

Beyond2015

Beyond 2015 General Initial Comments to the “*Technical report by the Bureau of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) on the process of the development of an indicator framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda*”

March 2015

This paper is an **initial review** of the general aspects of the Technical report of the UNSC Bureau submitted to Members States for review and Comment during the post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations.

1) Main Messages from Beyond 2015 on post-2015 indicators:

- Indicators will need to be **broadly disaggregated** across all relevant goals and targets to ensure that disparities and inequities in progress are visible, and that the impact (or lack of it) of the SDGs on the poorest and most marginalized people are not obscured by medians or national averages as was the case with the MDGs.
- The SDGs indicators should abide by the principle of **non-regression** and cannot be less ambitious than the agreed targets or previously agreed indicators. Further, it should be faithful to the nature of the target which means measuring what the target is clearly calling for.
- It is no longer acceptable to use GDP as a proxy for development outcomes. Human development requires a more nuanced understanding of different elements of human wellbeing and equity; our commitment to sustainable development must **include adequate measurement of environmental factors**. Progress must be measured in ways that **go beyond GDP** and account for human well-being, sustainability and equity.
- The ‘**Data Revolution**’ has made it clear that availability and access to data are essential components of inclusive, effective development. Member states at the UN need to make a commitment to increasing availability, accessibility and inclusivity of data, including disaggregated data across key sectors.
- Member States should agree on the creation of a **set of universal indicators that can be shared across countries**. This is essential to guarantee comparability of progress across different contexts and to foster cooperation in achieving the SDGs, particularly within regions. Additionally, a transparent and inclusive process should be set at national level to establish indicators that capture the national realities and to ensure that every country is doing as much as they can and to guarantee the universality of the agenda.
- The process to set up indicators should be **led by technical experts in a transparent, participatory and inclusive process** that includes the experience and knowledge from civil society experts. The discussion and agreement of indicators for the SDGs should not become political, as robust technical inputs are needed to avoid perverse incentives.
- It is crucial that the indicators do not prioritise measuring the outputs of States over outcomes for people. Information on people-focused outcomes can be gathered through surveys of **people’s experiences and perceptions**, the latter of which are crucial for knowing what people think and whether they believe that things are improving.
- The indicators should facilitate people on the ground to directly **participate in the process** of measurement of progress, from design, collection of data, and analysis and communication of the results. This ‘bottom-up’ approach to data will ensure that people living in poverty are able to communicate their own realities and shape their own development pathways.

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2) Comments to the UNSC Technical Report:

We agree that the process for the development of a robust and high-quality indicator framework is a **technical process** and that it requires time to be properly conducted. While NSOs will play a key role in technical discussions, **civil society actors** such as NGOs, research organisations and academics bring with them rich and varied technical experiences of gathering data that is extremely relevant to the new development framework.

- We were concerned to see that the report makes several references to the post-2015 agenda as only a “development” agenda. It must be clear that this is a **sustainable development agenda** and the elaboration of indicators must take this seriously into account to not overlook the need to cover economic and environmental issues across the goal areas and thereby ensuring interlinkages.
- It was positive to see that **disaggregation** was described as “feasible with strong effort” and to see the consensus on the need to “ensure disaggregation of indicators and to include a human rights dimension to the indicator framework (following the “no one left behind” principle)” (p. 8). We consider that there will be a need for a strong political commitment from Members States to improve their capacities to monitor and collect data as well as to the provision of capacity building and technology transfer in this area.
- The **categories of disaggregation** are not developed. The IEAG-SDGs should start from the categories proposed in the Open Working Group report, target 17.18: *‘income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts’*. Disaggregation by age and sex was only applied to 23 of the proposed targets. Disaggregation by gender should not replace specific indicators addressing gender equality and women’s human rights. The principle of “**leaving no one behind**” will only be fulfilled if disaggregation is properly done.
- The report focuses very much on the feasibility, relevance and suitability of indicators but makes no mention to the principle of **non-regression**. This is particularly important to keep the ambition of the SDG framework. It is important to underscore that some of the MDG indicators could not have made into the “AAA” category in 2000 but after strong commitment and investment, they are now feasible and measurable.
- The approach for a limited number of indicators must support, not undermine, the **interdependency** between Sustainable Development Goal areas. Therefore, it will be necessary to increase the number of indicators that link outcomes in different goal areas in order to actively drive interdisciplinary, inter-ministerial collaboration for systems-based approaches to national development planning, implementation and monitoring. The working methods of the IAEG-SDG should include novel working groups to ensure these interlinkages are made, for instance between poverty alleviation and environmental protection. The IAEG-SDG should seek to increase the number of indicators that make the explicit **interlinkages** between environmental, social and economic outcomes and also more adequately correlating where indicators for one target may help to track progress on others.
- The report did not properly emphasize the need for broader measures of progress **beyond GDP**. It also lacked clear criteria regarding ensuring that all three dimensions of sustainable development would be represented in a balanced way in the proposed global indicators. A shift in emphasis from measuring economic production to a multidimensional measure of people’s wellbeing based on principles of sustainable, equitable, and just development. Wellbeing should include enjoyment of human rights, political voice and participation, community trust, and the quality of governance.

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- Many of the key points of the **data revolution** (the need for increased capacity of NSOs, the need for national ownership and relevance of indicators, and data disaggregation) are included in the report. However, unless availability, accessibility, “shareability” and inclusivity of data is also understood to refer to **citizens**, and particularly people experiencing poverty and marginalization, this does not live up to the ambitions that the ‘data revolution’ can contribute to accountability towards people on the ground.
- We are concerned by the insistence of starting the discussions focusing on a “small” and “limited” number of indicators. This may rule out a number of necessary indicators from being integrated and measured. The inclusion of **qualitative** indicators is also crucial to allow for reaching out to the most vulnerable and marginalized and in order to have a more comprehensive picture of country and global progress.
- We welcome the commitment to a universal set of indicators but we are concerned that the indicators proposed so far do not capture the **entirety of the ambition** of the SDGs. Member States should agree to develop a longer list of indicators that could be measured as capacities, expertise and technology at country level increase.
- The report proposes an “**integrated architecture**” to organize the global regional, national and thematic indicators but does not present a proposal on how the regional, national and thematic indicators would be developed. The report is not clear on how civil society and non-governmental experts could be able to engage on the development of the national-level indicators either.
- The ToR of the IAEG-SDG says that: ‘*The group will conduct its work in an open and inclusive manner and will invite the private sector and **civil society** to contribute its expertise and experiences on indicators and innovative ways of data compilation*’. However, there is no clarity about how this engagement will be organized: this should be urgently established and non-governmental members included in the group.
- We were concerned to see that **experiential and perception indicators** were ranked low for feasibility despite the fact that those are already being collected in several countries and by several parties that have data collected over multiple years. The ‘**bottom up**’ approach to data is missing from the report, excluding the voices of the poor and marginalized.
- We were concerned that feasibility was considered based on the current resources and expertise only of national statistical offices rather than national statistical capacities. The post-2015 agenda is very ambitious and it is critical to allow flexibility for the development of indicators to **measure the new and transformative areas** proposed in the SDGs, including on gathering data on people’s perceptions and experiences. We should not only be pushing for what we can monitor today, but what we want to be monitoring comprehensively by 2030.
- The final set of global indicators will need to be proofed from a **universality** perspective.
- **Participation** is critical – the ambition of the post-2015 data revolution will only be achieved if the capacities of the NSOs are supplemented with the collaboration with other actors, including civil society organizations.