

# ANTI-CORRUPTION IN DEFENCE AND SECURITY: A CORNERSTONE FOR PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

TI-DS  
SPOTLIGHT

SDG 16

World leaders committed to fighting corruption as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**SDG 16.5 sets the target of substantially reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms. As a component of SDG 16, this recognises that addressing corruption is essential for the peace, justice, and strong institutions that are necessary for sustainable development.**

**Spotlight on the Goal of peace:** it is now largely understood that corruption, conflict and instability are fundamentally intertwined. The potential of corruption in the extractives sector

to fuel war economies, the role that corruption in health or education plays in causing societal grievances, and the impact that corruption can have on political settlements that hold together fragile peace are all relatively well established.

Whilst addressing the impact of these forms of corruption on prospects for peace is indisputably important, there is another area which, despite its centrality to these issues, frequently remains outside the scope of attention of those striving to achieve SDG 16. Addressing corruption in the defence and security sectors is a crucial step in achieving this Goal. This *Spotlight* illustrates how it can be done.

## WHAT IS SDG 16?

Sustainable Development Goal 16 aims to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. This SDG cemented the critical understanding in development thinking that sustainable peace cannot be built without good governance, integrity, and fair institutions.

## SDG 16: CEMENTING THE LINK BETWEEN CORRUPTION AND CONFLICT

**Where corruption is rampant, conflict is not far.** Five of the ten lowest-ranking states in the Global Peace Index are also among the lowest-ranking within Transparency International’s 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).

The integration of the fight against corruption into the SDG focused on peace, justice and strong institutions reaffirmed **how vital anti-corruption measures are to building and sustaining peace** and helped push the link between corruption and conflict onto centre stage.

Progress on SDG 16 requires corruption to be fought at all levels, across all sectors. Yet the very sectors which are most explicitly engaged with conflict and insecurity, and most closely connected with instability such coups, are frequently overlooked, or given a special pass. **This is despite the defence and security sectors being exceptionally prone to corruption**, due to their particularly high levels of secrecy, complexity, and spending. The Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI) 2020 shows that 62 per cent of the countries assessed displayed **high to critical levels of corruption risk** across the defence sector.

## THE GDI AND SDG 16

Transparency International Defence & Security’s [Government Defence Integrity Index \(GDI\)](#) sets standards and provides a roadmap for better governance of the defence sector. Drawing on a comprehensive assessment of gaps in policy and practice, the GDI supports assessment of corruption risks in 86 countries and identifies the safeguards needed to prevent corruption. By analysing and utilising GDI data, governments can identify concrete reform priorities which will help to advance SDG 16.

**Corruption in defence and security has a far-reaching negative impact on human security as well as on sustainable development as a whole.** It renders defence and security institutions ineffective, which in turn undermines the provision of security, promotion of rule of law, and protection of human rights. The grievances that it creates erode public trust, fuel instability and in some cases drive recruitment into violent extremist groups – the list goes on. It distorts political incentives away from decision-making in the public interest towards decision-making in private interests, and wastes money that could otherwise have been spent on public services and other public goods.

**If we want to achieve SDG 16 by 2030, anti-corruption in defence and security must be prioritised in order to develop effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions.**

## CASE STUDY: NIGER

Alongside its internal instability, Niger is vulnerable to the effects of expanding regional conflicts and unchecked corruption across porous borders. The Association Nigérienne de Lutte contre la Corruption (ANLC), with the support of Transparency International Defence and Security, has built eight **Citizen Vigilance and Community Watch Committees (C2VC)** – the first civil-military committees in the country. These C2VCs create space for conflict-affected communities in border regions to inform military representatives about the security threats that they are facing, including corruption-induced threats such as illicit arms trafficking and corrupt security officials. Both parties then discuss how to best respond to these issues. In their first year, the C2VCs achieved the dismantling of three arms trafficking cells, an increase in reporting and whistleblowing on corruption, and improved dialogue with local politicians. The C2VCs have become powerful platforms for citizens to reduce security-related corruption by building direct communication, mutual trust and support between local communities and military representatives. In a country with frequent transitions of power between democratic and military authorities, this dialogue is of significant value.



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# ACHIEVING SDG 16 THROUGH ADDRESSING CORRUPTION IN DEFENCE AND SECURITY

## 1. Improve governance and transparency in defence and security

Enhance oversight, increase transparency, and establish independent entities with the authority to monitor and investigate corruption cases in the defence and security sectors. The GDI offers a set of standards for good governance in these sectors that can be used as guidance.

## 2. Integrate anti-corruption into security sector reform (SSR)

Embed anti-corruption thoroughly throughout SSR policies and programmes to effectively address corruption and build a more accountable, effective and inclusive security sector.

## 3. Conduct comprehensive corruption risk assessments

Integrate corruption risk assessments in the planning and implementation of any governance or development programmes related to defence and security, as well as into military operations and UN peacekeeping missions, in order to increase awareness and build in mitigation for corruption risk from the start. This can be conducted as part of wider political economy or conflict analyses.

## 4. Enhance whistleblower protection

Develop and enforce mechanisms to enable and protect individuals reporting corruption. Whistleblower protection in the defence and security sectors should be the same as in any other public sector, despite the higher degrees of hierarchy and secrecy in these sectors. Establish gender-sensitive and secure channels for anonymous and safe reporting.

## 5. Reinforce anti-corruption commitments to SDG 16 in central policy documents

Declare countering corruption in defence and security a priority action in forthcoming high-level policy documents, and renew commitments to achieving SDG 16 and SDG 16.5 on international, national and sub-national levels. **Tackling corruption in defence and security must become a pressing priority in any development agenda.**



### Find out more

[Transparency International](#) is a global movement working in over 100 countries to end the injustice of corruption. We hold the powerful and corrupt to account, by exposing the systems and networks that enable corruption.

[Transparency International Defence and Security](#) is part of the global Transparency International movement. We are dedicated to tackling corruption and strengthening transparency and accountability in the defence and security sector worldwide.

The [Government Defence Integrity Index \(GDI\)](#) is an assessment of corruption risks in government defence institutions. It provides a tool for national governments to assess how they can better work towards implementing SDG 16 by increasing integrity in their defence institutions.

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