The role of science and scenario modeling in setting priorities for SDGs?

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Outline

- Definition
- Goals
  - Help us coordinate action
- The future is uncertain
  - Scenarios are one way of trying to get a sense of what the future might look like
- Science
  - Is a guide

Definition

- SD as defined by the Bruntland report contains the key concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor to which overriding priority should be given, and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs

Goals

- Good goals mean different things to different people
  - Goals allow political leaders to say they have made a decision
  - Goals allow businesses to align CSR policies and activities to a wider cause
  - Goals and their related indicators allow civil society to assess and address progress, gaps and needs
  - Goals makes work easier for UN agencies to focus and manage

- And what about the other 7 billion people on this planet?
  - For most people goals are something they hear about on the news, if at all

  - It is fundamentally important that goals lead to tangible improvements in peoples lives
  - Accountability issue is crucial

Prioritizing goals

- Priorities are based on judgment
  - Normative frameworks can provide a basis upon which to prioritize goals
  - Priorities also depend on peoples circumstances
    - Are we trying to meet basic needs or lift already high levels of welfare?

- The UN provides many normative document that we can use to guide our development ambitions
  - UN Charter
  - Convention on Human Rights
  - Framework Convention on Climate Change
  - etc

Science

- To generate useful knowledge to support a transition to SD
- To illuminate interaction between nature and society
- To develop tools for monitoring key environmental and societal conditions and guidance on effective management systems
- To provide information to better enable formulation and selection of policies in decision making process

Scenarios

- Scenarios need to start with people and finish with people
  - Our ambitions
  - Our actions
  - Our current generation and our future generations
- Lets start with social sciences
  - 7 billion people
  - Multiple cultures and belief systems
  - What are our basic needs and beyond that, aspirations?
- Lets look and economic behaviors
  - Incentives?
  - Costs and benefits?
  - Development opportunities?
- What are the limits to growth and development
  - What are the physical limits of ecosystems?
  - What is the value of ecosystem services to society?
  - What are the benefits of urban and rural habitats to their occupants?
- Who might benefit under these scenarios?
  - The wealthy or the poor
  - Those with opportunities or those that loose opportunities
  - Is this equitable?
    - Within generations?
    - Across generations?

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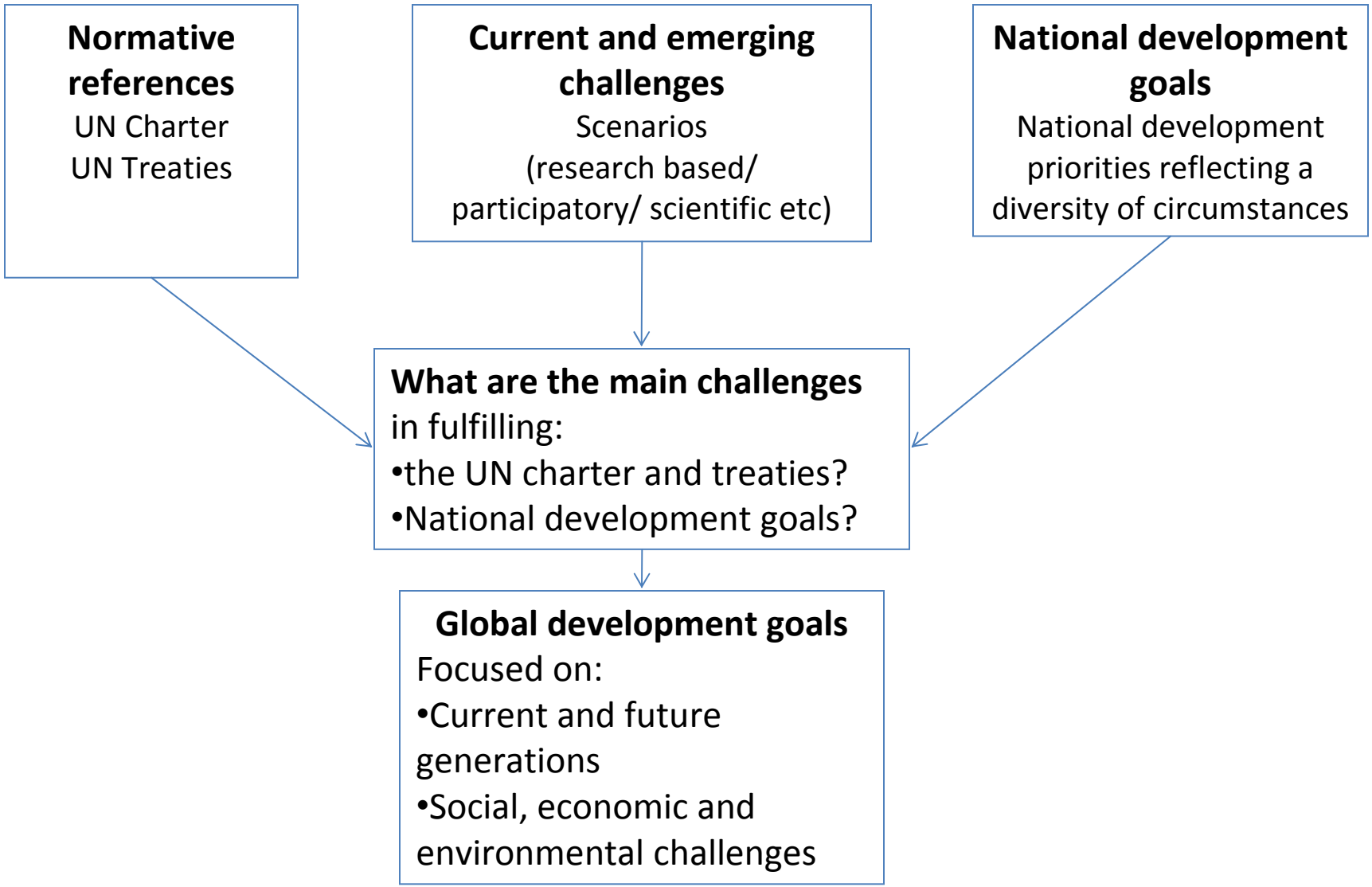

There are lots of global scenario models

Perhaps we need to ask a few hard questions:

Do these global scenario models help identify the most important challenges or do they focus on things that can be measured?

Are the challenges facing the worlds most poor the same as those found at the global level?

Do global development goals align well with national development goals or not?

Who benefits most from global development goals?

Source: Sustainable Development Scenarios for Rio+20. Online: http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/SD21-scenarios_Alex_Roehrl.pdf

Indicators

- Provide a metric for assess progress relative to a goal

However

- *"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted"*
  - Albert Einstein

Innovation

- Physical science without technology and innovation is desperate
  - Physical sciences can tell us something about the limits of the ecosystems of which society and our economy's are an integral part
  - Technology and innovation is required to make more with less
    - Human innovation is essential for human development
    - Technology is essential for global equity and meeting development aspirations