

8. Innovations in Measuring SDG 16: The Case of Liberia

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INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global agenda for transformation which requires that “no one is left behind”. The National Evaluation Capacities Conference 2017 held in Istanbul, Turkey from 16 to 20 October ensured that countries were brought together to participate and share knowledge and experiences related to their involvement in the implementation of the SDGs. Liberia as a post-war country benefited through the participation of five participants drawn from government and civil society organizations who had the opportunities to share experiences, innovations and learning. The conference also helped to build partnerships with some people of the world.

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to establish that the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index is a useful tool that contributes towards national evaluation capacities if adapted to measure SDG 16. This tool can be used for multiple objectives. It can be used to better understand the roots of reconciliation and the interaction between factors such as truth, justice, social cohesion, reconciliation and peace.¹⁴⁶ It is a predictive and diagnostic tool that measures the impact of peacebuilding and reconciliation programmes and policies and allows data to be quantified and understood in order to increase effectiveness and efficiency. SCORE can be used to measure the capacities of governance institutions. It can further measure the level of trust citizens have in law and order institutions and their capacity to function. The index can disaggregate levels of trust by various demographic measures. SCORE is an innovative assessment tool proposed for measuring indicators of SDG 16 in addition to other tools in existence.¹⁴⁷

146 Predicting peace. The Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index as Tool for Conflict Transformation (<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/predicting-peace-social-cohesion-and-reconciliation-index-tool-conflict-transformation>).

147 This tool can measure the level of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, challenges and sustainability of governance institutions and programme interventions. It also can identify conflict prone regions of a country, as well as measure the impact.

SOME CHALLENGES FOR MEASURING SDG 16 ON PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

There are a number of challenges to measuring progress on SDG 16 which must be taken into consideration as efforts are being taken by national governments to report progress. For instance, most African State institutions have yet to comprehensively understand the relationships between governance, peace and security and development. This is even complemented by the lack of standard data collection approaches which should be informed by changing country scenarios, histories and priorities.¹⁴⁸ Measurement of SDG 16 should be based on available, high-quality qualitative and quantitative indicators and there should be resources at country level to define such indicators, which African countries often face as a challenge.

Because SDG 16 is complex, it requires not just good indicators for measurement but also effective participatory planning and constant rigorous political analysis guided by “political will” as positive incentives provided by State authorities which SCORE is capable to address. Results generated from these processes should therefore inform an effective framework that considers perspectives of regional and county-level systems based on a standard approach that monitors and reports on SDG 16. This is however limited if not lacking in most African countries. Further, because democratic values and practices such as inclusiveness, participation and the rule of law differ from country to country, the lack of baseline data to measure progress in these areas make it difficult to assess progress on SDG 16.

Liberia recently experienced increased participation in voting on 10 October to elect the country’s new leaders, but to what extent can this action be translated into improved governance is a question that SCORE will be used annually to assess within the context of good governance. Liberia, like most African countries, has a centralized system, thus excluding and marginalizing the mass majority of the population from decision-making and access to State resources, so that measuring SDG 16 is difficult. Furthermore, unless public resources are fairly distributed for citizens to feel the sense of peace, security and development, debate about transparency and accountability is “mere talk” which poses a challenge to measuring significant progress on SDG 16. Capacity constraints pose serious impediments to measuring all the indicators of SDG 16, which means that African countries should start with a limited number of indicators.¹⁴⁹ It is important for both technical and institutional capacities to be built in the development of comprehensive monitoring and reporting framework in consideration of regional, national and thematic perspectives as an approach. African countries, especially a post-war country like Liberia, do not have the capacity to report progress on all the indicators and targets. Moreover, it is unrealistic to measure progress on SDG 16 based on global indicators because governance, peace and security are influenced by country-specific norms, cultures and social amenities.¹⁵⁰

148 Adedayo Bolaji-Adio, ‘The Challenge of Measuring SDG 16: What Role for African Regional Frameworks?’, European Centre for Development Policy Management Discussion Paper No.175, May 2015.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.

WHY USE SCORE AS MEASURING TOOL FOR SDG 16?

Governance, peace and security cannot be measured just by a statistical tool; rather a combination of both qualitative and quantitative measurement tools is needed. Because SCORE adopts both, it therefore has the capability to collect data, analyse, plan, design and monitor implementation of national policies, accountability systems, inclusiveness and the rule of law, and promote inclusive participation.¹⁵¹ It is acknowledged that for any given society to be peaceful, just and inclusive, its governance processes should be based on genuine reconciliation.

INNOVATIONS IN MEASURING SDG 16: THE CASE OF LIBERIA

The Liberia SCORE was completed in May 2017 and was the first to be implemented in Africa. Coming at a critical moment in the country's post-war history, the findings are being used by the Government and the United Nations to formulate peace consolidation policies during the ongoing transition process. It has identified parts of Liberia most vulnerable to fragmented social cohesion during the transition, and its predictive analysis points to policies and practices that can best support the sustaining peace agenda. Liberia SCORE is being used by the Government and partners to monitor the implementation of the Liberia Peace Building Plan and to guide the revision of the Government's Strategic Road Map for National Peacebuilding, Healing, and Reconciliation. The Strategic Road Map was designed to foster coherence of institutions, structures, systems, mechanisms and human resources mobilized to foster national healing and reconciliation and build sustainable peace.¹⁵²

Overall, Liberia's SCORE results showed five predictive models which focused on five outcomes of interest, two of which are discussed below.¹⁵³ The data collection for the Liberian SCORE was carried out by Search for Common Ground while the data analysis and interpretation was done by SCORE specialists from the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development. The Liberia Peacebuilding Office is the custodian of the SCORE in Liberia. Liberia is the first country in Africa to use the SCORE methodology. The Economic Community of West African States, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Liberia and the Peacebuilding Office have initiated efforts to institutionalize SCORE in Liberia and West Africa.

The SCORE exercise was carried out in the 15 counties of Liberia. The index was calibrated in March 2016 and the data were collected in April and May; the participants were citizens of Liberia aged 18 years and above. A random stratified sampling method was used to produce a representative sample of the population based on the results of the 2008 Population Census. Among the key findings were as follows:

151 Ibid.

152 The Strategic Road Map for National Peacebuilding, Healing and Reconciliation.

153 SCORE Policy briefs developed by Dr. Ilke Dagli, in collaboration with Dr. Alexandros Lordos and Dr. Yushimiko Owaki who led the SCORE study in Liberia in 2016. Detailed policy briefs available at www.scoreforpeace.org.

1. **Enhancing coexistence and civic trust in Liberia**¹⁵⁴

Considering the turbulent past of Liberia and its multi-ethnic, multi-religious societal composition, one of the key outcomes of interest for SCORE was to enhance coexistence and civic trust in the country. Heat maps were generated, showing differences in the perceived level of coexistence and civic trust across counties.¹⁵⁵ The average score across Liberia is 5.2. In other words, approximately 5 out of 10 people feel negative about progress in reconciliation and/or intergroup harmony and/or feel distrustful or dissatisfied towards civic institutions.

Policies and interventions to enhance coexistence and civic trust should focus on developing existing capacities to improve delivery of State services, foster civic engagement and reinforce socioeconomic improvement, while reducing the propensity for violence and improving the sense of security. To ensure effective and efficient allocation of resources, these policies and interventions should target areas where the likelihood of impact is the highest. In the short and medium term, the SCORE predictive analysis reveals that access to and efficacy of state services and documents, complemented with improved efficacy of national frameworks and social capacity-building processes, would be one of the most effective policy entry points to enhance coexistence and civic trust. On the other hand, policies aimed at promoting constructive civic participation and developing capacities and support mechanisms to foster forgiveness and intergroup healing should be incorporated into long-term programming and strategies.

2. **Addressing violent tendencies and sexual and gender-based violence**¹⁵⁶

SCORE Liberia has assessed aggression in daily life, endorsement of political violence and endorsement of sexual and gender-based violence as the three main components of violent tendencies in order to better understand the societal dynamics of Liberians and drivers of violence. Looking at two of the indicators—political violence propensity and aggression in daily life—at the country level, four broad groups of people are observed. While 57 percent of Liberians express generally peaceful attitudes (aversion to political violence and non-aggressive), approximately 20 percent express both aggression and a strong propensity for political violence. A heat map¹⁵⁷ shows the scores for violent tendencies across the country (by county). Since a score of 0 is not achievable and a score of 10 would mean that every single individual in Liberia is a potential perpetrator, the aim should be to

154 Ibid.

155 See <http://www.scoreforpeace.org/eng/?country=19>.

156 Liberia's SCORE report led by SeeD. SeeD is a peacebuilding think tank, with regional scope, that uses participatory research to support international organizations, local policymakers, stakeholders and peace practitioners to develop, implement and monitor targeted efforts towards social cohesion and reconciliation.

157 See <http://www.scoreforpeace.org/eng/?country=19&year=33&dimension=Violent%20Tendencies&indicator=All&of=all>.

get the county scores as close to 1 as possible. According to the SCORE findings, the country-level average for violent tendencies in Liberia is 1.9. In other words, approximately 2 out of 10 people express violent tendencies in one way or another (aggression, political violence and/or endorsement of sexual or gender-based violence).¹⁵⁸ Based on the SCORE findings, counties such as Grand Cape Mount (score of 4), Grand Gedeh (3), River Cess (2.7) and Lofa (2.5)¹⁵⁹ are identified as areas of concern for interventions in terms of tailoring appropriate and effective policies which would make high likelihood of impact.

SCORE INDEX AND SDG 16

The Government of Liberia has made efforts to domesticate the SDGs in its national development framework, the Agenda for Transformation Framework Successor. The Government is currently working with the Peacebuilding Support Office on a multi-year SCORE programme (2018-2020) which will guide, monitor and evaluate progress on the implementation of the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan. A key dimension of the multi-year programme will be to integrate SDG 16 targets and indicators into national frameworks through the lens of the SCORE methodology. The programme will deliver the following results:

- Robust monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Liberia peacebuilding plan;
- Evidence-based and targeted design of United Nations agency and government peacebuilding and conflict prevention programmes, including under the Liberia Multi-Donor Trust Fund;
- Precision tracking of the priority social cohesion indicators, including those related to SDG 16;
- In-depth analysis of causal factors and root causes of the conflict and social fragmentation;
- Robust monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan and Reconciliation Road Map.

The table below provides an example of how the SCORE index will add value to the SDG 16 targets in Liberia, in this case the target for reducing violence and the associated indicators. Qualitative measures can be constructed for each indicator and monitored and evaluated over time.

158 SCORE Liberia draft policy brief – addressing violent tendencies and sexual and gender-based violence, Dr. Ilke Dagli, SeeD.

159 See <http://www.scoreforpeace.org/?country=19&year=33&dimension=Violent%20Tendencies&indicator=All&of=all>.

TABLE 1. VALUE ADDED BY SCORE

TARGETS	INDICATORS	VALUE ADDED BY SCORE
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	SCORE will disaggregate societal dynamics related to crime and identify the drivers of violent behaviors at the national and subnational levels
	16.1.2 Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause	SCORE will predict the drivers of conflict and identify conflict prone regions of the country. It will provide indicators of violence propensity which can be measured year by year. It will also measure the impact of policies and programmes designed to prevent conflict.
	16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months	SCORE will measure the level of societal acceptance of physical, psychological or sexual violence and predict the social and political contexts where violence is likely to occur.
	16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live	SCORE will measure the level of trust citizens have in law and order institutions and their capacity to function. The index can disaggregate levels of trust by various demographic measures.

BASED ON THE SCORE METHODOLOGY, HOW DO PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF EVALUATION NEED TO CHANGE?

It is an established fact that national governments do not have the available resources to effectively measure the SDGs. Global stakeholders and evaluators need to adapt new approaches to the evaluation of the SDGs, particularly SDG 16 which is the point of interest, and this should generate new principles and practices that account for common agreement amongst actors at various levels in terms of divisions of their responsibilities at the national, regional and local levels. This is quite necessary because of the complexity surrounding the SDGs, given the types of indicators and the challenges facing national governments. The new principles and practices should call for identifying innovative ways to collect, analyse and use data. The role of UNDP Liberia and development partners is very significant in the process whereby these institutions would need to reaffirm commitments to build and strengthen national capacities. These efforts should create opportunities to build synergies and stronger partnership for sustainable and inclusive growth for “no one to be left behind” as well as strengthening national capacities in exploring new ways to work together with national governments and other stakeholders to effectively measure the SDGs.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITIES?

Given the complexities around the SDGs with 17 Goals, 169 targets and more than 232 indicators, and with the Agenda 2030 call for global actions, the implementation of the SDGs depends on national context considering the roles of both government and civil society actors. There is complexity of collecting quality and adequate data to make informed decisions using participatory approaches.

A post-war country such as Liberia is even more challenged by national evaluation capacities with no clear policy on evaluation of the SDGs and other sustainable development frameworks. While Liberia does have the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services, the data and statistical house for Liberia, it lacks adequate capacity for comprehensive data collection system with fragmentation in the current data collection process at national and local levels. Liberia does not at the moment have baseline data for SDG 16, informed by a coherent monitoring and evaluation framework. Because of the challenge of inadequate funding, there is low demand for evaluation and systems for communicating evaluation results to stakeholders. The national Government's demand for quality data to make informed decisions requires building and strengthening national evaluation capacity with further need to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships to build synergy with each of the SDGs. Developed countries should be encouraged to provide funding to support countries that are less developed and those in transition based on national action plans. Whatever support should be evaluated against building on accountability in national process.

CONCLUSION

SCORE methodology has the strength to contribute towards national evaluation capacities. As a process framework, it provides robust diagnostic and predictive capacity to assess peace, justice and governance institutions. This is evidenced by the 2016 SCORE study in Liberia, the results of which are helping the Government and partners to design programmes and formulate policies based on empirical evidence. Heat maps demonstrate the level of scores that determine target areas of concerns for policy recommendations and desired programming that would have the greatest impact. With the use of SCORE methodology in Liberia, we were able to utilize an advanced analytical and participatory multi-stakeholder process which is currently guiding the development of an evidenced-based, county-level five-year vision and programmes on national reconciliation. The results are further helping to optimize resource allocations by designing and deploying appropriate interventions that would have the greatest potential for violence prevention and conflict transformation. These interventions are being deployed in geographic areas that show low civic trust as indicated on the heat map, and by designing and implementing the needed interventions citizens would begin to build confidence and trust in governance institutions. If citizens are confident and trust that State institutions have become efficient and effective, then these would be translated into enhanced coexistence and civic trust as a response to measuring the SDG 16 indicators.

The Government together with the United Nations and other partners is attempting to address these issues by the development of a multi-year programme which will be integrated

by SDG 16 targets and indicators utilizing the SCORE methodology. The programme will deliver a number of results including robust monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Liberia peacebuilding plan, Strategic Road Map for National Peacebuilding, Healing and Reconciliation, as well as the Framework for Mutual Accountability, a national development document. A second round of SCORE has begun targeting 6,000 individuals across Liberia to assess peace, justice and governance issues.

The evidence-based and targeted design of United Nations agency and government peacebuilding and conflict prevention programmes, including under the Liberia Multi-Donor Trust Fund, are underway, along with efforts to incorporate the SCORE methodology into the institutional capacity of the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services. Our international partners including UNDP should further strengthen national capacities as a key principle for finding innovative ways to measure the SDGs. Based on the results of Liberia's SCORE in 2016, it is determined that SCORE methodology adds significant value to measuring global indicators, mainstreamed into national processes and programmes.