

PERCEPTION DATA AS A METRIC OF WELL-BEING AND SDG PROGRESS: AN HLPF SIDE EVENT

New York, 13 July 2017 – A High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development side event, entitled ‘Perception Data as a Metric of Well-Being’, showcased the results of several pilots that used quantitative and qualitative methodologies to collect perception data on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in order to assist decision-makers in SDG review activities. Co-sponsored by the governments of Guatemala and Zimbabwe, UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP), SDG Action Campaign, and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), the event focused on six of the seven goals (1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14) under review during this year’s HLPF and attracted about 100 participants.

In setting the context, Mandeep O’Brien, Associate Director, UNICEF Public Partnerships Division noted that when member states agreed on the Agenda 2030 in 2015, they also acknowledged the need to cultivate the participation of a wide range of diverse actors and stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. “There was a very strong emphasis on the importance of collection, analysis and use of disaggregated data, which is instrumental for influencing policy making, decision making, programming, service delivery, as well as influencing social norms and trying to reach those most left behind,” she said.

Presenters shared results from pilot countries obtained using mobile tools like UNICEF’s U-Report and WFP’s mVAM, on-line surveys like My World 2030, and offline qualitative methods like the Participatory Monitoring and Accountability Programme to inform SDG implementation and decision-making.

In the first presentation, Keila Gramajo Vichez, Advisor/Sub-secretary of Public Policy with the President’s Planning and Programming Secretariat, Government of Guatemala noted that adolescents and youth make up a third of Guatemala’s population and tools like U-Report allow them to share their views on the SDGs. She emphasized that the decision to include U-Report data in her country’s 2017 [voluntary national review \(VNR\)](#) is “proof of the commitment of the Government of Guatemala to adolescent and youth participation.”

Grasiano Nyaguse, Director of Economic Planning and Coordination, Ministry of Macro-Economic Planning and Investment Promotion, Government of Zimbabwe, informed that SDG polls were conducted using both U-Report and mVAM. “The polls revealed that people ranked good health, employment and quality education as the priority issues in Zimbabwe,” he said. Moreover, two out of five respondents thought that, compared to other families, their living conditions were better.

Mariana Monteiro, from the civil society organization *Engajamundo*, presented results from the Brazil SDG polls and said that they targeted 6,498 U-Reporters via SMS, Twitter and Facebook. Some notable findings are that 68% of the respondents are not aware of the SDGs, poverty reduction is perceived as a responsibility of the government and mental health is emerging as a big concern for young people. Respondents also informed that 72% of housekeeping tasks are performed by women, indicating that gender stereotypes persist.

Simone Archer-Krauss, an intern with UNICEF PPD, presented results from the Thailand pilot on behalf of the Country Office. When asked about who is responsible for achieving the SDGs, in Thailand’s aging society, most people over 20 think that the government should be responsible for achieving the SDGs whereas young people think that civil society, international organizations and the private sector should also play a role. Results also show that younger age groups think that higher speed connectivity will make the internet more useful, whereas older age groups think it is cheaper data plans.

Jo Howard of Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Tom Thomas of the Institute for Participatory Practices (Praxis), presented results from pilots using qualitative participatory research methods. Ms. Howard began by observing that “All our partners are using participatory research [including participatory video, community radio, dance and song] to build capacity and open spaces for dialogue with duty bearers. We go beyond the perception data to see how we can actually use that data. Our work complements that of U-Report and mVAM.” Participants were then shown a brief video documenting the experiences of marginalized communities in India. “You can see how their reality is different. The challenge is to make governments see these realities and bring them to bear on the SDGs leaving no one behind,” Mr. Thomas said. He added that there are no shortcuts to achieving SDGs and it is important for marginalized communities to be brought into the fold.

Dilek Ozler, Coordinator at Paragon Partnerships and Susan Gigli, Global Director for International Development at Kantar Public, presented the results from recent MY World 2030 pilot surveys conducted in 11 high and middle income countries in partnership with the UN SDG Action Campaign. “Overall the sample was largely urban, educated and employed with close to the majority of the respondents (7,722 aged 16 to 60) having a secondary degree,” said Ms. Gigli. A noteworthy finding is that one out of every five people surveyed said they did not have enough to eat.

In closing, Steven Were Omamo, Deputy Director of WFP Policy Division noted that UNICEF and WFP work very closely in terms of operations. He described the UNICEF/WFP collaboration on one of the pilots as “an example of where you expand that cooperation into new areas combining data collection approaches, using technology to learn about the populations that we support, and partnering for advocacy around the SDGs so as to increase the quality and amount of information available for policy and decision makers.”

Although 44 Member States volunteered to report on SDG progress at this year’s HLPF, the pilot projects were only conducted in a select number of these countries. The side event contributed to the HLPF theme “Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing World” by demonstrating that perception data improves the wellbeing of citizens around the world by providing information that supplements objective indicators and draws attention to important issues that are often missed or ignored.

For any questions on the side-event or project, please contact [Moumié Maoulidi](#).