MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION FOR THE SDGs

DATA, STATISTICS, FOLLOW UP AND REVIEW*

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Data and statistics are important for measuring progress on the SDGs targets and indicators. United Nations General Assembly adopted an initial set of 244 global indicators for the SDGs and targets of the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development.[1] However, implementation of the SDG is severely constrained by lack of data. More than half of the indicators have either very limited coverage (countries) or very limited available data.

The data scarcity is more in the Asia and the Pacific region. Currently trends analysis is possible for only one-fourth of the global indicators (64/244 indicators).[2] Most data are available for SDG 7 (Access to clean energy), SDG 8 (decent work and employment) and SDG 9 (sustainable industries, infrastructure and innovation), where data is available to measure progress on more than 50% indicators in more than 50% countries in the region. For SD1, SDG 5, SDG 6, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14 and SDG 16, 50% or more indicators have no data.

The data scarcity is more severe as far as central theme of the Agenda 2030 Leave No One Behind (LNOB) is concerned. To develop LNOB markers, we need data disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, location, disability etc. Currently only sex disaggregated data is available, that too only for 22 indicators.

93 out of 244 indicators are in the Tier 3 meaning that there is no internationally agreed methodology on these indicators, neither data is available. Most of the Tier 3 indicators (lack of it) lie in environmental and climate related goals, severely constraining capacity of review progress on these

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1   ESCAP/RFSD/2018/INF2. These global indicators will be reviewed in 2020 and 2030.
2   We require two kinds of data to monitor progress. If a particular data is available for one point (one data set) in time, it can only tell us the status. If the same data is available for at least two points of time (two data sets), then only progress can be measured or trends analyzed.

goals. This is very important as leading countries on the SDGs dashboard and index (viz. Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway etc.) as well countries ending up among the lowest ranks and based in the sub region) are equally poorly performing on environment and climate related goals.[3] 11/13 indicators in SDG12, 6/8 indicators on SDG13, 8/10 indicators in SDG 14 lie in Tier 3. Tier 3 indicators (lack of data) also figure prominently on other social and economic goals. 6/14 indicators in SDG 1, 6/11 indicators in SDG 10 and 7/15 indicators lie in Tier 3. Even among Tier 1 and Tier 2 indicators (151/244) which are supposed to have smaller data gaps, 60 have only one data point, and 30 have no data.

Clearly, building capacity of national statistical organization, accessing and validating alternative data from CSOs and INGOs and other systems need to be pulled.

Many INGOs/networks and CSOs are having fairly elaborate set of data and MIS systems as they also have to report on statistics to their donors. It may serve an importamt purpose to look deeply into the best practices in this. Many CSOs are doing fantastic work in data collection. For example International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) collects data on internet shutdowns, Transparency International has extensive data on perception of corruption and other corruption related data. Many CSO groups working with particularly with some vulnerable groups like manual scavengers, tribal and indigenous communi9es, dalits, single women, women headed households, PVTGs has very important data sets, which national statistical organization do not collect. Just before this years HLPF a group came up with this very interesting data of 100 million people being in the life and death situation in particular SDGs are achieved are not. These can be very helpful in providing alternative data.

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3   Sub region of south and south west Asia as a whole is regressing on SDG 8, SDG, 11 and SDG 13, and performing very poorly on SDG 14 according to ESCAP's 2018 report.

Can MOSPI/NITI have partnership with CSOs networks and sit together to look into what kind of data they have and what kind of data they can generate very easily and very quickly, and come up with a data validation mechanism. Can we take this discussion to states and districts. Even if we can have data of 100 poorest villages, or 10 most backward communities, or nomadic communities or 50 poorest pockets of poverty or PVTGs that will be a valuable addition to data availability. Or if we can come up with a national LNOB framework in partnership with the CSOs, that will be fantastic. I am sure that many CSOs and national networks will be happy to collaborate on this.

There is no history of review and follow up at the sub regional and regional levels either in MDGs or in the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) processes. Therefore, follow up, monitoring, review and building up an accountability mechanism is extremely challenging. As a matter of fact, review, monitoring and follow up is the weakest link in the Agenda 2030 right from the HLPF to the APFSD. While HLPF is limited to be a reporting mechanism, APFSD functionally remains just a sharing mechanism. We are losing out on a critical component that is National Review systems, as countries are yet to have some semblance of a credible and robust review mechanism. We cannot have an effective global/sub regional or regional review mechanism, unless there are credible mechanisms at National levels. Effective mechanisms at national levels will significantly reduce the reporting burden of the countries at sub regional/ regional or global level.

Here are some ideas on strengthening sub regional review and follow up mechanisms without adding to the reporting burden of the countries;

Since VNRs are most important tool for review, can ESCAP SSWA form and host an Peer Review mechanism composing of multi stakeholder Advisory Group on VNRs and thematic/goals based Working groups. The Advisory group on VNRs can assist

(mainly virtually but also in person) and provide handholding to countries looking into critical gaps of information, and helping them to come up with a VNRs based on the UNSG guidelines, enhancing uniformity and comparability, and making it capable of tracing progress. It can also look come up with an outcome in the form of recommendations or guidelines for follow up, which countries have discretion to follow or reject. This exercise can bring some desired changes in the standards and rigour in the VNR process. Working groups convened by ESCAP SSWA can be self organized groups looking into goals under review, or goals on which sub region is regressing, or important sub regional public goods like Himalayas, transboundary rivers, or major concerns which pervade across the sub region viz., migration and trafficking, disasters, jobs and employment, sub regional trade agreements and the likes. A good start can be made by having a working group dedicated to review and report progress on LNOB commitment in the sub region. We are sure that many CSOs and national/regional networks will be happy to help in these working groups.

Last but not the least, more than data, technology, finance, and review challenge, the transformational nature of the Agenda 2030 is the ambition challenge. With not a single country on the path to achieve all SDGs by 2030, all countries need to enhance their commitment, ambition and pace to achieve 2030.

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