



## Refining the Indicators: Opening the process; open for influence?

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As the first year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development concludes, the technical work at/of the UN continues to refine and agree on the global indicators to measure progress. This involves circulating selected indicators for consultation, adopting a lead agency to collect and submit the data and adopting an agreed methodology, as well as fundraising to increase the extent of data coverage and building capacity. At the same time, as this is a work in progress, many Member States have undertaken national initiatives to review the SDGs and incorporate them into national policy and budget processes.

At the conclusion of its 47<sup>th</sup> session in March 2016, the UN Statistical Commission accepted the proposed SDG indicator framework submitted by the Interagency and Expert Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDGs) as 'a practical starting point' which will continue to be refined over the next several years. At that session, where delegations included policy as well as technical representatives (somewhat unusually), Member States were asked and agreed to hold off on policy related comments on the indicator framework until the IAEG-SDGs could conclude its work on the technical issues, submitting comments on ten indicators as illustrative only. The technical work includes the assignment of indicators into three tiers, classified according to whether or not there is an agreed methodology as well as the extent of data availability, along with the adoption of a custodial or responsible agency for data collection and submission.

The Statistical Commission requested the IAEG-SDGs to immediately revisit the indicator

framework based on these illustrative examples, leaving more politically contentious indicators until

a later stage. The IAEG-SDGs then compiled the list of ten indicators, together with a proposed refinement for each, and distributed them through an Open Consultation, 19-29 September, 2016.

The Open Consultation on the ten indicators continues the substantive engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, including national statistical offices (NSOs), Member States, academia and civil society organizations that has characterized the identification of the indicator framework as well as the 2030 Agenda process itself. Broad consultations will continue, especially as UN agencies as well as Member States recognize the value of citizen-generated data, and civil society organizations recognize it as a way to demand accountability from the statistical experts and custodial agencies.

The results of the open consultation, consisting of 200 responses, were compiled and posted on line at: <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/open-consultation-4>. The IAEG-SDGs will review and agree on the refinement of the 10 indicators at their 4<sup>th</sup> meeting in Geneva, 15-18 November, 2016: the first two days will involve IAEG-SDGs members only, after which their consensus proposals will go to plenary 17-18 November. At that meeting the IAEG-SDGs will also finalize the tier system and select custodial agencies for indicators that currently lack them. The revised indicator framework will be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission for adoption at its 48<sup>th</sup> Session in March 2017. Meanwhile custodial agencies are working to refine the indicators for

which they are lead monitors, often in consultation with other agencies.

Since March 2016 the IAEG-SDGs has been working to finalize a work plan for each of the Tier 3 indicators—those for which there is no agreed methodology—and try to move them into Tier 2—for which data is not widely available.

### Highlights of the Open Consultation comments

1. Indicator 1.a.1, under the Target to ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including ODA, is the proportion of resources allocated by government directly to poverty reduction programmes. The proposed refinement is: the sum of total grants and FDI and non-debt inflows. This shifts the focus from domestic to external support which most participants agreed with but the Women's Major Group (WMG) was opposed to including FDI in the list as it does not reflect what goes to programmes. Other CSOs proposed combining the two alternatives.

This indicator is **Tier 3**, with WB unconfirmed as custodial agency

2. Indicator 2.b.1 under the Target on trade restrictions and distortions in agricultural markets, is: 'Producer support Estimate' (value of transfers from consumer and tax payers to agricultural producers, i.e., agriculture subsidies), offered by OECD, was seen as too complex by most NSOs as it includes elements not collected by NSOs or reflected in national budgets. But the refinement: 'percentage change in import and export tariffs on agricultural products' was not preferable to many national statistical offices, which preferred actual level of tariffs to the percentage change—the US statistical office was one of these, suggested it be: 'Average agricultural tariffs, using the WTO tariff database' which is calculated for all members. FAO proposed yet another alternative: 'Impact NRP or the monetary equivalent of the Nominal Rate of Protection (NRP)- expressed in national currencies or in USD and be aggregated over all products', thereby capturing, for example, the effects of border protection and export subsidies. CSOs had a range of opinions; the WMG rejected the refined indicator, saying the target is about subsidies and should say so. Basel Institute on Commons and Economics commented that tariff reductions should be kept out of SDGs as they are the only way for many countries to grow their

economies. This indicator is classified as **Tier 2**, with OECD as custodial agency, with involvement of WTO and FAO.

3. Indicator 3.8.2, under the Target to achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection and access to quality health care services, measures the number of people covered by health insurance or a public health system. The proposed refinement would focus more specifically on the under-protected, stating: "Proportion of the population with large household expenditures (e.g. greater than 25%) on health as a share of total household expenditure or income". Almost all CSOs and agencies support the change, as having health insurance is not a measure of protection from financial risk, although they propose further refinements or alternatives. The exception is Women for Women Human Rights- New Ways (WWHR) which rejects the change, saying "the emphasis on income makes minor, yet accumulating health care costs invisible and will also neglect households which are forced to neglect taking care of healthcare issues due to lack of resources, financial and/or logistical". Other sample comments:

- UK and US statistical offices support the World Bank/WHO proposal instead which states: "household health expenditure as a % of total household income [or expenditure or consumption]" or original formulation of "Fraction of the population protected against catastrophic/impoverishing out-of-pocket health expenditure"
- UN Women supports the change but notes that the focus on household level expenditure makes it difficult to disaggregate by sex and other relevant characteristics, and suggests instead: Annual mean out-of-pocket health care expenditures (in PPP \$) by sex, age, race/ethnicity & and income.
- WMG notes that the threshold of 25% is too high—they and other CSOs propose 10%.

This indicator is classified **Tier 3**, with WHO as custodial agency with involvement of the World Bank (WB).

4. Indicator 3.b.1, under the Target to support research and development (R&D) on vaccines and medicines for diseases affecting developing countries and provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines in accordance with the Doha Declaration on TRIPS, measures the proportion of the population with access to

affordable medicines and vaccines on sustainable basis. The proposed refinement includes 2 indicators, one on coverage of all vaccines in the national programme and the other on the “proportion of health facilities with a defined basket of medicines available”. Many CSOs oppose the removal of ‘affordability’ from the refined indicator though the Basel Institute for Commons and Economics comments that many people have no money at all, so it supports the refinement but it should specify available for free. The UN Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY) picked up on support for R&D in this target and proposed including the poor and sick in this research. An earlier CSO comment on this indicator noted that the target includes reference to TRIPS and the Doha Round which is now effectively dead and so should add constraints in ODA or loan agreements.

The UK statistical office supports the indicator agreed by WHO, World Bank and partners in the 100 Core Health indicators instead, which reads: “Percentage of health facilities with essential medicines and life-saving commodities”. The US statistical office supports the refinement indicator with some additional breakdowns with regard to funding (government or non-government).

This indicator is classified as **Tier 3**, with WHO not yet confirmed as custodial agency.

5. Indicator 5.6.2, under the Target to ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights, measures the number of countries with laws/regulations that guarantee women aged 14-59 access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education. The proposed refinement indicator would add men to this guarantee. While NSOs generally support this, as does the International Women’s Health Care Coalition, UN Women (UNW) as well as International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) opposed, pointing out it would limit data collection on abortion and other services unique to women. UNW would also remove the age cap, as would CSOs.

This indicator is classified as **Tier 2**, with UNFPA as custodial agency with involvement of UNW and UNDESA population division.

6. Indicator 7.a.1, under the Target to enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, measures: “Mobilized amount of USD per year starting in 2020 accountable towards the \$100 billion commitment”. The proposed refinement would

measure “Amount of public and private funds invested in clean energy infrastructure and clean energy technology”, which the UK statistical office approved as it would eliminate the reference to the \$100 billion commitment. The US statistical office would push the time to begin to 2020-2025 and propose some other changes, calling the refinement only ‘a step in the right direction’.

Several CSOs support the refinement—the World Wildlife Fund pointing out that investments in 2015 for renewable energy were beyond \$100 billion. To also capture the element of enhanced cooperation, they propose including a measure of international cooperative agreements: “Number of international cooperative agreements and amount of public and private funds invested in clean energy infrastructure and clean energy technology”. Welfare Togo and the International Centre for Educational, Cultural, Social and Economic Development point to the need to measure international financial contributions. Others, including those allied with Women’s Major Group (WMG) prefer the original, with the change to say amount ‘disbursed’ instead of ‘mobilized’, while some, including Centre for Human Rights and Climate change research would accept both indicators.

Finland’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs went further, stating “The term ‘advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel’ is ambiguous and opens the door to any Business-as-Usual fossil investments to be included [as] every new coal power plant is arguably ‘cleaner’ than older plants. Finland, like several other countries, is committed to end fossil fuel subsidies as well as public financing to new coal plants, regardless of their level of efficiency. Sustainable and clean energy should be defined strictly as renewables only, and even transitional sources like natural gas-fired plants should be excluded until they use 100% renewable methane.”

OECD also commented at length, saying the current indicator is not about energy, and so does not address the target, but suggested the refinement indicator is too broad, since the target emphasizes international co-operation on clean energy, not total public and private investment in clean energy irrespective of its origin (domestic or foreign). Agencies with expertise in clean energy should be asked to propose practical alternative indicators. This indicator is classified as **Tier 3** (and is repeated in 13.a.1 under climate change) with OECD as custodial agency with involvement of UNFCCC and UNEP.

7. Indicator 8.8.2, under the Target to protect labour rights and safe working environment for all workers, including migrant workers, measures the increase in national compliance with labour rights based on ILO textual sources and national legislation. The refinement indicator would instead measure the 'level' of national compliance. The refinement is supported by NSOs and ITUC, though the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) would add human rights to the standards being applied. WMG would also add measure of trade union density to the indicator (as suggested by earlier CSO statement). This indicator is classified as **Tier 1**, with ILO as custodial agency

8. Indicator 8.9.2 under the Target to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local products, measures the number of jobs in tourism industries as a proportion of total jobs and job growth. The proposed refinement would specifically refer to sustainable tourism and local products—but no concrete proposal currently exists. NSOs generally agree but with a range of additional refinements. This indicator is classified as **Tier 2**, with UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as custodial agency.

9. Indicator 8.b.1, under the Target to develop and operationalize a global strategy on youth employment and implement the ILO Global Jobs Pact, measures total government spending on social protection and employment programmes as proportion of national budgets and GDP. The refinement indicator would cut reference to GDP. While ILO supports the change, UN Statistics Division (UNSD) prefers the original (including GDP) as national budgets are not comparable across countries since they are different sizes and include different elements whereas GDP is comparable. Eurostat agrees with this as do the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) and WWHR-New Ways and several CSOs on issues of aging for the same reason. Some CSOs would add disaggregation by different population groups. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) notes that neither indicator reflects the actual target, as does Education International. The Basel Institute on Commons and Economics comments: "Great that you cancelled GDP" but added that it would be better to replace with indicator based on citizen-generated data. This indicator is **Tier 3**, with ILO listed as possible custodial agency with involvement of the WB and OECD.

10. Indicator 16.4.2, under the Target to reduce illicit financial and arms flows, measures the

proportion of seized small arms and light weapons that are recorded and traced in accordance with international standards and legal instruments. (Illicit financial flows are measured under Indicator 16.4.1, for which the custodial agency is yet to be confirmed. UNODC is suggested with the involvement of IMF but a work plan is not yet received.) The refinement to indicator 16.4.2 would delete the word 'traced' and expand to say "proportion of seized, surrendered or found small arms and light weapons that are marked, recorded or destroyed in accordance with relevant international legal standards". Oxfam strongly supports the change though other CSOs have reservations: WMG rejects the restriction to small arms and light weapons in both alternatives as well as the measurement only of seized weapons. They suggest: "Number and proportion of conventional weapons in communities/or owned by private individuals and non-state actors". The US statistical office opposes the deletion of the word 'traced'. This indicator is **Tier 2**, with UNODC as possible custodial agency with involvement of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODA.)

UNODC says: "The new wording is not a simple refinement of the old indicator, but a radical change in its nature. It broadens the scope to other categories of arms (surrendered and found) that are not clearly linked to an illicit activity and loses its focus on recording and tracing, the main tools to identify illicit flows. The new indicator reflects a disarmament agenda and it is no longer conducive to the measurement of illicit arms flows reduction as expressed in Target 16.4 which is not so much about a reduction of the arms in circulation, but about a reduction of their 'illicit flows' in the context of 'combatting all forms of organized crime'. The change seems to deviate from the IAEG guidelines on refining indicators as for 16.4.2 the guidelines simply ask to define its denominator. The new indicator not only change the original denominator which is total number of seizures but it also redefines its scope and measurability. It mixes together so many aspects of firearms that trends would become difficult to interpret."

## Next steps

In July 2017, the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) will review the second year of implementation of the 2030 agenda, focusing on the priority theme of “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”. It will review a total of seven goals:

- Goal 1 on ending poverty,
- Goal 2 on food security and sustainable agriculture;
- Goal 3 on health and well-being;
- Goal 5 on gender equality;
- Goal 9 on infrastructure, innovation and industrialization;
- Goal 14 on sustainable use of marine resources; as well as
- Goal 17 on means of implementation, which is included each year.

In the run up to this meeting the UNSD reports that regional level forums are very engaged and their findings will be shared in early 2017. In addition, the UNSD points to ‘a vibrant set of activities’ to localize the needs on how to monitor and report effectively, planned for the [2017 HLPF national voluntary reviews](#).

In June the Secretary-General will issue a 2017 progress report, based on the data submitted to the IAEG-SDGs, and other agencies are expected to do the same, focusing on their particular area. FAO is expected to highlight its report on “Achieving SDG2 - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”, issued in October 2016 while WHO is likely to feature its report “World Health Statistics 2016: Monitoring health for the SDGs.” UN Women is preparing a mandated Secretary General’s report on the priority theme to go to the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2017, where it will also highlight the Full Report of the Secretary-General’s High Level Panel for Women’s Economic Empowerment, published on line in October 2016. It will also issue a follow up report to its 2015 “Monitoring Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Opportunities and Challenges” in September 2017.

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