



Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals: Executive Summary

In September 2015, a summit of heads of state will adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The experience of the MDGs underscores the importance of thinking through the indicators as early as possible; we cannot afford a lag of three or four years before we start to measure our progress. So far, the international community's attention has been focused primarily on defining goals and targets. The next step is to agree on the indicators and associated monitoring systems so that the world will be ready to implement the SDGs in 2016.

This report is offered as a contribution to the multi-stakeholder debate and outlines how indicators might be established to support the SDGs and targets proposed by the Open Working Group on the SDGs (OWG). The report is the result of 15 months of intensive global discussions involving thousands of experts from UN organizations, academia, civil society, business, and a large number of national statistical offices (NSOs).

Effective SDGs, targets, and their indicators will serve as a **management tool** to help countries develop implementation strategies and allocate resources accordingly. They will also serve as a **report card** to measure progress towards sustainable development and to help ensure the accountability of all stakeholders for achieving the SDGs. Indicators will be the backbone of monitoring progress towards the SDGs at local, national, regional, and global levels.

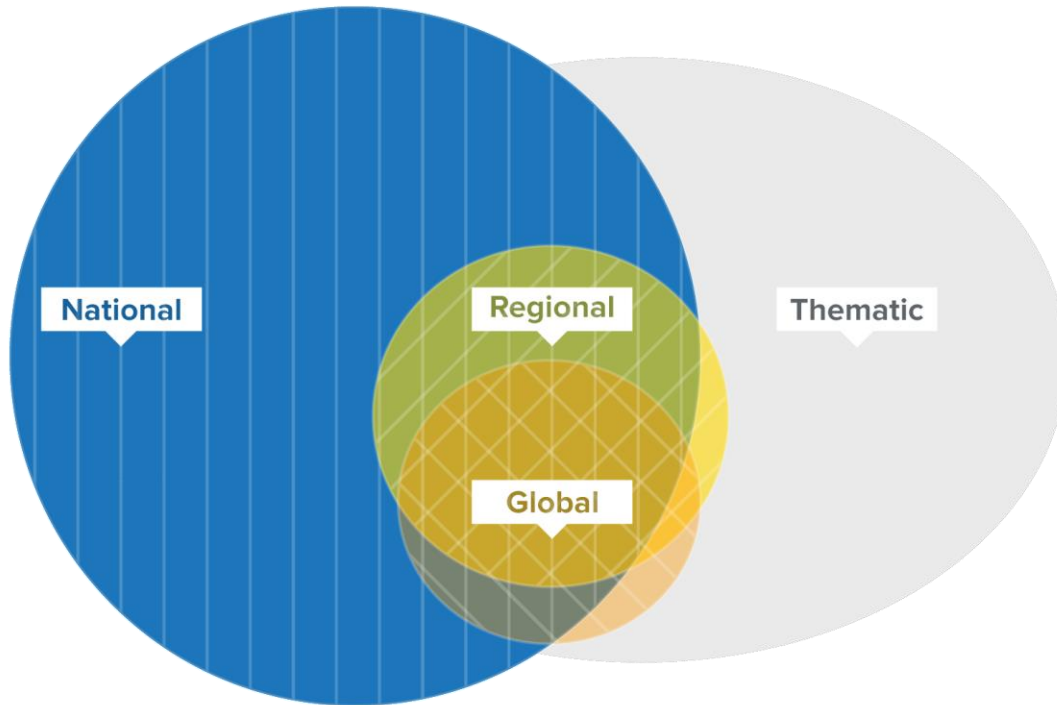
The mechanics of SDG monitoring are still being worked, but an emerging consensus suggests that the focus of SDG monitoring will be at the national level. Complementary monitoring will occur at regional and global levels. Moreover, each major thematic community, such as health, education, agriculture, and so forth, will mobilize technical expertise around its key thematic issues.

Each level of monitoring requires different types of indicators, as described in the figure. This report proposes **100 Global Monitoring Indicators**, accompanied by suggestions for Complementary National Indicators, which together **track the full range of SDG priorities** in a clear and effective manner (see Tables 1 and 2). Based on discussions with senior statisticians from the statistical offices of Eurostat, BPS Indonesia, the OECD, the Philippines, the UK, and many others, we believe 100 to be the maximum number of global indicators on which NSOs can report and communicate effectively in a harmonized manner.

Complementary National Indicators, which are offered as a menu of options for countries that want to expand their national level monitoring. We underscore that the list of Complementary National Indicators is far from exhaustive and meant only for inspiration and illustration.

Many important issues, such as gender equality, health, sustainable consumption and production, or nutrition cut across different goals and targets and are therefore tracked by indicators arranged under different goals and targets. Similarly, the goals and targets are interdependent and must be pursued together since progress in one area often depends on progress in other areas. As a result, an indicator framework needs to effectively track cross-cutting issues and support integrated, systems-based approaches to implementation (see Annex 1).

The report outlines ten principles for Global Monitoring Indicators. Inter alia such indicators should be limited in number; simple, intuitive, and policy-relevant; consensus based, in line with international standards; relevant to all countries and all people; and lend themselves to fine levels of disaggregation.



National monitoring is the prerogative of each national government. Each country decides on number and nature of national indicators, which follow national standards and may not all be internationally comparable. A limited set of Global Monitoring Indicators will also be integrated into national monitoring efforts. Although likely to be drawn from official data sources, countries may also decide to include non-official data among their national indicators.

Global monitoring is based on a set of Global Monitoring Indicators that are harmonized to common global standards and would form basis for review at the High Level Political Forum. GMI would be predominantly drawn from official data. GMIs are generally applicable to all countries, but some may only cover a subset (e.g. malaria does not apply to countries in temperate zones and landlocked countries do not report on oceans).

Regional monitoring provides a platform to foster knowledge-sharing, peer review, and reciprocal learning across regions. Regional indicators comprise Global Monitoring Indicators, Complementary National Indicators, and possibly a small number of indicators targeting specific regional priorities. Regional monitoring mechanisms should build on existing regional mechanisms.

Thematic monitoring comprises specialist indicators reported on by epistemic communities. They can include input and process metrics as helpful complements to official indicators. Many communities may also use other sources of unofficial data and experiment with creative and novel ways of collecting, analyzing, and presenting data.

Figure 1: Schematic illustration with explanation of the indicators for national, regional, global, and thematic monitoring

A number of urgent technical priorities to be addressed over the coming months include filling indicator gaps, harnessing new innovative sources of data and moving towards annual monitoring. Annual monitoring is particularly crucial for the SDG indicators to serve as a management tool, informing national planning and budgetary processes. To align with such processes, SDG monitoring should operate on an annual cycle (see Annex 3 in the report). In contrast to the MDGs, where data was spotty and often years out of date at the time of publication, SDG indicators should be reported annually with some metrics using interim annual figures produced using robust estimation methodologies.

Key milestones in the roadmap include a multi-stakeholder process to identify global indicators and baselines; ongoing thematic consultations to agree upon long-lists of specialist indicators for thematic monitoring; and the establishment of a Data Revolution Partnership.

Success in monitoring the SDGs will require a data revolution, following some of the bold but imminently feasible steps outlined in this report. In our consultations with the technical communities, we have witnessed outstanding expertise and tremendous enthusiasm for making the SDGs and their monitoring a success. We are convinced that these practical steps can be taken in a timely fashion. The SDSN will continue to support UNSD and work with other interested partners to help develop a sound SDG indicator framework and make the data revolution a reality.