

# 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



#### CO-MODERATORS

**Elizabeth Andersen**, Executive Director, World Justice Project  
**Sarah Mendelson**, Distinguished Service Professor  
of Public Policy and Head of Heinz College in  
Washington DC, Carnegie Mellon University

**17 ROOMS GLOBAL FLAGSHIP  
2021 ROOM DOCUMENTS**  
NOVEMBER 2021



This document summarizes the ideas and actions that emerged from Room 16, a working group for Sustainable Development Goal 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, that convened as part of the annual 17 Rooms global flagship process in 2021. The [17 Rooms initiative](#) is co-hosted by the Center for Sustainable Development at The Brookings Institution and The Rockefeller Foundation. Each Room, one per SDG, was asked to identify actionable priorities that can be advanced by the end of 2022 to improve some component of 2030 outcomes for its respective Goal. Corresponding documents prepared by the other flagship Rooms are available [here](#), alongside a synthesis report prepared by the 17 Rooms secretariat.

## **Room 16: #JustRecovery—Toward the universal advancement of accountable, inclusive, people-centered social and justice policies in the post-COVID-19 era (V: October 1, 2021)**

Elizabeth Andersen and Sarah Mendelson

### **Room focus**

We aim to connect and coordinate global, regional, national, and local layers of action to assess and foster accountable COVID-19 relief and recovery efforts that reduce inequalities and increase access to justice in all countries and communities.

**Room 16 participants identified three interlinked areas of action to advance through 2023: 1) Identify and develop best practices for #JustRecovery; 2) Create a Community of Practice to teach and partner with the next generation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and anchor these efforts; and 3) Coordinate communications and advocacy around these best practices to drive policy responses.** A broad theme cutting across all three areas is the need for recovery that generates just outcomes. Such outcomes will be fundamental to building back better and ensuring that all countries deliver to all inhabitants. The ingredients of such recovery include responsive and inclusive policies, equitable vaccine distribution, transparent and accountable distribution of recovery packages particularly to the most vulnerable and marginalized, as well as mechanisms that enable communities to meet basic social and justice needs. If these do not happen, if recovery is uneven, inequitable, and unjust—which evidence to date suggests it is—then collectively this situation threatens to further inequalities, drive an increase in corruption, a rise in violence, and a further breakdown in trust and social contracts, endangering all SDG outcomes. In other words, a greater sense of urgency coupled with action on the SDG16+ agenda is needed across the board.

### **Identify and develop best practices for #JustRecovery**

Participants are involved at numerous global, regional, national, and local levels advancing #JustRecovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The elevation of just recovery helps advance the conception embedded in the SDGs of leaving no one behind. This universality is at the core of not only the SDGs but the touchstone for the human rights movement since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ([UDHR](#)).

At the global level, recognizing these connections, dozens of countries have signed on to the [Sustainable Recovery Pledge](#) (although notably not the United States). In practice, there are many challenges to its implementation. Specifically, most jurisdictions lack the disaggregated data required to identify the gaps in people's ability to meet their basic social and justice needs and to design and evaluate COVID-19 relief and recovery in ways that address those gaps (World Justice Project, WJP/Pathfinders: [Grasping the Justice Gap](#)). Moreover, in the absence of transparency and accountability mechanisms, massive relief

packages and [vaccine](#) programs have fallen prey to [corruption](#) and capture and failed to address the social, political, and economic vulnerabilities and structural inequalities revealed and deepened by the COVID crisis.

In the face of these challenges, Room participants are identifying positive models for building back better. A forthcoming WJP report, based on consultation with national statistical offices, justice sector officials, and civil society representatives in dozens of countries will identify emerging models for gathering and using people-centered justice data to advance a #JustRecovery. (Forthcoming, WJP, People-Centered and Data-Driven: A Guide to Justice Strategies). Pathfinders has gathered practices from governments around the world in [inclusive recovery](#) and [access to justice](#) during the pandemic. The Open Government Partnership is elevating models for accountable recovery packages. The needs for transparent accounting standards for the recovery packages emerge as vital to combating the state capture and corruption that can follow the unprecedented release of \$17 trillion. Some emerging best practices following financial flows using technology, for example in Colombia and Paraguay and no doubt elsewhere, might be scaled and applied also to equitable vaccine distribution.

At the local level, emerging directly from the 2020 Room 16 discussions and with support from The Rockefeller Foundation, some participants have preliminary findings from deep dives in Toronto, Atlanta, and Pittsburgh that are gauging a number of social and justice needs including the stark rise in food insecurity, housing loss, and unemployment. These local deep dives in North American cities only underscore the universality of the challenges to #JustRecovery. Data accessibility and disaggregated data on social justice needs vary widely across localities with most cities having little on crucial data points by race and gender. Data disaggregation is, however, a key strategy for inter alia identifying and addressing gender, racial, and other inequities as well as strengthening localization. In most cases, the data is compiled by national and local NGOs or emerges from other ad hoc arrangements (often with universities) and not the city government (where policymaking, including budgeting, takes place). What we can also say at this early stage of work is that translating existing data into SDG targets and then actual numbers of people, building on work by McArthur and Rasmussen ([2017](#), [2019](#)), has emerged as a central task to identifying whose basic social justice needs go unmet, who is being left behind, and what can be done about that. While data on social justice needs are often obscured, the transparency and accountability of COVID-19 relief and recovery funds are also uneven by locality, with an absence of agreed upon reporting standards. Finally, we are also observing the absence of what are increasingly viewed as best practices internationally being applied in these North American contexts, such as for cash transfers. In short, our preliminary findings suggest recovery is more unjust than just. Work on this effort will continue through the academic year, and by Fall 2022, we will have a detailed report.

### **Create a community of practice (CoP) to teach and partner with the next generation on the SDGs and anchor these efforts**

Room participants generally agree that universities are emerging as important and stable platforms to advance the SDGs. The ongoing #JustRecovery work in Room 16 described above includes numerous university partners, and we see exciting possibilities to deepen and scale this effort including through pooling resources and methodologies, pulling forward success stories including those that use innovative approaches and university-wide uptake, and communicating these to and with young people. The SDGs are a great tool for teaching social justice and human rights but do need some translation. Universities in general, and schools of public policy in particular, have a role to play in training the next generation ("[Cohort 2030](#)") on the integrated nature of the SDGs, the role that disaggregated data

ought to play in shaping policies, and specifically, in leaving no one behind. To that end, some participants will continue to meet periodically over the next year. The goals will be to hammer out topics for discussion, uncover best practices, and create plans and strategies for getting them resourced to support this emerging CoP to advance new approaches to teaching and partnering with the next generation about human rights using the SDGs, human-centered design, and the optimal use of disaggregated data. Tapping into and building on the experience of students involved to date in the #JustRecovery work and in translating data to SDG targets will be important also in the creation of a vibrant CoP.

### **Coordinate communications and advocacy around these best practices to drive policy responses**

Room 16 participants are committed to strategically engaging at gatherings over the next two years to raise awareness of the gaps and needs identified above as well as elevate success stories to stimulate action at global, regional, national, and local levels. Specific activities include:

- Propose collaboration around people-centered data ecosystems that draw on diverse sets of data to ensure no one is left behind. These ecosystems would serve as a (currently missing) mechanism to enable the elevation of local voice and ensure just recovery and overall accountability for delivering the SDGs;
- Coordinate cross-room efforts to encourage all countries in 2022 to commit to and release a Voluntary National Review (VNR). Underscoring universality, these efforts should include the United States (as the only OECD and G-20 country that has thus far failed to do so while [247 VNRs](#) in total have been filed); and
- Advocate to policymakers and donors the value proposition of embracing and funding efforts to gather, report, and use people-centered disaggregated justice data, including reporting on SDG 16.3.3 measuring access to civil justice.

There are numerous events and strategic opportunities over the coming year to advance the SDGs. Participants in Room 16 are particularly focused on: the U.S.-led Summit for Democracy (Remote 9-10 December 2021, TBD /reconvene in person in 2022); the [OGP 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary Summit](#), Seoul (Hybrid 15-17 December 2021) and OGP member state action plan processes; the [World Justice Forum](#), The Hague (30 May-2 June, 2022); High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2022 (Mid-July 2022); and U.N. General Assembly (September 2022).

The Biden administration has yet to strongly endorse the SDGs at either the national or international level. While many policies advanced by the administration align well with the SDGs, the lack of endorsement is viewed by many as a critical missed opportunity to coordinate with countries around the world on #JustRecovery. A near-term objective emerging in Room 16 (and perhaps shared across other rooms) is to promote meaningful, strategic, and holistic engagement by the Biden administration on the SDG agenda and its implications for both domestic and foreign policies, particularly as it plans and organizes the Summit for Democracy.

### **Room 16 Participants**

Ariel C. Armony; Margaret Biggs; Sarah Cliffe; Gbemi Disu; Birgitte Feiring; Sofia Gruskin; Alvaro Herrero; Sanjay Pradhan; Borislav Petranov; Thomas Probert; Khalil Shahyd; Rebecca Sandefur; Michael Warren; Joseph Wong