Leveraging citizen generated data - opportunities and challenges

Localizing SDGs and NDS-1 Through Voluntary Local Reviews in Zimbabwe

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Citizen Generated Data and SDGs Monitoring

- Official statistics have traditionally been relied upon to craft policies and to measure SDGs progress and national plans.

- But there are still huge gaps and many countries are struggling to obtain relevant, timely, disaggregated data to track progress.

- Alternative data sources such as citizen-generated data (CGD), geospatial data, mobile data, and big data have become increasingly relevant to help close the data gap.
Citizen Generated Data and SDGs Monitoring

- CGD has a high potential to monitor and drive progress on a country’s development, including towards SDGs by
  - Citizenship: Creating new relationships and public spaces
  - Monitoring: Informing, expanding, and improving SDG monitoring
  - Implementation: Informing public policy goals and community-driven problem solving
What is Citizen Generated Data?

- CGD is defined as data that people or their organizations produce to monitor, demand directly, or drive change on issues that affect them.

- The UN Statistical Commission convened in March 2022 recognized the value of CGD in filing data gaps.

- National Statistical Offices are increasingly recognizing CGD as a valuable data source in pursuing sustainable development to help fill evidence gaps.

- NSOs can support and guide producers of CGD to comply with statistical quality standards and improve their usefulness.
Benefits of Citizen Generated Data

• These data can provide timely and granular data on community issues, supplementing official data sources and helping to shape development policies that are inclusive and responsive to community needs.

• Fosters creation of new spaces for national, local and regional governments and their citizens to engage

• Promotes the inclusion of citizens in public decision-making at different levels of government.

• Empowers citizens by engaging them in one or several stages of the data value chain: collection (e.g. censuses and surveys), publication, uptake, and impact.
Benefits of Citizen Generated Data

- CGD increases data availability, particularly on marginalized people, who may often be left out of traditional surveys and censuses.

- Hence, investments in a rich data ecosystem that supports CGD alongside official data sources:
  - empowers the poor and groups in vulnerable situations
  - provides a holistic understanding of marginalization, and
  - supports inclusive decision-making to ensure that no one and no place is left behind in SDG implementation.

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Countries Using CDG

• NSOs are experimenting with CGD to enhance official statistics.

• The Kenya Bureau of Statistics is building its capacity to use these alternative data sources.

• A practical guide was developed following a call by a call from CSO in Kenya for guidance on producing quality CGD. "Citizen-generated data in Kenya: a practical guide"

• The Philippines has identified multiple indicators under 12 SDGs suitable for CGD application.

• The Government of Viet Nam adopted 80% of LNOB Viet Nam’s recommendations in its 2020 national report on SDG implementation.
E.g. Identifying the ultra-poor using CGD

• How do we end the worst forms of human poverty?

• Bangladesh defined the “ultra poor” as those living on 60-70 cents a day or less - the majority tends to be landless rural women

• They are trapped in the worst forms of destitution, are the most vulnerable, lack the skills needed to lift themselves out of extreme poverty.

• They often do not benefit from market-based interventions like microfinance.

• Development and growth tend to leave them behind; they are unable to break free from extreme poverty despite their hardest efforts
E.g. Identifying the ultra-poor using CGD

- The very poorest can “graduate” from ultra-poverty with a set of carefully targeted, sequenced, tailored interventions.
- Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC)’s methodology has been used.
- BRAC serves 126m people in 17 countries in Asia, Africa, the Americas.
- BRAC’s targeting process begins by identifying geographic locations with a high concentration of ultra-poor households.
- Next step is participatory wealth ranking. Groups of 40-50 villagers are asked to discuss and rank the wealth of every household in the village.
E.g. Identifying the ultra-poor using CGD

- Programme staff follows up with door-to-door visits, using questionnaires to determine who qualifies.
- More senior managers are then required to verify the final selection.
- Selected HHs are given a productive asset (e.g. livestock, agricultural inputs, capital for small trading); receive training on how to use their new asset; weekly stipends, participate in savings programmes; health care; social integration
- After 18 to 36 months, 75% to 98% of participants met “graduation” criteria.
Challenges

• NSOs’ perception towards CGD is improving but they are still concerned about data quality and methodological coherence.

• CGD is perceived to lack credibility due to limitations of low coverage and insufficient initiatives to represent a population or area of interest.

• With the stewardship of National Statistical Offices, standardized guidelines and data partnerships can contribute to the extensive use of these data.

• CSOs can conduct CGD initiatives that comply with statistical quality standards similar to those used by NSOs.
Way forward

• UN Statistical Division and the LNOB coalitions are developing a global quality assurance toolkit for CGD producers, built on national level experiences.

• Producing guidelines will help “translation” of statistical concepts, principles, and processes into everyday language, enabling CSOs to produce data and statistics that comply with quality standards.

• Beyond guidelines, more investment efforts should be targeted towards strengthening CGD.

• Its important that CGD contributes to the development discourse coming out of people’s voices, experiences and life stories if countries are to LNOB.
Thank you.