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Interactive Dialogue with major groups and other stakeholders, March 25

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In the Philippines, like many other countries, statistics have been used to mask poverty and inequalities between rich and poor, men and women. A few magical waves of statistical wands support governments' claim that poverty has been greatly reduced, and that globalization has been good for all.

But walk with me through the slums of Manila and I will show you that poverty, no matter how it's measured, is deeply felt by millions. Come to our rural communities and see how resource grabs, the privatization of water, energy, education and health are greater indicators of misery.

Statistics are *political* acts. They matter for those we choose to count. They matter even more for those we don't count.

The use of the World Bank's poverty measurement and the failure to measure the concentration of wealth are two political statistical choices designed to continue the malevolent fiction that neo-liberalism is good for the world.

Anywhere in the world, USD1.25/person/day is a starvation rate. It suggests that it's acceptable for 3.5 billion people in the global south to live on the equivalent of minimum wage in a wealthy country with no benefits or public services.[1] That is a morally reprehensible assertion that values the lives of the vast majority of the world less than those in the developed world. The World Bank's changing the base year for the statistic is another reprehensible manipulation to make the poor 'disappear'[2].

The statistics we select should measure transformation. And it's not hard. We can measure:

- growing wealth inequalities between countries and between people;
- how much of the world's wealth sits in offshore bank accounts;
- whether a country provides living wages;

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[1] David Woodward, http://newint.org/features/special/2010/07/01poverty-line-definition/

[2] Sanjay Reddy and Thomas Pogge, 'How NOT to count the poor' http://www.columbia.edu/~sr793/count.pdf

- the ratio between labour share and profits. We could even measure the time it takes the world's richest person to gain what a Bangladeshi garment worker will earn in a year (which is one second, by the way).

We can measure policies, not just outcomes. We can measure:

- military spending and compare it to public health spending;
- taxes paid by corporations and by the wealthy;
- interest in loans paid by developing countries;
- how many trade agreements are subject to human rights and gender audits.

These would be statistics faithful to the Open Working Group (OWG) goals and targets (SDGs). We should not restrict the number of indicators nor the *political intention of the indicators*. Civil society and proportional representation from the G77 countries in the expert group is crucial.

For instance, the proposed indicator for redistributing unpaid care work is the distance to fetch water. Of course it is important to measure women's access to publicly available water through Goal 6, but here we need to measure public investment in care services – surely that was the intention.

Civil society can play a powerful role in monitoring the SDGs, connecting local realities to global policy debates, building new paradigms for social transformation.

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