In contrast, three respondents indicated that payment or some other forms of attention to cost and bottom-line concerns would help support release. Two participants endorsed direct payment as supporting release, and one added in an open-ended response that supporting release of data would require "involving the company on a commercial basis, ensuring cost-effectiveness and business opportunities." These three respondents operated in the information technology sector (two participants) and in the extractives industry (one participant). Both of these sectors are more directly engaged with treating data specifically as a product that can be sold and/or have more operations in fragile and conflict-affected states internationally. This suggests that companies with the most direct nexus to SDG 16 indicators are also aware of the potential value of these data.

Unlocking the Value of Private-Sector Partners: How to Maximize the Potential for Partnership

The results of this survey are consistent with past research suggesting that some companies may be concerned about issues such as profitability, political blowback, and having legal frameworks for partnerships with government. Unlocking the value of private-sector partnerships will require addressing these issues.

Profitability

While some participants in this survey suggested that their companies would release data without preconditions, about half suggested that concerns about payment, the presence of a business case for the release, or other issues relating to profitability would be important. This is not surprising; firms are by nature organized to pay attention to bottom-line concerns. In some countries, publicly traded companies face a formal fiduciary duty to act to maximize shareholder return and can potentially face a lawsuit should shareholders feel that this duty was breached.[54] Dr. Rosanna Guadagno, a researcher at the Peace Innovation Lab at Stanford who is working on developing systems for helping private-sector actors collect and release data on security, put it this way: "In the private sector, people are focused on keeping things proprietary, keeping control of their intellectual property, and I think that as this area develops there needs to be some compromise—there needs to be a compromise between openly sharing this information and acknowledging that in industry, folks will want to make money off of their services."[55]

Any work with private-sector actors must function based on the premise that it will be difficult for decision-makers within a company to take actions which cause damage to their financial bottom line. However, there is an increasing shift in many countries toward a broader understanding of what the bottom line entails. Recently, management and business literature has begun discussing the idea of a "double bottom line"—profitability and social impact[56]—or a "triple bottom line" that also includes environmental sustainability.[57] The validity of these concepts is contested,[58] but there is increasing evidence that there are links between positive social impact and profitability internationally, particularly in the longer term and for companies that effectively communicate their work to consumers.[59] Discussing the Sahara Group's focus on ethics and social impact, Oluseyi Ojurongbe argued that "the only sustainable way to grow your business is to be ethically upright. It takes less effort to make someone do the right thing than to make them not do the wrong thing."[60] More broadly, when considering

issues relating to SDG 16, there are clear links between the issues themselves and profitability. Conflict is enormously destructive to the infrastructure, social capital, and economic systems that companies rely on,[61] and corruption and human rights abuses can damage investment and economic growth.[62] To the extent that tracking and releasing data on these issues can contribute to resolving them, there is a direct business link between supporting the release of these data and improvements in the operating environments for companies in areas struggling with these issues.

> *In many cases, it will be possible to make a positive case that contributing to the resolution of problems such as violence or corruption will help a company's profitability.*

The critical lesson for engaging with business to take from this research and this survey is that any outreach to business actors should accept bottom-line concerns and business interests as a foundation for the discussion. In many cases, it will be possible to make a positive case that contributing to the resolution of problems such as violence or corruption will help a company's profitability. Where it is possible to make a concrete business case for participation, such as that identified by the *Grupo de los 10* in Monterrey, that case should be put forward. Even without a positive business case, however, those who wish to engage the private sector for these purposes must operate under the assumption that the companies have bottom-line concerns that will make it difficult for them to come to decisions that do not help long-term profitability.

Legitimacy and Public Perceptions

A second concern flagged by participants related to the paired issues of whether such engagement is a legitimate role for their company and whether they may face public criticism for partnering on data collection or release. Asked what concerns they have about the idea of working with NSOs to release data, one participant cited "regulations, privacy, and consumer trust." This is consistent with other research on challenges to engaging business in issues relating to conflict or politically contentious issues. Despite strong arguments that business actors can have a positive effect on peace and security and several cases showing ways that firms have engaged positively,[63] actual engagement by firms in conflict areas is inconsistent. A 2010 study of TNCs operating in Lebanon at the time of the 2006 and 2007 conflicts noted that although the business leaders interviewed agreed that peace was critical for their business, they struggled to see legitimate, effective roles that they might play.[64]

Participants in the research herein flagged similar concerns about the legality of reporting data, concerns about public perceptions and the possibility of reputational impact, and concerns about privacy. In our interview, Garr said: "Unless it's already publicly available, there are just certain things that can't be shared. And there are also reputational

concerns … but just knowing that's a potential hurdle, you can work around it. There are many things that could be done, and frankly are done."[65] Relatedly, many companies that may be interested in supporting the SDGs may not have a clear idea of how to do so legitimately and effectively. In discussing the Sahara Foundation's work engaging the private sector in supporting the SDGs, Ojurongbe said: "What we realized is that a lot of private-sector companies want to do good, but require the right partners and an enabling environment."[66]

> *"What we realized is that a lot of private-sector companies want to do good, but require the right partners and an enabling environment."*

Past experiences of how these obstacles can be overcome suggest that coordination between government and the private sector is important. The case of Safaricom during the post-election violence in Kenya is an example where a company faced similar concerns and overcame them through close coordination with the government. One way to resolve issues is through a process of formal engagement by government actors with private-sector groups. In some states this may take the form of legislation that formally synchronizes laws around privacy and information-sharing with what's needed for company engagement with reporting. In other states it may take the form of bilateral memorandums of understanding between NSOs and companies or groups of companies engaging with the reporting process.

Another tool useful for addressing political concerns is engagement with umbrella associations such as business associations or chambers of commerce. These organizations provide distance from the businesses, which allows for better collective action; businesses are able take a more active role in conflict situations without as much concern for specific reputational issues.[67] Support for this idea was evident in the responses to the survey, with several participants endorsing engaging with collective associations as intermediaries in the process. This may also be a position academic institutions can take, as they have technical expertise in data collection and aggregation and may be perceived as being politically neutral.

A recommendation coming from this is that many private-sector actors will have concerns about what is appropriate for them in terms of engaging with issues relating to peace and good governance. Even for actors who want to work positively, identifying a clear and legitimate role will be important; outreach by government to companies or business associations can be important in developing pathways to engagement seen by companies as legitimate. Outreach by civil society organizations to both government and private sector can help to spur conversations and develop shared understanding and new approaches that are seen as effective and appropriate. Multisectoral partnerships incorporating participants from the government, private sector, and civil society can be useful

for developing effective, impactful, and accepted pathways for engaging the private sector.

Addressing How Embedded Businesses Are in Local Issues

Business actors—especially SMEs, who by definition operate only in relatively small regions—are made up of people drawn from and embedded in local society. This means that it is difficult to discuss the private sector as something separate from existing political dynamics. The profit-driven nature of business does provide a context in which business owners and operators may need to consider issues other than politics in their decisions, but as discussed above, this is not as central a concern as it may sometimes seem. When considering politically contentious issues such as corruption, intergroup violence, and crime, the private sector can't be seen as wholly disconnected from these issues. In some cases, they will be victims of crime, instability, and violence; a 2017 report pointed out that "the interest of SMEs in building peace is direct: if their own communities are fraught with violence and crime, they lack the conditions needed to build a successful business."[68] In other cases, they will be profiting from the system or using their resources to advance narrow political interests that don't necessarily benefit from data about corruption or political violence being released. Engaging the private sector, or any institution or sector within a society that faces foundational political splits or factionalization, must be done with an awareness that the actors involved may be motivated to downplay issues, disengage with the reporting process, or report incorrect information.

Relatedly, governments may not always be positive actors. Responding to open-ended questions about their own thinking on this topic, one participant warned of concerns that "potential misuse of data is more of a risk in countries with immature institutions and poor checks and balances." Another participant acknowledged a foundational tension directly relating to this; if peaceful, just, and inclusive societies were already the norm internationally then there would not be a need for SDG 16. For clearly unjust or exclusive societies, there is concern that such data may be used in ways that could exacerbate problems. Slotin flagged this issue as well, positing that "there's definitely risk [of government interference]" in some countries. "If you're involved with exposing when you've been made to pay bribes or when you've been made to pay extra service fees by parts of government, you risk raising the ire of that government."[69]

This is ultimately a boundary condition for effective collaborative work. If a company is directly implicated in local issues in some way, they are not likely to be an effective partner for reporting. Likewise, if a state government has a persistent record of failures to protect human rights or of systemic persecution of some groups, it is possible that better data may only facilitate more abuses. Partners interested in supporting P3s in support of data collection should consider these issues before beginning an initiative. Institutions and officials including the UN Special Envoys on National Human Rights institutions (NHRIs)

and international nongovernmental organizations such as Amnesty International or Saferworld may be valuable partners in this assessment. UN assessments of a state's NHRIs and their compliance with the Paris Principles[70] can give insight into both a state government's commitment to protecting human rights and their credibility as a partner for outreach. Similarly, international nongovernmental organizations focused on transparency and advocacy can often provide valuable insights regarding both government and private-sector engagement in human rights issues.

All of this leads to the recommendation that any actor, whether state or CSO, interested in supporting P3s in reporting under SDG 16 should engage in a careful mapping of the local dynamics before approaching specific businesses or business associations for participation. If local private-sector actors are implicated in problems relating to SDG 16 indicators, they are not likely to be positive actors. Similarly, if the state government does not show genuine support for transparent, just, and inclusive systems, careful consideration should be given to how to ensure that companies providing information would not be targeted for retaliation, and that the information provided would not be used in the commission of further abuses.

Conclusion

The question of how private-sector actors can support state reporting under SDG 16 directly intersects two conversations happening at the UN and internationally. One discussion is about big data, innovation, and the developing role of analytics and data-based practice in support of the SDG process overall. The other discussion is about the growing public–private partnership support of the work of the UN and the international community. Each of these developing discussions underscores the idea that there may be a positive role for private-sector actors to play in supporting states in their obligations to release data under SDG 16. In parallel, examples from both theory and practice support the idea that firms can be and have been important to the process of collecting and releasing data on conflict and good governance internationally.

Respondents to our survey, as well as in other research on firm behavior in conflict-affected states, likewise support this idea but also contextualize it. Businesses face specific pressures and concerns about profitability, political blowback, and the legitimacy of their involvement in politically contentious issues. Any approach to engaging with the private sector that doesn't take these factors into account is likely to fail. However, there are opportunities for engaging with these issues and overcoming them.

Executing the significant tasks associated with reporting the indicators in the Sustainable Development Goals—much less accomplishing the goal of reducing the underlying issues and problems—will take sustained effort and technical expertise from many states internationally. In an increasingly networked world with growing reliance on coalitions of institutions from multiple sectors being leveraged as tools for solving collective problems, it's reasonable to ask how

these kinds of partnerships might contribute to the goals and their assessment. This research suggests that there is a role for private-sector actors and, if the specific issues inherent in engaging with them can be addressed, that such actors may be positive partners for achieving the global movement toward data-based assessment of the sustainable development goals.

This report is limited by the extremely small sample, and by the probable biases of the respondents. While the responses reported here suggest that at least some members of the private sector see a role for firms in support of SDG 16, they can in no way be considered a truly representative sample showing how widespread this support is. Before developing any specific program or approach to implementation, more systematic research with a broader sample would be important.

In addition, this report engages with the question of the SDGs as a global process but the actual implementation of them is taking place at the state level. Implementing any approach to engaging the private sector in reporting will need to be based on the individual conditions of the actors involved. Each state will face its own local pressures, and each company will have its own specific concerns. More systemic research, whether by companies, CSOs, or academic institutions, will be valuable in uncovering which approaches are most useful in the multiple contexts faced by states globally. Any institution interested in implementing this partnership approach would likely benefit significantly from utilizing an open process in which pilot projects could be developed in a collaborative way where state, citizen, and company concerns could be identified and addressed.

One model for this is the recently completed pilot initiative on national-level monitoring of SDG 16 executed by the United Nations Development Programme. This project, completed with the Open Government Partnership and with funding from the United States Agency for International Development, provides an example of how pilot programs for monitoring indicators associated with SDG 16 can be developed in a careful, open process.[71] It also shows that the SDG process is itself a data-generating and data-informed one. When considering the role of the private sector, there may be significant opportunities to collectively explore in a way that allows for public discussions of lessons learned.

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