

## PAKISTAN & SDG 16 - PEACE, JUSTICE, & STRONG INSTITUTIONS

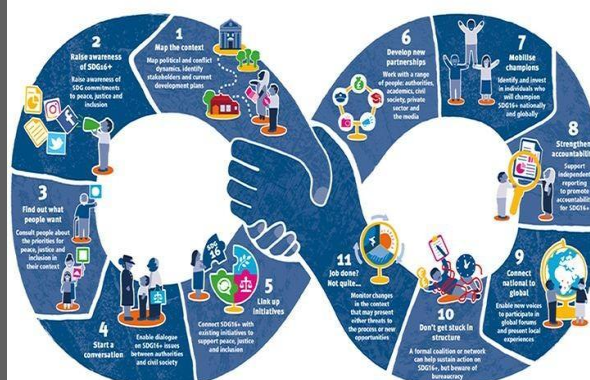
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August 10, 2023

*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



## Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. These goals were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 and serve as a global blueprint for a better and more sustainable future. Each goal includes specific targets to be achieved by 2030. The SDGs aim to address various economic, social, and environmental challenges facing the world today.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encompasses 17 interlinked Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals are designed to tackle the world's most pressing challenges. They are: eradicating poverty, achieving zero hunger, ensuring good health and well-being, providing quality education, promoting gender equality, securing clean water and sanitation, ensuring access to affordable and clean energy, fostering decent work and economic growth, developing sustainable industry and infrastructure, reducing inequalities, building sustainable cities and communities, promoting responsible consumption and production, taking action on climate change, conserving life below water, protecting life on land, advancing peace, justice, and strong institutions, and fostering partnerships for the goals. Each SDG addresses specific aspects of global development; they serve to bring all countries to work together towards a sustainable and prosperous future by the year 2030.

The SDGs were added to the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), identifying new areas of global concern such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities. The SDGs are linked together as a chain of sustainable pathways towards a brighter future and better life for all; interconnected and universally recognized as pivotal to a global sustainable future.<sup>1</sup>

Pakistan affirmed its commitment to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development by adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as its National Development Agenda through a unanimous National Assembly Resolution in 2016.<sup>2</sup> In line with this agenda, the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed an agreement and designed the National Initiative for SDGs to develop mechanisms for achieving the SDGs per national and provincial priorities.<sup>3</sup>

The SDGs are highly relevant to Pakistan's context as they provide a comprehensive framework to address the country's socio-economic and environmental challenges. By aligning its development priorities with the SDGs, Pakistan aims to tackle poverty, promote inclusive growth, improve education and healthcare, address climate change, and foster peace, justice, and strong institutions. The SDGs offer a roadmap for Pakistan's sustainable development, guiding policy and decision-making processes to build a more prosperous and equitable society for its people.

## **Pakistan and SDG 16**

Sustainable Development Goal 16 stands out as a beacon of hope for many societies, particularly those aspiring to achieve justice and strong institutions. SDG 16 is committed to reduce violence while engaging with governments and communities to address conflicts and insecurity. Central to this endeavor is the reinforcement of the rule of law and the protection of human rights which is an essential element for lasting peace. Additionally, curbing the flow of arms and strengthening the involvement of developing nations in global governance institutions are vital aspects that contribute to SDG 16's pursuit of a safer, fairer, and more stable world.<sup>4</sup>

For Pakistan, a country struggling with multifaceted challenges, the pursuit of SDG 16 is extremely important. Not only is it a national imperative but also a pathway to sustainable development.

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<sup>1</sup> National Initiative for Sustainable Development Goals, <https://www.sdgpakistan.pk/web/sdgs>

<sup>2</sup> SDGs in Pakistan, <https://sdgs.punjab.gov.pk/sdgs-in-pakistan>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> SDG 16, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, <https://www.sdgpakistan.pk/web/goals/goal16>

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|---|---|---|--|
|  | <b>TARGET 16.1</b><br><b>REDUCE VIOLENCE EVERYWHERE</b><br>Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.   |  | <b>TARGET 16.2</b><br><b>PROTECT CHILDREN FROM ABUSE, EXPLOITATION, TRAFFICKING AND VIOLENCE</b><br>End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.  |
|  | <b>TARGET 16.3</b><br><b>PROMOTE THE RULE OF LAW AND ENSURE EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE</b><br>Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.   |  | <b>TARGET 16.4</b><br><b>COMBAT ORGANIZED CRIME AND ILLICIT FINANCIAL AND ARMS FLOWS</b><br>By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime. |
|  | <b>TARGET 16.5</b><br><b>SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCE CORRUPTION AND BRIBERY</b><br>Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.   |  | <b>TARGET 16.6</b><br><b>DEVELOP EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT INSTITUTIONS</b><br>Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.   |
|  | <b>TARGET 16.7</b><br><b>ENSURE RESPONSIVE, INCLUSIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE DECISION-MAKING</b><br>Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.   |  | <b>TARGET 16.8</b><br><b>STRENGTHEN THE PARTICIPATION IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE</b><br>Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance.   |
|  | <b>TARGET 16.9</b><br><b>PROVIDE UNIVERSAL LEGAL IDENTITY</b><br>By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.   |  | <b>TARGET 16.10</b><br><b>ENSURE PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND PROTECT FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS</b><br>Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.        |
|  | <b>TARGET 16.A</b><br><b>STRENGTHEN NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AND COMBAT TERRORISM AND CRIME</b><br>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. |  | <b>TARGET 16.B</b><br><b>PROMOTE AND ENFORCE NON-DISCRIMINATORY LAWS AND POLICIES</b><br>Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.   |

### SDG 16 Targets<sup>5</sup>

Some of the major targets of SDG 16 in Pakistan include;<sup>6</sup>

1. Ending abuse against children and violence related deaths.
2. Promoting the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice that protects human rights.
3. Addressing illicit financial flows, arms trafficking, and organized crime.
4. Develop effective and transparent institutions at all levels, countries can enhance their governance structures and better respond to the needs and aspirations of their citizens.
5. Inclusive decision-making.
6. Providing legal identity for all, including birth registration, contributes to individuals' rights and facilitates their access to essential services and opportunities.
7. Build policies that support sustainable development efforts by fostering transparency, accountability, and social inclusion.

Overall, SDG 16 recognizes that peace, justice, and strong institutions are crucial for sustainable development, and concerted efforts at the national and global levels are needed to create a world

<sup>5</sup> SDG 16, Targets, <https://www.sdgpakistan.pk/web/goals/goal16>

<sup>6</sup> Target 16.7: Ensuring Responsive, Inclusive And Representative Decision-Making, <https://sdg-tracker.org/peace-justice#16.7>

that upholds the principles of fairness, equality, and respect for human rights.<sup>7</sup> To achieve these targets, cooperation, capacity building, and international collaborations are essential, particularly in developing countries, to prevent violence, combat terrorism and crime, and build resilience against these challenges. Achieving peace, justice, and strong institutions contributes to progress in poverty eradication, gender equality, education, and economic growth.

Sustainable Development Goal 16 poses both challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. While progress has been made, obstacles still persist, hindering the country's ability to achieve the targets. As a country facing both internal and regional conflicts, Pakistan recognizes the significance of cultivating peaceful societies and promoting regional stability.

Some of Pakistan's efforts towards SDG 16 are;

### **1. *Internal Conflict Resolution:***

Pakistan actively addresses internal conflicts through political dialogue, development initiatives, and targeted reconciliation efforts; the country seeks to bring lasting stability and socio-economic progress to the region. Furthermore, the merger of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) in 2018 was a significant step towards promoting peace and stability in the region.<sup>8</sup>

### **2. *Cross-border Conflicts:***

Pakistan has always been an advocate of peaceful negotiation to solve conflicts, an element crucial for regional stability. By providing a platform for negotiations and encouraging dialogue Pakistan aims to support peaceful resolutions to any conflict.

### **3. *Counter-Terrorism Efforts:***

Pakistan's military operation, Zarb-e-Azb, launched in 2014, significantly contributed towards enhanced security and peace in the region. In the same year, the National Action Plan (NAP) outlined a comprehensive strategy to counter terrorism in Pakistan. Measures such as stricter

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<sup>7</sup> Goal 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals/peace-justice-and-strong-institutions>

<sup>8</sup> The Merger of the FATA and KP: Political Ploy or Positive Change?, <https://acleddata.com/2018/05/30/the-merger-of-the-fata-and-kp-political-ploy-or-positive-change/>

legislation, intelligence sharing, and de-radicalization programs, were taken in the effort of fostering stability.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4. *Regional Cooperation:***

As a member of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Pakistan actively engages in regional initiatives including various forums, dialogues, and confidence-building measures to strengthen regional ties and stability in South Asia. Pakistan also recognizes that economic development is essential for peacebuilding.

#### **5. *Access to Justice and the Rule of Law:***

These are integral components of SDG 16. Pakistan has undertaken efforts to strengthen legal frameworks, enhance judicial systems, and ensure equal access to justice for all. By advancing access to justice and upholding the rule of law, Pakistan aligns its actions with the objectives of SDG 16.

#### **6. *Legal Reforms:***

Pakistan has introduced legal reforms to strengthen the criminal justice system; measures such as the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Protection of Women Act, and the Anti-Rape Ordinance aims to provide greater protection against violence and discrimination. Reforms in family law have also been undertaken to promote gender equality and to protect the rights of women. Protection of Women against Violence Act, Muslim Family Laws Ordinance and the establishment of family courts reflects the effort to ensure fair outcomes of family disputes.

#### **7. *Enhancing Judicial Systems:***

Improvements have been made in Case Management Systems and expedite the delivery of justice. Moreover to enhance efficiency and transparency, relevant technologies such as; the digitization of case files, development of a digital case management system, and a web-based system, have been added to fast track judicial systems, which allows lawyers, litigants, and judges to access case information online.<sup>10</sup> Pakistan also embraced Alternative Dispute

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<sup>9</sup> National Action Plan, 2014, <https://nacta.gov.pk/nap-2014/>

<sup>10</sup> Qazi, Marvi, "Infusing Digital Technology in Judicial Operations in Pakistan: A Critical Analysis of Global Best Practices and Local Initiatives," March 4, 2023, <https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=889127119117085069071107064124110104036009058007026037005120121009020091073089031087018123040104049123008009106028011084086096001008088038013089107065027085126020006005066077104085106094108007007005024127004001024119127027011081110101027067030119021074&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE>

Resolution (ADR) mechanisms to provide timely justice to citizens. Mediation centers, reconciliation councils, and arbitration forums offer alternative avenues for resolving disputes, reducing the burden on the formal court system and promoting cost-effective settlements.

#### 8. *Equal Access to Justice:*

Seeking to bridge the gap between citizens and the justice system, Pakistan has undertaken awareness campaigns to educate citizens about their rights, legal processes, and available remedies. Punjab Access to Justice Program and the Sindh Legal Empowerment and Assistance Program aim to provide legal aid and support to vulnerable populations, ensuring that socio-economic status does not hinder access to justice.

#### 9. *Rule of Law and Accountability:*

Pakistan has established the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), to combat corruption and promote accountability. These measures contribute to strengthening the rule of law and building transparent and accountable institutions. Pakistan focuses on good governance with the establishment of Ombudsman offices, citizen feedback mechanisms, and e-governance systems in efforts to enhance public trust and strengthen institutions.

#### 10. *Institutions and Governance:*

Pakistan has implemented anti-corruption initiatives to address systemic corruption and promote accountability. Bodies, such as NAB aim to investigate and prosecute corruption cases through justice and transparency. Pakistan has introduced reforms to enhance public financial management. This includes the digitization of financial records and the implementation of performance-based budgeting.

| SDG16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions  |      |      |     |  |
|---|------|------|-----|--|
| Homicides (per 100,000 population)  | 4.0  | 2021 | ● → |  |
| Unsentenced detainees (% of prison population)  | 65.7 | 2016 | ● ● |  |
| Population who feel safe walking alone at night in the city/area where they live (%)    | 60   | 2022 | ● → |  |
| Birth registrations with civil authority (% of children under age 5)                    | 42.2 | 2018 | ● ● |  |
| Corruption Perceptions Index (worst 0–100 best)   | 27   | 2022 | ● ↓ |  |
| Children involved in child labor (% of population aged 5 to 14)                         | 11.4 | 2018 | ● ● |  |
| Exports of major conventional weapons (TIV constant million USD per 100,000 population) | 0.0  | 2021 | ● ● |  |
| Press Freedom Index (worst 0–100 best)  | 40.0 | 2023 | ● ↓ |  |
| Access to and affordability of justice (worst 0–1 best)                                 | 0.4  | 2021 | ● → |  |
| Timeliness of administrative proceedings (worst 0–1 best)                               | 0.3  | 2021 | ● ↓ |  |
| Expropriations are lawful and adequately compensated (worst 0–1 best)                   | 0.5  | 2021 | ● ↓ |  |

### *Pakistan Performance Indicator SGD 16 - 2023<sup>11</sup>*

Like many countries, Pakistan prefers certain goals that are in line with the long term strategic plans of the country.<sup>12</sup> Implementing SDGs essentially involves trade-offs between a number of goals based on national contexts, such as investing in large infrastructure development versus human development.<sup>13</sup>

### **Success Stories**

Pakistan's commitment to achieving SDG 16 has resulted in significant success stories, showcasing remarkable progress. These achievements highlight the value of innovative programs and reforms in working towards SDG 16. Pakistan's efforts serve as valuable models for other developing nations. It emphasizes the significance of concerted actions and collaboration to create a more just and sustainable world. These examples highlight the country's commitment towards achieving SDG 16 and provide valuable insight into effective strategies and initiatives:

1. *Punjab Access to Justice Program*: Provides free legal aid, advice, and representation to marginalized communities, ensuring their access to justice. Provide security and ensure equal protection under the law to citizens of Punjab, in particular to the poor. <sup>14</sup>
2. *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Reforms*: Depoliticized the police force, introduced merit-based recruitment and technology-driven solutions, enhancing accountability and efficiency in law enforcement. <sup>15</sup>
3. *Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)*: As Pakistan's flagship social protection programme, it targets to alleviate poverty through cash transfers, empowering vulnerable households and promoting inclusive development, particularly in the poorest households across Pakistan. <sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Pakistan Performance Indicator, <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/static/profiles/pdfs/SDR-2023-pakistan.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Johannes M. Waldmüller, Hameed Jamali & Nelson Nogales, "Operationalizing Sustainable Development Goals in Vulnerable Coastal Areas of Ecuador and Pakistan: Marginalizing Human Development?," *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 2019, 20:4, 468-485, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19452829.2019.1666810?journalCode=cjhd20>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Punjab Access to Justice Programme, Planning & Development Board, <https://pnd.punjab.gov.pk/system/files/AJP08.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> KP Police Reforms, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1563594/kp-police-reforms>

<sup>16</sup> Benazir Income Support Programme, <https://www.bisp.gov.pk/>



4. *Digitalizing Justice System*: E-filing, online case management, and digitized court records streamline processes, improve access to justice, and strengthen the rule of law.<sup>17</sup>

### Future Challenges

Despite the significant achievements in favor of SDG 16, Pakistan may still face challenges and obstacles given its current systems. It may include:

1. Ongoing political instability could hinder the long-term commitment to achieving SDG 16, further affecting the continuity of policies and implementation efforts.
2. *Security Concerns*: Persistent security challenges, such as terrorism, pose obstacles towards Pakistan's efforts of peacebuilding and establishment of stable and secure societies.
3. *Corruption and Weak Governance*: The prevalence of corruption and weak governance hinders progress towards SDG 16.
4. *Socio-economic Inequalities*: Pakistan's socio-economic disparities, gender inequalities, and exclusion of marginalized groups create challenges in ensuring equal access to justice for all citizens.
5. *Capacity Building*: Strengthening the capacity of institutions, particularly in the justice sector is vital for effective implementation of SDG 16-related initiatives.
6. *Resource Constraints*: Limited financial and human resources pose challenges in adequately investing in peacebuilding, justice systems, and institutional strengthening efforts required for SDG 16.
7. *Cultural and Traditional Barriers*: Overcoming barriers that may impede the participation of women and marginalized communities in decision-making processes and accessing justice is a challenge for Pakistan.
8. *Data Availability and Monitoring*: Ensuring the availability of accurate and reliable data to measure progress towards SDG 16. This targets and establishes robust monitoring mechanisms which are crucial but poses a challenge.

Addressing these challenges require sustained commitment, policy coherence, and multi-stakeholder collaborations. Strengthening political stability, addressing security concerns, combating corruption, promoting inclusivity, and investing in capacity building are key areas that Pakistan needs to focus on to overcome obstacles and advance SDG 16.

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<sup>17</sup> Digital Justice: SC to use e-court system for first time in judicial history of Pakistan, <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/digital-justice-sc-to-use-e-court-system-for-first-time-in-judicial-history-of-pakistan/>



## Conclusion

It is crucial for Pakistan to continue investing in socio-economic development, inclusive governance, and conflict resolution mechanisms, by incorporating local communities, marginalized groups and civil society organizations into peace-building initiatives. By doing so Pakistan can ensure a more inclusive and sustainable path towards peace, aligned with the principles of SDG 16.

While progress has been made, challenges remain in ensuring universal access to justice and upholding the rule of law in Pakistan. Issues such as judicial backlog, limited resources, and societal barriers still need to be addressed. By advancing access to justice, ensuring the rule of law, and promoting transparency and accountability, Pakistan can create a society where the rights of all citizens are protected, and institutions function effectively. Sustained efforts are required to make further progress.

At its core, SDG 16 emphasizes the importance of peaceful societies as prerequisites offer a roadmap for Pakistan's sustainable development, guiding policies and decision-making processes development. It recognizes that without peace and stability, progress in other areas of development becomes challenging to achieve.