



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



MODERATORS

Nancy Lindborg and Sarah Mendelson

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The 17 Rooms initiative is convened by the Brookings Institution and The Rockefeller Foundation to stimulate near-term cooperative actions to advance the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This document summarizes insights and actions that emerged from the working group discussions in Room 16 during the 17 Rooms 2020 flagship process. The text was independently prepared by the Room's Moderators and participants, in response to the common question asked of all Rooms in 2020: "In light of recent crises linked to COVID-19, systemic racism, and other urgent challenges, what are 1 to 3 actionable priorities over the coming 12-18 months that address near term needs while also making a decisive contribution to protecting or advancing your Goal's 2030 results? What actions can members of your Room take to advance these priorities?" Corresponding documents prepared by all the other Rooms are available [here](#), alongside a synthesis report prepared by the 17 Rooms secretariat.

We aim to address both specific aspects of SDG 16 and a holistic, refreshed approach to broaden constituencies in favor of dignity and respect for human rights given the multiple crises we face today. Room 16 participants identified **four focus areas**: Transparency/Accountability/Anti-Corruption; Justice (Racial, Access, Transitional); Innovative Approaches/Reframing of Human Rights/Social Justice; and Resilience/Fragility/Peacebuilding.

Room 16 participants identified **four main priorities** on which we want to make progress by December 2021. We view the priorities as campaigns and actions that will advance the four focus areas, some that crosscut, and some that are specific to one area. Our overarching goal is to advance an understanding of how the SDGs in general, and SDG 16 as well as the [16+](#) agenda represent paradigm shifts in how we think and do development, advance sound governance, and safeguard human rights. The current global pandemic is laying bare the many inequities and injustices that span the globe, including in higher income countries, animating the need for a new, stronger social contract for fragile communities wherever they exist around the world. Most fundamentally, how the numerous COVID-19 stimulus and relief packages are shaped, allocated, and applied will dictate whether recovery is just, inclusive, and able to prevent further outbreaks of violence due to exacerbated grievances and marginalization. Inclusive, equitable, and demand driven approaches are key to those aid/recovery funds flowing more justly. If a renewed or new stronger [social contract](#) can emerge along with these funds, we will make progress on the SDGs.

Cross Cutting Priority—Getting #JustRecovery: To address the multiple crises emergent from COVID-19, governments and international institutions have, in a matter of months, mobilized the largest stimulus and relief packages since World War II, amounting to at least [\\$12 trillion](#). These packages may enable the kind of inclusive, equitable, and just recovery envisioned by the inclusion of Goal 16 in the Global Goals. Yet, when vast amounts of money move fast, there is an increase of corruption, state capture, and systemic failure and the money doesn't reach those most in need. We, therefore, propose prioritizing a global multi-stakeholder campaign that involves governments, civil society, private sector, and others to advocate and institutionalize inclusivity and transparency concerning the numerous COVID-19 stimulus and relief [packages](#) and ensure the intended goal of building back better, more justly and equitably, in countries and cities around the world.

This wide-ranging campaign within and across countries would call for actions by governments and non-governmental actors related to transparency, participation, and oversight of the multiple elements in the recovery process. These would cover aid packages and debt financing, public procurement processes as well as tracking where the money goes and who specifically benefits. It would trace the impact on specific populations affected by COVID-19 and make sure their voices are [heard](#). It would include passing and enforcing public beneficial ownership laws in order to prevent leakages and prioritize support to companies fulfilling their tax and societal obligations. (Such an effort would also help expose dictators' dollars.)

The value proposition of this multi-stakeholder approach involves institutionalizing a paradigm shift, combining the traditional supply-side governance model, albeit with an emphasis on transparency, with a demand-side, data-driven model that begins by identifying people's needs in a locality and then empowers citizens, civil society, the private sector, and others to both shape responses and trace financial flows. A particular emphasis would be on data collection of [justice needs](#) and engagement with grassroots organizations to amplify the voice of vulnerable communities in program design and implementation.

The #JustRecovery campaign would serve as a unifying banner to tie together multiple flows of assistance, whether national or local recovery funds, overseas development assistance, humanitarian response, peacebuilding, social justice and human rights work, both at home and around the world. This approach could include, among other elements, data visualization and dashboards, supported by standardized, disaggregated data collection to highlight numerous inequities related to health, income, access to justice, as well as pinpoint needed interventions, and track what is effective. Information on needs and inequities as well as a focus on local decision making and increased resources at the local level would lead to better outcomes, less fragility, and more resilience in all communities regardless of context.

The Transnational Justice Priority: Applying relevant international standards to domestic justice practices, especially in the struggle for racial justice in the global north and the knock-on effects of COVID-19 felt in communities around the world, is an urgent priority. One strand involves efforts to bring domestic laws on the use of force more in line with [international standards](#), especially with regard to policing. Another concerns tracking the impact of UN human rights instruments (using an algorithm and country-based correspondents) to assess what is actually happening in a [community](#). A third effort promotes specific lessons from the menu of reconciliation and transitional justice efforts used around the world and applied to the [United States](#) and the fight for racial justice and equity.

The Next Generation Priority: The impact of the pandemic has underscored the need for new approaches to teaching and researching [human rights](#). The opportunity is to create a re-energized Community of Practice to explore new, innovative approaches and methodologies that use the SDGs to engage high school and university students, with an emphasis on a demand-driven, data-informed, human-centered design. Successfully institutionalizing new approaches would also lead to more focus on localities and locally based leadership. It would involve [field building](#), elevating a focus on inequality and inequities, socioeconomic issues as well as work with cities. Practically, it involves convening experts as well as students, sharing best practices and syllabi, exploring the role that experiential learning and [moot courts](#) can play, and other modalities to be identified.

The Elevating Prevention Priority: Fragility is gaining ground everywhere. This priority places greater attention on investing in prevention rather than relying on military and humanitarian responses deployed only after a crisis has erupted and devastated communities. A decade of evidence underscores the importance and potential of aligning development, diplomacy, and security approaches to focus on improving local social contracts through locally led initiatives. Putting more accountable, inclusive governance—the essence of Goal 16—at the heart of development has been identified by key donors as a more effective approach, from the World Bank to the UK and the [US](#). Moving from policies to action will, however, require sustained, focused advocacy, and all concerned parties need to acknowledge that upstream prevention work has many aspects. It involves integrating peace action into peace education, for example, to engage young people in building peace in their own communities. It involves policy approaches that center peacebuilding in donor diplomacy and foreign assistance portfolios as well as measuring the impact of the totality of engagement, not just a program here and there, on drivers of fragility in a country.