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.

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