Executive Summary:

Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals

Launching a Data Revolution

A report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations by the Leadership Council of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network
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May 15, 2015
About this report

This report is the result of over 18 months of consultative work led by the SDSN with the contributions of nearly 500 organizations and thousands of individuals – draft versions of the report have so far been downloaded over 80,000 times. The SDSN Thematic Groups, a large number of UN agencies and other international institutions, national statistical offices, civil society organizations, academia, and businesses have provided expert input that has helped us improve the indicator framework. We are particularly grateful for the detailed comments received during two public consultations, the first from February to March 2014, and the second in January 2015. Comments submitted during these consultations and changes made to our report are provided on our website.

This is the final version of the report, though the list of Global Monitoring Indicators may be periodically updated as experts agree on metrics or new ones are developed to fill the identified gaps. These updates will be made on our new indicator web platform: http://unsdsn.org/indicators.

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We are immensely grateful to professionals working at the following organizations who have provided critiques and suggestions for improving the report and the proposed indicator framework. None of these organizations or individuals were asked to endorse the final report. All remaining errors and inaccuracies remain the responsibility of the SDSN Secretariat.

A list of organizations, including:

- Malta | Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori (ISFOL)
- Japan International
- IPPF EN | IRENA | IREX | Islamic Relief Worldwide
- Islands and Small States Institute, University of
- International Planned Parenthood Federation
- International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI)
- International Risk
- ATD Fourth World | International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
- International Pediatric Association (IPA)
- Volunteering in Development | International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC)
- International Federation of Surgical Colleges (IFSC)
- International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA)
- International Forum for Federation for Family Development
- International Federation of Freight Forwarders Association
- International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC)
- International Environment Forum
- International for Essential Surgery (ICES)
- International Council on Social Welfare
- International Disability Alliance (IDA)
- International Center for Alcohol Policies
- International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
- International Center for a Research on Women (ICRW)
- Interessenvertretung Selbstbestimmt Leben in Deutschland
- International AIDS Vaccine Initiative
- International institute of Noahide
- Instituto Politécnico Nacional-México
- Inter-American Development Bank
- Global Health - University College London
- Institute of Applied Manpower Research, Planning Commission
- Institut pour un Développement Durable
- Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies - Potsdam
- Horizon International, Yale University
- Human Rights Defenders Alert
- ICCA Consortium
- IDEAS For Us
- Hertie School of Governance
- High-Level Task Force for the ICPD
- HNB Garhwal Central University
- Harvard University
- HDS systems design science
- Health Workforce Advocacy Initiative
- HelpAge International
- Hertie School of Governance
- High-Level Task Force for the ICPR
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- International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA)
- International Forum for Volunteering in Development
- International Gay and Lesbian Rights Commission (IGLHRC)
- International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)
- International Labor Organization (ILO)
- International Movement
- ATD Fourth World
- International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
- International Pediatric Association (IPA)
- International Planned Parenthood Foundation
- International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI)
- International Risk Governance Council
- International Service
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- IntraHealth International
- IPPF EN | IRENA | IREX | IFA
- Islamic Relief Worldwide
- Islands and Small States Institute, University of Malta
- Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori (ISFOL)
- Japan International
Executive Summary

In September 2015, a summit of heads of state will adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The experience of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) underscores the importance of thinking through the indicators as early as possible; we cannot afford a lag of several years before we start to measure progress towards achieving the SDGs. The international community has rightly begun to shift attention to the indicator framework and associated monitoring systems. In June 2015, the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) will convene to start the technical work of defining an SDG indicator framework.

This report is offered as a contribution to the multi-stakeholder debate in support of the SDGs. It outlines how a comprehensive indicator framework might be established to support the goals and targets proposed by the Open Working Group on the SDGs (OWG). The report is the result of 18 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). The large number of detailed comments received from all parts of the world and all areas of expertise gives us confidence that it is possible to measure the full spectrum of SDGs and their targets through a compact indicator framework.

Indicators will be the backbone of monitoring progress towards the SDGs at the local, national, regional, and global levels. A sound indicator framework will turn the SDGs and their targets into a management tool to help countries develop implementation strategies and allocate resources accordingly, as well as a report card to measure progress towards sustainable development and help ensure the accountability of all stakeholders for achieving the SDGs.

The mechanics of SDG monitoring are still being worked out, 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, analyze, and communicate data on progress towards achieving its objectives. Such thematic monitoring and review will be an important complement to official monitoring and review at national, regional, and global levels.

Each level of monitoring requires different types of indicators (see Figure 1 and Annex 5 for an illustration). This report proposes 100 Global Monitoring Indicators, accompanied by suggestions for Complementary National Indicators, which together track the full range of SDGs and targets in an integrated, clear, and effective manner (see Tables 1 and 2). Based on discussions with a large number of statistical offices, including 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. This conclusion was strongly endorsed during the 46th UN Statistical Commission in March 2015, as well as the preceding Expert Group Meeting on SDG indicators.

Each country should pick the number and range of Complementary National Indicators that best suit its needs and capacity to collect and analyze data. Given the breadth of country circumstances we expect substantial variation in the number and type of national indicators that countries will adopt. This report includes some initial suggestions for such indicators. We underscore that the preliminary list of Complementary National Indicators is far from exhaustive and meant only for inspiration and illustration.
All SDG indicators need to be considered as an integrated package and must work in harmony with one another. Many important issues, such as gender equality, health, sustainable consumption and production, and nutrition, cut across goals and targets. The goals and targets are themselves interdependent, and must be pursued together, since progress in one area often depends on progress in other areas. As a result many indicators contribute to monitoring more than one target (Table 2). An SDG indicator and monitoring framework must also give careful thought to tracking cross-cutting issues so that it can support integrated, systems-based approaches to implementation (see Annex 1, page 67).

This report outlines ten principles for Global Monitoring Indicators (GMIs), so they track the range of SDG priorities in a clear and effective manner. 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 able to be disaggregated to track progress for all relevant groups.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National monitoring</th>
<th>Global monitoring</th>
<th>Regional monitoring</th>
<th>Thematic monitoring</th>
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<td>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.</td>
<td>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. GMIs 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).</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
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This report identifies a number of urgent technical priorities that need to be addressed over the coming months to develop an effective indicator framework for the SDGs. They include filling gaps in available indicators; harnessing new, innovative sources of data; and moving towards annual monitoring. Annual monitoring is particularly crucial if the SDG indicators are to serve as a management tool, informing national planning and budgetary processes, as well as global follow-up (see Annex 2, page 92). In contrast to the MDGs, where data was spotty and produced infrequently with long lags, SDG indicators should be *reported* annually, though not all data will be *produced* annually. For some metrics, interim annual estimates can be produced using robust estimation methodologies.

Implementing the changes outlined in this report and ensuring effective data for the SDGs will require increased resources. Working with major leading international organizations and in consultation with large number of NSOs, the SDSN has detailed the investment needs for robust SDG monitoring. We project that $1 billion will be required each year to monitor the SDGs. At least half of this will need to be raised through domestic resource mobilization, but at least $100-200m will be required in incremental ODA.

Another key step will be the establishment of a Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, to help drive the Data Revolution. This Partnership can bring together public and private stakeholders to fill gaps in our knowledge, establish global norms and standards to increase the ease and security of sharing and using data, help countries develop robust national strategies for data development, and -- crucially -- help mobilize urgently needed financial resources. If adequately resourced, a Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data would empower countries around the world to make the SDGs a real management tool for sustainable development.

Our confidence in the robustness and feasibility of the steps towards a data revolution for the SDGs that are outlined in this report is based on extensive, in-depth consultations with the world’s leading experts and stakeholders involved in the SDG process. In our broad, global consultations with the technical communities, as well as other stakeholders, we have witnessed outstanding expertise and tremendous enthusiasm for making the SDGs and their monitoring a success. We are convinced that the practical steps discussed in this report can be taken in a timely fashion. The SDSN will continue to work with other interested partners to help develop a sound SDG indicator and monitoring framework, and to realize the great potential of the data revolution for sustainable development.