

# Measurement challenges in SDG progress



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# Perspective on the SDGs



- Historic achievement: new thinking about development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and an ambitious, transformative agenda agreed through participatory process.
- Sustainable development – integrating economic, social and environmental pillars. Demands integrated action and holistic progress reporting.
- Inclusion and sustainability as important ends
- Underlying theory – development as complex social change, addressing systemic causes of poverty, inequality, environmental destruction.
- Universal agenda, for all countries.
- A transformative agenda and a departure from the basic needs focused, MDG N-S aid agenda.

# Transformative agenda – some key *new* elements



- not just faster progress but reversal of trend e.g. inequality; consumption and production; climate change
- addresses systemic/root causes of poverty, inequality, environmental destruction
- means of implementation (goal 17 and targets in goals)
- overarching theme of leaving no one behind
- interlinkages amongst goals/targets
- Data requirements: complex measurement challenges; new indicators; disaggregation

# SDG indicator framework and progress reporting



# When the rubber hits the road – demand vs. capacity for data collection



- Global monitoring framework (232 indicators) vs. capacity of national statistical offices (NSOs)
- Financing? Cost of strengthening national systems - estimated US\$1 billion pa - Inadequate mobilization of funding
- Investing in developing tier II and tier III indicators – cutting edge measurement tools for a transformative agenda

# SDG indicator framework



## Gaps in translating a norm to a number

- limit on number of indicators (1-2) per target - yet targets are complex
- data not available: Tier I (82); Tier II (61); Tier III (84)
- non-quantifiable targets/goals
- distortion of meaning and politics of indicator selection

# Assessing progress



- How to summarize 17 goals, 169 targets, 232 indicators
- Focus: reporting on conventional indicators with robust data series
- Neglect: data with poor data coverage, innovative measurement tools for cutting edge issues (tiers II and tier III indicators), for policy change rather than outcomes (means of implementation)
- Selectivity (intended or unintended) – CESR blog post on 2017 SDG progress report: “the ambitious spirit of the 2030 Agenda would be undermined by the weakness of the ‘official’ monitoring and reporting arrangements” (Donald, CESR)

# Risks of neglecting the transformative agenda in progress reviews



- Reporting driven by data availability, focus on outcome and tier I indicators
- Neglect of means of implementation
- Neglect of targets for policy change
- Weak disaggregation and reporting on leaving no one behind



# Some examples



- **Goal 2: Hunger, food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture (13 indicators)**
  - 2016: 3 outcome indicators (tier I); 2017 3 outcome ((tier I) and 2 policy indicators (tier III)
  - no disaggregation
- **Goal 5: Gender equality and empower all women and girls (14 indicators)**
  - 2016: 3 tier I outcome indicators and 1 tier II; 2017: 7 outcome indicators (tier I, II, III)
  - no reporting on means of implementation (economic resources, technology, policy reforms)
  - no disaggregation
- **Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries (11 indicators)**
  - 2016: 3 tier I outcome indicator. 2017: 3 tier I outcome indicators and 1 tier III indicator;
  - no target and indicator on inequality among countries
  - no indicator on income and wealth distribution within countries
- **Goal 14: Oceans, seas and marine resources**
  - 2016 report on 2 tier I outcome indicators. 2017 report on 3 tier III and 2 tier I indicators
  - Neglect of 7 policy related indicators
  - distorting indicator: instruments to combat *illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing*
- **Goal 17: Means of implementation and Global partnership (25 indicators)**
  - 2016: report on 9 tier I indicators. 2017: report on 10 tier I and 1 tier II indicator.
  - Neglected issues - technology access, financial stability, policy space, policy coherence



- “Measure what we cherish or cherish what we measure” – avoid data fetishism
- Progress reporting: move to less data driven assessment,
  - data availability should not be priority
  - qualitative assessment of tier III indicators
  - attention to means of implementation
  - explicit attention to disaggregation and leaving no one behind
- Holistic approach to progress reporting appropriate to an integrated, indivisible agenda

# Development data production, diffusion, use



# Evolving data ecosystem: governance issues



- Data revolution and MDG progress monitoring
- Effects on governance of data production, diffusion, utilisation
- Revolutions are disruptive – strengthen or weaken NSOs
- Accountability, accessibility, priority setting for data collection and knowledge production
- Global and national levels
- Role of NSOs
- Future unclear - Conflicting visions of data system for development – open or managed system structured around NSOs and international agencies

# Summing up: “Measure what we cherish” cherish what we measure



- Data critical for decision making, monitoring SDG progress – strengthening NSOs and Tier II/III indicators a priority
- Progress monitoring – avoid excess reliance on data and move to qualitative cum quantitative assessments
- Emerging challenge: Governance of data for development
- Data are technical but deeply political.