

## **Political Participation**

### **Description:** (process indicator)

This proxy indicator to assess political participation is part of the composite Transformation Index of the Bertelsmann Stiftung (BTI). Specifically, the indicator measures “political **consensus building**” by posing the question: **To what extent does the political leadership enable the participation of civil society in the political process?**<sup>1</sup> The question asks whether the political leadership involves civil society actors in:

- Agenda setting
- Policy formulation
- Deliberation and decision-making
- Policy implementation
- Performance monitoring

### **Rationale:**

Participation is one of the fundamental human rights principles<sup>2</sup>, requiring that everyone has the right to participate in making decisions that affect them. The extent to which civil society is able to access and effectively utilize political spaces is essential to work for the realization of the human right to food and nutrition and related rights, and to ensure that those most affected by malnutrition and hunger are fully involved in political processes and decisions that most affect them.

### **Method of measurement:**

The BTI is collected every 2 years. The Index utilizes a rating scale for questions which ranges from 10 (best) to 1 (worst). Four response options relate to the scoring levels of 10- 7- 4- 1, each of which describes an empirical assessment that corresponds to a respective rating, as shown in the box below .

SCORE	ASSESSMENT DESCRIPTION
10	The political leadership actively enables civil society participation. It assigns an important role to civil society actors in deliberating and determining policies
7	The political leadership permits civil society participation. It takes into account and accommodates the interests of most civil society actors.
4	The political leadership neglects civil society participation. It frequently ignores civil society actors and formulates its policy autonomously
1	The political leadership obstructs civil society participation. It suppresses civil society organizations and excludes its representatives from the political process

Two regional experts then discuss these ratings and agree on ratings that reflect the differences among countries of the same region. To ensure global comparability, the regional coordinators and the BTI team then convene and review ratings across regions and calibrate the scores. During the final review phase, ratings are reviewed and calibrated by the BTI Board, a panel of esteemed scholars and practitioners with long-term experience in the field of development and transformation who advise the BTI team.<sup>3</sup> Should a calibrated rating differ significantly from that suggested by the State, BTI might consult, but the final rating decisions are made by the BTI Board.

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<sup>1</sup>Indicator 16.4, *Civil Society Participation*,

<sup>2</sup> The seven principles are: Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Transparency, Human Dignity, Empowerment, Rule of Law

<sup>3</sup> The list of independent experts can be found here by region: <http://www.bti-project.org/en/about/country-experts/>

For this measurement, “civil society” includes civil, economic and professional interest associations, religious, charity and community-based organizations, intellectuals, scientists and journalists.

#### Data collection and source

This indicator is constructed from data contained in the Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI). In fact, the indicator is one of 49 sub-indices that make up the full composite BTI. The full index and country-specific scores are available at: <http://www.bti-project.org/en/home/>

#### Periodicity

Data for the BTI index is gathered every 2 years (latest 2016) and covers 129 countries worldwide

#### Disaggregation

The indicator is obtained from a secondary data source which presents indicator scores by country. This offers no opportunity to disaggregate the indicator to obtain within-country scores to assess to what extent political participation varies among different population groups, such as women, urban versus rural populations, indigenous versus non-indigenous groups, minority population groups, etc.

The country scores can be compared over time, as they are provided every two years. However, the intertemporal comparisons are subject to a small limitation as spelled out below.

#### Comments and limitations

Generally, the BTI offers a wide range of indicators on various issues, and follows a rigorous assessment procedure. One limitation is that the initial rankings provided by states are self-assessments, so this can be limiting, as states might be hesitant to assign themselves a low score, thus providing an upward bias.. However, the independent experts review (1 expert and 1 regional coordinator from the BTI project), provide a check to ensure that the final assessment is more objective.

The indicator does not allow an assessment of the within-country inequality in political participation, on two accounts. First of all, civil society in this case is likely to include a wide variety of non-state actors, which may or may not represent those most affected by malnutrition and hunger and suffering from violations of the human right to food and nutrition; and over time, the set of civil society actors is likely to change in composition. Secondly, as pointed out above, this secondary indicator does not lend itself to disaggregation within a country by various population groups. Ideally, this indicator would eventually be accompanied by more detailed country-specific information which would allow an assessment of the inequality in political participation among different population groups.

Intertemporal comparisons in country-specific scores are somewhat limited by the fact that country-specific scores are assigned within a regional context, which means that the country score reflects the status in the country in relation to the status in other countries of the same region. However, since this indicator is not likely to be time-sensitive (i.e. underlying conditions are not likely to change quickly over time), this should not hamper using the indicator to monitor political participation over time.

**Note: The BTI covers a total of 129 countries worldwide. Not all countries covered in this processes are included including the United States, Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden.**