Beyond 2015 Indicators Task Force

Interlinkages and post-2015 global indicators

September 2015

"This [indicators] framework will be simple yet robust, address all SDGs and targets including for means of implementation, and preserve the political balance, integration and ambition contained therein." –
Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Para.75)

Introduction

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September, the indicators process becomes the next crucial phase of the post-2015 framework. We call on Member States to consider the position outlined below to ensure that indicators for the SDG framework reflect the scope and ambition of the SDG goals and targets, while maximising the potential for interlinkages between indicators to mutually reinforce goals.

Purpose and limits of interlinked indicators

Many of the goals and targets have areas of concern which overlap each other. Given the complexity of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the breadth of ambition in the goals this is a necessary feature, and has the potential to promote a more holistic and integrated approach to development.

However, none of the targets directly repeat others, meaning that it is unlikely that any one indicator will act as a satisfactory proxy for more than one target. Indeed, it is more likely that some targets will require more than one indicator, or a composite index, to monitor progress on their different facets, and this is reflected in the current proposals.

The purpose of identifying linkages across targets should therefore be to identify indicators which, while measuring one target, also support or reinforce monitoring elsewhere where another target overlaps the same field. Most importantly, **interlinkages among indicators should not be considered a reason to arbitrarily limit the number of global indicators.**

It is therefore important to prioritise indicators proposed which are structured and disaggregated sufficiently to simultaneously a) monitor the core targets and b) contribute to the monitoring of overlapping targets.

To expect multipurpose indicators to monitor multiple whole target areas is to expect too much, and would be highly likely to reduce the ambition and scope of the goals themselves, contrary to the mandate of the IAEG established in para.75 of the agenda for sustainable development.

A few examples:

The water and sanitation goal calls for indicators which measure progress in access to both 'safely managed' and 'basic' drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene, for which various indicators have been proposed, and the target for universal education calls for indicators for quality and quantity of education. Overlapping these, the target for access to basic services (1.4) must include access to 'basic' water and sanitation and basic education and health services; the target for sustainable cities entails reducing slum living (11.1), which means increasing access to 'basic' water and sanitation. In addition, goal 2 calls for an end to hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and agricultural sustainability. The importance of WASH to ensuring food and nutrition security is increasingly being recognised. The already agreed 2012 World Health Assembly targets on maternal and child nutrition provide a comprehensive foundation for indicators for target 2.2 while also being relevant and overlapping targets 3.1 and 3.2.

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Many aspects of the gender equality and women's rights, such as women's participation and leadership in decision making, are multi-dimensional and changes to one may impact on another. For example, violence against women in the household can increase as women move into public and political life or into the economic sphere. Some indicators therefore will 'interlink' in very complex ways that must be understood properly.

The interlinkage between Target 16.7 and Target 5.5 have been identified. Target 16.7 looks to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Indicators for this target are relevant to but do not fully capture the specific focus intention behind target 5.5 which is specifically focused on ensuring women's 'full and effective participation' and 'equal opportunities for leadership' at 'all levels of decision-making' in political, economic and public life. Target 5.5 seeks to address the specific persistent inequality which has seen women as 50% of the population having a disproportionately unequal say in decisions that are made politically, economically and publically which in turn results in the perpetuation of gender blind policies and actions from decision makers.

Target 5.5 also focuses on increasing the number of women in leadership roles within these institutions rather than whereas 16.7 which focuses more broadly on broad proportions across different organisations/institutions. To capture the intent of target 16.7, an indicator should focus on measuring the ability of people to participate in decision making without being members of institutions – i.e. collective decision making processes rather than representation from a few and this should be disaggregated according to many factors including age, gender, ethnicity, geographical location, disability etc. This would complement information gained from indicators under Target 5.5, but is a separate measure.

Inequality Interlinkages

Similarly, while Goal 10 - Reduce inequality within and among countries - has bespoke indicators proposed[1] to monitor the stated targets, the broader purpose of ensuring increased equality requires sufficiently disaggregated data across the SDGs to ensure equitable progress for different groups. Ensuring indicators that can be disaggregated across key axes of inequality are selected, will enable them to support the monitoring of goal 10.

The current proposed indicators, published by the IAEG-SDGs as of 11 August 2015, list notes that all indicators '*are to be disaggregated by sex, age, residence (U/R) and other characteristics as relevant and possible.*' (p. 1, para 6). Failure to specify the full list of categories for disaggregation is out of step with the framework which specifies that data should be disaggregated by '*income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national context.*' (as specified in target 17.18 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)[2] Overlooking these categories wholly undermines the concept of 'leave no one behind' and the agreement reflected on Agenda 2030.

Whilst we recognise that complexities in disaggregating data exist, in some cases they are less complex than perceived. Many of the proposed indicators rely on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) or Household Survey information. These surveys already contain questions pertaining to ethnicity or proxies such as language. Failure to ensure the indicators are disaggregated by the full list of factors outlined in the SDGs risks further marginalisation of vulnerable groups and undermines the intention of the whole SDG framework. It is important to note that using these modular data sources means that in some contexts where changes are likely to be gradual, modules can alternate to enable cost-effective tracking of multiple indicators over time. Additionally, data may often be available from other sources, such as routine collection by responsible government departments, presenting efficiencies in data collection and third parties, such as civil society.

[1] List of indicator proposals as of 11 August 2015, pp. 61-65. Full document available at http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/List%20of%20Indicator%20Proposals%2011-8-2015.pdf, Retrieved on 10 September 2015.

[2] Full document available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld, Retrieved on 10 September 2015.

Means of implementation interlinkages

Goal 17 – To strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development – also cross-cuts all goals, demanding sufficiently robust monitoring so that implementation of these targets can be achieved. In order for this goal to be realized, monitoring in all the preceding goals must be inclusive, sufficient and participatory to capture the full scope of the targets and support progressive improvements. Furthermore, regarding target 17.17, it is crucial for the global indicators framework to count with at least once indicator measuring the participation of civil society in public-private partnerships.

General principles:

The process for discussing and selecting indicators must be characterised by transparency, accountability and participation. This should happen globally (by providing space for different groups to contribute to the IAEG) and nationally (by encouraging NSOs to set up reference groups involving different types of data producers and users).

Maintaining the scope and ambition of the goals is critical, and indicators must directly respond to the goals and targets and should not be arbitrarily dropped if doing so means that part of a goal or target will not be measured.

These recommendations are based primarily on the principles for the SDG monitoring shared by Beyond 2015 and available [here](#).