Post-2015 Data Test
country level experiences

Post-2015 Data Test

Blogs and Write-ups

June, 2016

CENTRE FOR POLICY DIALOGUE (CPD)
B A N G L A D E S H
a civil society think tank

NPSIA
The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs

Southern Voice
2015 On Post-MDG International Development Goals

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Unpacking the Data Revolution at the Country Level – Initial Findings

Debapriya Bhattacharya and Kate Higgins

On October 14, 15 and 17 2014, the Post-2015 Data Test team came together from all corners of the globe in New York and Washington DC. With our empirical, country-level work completed, and the post-2015 machinery – including the *UN Secretary General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development* – gearing up following the UN General Assembly, we decided the time was ripe to share our initial findings with member states, civil society, UN agencies and think tanks and to explore their implications for the data revolution and the post-2015 agenda more broadly.

The Post-2015 Data Test has three objectives: road-test a universal, country-relevant post-2015 framework across a variety of country contexts; assess data adequacy for monitoring the post-2015 goals at the country level; and inject global-level deliberations and decision making with country-level realities and perspectives. It is led by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs (NPSIA), in association with Southern Voice on the Post-MDG International Development Goals and involves in-country empirical studies in seven countries: Bangladesh, Canada, Peru, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Turkey.

Reflecting on our research to date, in New York and Washington DC we highlighted five key findings:

1. **Universality:** A universal, country-relevant framework that comprises global goals and targets but gives space and flexibility for country differentiation can have resonance across countries at differing stages of development. But allowing countries space to identify national priorities is critical to ensuring the utility of the framework and robust adoption at the national level.
2. **Data availability:** The availability of data for tracking progress against a range of different potential post-2015 goals is variable. We road tested seven goal areas: education; employment and inclusive growth; environmental sustainability and disaster resilience; poverty; global partnership for sustainable development; governance; and infrastructure and energy. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the areas where data were most available were education, poverty and employment. The areas where data were least available were governance, environmental sustainability, infrastructure and energy.
3. **Data quality:** Data quality was also variable across goal areas and largely mirrored our data availability results. Applying our data quality assessment framework (take a look at our detailed methodology and implementation guide for more information), we found that data quality was best for education and poverty and worst for governance, environmental sustainability and disaster resilience.
4. **Disaggregated data:** Some disaggregated data is available by sex, urban/rural location and sub-region but little disaggregated data exists by income level or social (e.g. ethnic) group. This means that significant investments are required to properly deliver the "leave no one behind" agenda.
5. **Global minimum standards:** Global minimum standard targets are not relevant in high-income countries, and not feasible in low-income countries (without a significant injection of resources and necessary changes in global

policies and frameworks such as financial regulation, trade and climate).

We presented five recommendations for the data revolution and the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

1. **Measure what matters:** Better data are needed across the board, but an 'extra stretch' will be required in areas that look set to be identified as central to the post-2015 sustainable development agenda: governance; environmental sustainability; and data disaggregation.
2. **Capacity and policy space need attention:** The technical, political economy and regulatory dimensions of data production needs attention. This means building the technical capacity of national statistical agencies as well as line ministries. It means making data timely, accessible and affordable, and having the right regulatory framework in place. At the same time, the capacity of data users needs to be developed so that they can use traditional and new sources of data to effectively hold governments to account.
3. **Data is political:** There is demand at the sub-national and national levels of government for more and better data, and heightened recognition amongst citizens about the power of data. But politics play a key role in determining what is measured, who is measured and how data is shared. This has implications for how data on more politically-charged issues, such as governance, are collected and shared. It also has implications for how motivated governments will be to collect data on typically marginalized and excluded groups.
4. **Support country ownership:** If the post-2015 framework is going to be more grounded in country-determined priorities and processes, the international community must be prepared to relinquish some control. A country-determined agenda may mean a messier framework: different types of targets for different types of countries, less international comparability, and the slower generation of required data in the short term to ensure sustainability in the longer term.
5. **There is an appetite for more and better coordination on data:** At the national level, data generators and data users want more and better data coordination to, for example, establish principles for data generation and use, ensure coherence between survey instruments, and establish data dissemination policies. National-level actors recognize the importance of international coordination to ensure and support comparability, reporting, resourcing and lesson-learning, but warn against over-engineering the international architecture.

We look forward to launching the country reports and the global synthesis report in early 2015. In the meantime, we've planned a series of blogs reflecting on the initiative to date, which will be released in the coming weeks. You can also take a look at our initial findings on the Post-2015 Data Test website. And of course, please follow us on Twitter @post2015data.

Many thanks to the United Nations Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Center for Global Development for helping us make these meetings happen. More to come!

(Posted on the Post-2015 Data Test website on November 11, 2014)

Implementing the SDGs in upper-middle income countries: A view from Turkey

Mehmet Arda

Recently, the Post-2015 Data Test released its latest report, Measuring Sustainable Development to 2030: A view from Turkey. The report, which provides an overview of priorities for Turkey in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and examines the adequacy of data for follow-up and review, suggests a number of thought provoking ramifications regarding the meaningfulness and the usefulness of SDGs.

Public and private awareness and ownership over the SDGs is very important to their meaningfulness and usefulness. As the preparatory process for the SDGs continues, the study makes clear that broad participation is critical to producing good ideas and valid proposals in the generation of a country's priorities both in negotiations and in implementation going forward. Although the final result in September will be a set of SDGs for everyone, everywhere, each country's input is crucial for arriving at a meaningful outcome. Nevertheless, no matter how well defined the goals are, their usefulness and effectiveness will depend on the existence of a sufficiently large enough group of policymakers and implementers ready and committed to take them into account either as goals or as policy guidelines. Broad participation in the generation of ideas that national negotiators take to international forums in preparatory phases should lead to broader national ownership and commitment to implementation, once the SDGs are actually agreed. Subsequent publicity could help, but only partially. In Turkey, substantive work on the preparatory process is basically confined to one Ministry (Ministry of Development) with the Turkish Statistical Institute aware of the eventual demands that will be made of them. The interest from academic circles and civil society, however, is sporadic. The preparation of the Turkey report provided some impetus for generating interest when views were solicited from various sources. It is hoped that the report will further help in this direction and enhance awareness and ownership.

Just as the implementation of the Post-2015 Data Test in different countries will provide an ultimate reality check for the SDGs in terms of data availability, the preparation of the country report was also a reality check for its authors. **Even in cases where countries have relatively good quality data on a range of economic, social and environmental issues, monitoring the SDGs will still present a challenge.** Under the study, data availability had to be assessed not for an academic paper or a political statement but with the purpose of monitoring eventual internationally agreed indicators. Putting the potential indicators into the Turkish context was a challenging exercise. While some of the indicators examined under the study were not very meaningful in Turkey's context, such as those relating to "modern cooking solutions," it was revealing that finding data on some relatively simple indicators such as "population with access to an all-season road" would be impossible without much research. Moreover, some indicators and targets would need to be adapted to better suit Turkey's upper-middle income context. For example, in relation to infrastructure, at Turkey's level of industrialization, the cost of electricity becomes more important than outages.

One of the crucial stakeholders in SDG monitoring will be the Turkish Statistical Institute, and the report provides some indication of what may be eventually required from them. It also suggests

that **each goal area will likely be faced with data challenges**. While there are ample data on poverty, when some interesting questions are raised, for example on ethnic differences, disaggregation becomes very problematic. Examination of education indicators revealed another issue, namely that of the validity of electronic registry systems. While every person of school age is assigned to a school, the reality check of actual attendance reminds us to question the validity of data even when they seem to be easily and readily available. The report also found that some indicators important for Turkey and countries of its level of development, such as on occupational injuries in the context of monitoring employment outcomes, are unavailable. Data related to governance is an area where access to administratively collected data becomes a significant issue – for example, in terms of measuring issues related to rule of law. Similarly, with environmental indicators that look at the existence of regulations, a significant gap can exist in terms of implementation.

The report provides useful insight on meaningful indicators for countries facing the middle-income trap, which has implications for the current indicator selection **process underway.** Under the study, the team also identified country specific indicators to reflect Turkey's priorities. Many of the indicators which were suggested by the Turkish team reflected the concerns of a country faced with a middle income trap. In a global context, such indicators would make much sense for many countries in a similar situation. For example, the issue of *quality* rather than quantity of education defined many of the Turkey-specific indicators selected for the goal area related to education. Whether and how such issues appear in the final list of indicators will be interesting to see. Fundamentally, the SDG's usefulness and relevance in Turkey and in similar countries will be much affected by the perception by these countries regarding how their concerns are reflected in the final outcomes.

Ensuring precise definitions for goals, targets and particularly indicators, is a crucial issue for the post-2015 framework. It is unlikely that the existing SDG targets will change substantially to ensure better clarity going forward (notwithstanding the suggested changes in the zero outcome document for September). It is here that academics and data providers must play a crucial role. Things that sound meaningful and attractive politically may be extremely difficult to define precisely so that they can be measured and monitored. "Equal pay for equal work" is a laudable goal but defining the equality of work needs considerable statistical skill. International comparability is an added concern. Similarly, in the case of targets and indicators related to global partnership, differences in types and terminology of cooperation exist and practical definitions may need to be introduced.

The costs and trade-offs related to data generation presented by SDG monitoring should not be under-estimated and prioritization of efforts will be needed. As sources of information in Turkey, surveys are very useful as they are timely and detailed, particularly those done using standards of the European Union. Nevertheless they are expensive. Administrative data, collected by the government in doing its daily work and providing services to its citizens has great potential as a source of information. If more information of this type can be collected in a statistically useful manner, following standard definitions and meeting statistical standards, the statistical offices of many countries, Turkey included, could focus on much more specialized work and improve the availability of information for policy-making.

(Posted on the Southern Voice website on June 16, 2015)

The quest for a new data ecosystem – Monitoring sustainable development in Bangladesh

Towfiqul Islam Khan

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be adopted at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly this week, and will be showcased at the UN Sustainable Development Summit on 25-27 September. In the lead up to the summit, issues related to generating data and information to monitor sustainable development progress has attracted much attention, with stakeholders calling for a Data Revolution. Governments, development partners, thought leaders and civil society organisations are exploring opportunities to ensure the availability of more and better data, necessary to establish baselines and measure SDG related progress both at country and global levels. Against this backdrop, as part of the Post-2015 Data Test initiative, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh released a report today.

The report, titled "Measuring for Monitoring: The State of Data for SDGs in Bangladesh," offers important insights on the readiness of Bangladesh to monitor the SDGs. The report highlights key areas where technical and financial support will be needed to measure progress made and monitor the implementation of the SDGs and targets. The study benefits policymakers and stakeholders in Bangladesh by offering a deeper understanding of the challenges that will need to be addressed going forward. The report provides guidance to concerned stakeholders on potential corrective measures, and suggests take new initiatives to address deficits in the Bangladesh data ecosystem, including in terms of next steps to improve data generation for the SDGs. The Bangladesh case study presents an overall assessment of existing institutional statistical capacity in Bangladesh and provides recommendations to improve data availability, access, timeliness and quality. Feasibility of a selected set of candidate SDG targets and indicators is assessed from the perspective of data availability to monitor implementation of the SDGs.

We observe that global ambition to realize the envisaged Data Revolution has gained currency in the discourse on SDGs in Bangladesh. Relevant stakeholders are becoming increasingly aware of the emerging data demands. We also note that, over the last decade, Bangladesh has seen gradual improvements in data production, dissemination and use with regard to development issues. However, our study shows that in Bangladesh, at present data are not readily available for a number of candidate indicators for the SDGs. On a positive note, for many indicators, which are examined under the study, data can be estimated or calculated from existing administrative information and available surveys in Bangladesh. Nonetheless, dearth of the needed data will likely make it difficult to establish a baseline for measuring progress on SDGs in Bangladesh. Without baseline data, it will be difficult for Bangladesh to establish measurable SDG targets. In addition, data for several important indicators are not available at the level of disaggregation needed.

The study evinces that data in Bangladesh are of variable quality. Data often suffer from a lack of accuracy and reliability, timeliness and punctuality, accessibility and clarity, and coherence and comparability. Thus, there is an acute need to improve overall data quality. This is particularly true for a number of goal areas, including energy and infrastructure, environmental sustainability and disaster resilience, governance, and global partnership for sustainable development. There is

a need to standardise and ensure coherence as regards relevant concepts and definitions of variables through wide-ranging consultations among major stakeholders.

Issues relating to the accessibility and affordability of data need to be urgently addressed. In connection with this, it is to be ensured that dissemination of disaggregated and unit-level data can be made available at a minimum cost. Promoting data dissemination digitally and in user-friendly formats (e.g., spreadsheets) and establishing interactive websites for data should be a priority.

Although efforts have been made to reform the statistical system in Bangladesh, they are inadequate to meet the growing demands for more and better data. The study emphasizes the role of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in generating adequate and high quality data to track development progress. BBS is currently implementing a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) for the 2013–2023 period. Implementation of the NSDS will definitely require an overhaul in view of SDGs, which will need to be supported by adequate human and financial resources. Coordination will also need to improve. Local Consultative Group may coordinate development partners' initiatives, while the Ministry of Finance, including its Economic Relations Division, ought to coordinate financing needs. While formulating these plans, it is important that data producers recognise demands for more frequent, timely, disaggregated, quality data on the part of policymakers and non-governmental actors. The potential roles of the private sector and modern technology in the Data Revolution have yet to be adequately appreciated in Bangladesh. A big push is required for the advantages of information and communication technologies to be sufficiently recognised and appropriately leveraged.

As implementation of the SDGs begins in earnest from January 2016, it is hoped that the CPD study will provide important pointers to key stakeholders as regards data for establishing benchmarks and to measure and monitor progress in view of SDGs in the Bangladesh context.

The study urges policymakers to design and develop a comprehensive plan that articulates concrete tasks to be performed by specific institutions and particular stakeholder groups to improve data generation. Such a plan will enable Data Revolution to be actualized in Bangladesh. Going forward, CPD will continue to provide support to policy makers on SDG implementation and the data revolution going forward. In collaboration with *Southern Voice*, CPD has launched a follow-up study, to develop an 'action plan' to address the gaps identified through the Bangladesh country study. It is hoped that this action plan will guide policymakers with practical next steps going forward.

(Posted on the Southern Voice and Post-2015 Data Test websites on September 23, 2015)

Tanzania Post-2015 Data Test Report Launched

Blandina Kilima

On February 17, 2016, REPOA released its Post-2015 Data Test report entitled *Assessing Data for the Sustainable Development Goals in Tanzania*. Based on consultations with local stakeholders, the report highlights the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Tanzania, unpacks the current state of data availability and quality at the national level, reviews initiatives at the national level that support the data revolution, and provides insights on the capacity development needs of official and unofficial data producers and users going forward. The report emphasises the issue of financial sustainability to maintain the quality and consistency of statistics as critical.

Realising the SDGs

With respect to realising the SDGs in Tanzania, the report notes the importance of ensuring that no one is left behind, that more and better data is needed, and that attention is needed to strengthen domestic resource mobilisation and intensively seek other sources of development finance given the economic context in the developed world. Additional finance is needed to both realise the goals more generally, and support sufficient monitoring of progress.

Address physical infrastructure needs

In terms of statistical activities, a resource gap exists for physical infrastructure that is necessary for productive working environments, such as improved facilities for the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Office of Chief Government Statistician, transport facilities, information and communications technology infrastructure, and modern computers and software. There is also room to support greater knowledge and technology transfer. For example, NBS could establish steady institutional partnerships with one or several experienced national statistical offices to continue strengthening the entire national statistical system and benefit from the transfer of technology.

Support national statistical priorities

In addition to physical infrastructure-related challenges, monitoring the SDGs in Tanzania will likely be hindered by data availability and consistency. Data collected in Tanzania, almost all of which are produced and hosted by the Tanzanian government, are sponsored by donors that may simply want national-level data for comparative purposes. In many cases, there is a need for data to be provided at lower levels of disaggregation.

The data revolution has a potential role to play in boosting data availability, specifically in terms of improving the frequency of data collection and disaggregation at all levels. The use of robust sample sizes by the NBS would enable better sub-national analysis and improve comparisons according to location and gender.

Address legal barriers to data accessibility

Moreover, legal barriers need to be addressed. The NBS collects and analyses data. However, analysis can be quite time consuming, and lead to general reports that are only available two years after data has been collected. The current policy is that data is only released following the production of a general report. This means that by the time data is available to other stakeholders, it is already two years old. Should the government continue with the current policy, then analytical capacity will need to be strengthening in the NBS to increase the speed of data analysis and publication. Another solution could be for the government to allow the release of data earlier but ask researchers and analysts to share their results with the NBS before they are published.

Harmonise data collection processes across government

Moreover, various institutions produce data based on their functions in society. However, data production is not harmonised in such a way that other institutions may utilise those data. A similar situation exists for data that supports the production of statistics, such as geo-data in a geographic information system. Population and other statistics should form "layers" in a national geo-data bank, where statistics support geo-data and other data. There have been improvements in this area, but obstacles to sharing data still exist, even within the public sector. Harmonising datasets from various sources would likely solve many data gaps and enable the comparative analysis of data collected by different sources. Harmonisation can be achieved by building the capacities of various data producers.

Improve collaboration between official and unofficial data producers

Finally, the report notes that greater collaboration between think tanks, civil society organisations and the NBS would also add value. While public and private entities have different resource bases, and varied objectives and roles in the production of statistics, the use of common methodologies for data collection would improve all sources of data.

(Posted on the Southern Voice and Post-2015 Data Test websites on February 25, 2016)

Ensuring the SDGs are Relevant for High Income Countries

Shannon Kindornay

As part of the Post-2015 Data Test initiative, the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs and the Centre for the Study of Living Standards launched the Canada case study report, *Canada 2030: An Agenda for Sustainable Development*, on February 25, 2015, in Ottawa.

Canada 2030 takes an in-depth look what the SDGs could mean for Canada and unpacks global and national sustainable development priorities, challenges and opportunities for implementation of the SDGs, and data availability for measuring progress. The report makes a number of valuable contributions. First, it serves as a comprehensive overview of Canada's sustainable development challenges, broadly understood in terms of economic, social and environmental well-being. Second, the report takes stock of the current state of Canada's national statistical system and data availability for monitoring progress on the SDGs. Finally, the report provides a concrete example of how a universal, country relevant sustainable development agenda could be applied to high income countries.

The report raises a number of important implications for the SDG framework.

- A universal post-2015 sustainable development agenda that allows for country differentiation can be meaningfully applied to high income countries. For the seven candidate SDG areas examined in the study – poverty, education, employment and inclusive growth, energy and infrastructure, environmental sustainability and disaster resilience, governance and global partnership – the research team found a high degree of correlation between the global goals and Canadian sustainable development challenges. However, targets and corresponding indicators may need to be adjusted to ensure relevance in high income countries.
- As I have argued elsewhere, while the SDG framework may resonate in high-income countries, a key challenge will be getting domestic stakeholders engaged. The Canada case study reveals a need to move the domestic conversation beyond the federal government. Ensuring that the universal framework resonates across countries with different levels of development requires input from countries based on their domestic experiences.
- Ongoing efforts at the national and sub-national levels should serve as the basis for establishing post-2015 roadmaps across countries. It is clear that many policies and strategies that address key elements of the post-2015 agenda exist across different levels of government in Canada. As countries move toward national implementation of the SDG framework, the SDGs should leverage existing plans and initiatives and build on past successes. Ensuring that the SDG framework allows country differentiation will be important in this context.
- Global minimum standards may not be particularly relevant for high-income countries but could guide development cooperation efforts going forward. Global minimum standards have the potential to play a critical role in galvanising efforts to address key global challenges. Development partners should consider ways to make the realization of global minimum standards a central part of activities carried out under the global partnership for sustainable development.

- Contributions to global partnership can and should be measured at the country level. Historically, commitments related to global partnership have been measured at the global level. Moving forward, post-2015 presents an opportunity for measuring commitments to global partnership at the country level, as the Canada case study reveals. Such an approach could strengthen global monitoring and follow up by tracking countries' individual contributions.

Governments are now in the thick of post-2015 negotiations. There is no question that ensuring that the SDGs are truly universal will require buy-in from high income countries. High income countries have a key role to play in the realisation of the SDGs in developing countries, and in addressing global public goods challenges. However, the universal agenda requires moving beyond the traditional role of high income countries as funders of sustainable development abroad to addressing sustainable development challenges at home. *Canada 2030* provides a concrete example of what this might look like in practice.

(Posted on the Southern Voice and Post-2015 Data Test websites on March 2, 2015)

Data – Key to successful SDG implementation and monitoring in Senegal

Maam Suwadu Sakho-Jimbira

In September 2015, the UN General Assembly formally adopted the new development agenda consisting of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aiming to end poverty and hunger, ensure prosperity and reduce inequality, and address climate change and environmental protection by 2030. In this context, the international community has recognized the critical need to improve statistics and information on sustainable development, calling for a "data revolution." Better data and statistics will help governments track progress, ensure decisions are evidence-based, and strengthen accountability.

Various initiatives related to the data revolution have flourished exploring ways to make reliable data more available, timely and disaggregated, and inform decision making and track development progress. Among these initiatives, the Post-2015 Data Test initiative was launched by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and Norman Paterson School of International Affairs (NPSIA), in association with Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals. The initiative considers a set of sustainable development goals, targets and indicators, and examines key data gaps for measuring progress going forward. As part of this seven country study, IPAR, a think tank based in Dakar and *Southern Voice* member, carried out the Post-2015 Data Test for Senegal. A number of key findings emerged from the Senegal study.

Data availability for SDG monitoring in Senegal is good overall.

Senegal is well-positioned to monitor the SDGs. Institutional reforms to the national statistical system over the past decade have led to improvements in statistical capacity, with significant impacts on the availability of data. The study included an examination of data for a range of SDG areas, including poverty, education, employment and inequality, energy, infrastructure, the environment and disaster resilience, governance and global partnership. We found that data is available for a 91 percent of the 45 indicators that all countries examined as part of the data test. In addition, we selected a number of national indicators that reflect Senegal's priorities for the goal areas noted above. Here, data was available for 64% of indicators. Though data exists, it should be noted that some indicators would need to be derived through relatively simple data manipulations.

But more work will be needed to ensure data availability for SDGs which were not included in the MDGs.

Though data availability is good overall, the availability of data is very weak for goals on governance, employment and the environment. Data are either missing, incomplete or discrepancies exist between data sources. To improve data availability for these goal areas, there is a need to improve coordination between the national statistical office, namely the ANSD (Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie), and administrative bodies for a regular production of reliable statistics. On employment, efforts are underway by the ANSD to produce regular high quality data through the first National Survey on Employment launched in July 2015. This effort should improve the weak data collection system regarding employment and labour market data.

The availability of disaggregated data remains a challenge.

A major limitation of data availability is the insufficient disaggregation of data at the local and sectorial levels. Efforts will be needed to fill disaggregated data gaps and ensure that the hope of "leaving no one behind" becomes a reality.

However, there are concrete steps which could greatly improve the availability of disaggregated data.

To improve the availability of data at the local level, the capacities (human, technical and financial) of Regional Offices of Statistics and Demography should be strengthened to meet the disaggregated data needs. In a context of decentralisation in Senegal, available disaggregated data at local levels will ensure reliable evidence for planning, development and evaluation of the implementation of local development policies.

At the sectorial level, more reliable and high-quality disaggregated data could be ensured if the ANSD plays a key coordination role in streamlining and centralising the management of qualified human resources in statistics within line ministries. One of the key measures to ensure statistical human resources for these ministries, in both quantity and quality, is for the ANSD to provide the *Cellule d'Etude et de Planification* of these line ministries with well-trained staff from ENSAE, the National School for Statistics and Economic Analysis.

Predictable funding is key to improving data quality.

We found that accuracy and reliability and timeliness and punctuality of data are the most problematic aspects of data quality in Senegal. The weakness of these areas, particularly timeliness and punctuality, can be explained by the ANSD's significant dependence on donor funding and domestic resources from government. National budget cuts and delays in the disbursement of donor finances devoted to statistical operations negatively impact the timeliness and punctuality of data.

Discrepancies between administrative data and survey data for sectors such as education explain weaknesses relative to accuracy and reliability of data. One way to improve accuracy and reliability would be for government ministries, departments and agencies to make better use of the "visa" system within the NSS which requires data producers to collaborate with ANSD when designing surveys.

Donor funding and technical assistance has been a driving force behind improvements within the national statistical system.

The review of the political economy of data in Senegal revealed the important role donors play in improving statistical capacities. For instance, the ANSD acquired statistical tools thanks to technical assistance from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the French government's Cooperation and Cultural Action Service. Bilateral cooperation between Senegal and Brazil led to the use of improved technologies for data collection in the last general census in 2013. This facilitated the availability of preliminary results three months after the end of data collection. Technology has great potential to fill data gaps, since it is useful for efficient data collection, analysis and dissemination.

However, domestic resources are key to ensuring the long-term sustainability of statistical production.

The Senegalese government is increasing its efforts to fund public statistics through domestic resources. For the last general census conducted in 2013, more than 90 percent of the total budget (13.5 billion CFA francs, or roughly USD 27 million) was provided by the Senegalese government. This represent a considerable effort and a positive move of the government towards mobilizing domestic resources for statistics. Strengthening such efforts in the future is key for the government to reduce

reliance on external funding, while reinforcing financial autonomy and country ownership.

Senegal's SDG strategy for implementation should include provisions to address data gaps.

As Senegal moves forward on implementation, the government will need to define a strategy, bearing in mind the *Plan Sénégal Emergent* (PSE), the flagship policy of Senegal. This strategy should include steps to address data gaps, including the underlying challenges with respect to effectively resourcing the national statistical system. The availability of good quality data will enable priority-setting, evidence-based decision-making and promote accountability for various stakeholders.

(Posted on the Southern Voice and Post-2015 Data Test websites on December 20, 2015)

Measuring the Sustainable Development Agenda in Peru

Martin Benavides, Silvio Campana, Selene Cueva, Juan Leon and Alejandro Wageman

In 2012, the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development proposed a set of priority areas, that were included in the Post-2015 Agenda that searches the eradication of problems that impair different countries around the world. For the pursuit of the SDGs, Bangladesh's Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and Canada's Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University, in association with Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals promote *"The Post-2015 Data Test: Unpacking the Data Revolution at the Country Level"*, an initiative that boosts the mapping of available data to measure the post-2015 sustainable development indicators and also the identification of challenges and opportunities that countries may face during the implementation of the SDGs. In this context, the Group for the Analysis of Development (GRADE) become responsible for the Peru case study. The study aims to analyse the SGD priorities of Peru, and examines data availability for monitoring and following through on the SDGs at the country level. Furthermore, it identifies the methodological challenges and proposes recommendations.

Peru's development advocates urgently a need to connect quality data and information about population's central problems with the creation of adequate interventions promoted by government entities and oriented towards SDGs. It is equally important to raise awareness and increase engagement toward policy issues regarding data revolution and SDGs. Therefore, various efforts boosted research processes and traced a thematic agenda for Peru. This way, taking into account the points of view of diverse participants such as civil society, government, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector and academia; the research team agreed that Peru needs to act on several factors during the post-2015 period: (i) reduce poverty in all its forms, (ii) improve the quality of education at all levels and education infrastructure, (iii) maintain the balance between economic growth and environmental protection, (iv) improve air and water quality, (v) ensure full access to developed infrastructure, (vi) establish a strong state and fight against corruption, (vii) improve relationships between the government, companies and communities and (viii) improve security and reduce violence in all its forms.

In this context, the SDGs emerge as particularly relevant for Peru. Since acknowledging that Peru has a lot of work to do to become developed, policy-makers are working strongly on social areas such as education, poverty and employment. Such work claims a national system prepared to measure the progress on the post-2015 agenda. The National Institute of Statistics and Information Technology (INEI) is Peru's trustworthy national statistics office and it produces relevant, accurate and timely information that obtained high scores according to the data quality assessment framework. However, data availability and quality varies by SDG, specifically in the goal areas of environment, governance and global partnership improvement. This is due to the fact that indicators under these goal areas come from ministries that work separately from INEI, thus they produce data through heterogeneous processes and qualities.

According to the data-mapping exercise undertaken for the Peru case study, 68% of indicators related to the goals areas of poverty, education and employment were calculated by the INEI in the National Household Survey. The situation of the rest of indicators are mixed. Six percent can be calculated by custom tabulation of data producers and ten percent of indicators are currently calculable, but data are not available for the proposed baseline year of 2010. Also, identified

non-official data could be used to monitor 8% of indicators. Furthermore, it draws attention that three global indicators under the goal areas on energy, governance and environment cannot be measured because data are not collected by the INEI, non-official sources or international sources. Other problem identified is the low level of data disaggregation by sex (important for indicators regarding financial inclusion) and minority group in Peru; this is important due to the high levels of social inequity identified in the country.

Over time, the collection of data for social indicators in Peru has changed due to various factors, such as laws, political pressure, budgets, technical difficulties and methodological innovations. Consequently, INEI practices and methodologies for data collection have changed. First by implementing a decentralisation plan, which implies, the use of methodologies and standardised processes in different offices in Peru. And, second, by incorporating the external support from an Adviser Committee which helped to improve methodologies and technologies for data collection.

Finally, the study arrives at recommendations for developing countries to generate indicators that answer to national and international demands for information. In first place, the creation of a tool that enables all countries to systematise and map all available data and information will help to ensure data quality as well as identify data gaps. Additionally, greater efforts are required from the INEI in a number of areas: *work together with various data producers to standardize data collection processes, include new questions in the National Household Survey to measure the SDGs indicators, create synergies with international organizations to strengthen the data collection processes, and develop personnel and infrastructure capacity as a respond to the increasing demand from government entities*. At last, the study emphasises the importance of ministries and political parties to embrace the post-2015 agenda since it will be part of the policy frameworks of many governments in the future.

Measuring Country Priorities – Sierra Leone

Samuel Jamiru Braima

The Sierra Leone country study examined the relevance of several proposed SDG areas for Sierra Leone and presents the state of statistical data to measure progress on those areas. The areas included (i) poverty, (ii) education, (iii) employment and inclusive growth, (iv) energy and infrastructure, (v) environmental sustainability and disaster resilience, (vi) governance, and (vii) global partnership for sustainable development.

Given that the SDG framework is set to allow for countries its own space in the adoption and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, the Data Test study called for an in-depth analysis of Sierra Leone's national priorities under the above mentioned seven issue areas. It also evaluated the availability of official data (according to source, type and description of data) required to monitor the progress on goals and identified data gaps.

The Sierra Leone report on the Post-2015 Data Test provides insights on potential national-level targets, and identifies key challenges and opportunities for implementation of the SDGs. The identification of national-level priorities and their causal analysis will help inform the dialogue on the adoption and adaptation of the SDGs in the national policy making process. The report identifies data gaps for monitoring progress against national and global SDG priorities and catalogues the challenges, inadequacies and efforts in Sierra Leone to collect and disseminate relevant data. It includes a mapping of data sources and an assessment of the accessibility, availability and quality of data. The findings of this report will serve as a guide for policymakers and experts who intend to establish reliable datasets and make evidence-based decisions in Sierra Leone.

Discussions about the post-2015 agenda have been limited in Sierra Leone but it would be fair to say that MDG issues have been at the forefront of development discussions in the country since 2009. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are aware of the MDGs and related achievements. They have called for accountability and transparency from the part of the government of Sierra Leone, who tend to declare that national goals and priorities are aligned with the MDGs.

Since 2002, the subsequent governments of Sierra Leone have undertaken a number of concrete measures to reduce the persisting problems of poverty, maternal and infant mortality and gender inequality. An example is adoption of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) III, referred to as the "Agenda for Prosperity." The issues of poverty reduction, youth employment and decent work (which fall within the theme of productive and remunerative work), youth employability (i.e. skills development), and disaster management and sustainable environmental practices are all major components encapsulated in PRSP III. These key priorities are also captured under the SDGs.

Given the high rate of youth unemployment in Sierra Leone, a priority of the government will be to collect disaggregated data on employment and the country's main economic sectors, including agriculture, mining and infrastructure. Additionally, the data collection process will need to be refined in order to ensure gender sensitivity, increase the frequency of data collection and shorten the time between data analysis and the dissemination of findings.

Sierra Leone faces significant political, institutional, policy and resource constraints to producing good-quality data. The country's national statistical office, Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL), is not autonomous. Political interference has meant that each government has conducted data collection that serves as a quick-win and can be

easily funded by the government and development partners. Importantly, CSOs remain dedicated to monitoring Sierra Leone's progress on the MDGs, particularly, in the areas of poverty, education and health.

At the institutional level, the staff turnover rate at SSL had been very high between 2004 and 2013. The attrition rate severely affected the trust of some stakeholders and donors, leading to restricted funding of SSL activities. This lack of resources negatively impacted the frequency of data collection. Since the 1989/90 Labour Force Survey, the government recently completed the follow-up 2014 Labour Force Survey that was intended to collect more accurate data on key labour market indicators. Currently, the nation awaits the formal publication of the 2014 Population and Housing Census results.

SSL has revised the National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS) in a concerted and collaborative approach. The objectives of the reforms were efficient and coordinated data production, client conscientiousness and speedier delivery of quality information to decision- and policy-makers, donors and other users of official statistics (Statistics Sierra Leone 2008, 2–3).

The first NSDS suffered from a lack of donor funding for implementation, following a sudden change of leadership that disrupted activities at SSL, which led to high attrition of trained staff. The lessons learned were the need to pool resources for statistical activities in the country and the need for collaboration among data users other stakeholders and SSL.

Statistical Landscape in Sierra Leone

The dearth of data had been identified for over a decade, yet the government of Sierra Leone has not implemented reforms or enacted laws that would drastically increase the frequency of data collection and shorten the time between data analysis and the dissemination of findings. Various surveys had been conducted, such as the Demographic and Health Surveys (2003, 2008, 2013), Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey, Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey and Population and Housing Census. These surveys, however, are insufficient for measuring progress on the SDGs, particularly for newer goal areas such as those related to the environment, energy, infrastructure, human rights and global partnership for sustainable development. They capture socio-economic indicators, though on an infrequent basis. Further, the potential to create synergies between survey instruments and improve their alignment to fill data gaps has not been realised. Measuring progress on the SDGs will require concerted efforts to collect and report additional information on relevant socio-economic indicators.

Of the 45 indicators examined across the seven goal areas included in this study, Sierra Leone has data for only 48.9 percent. Of the indicators which were selected to reflect national priorities under the SDGs, the situation is worse. Data exists for 13 of the 52 indicators examined–or 25 percent. Data for poverty-related indicators tend to be available, however will likely require further manipulation to meet SDG monitoring needs. Data on education is relatively available for school enrolment (by gender and age, by locality and district), the school completion rate, the pass rate in national examinations (disaggregated by region and gender) and the proportion of children who access pre-primary school/kindergarten.

Data on health are available for stunting and malnutrition, infant and maternal mortality rates, the fertility rate and household expenditure on health services. Regarding data on labour and employment, The Sierra Leone Labour Force survey of 2014 provides the benchmark that can be used to derive key indicators on the labour market.

Hence, Sierra Leone has quality data on education, health and labour. Nevertheless, improvements are needed in the frequency of data collection and the calculation of more indicators. To successfully monitor progress on the SDGs, deliberate efforts are needed to improve Geographical Information System data collection on the environment and

disaster management and coordinate data collection on energy and infrastructure, governance and global partnership.

Of the eight potential indicators examined for energy and infrastructure, data exist for two. Also among the nine indicators examined for the goal area related to governance, data exists for only two. Similarly, though Sierra Leone has established Development Assistance Database, data related to global partnership will need to be improved, particularly for indicators which track progress on financial and trade flows beyond official development assistance.

Notwithstanding efforts on the NSDS, there is ample room for improvement in data collection in Sierra Leone. Mechanisms and policies need to be put into place to increase the frequency of data collection and quality of data collected as well as to determine modes of data collection, the best time periods and what type of data should be collected by specific entities, including CSOs and non-governmental organisations.

Political Economy Dimensions

Sierra Leone is not in a good position to comprehensively measure the progress on the SDGs. In particular, SSL is not autonomous and is reliant on the government of Sierra Leone or donors to fund its activities. Unofficial data are collected by various commissions, such as the Anti-Corruption Commission and Decentralisation Secretariat, and core government entities. For example, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation collects programmatic heath data, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology collects data on education, the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs collects tourism data, the police and courts collect data on criminals and crimes, and many other government entities collect administrative data that are not for public or academic use. Overall, these unofficial data cannot be used for measuring progress on the SDGs because methodology for producing much data might not be compatible, and thus cannot provide a basis for comparison.

Recommendations

The government of Sierra Leone should legislate for all data collection to be coordinated and superintended by SSL and for the attachment of statisticians to all ministries, departments and agencies who act as liaison officers between their respective entities and SSL. This approach could lead to standardised data collection methodologies, quality assurance and better data comparability over time.

Sierra Leone's national statistical system needs to be strengthened. It should not be limited to the provision of financial and human resources, rather should include improving infrastructure and implementing a staff retention mechanism and staff exchange programme that will allow staff members to visit other statistical and international institutions. In turn, such initiatives will enhance the provision of timely, relevant and good-quality data for evidence-based policy-making. Additionally, Sierra Leone should design a model for sound statistical information collection and create a National Data Repository–hosting institution.

SSL should prepare an outreach programme for other data producers and data users. It should disseminate information about policies and procedures related to the preparation and presentation of metadata as well as methods of reporting on the quality of data sources.

More need to be done to improve the compilation of data on new entrants into the labour market through the establishment of a labour market information system, which considers the environment, gender, governance, rule of law, energy and infrastructure. Slight improvements or additions to some indicators on health, education and global partnership would provide national and global indicators that are adequate for monitoring the SDGs.

Flashy Innovations will not Fuel the Data Revolution

Shannon Kindornay

The global data shake-up has to be driven by national priorities and long-term investment. Calls for a data revolution to inform the post-2015 sustainable development agenda have been met with commitments, made at the Addis Ababa Financing for Development summit last month, to invest in national statistical systems, make greater use of unofficial data including big data, and adopt technological innovations to support data collection, analysis and dissemination.

These could all fill existing data gaps, improve public services and broaden partnerships. But as commitments turn into on-the-ground initiatives, the data revolution must become rooted in national priorities and realities.

And rather than the technological innovations that claim the data revolution spotlight, in many countries this will require something less flashy: considerable investments in long-term statistical infrastructure and capacity development.

Statistical bottlenecks

The Post-2015 Data Test project was set up to examine the adequacy of data for measuring progress in several development sectors. And, so far, testing in a handful of countries shows that many continue to face bottlenecks in statistical infrastructure and capacity development.

In Bangladesh, for example, data storage is not fully digitised, and weak information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure hinders data collection, analysis and dissemination. In Sierra Leone, limited internet access and use of smartphones or tablets are the main barriers to people accessing official statistics disseminated online. And, in Tanzania, only 15 of the 150 staffs at the National Bureau of Statistics are proficient in the use of statistical computer programmes, while other government departments are also short-staffed.

Other issues are common to many developing countries. For example, data collection across government departments is often uncoordinated with national statistics offices (NSOs). And it often fails to meet quality standards or use consistent methodologies and definitions.

Long-term solutions

In this scenario, it is important to think about possible ways to strengthen statistical systems. Bill Anderson, a data expert at the NGO Development Initiatives, says this can't be done through quick-win, 'plug and play' interventions. His work in Uganda on joining up disaggregated data sets to create usable, highly localised information highlights this reality.

Results can only be achieved by taking a long-term view to improving statistical capacity. For example, in Senegal, the challenge of retaining senior statisticians led to the government-backed National School of Statistics and Economic Analysis. The school is linked to the NSO, which offers pre-service and in-service training. The move has been successful: since the school was established, it has contributed to the NSO's recruitment and retention of trained statisticians, and overall staff numbers rose from 106 in 2000 to 234 in 2010.

In short, efficient, effective systems that produce sound official statistics do not appear overnight. They require physical, human and technical resources in NSOs and government departments.

Long-term support will also enable NSOs to harness the potential of innovative technologies and unofficial data, which can address immediate

gaps. This is because innovations will need to be grounded in country-level realities. In practice, this will mean understanding NSOs' resource constraints before settling on appropriate innovations.

Choosing technologies carefully can lead to huge gains in data availability and quality. Senegal used personal digital assistants in its 2013 census following a successful trial. This meant that preliminary results were available within three months — a vast improvement compared with a five-year lag in the previous census. It also enabled the collection of data with greater levels of break down by location, age and sex.

In this instance, the new technology succeeded because it had been tested, had sufficient funding and matched staff capacities.

Effective support for NSOs

There are new ideas for how to support NSOs effectively.

Many observers have called for better coordination with unofficial data producers to fill gaps in official statistics. Such partnerships will require NSOs to ensure data quality and coordinate collection — but these capacities are already weak.

And although use of unofficial data can offer quick-wins, it should not be used at the expense of strengthening institutional capacities. NSOs can make better and greater use of the data they, and other departments, have already collected.

International data partnership of PARIS21 (Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century) and other commentators have also suggested using data compacts, where countries agree to a set of basic principles and minimum standards in exchange for external financing. Such a system could improve data quality and boost financing, which is crucial: Post-2015 Data Test studies point to a lack of timely funds as a key obstacle to strengthening statistical systems. Even when national strategies are in place, implementation often lags from delays in financing.

National focus

In the past, donors chose to fund statistical activities that reflected their priorities rather than national plans. But future investments from governments and the international community must match national priorities.

Commitment to the proposed data compacts may facilitate this, if activities and partnerships are planned according to realities on the ground. This would help ensure that the data revolution is dominated by local rather than global needs.

As stewards of official data, NSOs should be at the heart of each country's data revolution. But for their efforts to be sustainable and relevant, they need support to identify when, where and how unofficial data can fill data gaps, and to integrate technological innovations and partnerships into a statistical system that aligns with national priorities.

(Originally posted on SciDev.Net on August 25, 2015)

Post-2015 Data Test
country level experiences

About the Initiative

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and the *Norman Paterson School of International Affairs (NPSIA)*, in association with the *Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals* network launched the "Post-2015 Data Test: Unpacking the Data Revolution at the Country Level" in February 2014. The primary objectives of this initiative were to road-test the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a variety of countries, examine data availability and quality for SDG monitoring, and inform global discussions on the SDGs with Southern research and perspectives.

As it was becoming obvious that the new global agenda would be a 'universal' one, seven low-, middle- and high-income countries across four continents were selected to participate in the initiative. Country studies examined the then SDG candidate goals and their measurement components, at the national level. The initiative included partners from each of the seven countries: Bangladesh– *Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)*, Dhaka; Canada – *Norman Paterson School of International Affairs (NPSIA)*, Ottawa; Peru – *Group for the Analysis of Development (GRADE)*, Lima; Senegal – *Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale (IPAR)*, Dakar; Sierra Leone – *University of Sierra Leone*, Freetown; and Tanzania – *Policy Research for Development (REPOA)*, Dar es Salaam. Turkey country study was carried out by a research team composed of members from various universities and think tanks based in Istanbul.

Through a rigorous analytical process, seven candidate goal areas and 45 indicators were examined by the Data Test team. These included poverty, education, employment and inclusive growth, energy and infrastructure, environment and disaster resilience, governance and global partnership. Teams carried out literature reviews and organised various workshops, interviews and focus group discussions to engage with the policy-makers, data producers and data users during the research process.

A data-mapping exercise was conducted by the research teams to identify the availability, quality and accessibility of national official data in the context of monitoring global and national goals, targets and indicators. Each team conducted an assessment of the political economy dimensions of the data revolution, or in other words, the political, legal, institutional and capacity constraints that inhibit the production and use of good quality data at the country level. The country studies under the Post-2015 Data Test were designed to shed light on key challenges at the country level with respect to SDG prioritisation, implementation and monitoring. The Global Report, "Implementing Agenda 2030: Unpacking the Data Revolution at Country Level," brings together the key insights, conclusions and recommendation emanating from these country studies.

The initial results of the country studies were shared at various global platforms and were widely used in informing and influencing the SDG policy making process at global and national levels.

The initiative has received generous support from the *William and Flora Hewlett Foundation*. It has also benefitted from the partnership with the *Think Tank Initiative (TTI)*, Ottawa, the *United Nations Foundation*, New York, and the Partnership for *African Social and Governance Research (PASGR)*, Nairobi.

For details, please visit: www.post2015datatest.com

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