

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
Informal meeting on measuring progress
17 December 2013

Examining data needs -- perspectives and assessments

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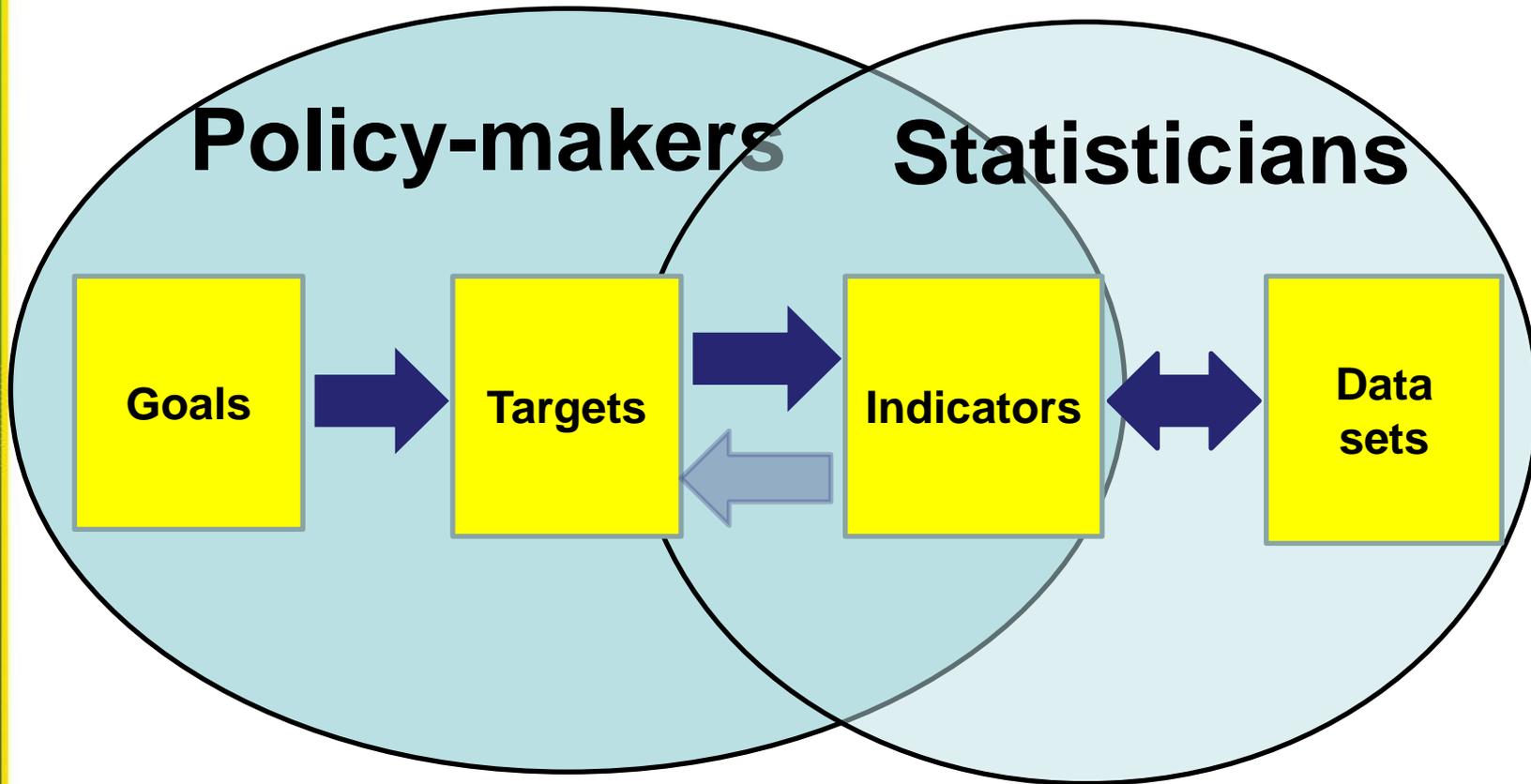
Introduction

- The High-Level Panel (HLP) of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda *A New Global Partnership* (May 2013) and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) *An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development* (October 2013) offer thoughts on the post-2015 agenda
- This presentation offers some perspectives and assessments on the data aspects of these reports

Statisticians and policy-makers need to work in partnership

- *You can't manage what you can't measure*
- Constructive, early engagement between official statisticians and policy-makers is critical
- Official statistics provide the quality and integrity necessary to underpin measurement in the post-2015 world
- A universal post-2015 agenda is crucial

Roles – policy makers and statisticians



Choosing **SMART** indicators

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**ttributable
- **R**elevant
- **T**imely

Official statisticians can offer assistance on all these dimensions

Importance of datasets and standards

- Indicators derived from well-constructed datasets will be of far greater value
 - Coherent
 - Consistent
 - Comparable
 - Able to be disaggregated
- Use of international frameworks and classifications is fundamental
 - Welcome support for SEEA in HLP
 - However, new developments will be needed, particularly in social and governance areas

The state of statistics

- Four dimensions of sustainable development
- The targets in the HLP and SDSN reports can be mapped to each dimension statistically:
 - Economic statistics – GOLD
 - Social statistics – SILVER
 - Environment statistics – BRONZE
 - Governance statistics – TIN
- Significant work would be required to provide the full-range of statistics in the HLP and SDSN reports, even for countries with well-developed statistical systems

A quick assessment of the HLP report for Australia

- 54 'illustrative' targets
 - Category A – Doable – 11 targets (eg decrease the maternal mortality ratio)
 - Category B – Doable with a bit of effort – 18 targets (eg improve soil quality, reduce soil erosion and combat desertification)
 - Category C – A fair way off – 25 targets (eg increase sustainability in government procurements)

The illustrative targets proposed by the HLP report are extremely ambitious from a statistical perspective

The SDSN report is similarly ambitious

A data revolution

- Strongly supported
- BUT
 - Must involve official statisticians and be led by the United Nations Statistical Commission (Rio +20 para 38 provides a mandate)
 - Will need resources
 - Will require significantly enhanced capability
 - Will not occur instantly – implications for baselines
 - Needs to be supported by investment in the development of concepts, measurement frameworks and standards
 - Will require focussed efforts
 - Needs to be aligned with national circumstances and requirements
 - Must be coordinated across development partners

Big data – a silver bullet?

- Big data offers enormous potential for increasing statistical information for relatively small costs
- However big data is often uncertain, of varying accuracy, biased, ‘dirty’ and unstructured
- Big data needs to be ‘tamed’ to make it fit for purpose from a statistical perspective
- This requires investments in technology and methodology
- National statistical offices are well-placed to unlock the statistical value of big data and make it accessible for policy makers

Frameworks for measuring progress and sustainability

- Official statisticians have extensive experience in developing frameworks for measuring progress and sustainability, both at the national and international level
 - Eg EU2020 target/indicator setting, OECD green growth and better life initiatives, UNECE/OECD/Eurostat framework to measure sustainable development, ABS Measures of Australia's Progress
- These frameworks also have relevance from a policy as well as statistical perspective and policy makers should tap into this expertise as they consider the conceptual frameworks to underpin the post 2015 development agenda
- It is disappointing to see that this expertise was not recognised in either the HLP or SDSN reports

Statistics as a development target?

- Without high quality statistics, development cannot be measured, monitored and managed
- More generally, high quality official statistics are a critical component of effective governance, which itself is recognised as an aspect of development
- Should there be a development target relating to an effective official statistical systems?
 - The measurement of a country's population is vital to the measurement of sustainability, so there should be a special focus on universal and effective civil registration and vital statistics systems which are the essential underpinnings of population measurement

The last word

- Effective measurement will be a critical underpinning of the assessment of progress in the post-2015 world
- This will only occur if there is a strong partnership between policy-makers and official statisticians
 - The focus will be on indicators, but targets and datasets also require attention
- The recognition of the importance of data in both the HLP and SDSN reports is welcome, but we are early stages
 - Significant attention is needed to ensure that statistics, particularly in developing countries, can meet the requirements of the post 2015 world
- Official statisticians at both the national and international level are ready and keen to work with policy-makers to achieve an effective partnership