Concept Note

Session 3—Data for Development: How to track progress of the SDGs?

A Diversifying Data Environment for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[1] and especially the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with their 169 targets set out a broad range of policy aims for both developed and developing countries. The new UN development agenda therefore creates two essential requirements in the area of data and statistics:

- Efficient National Statistical Systems (NSSs) that support governments in taking the right decisions for rolling out their national SDG implementation strategies
- Transparent monitoring that allows all stakeholders, but especially citizens to track if and how leaders deliver on their commitments under the Agenda 2030 framework

These requirements are influenced by diversifying national statistical environments that resort to an increasing amount of technologies and data sources.[2] Many sources of data are not primarily related to government activities, but can also be harnessed for better policy making. Examples include crowdsourced data from web applications, big data produced by commercial and non-governmental organisations and data collected through satellite or drone technology.

This development and its influence on National Statistical Systems (NSSs) is an important part of what is understood as the "Data Revolution", a process that "*draws on existing and new sources of data to fully integrate statistics into decision making, promote open access to, and use of, data and ensure increased support for statistical systems*."[3] Yet the diversifying data environment also creates challenges for developing countries that lack the necessary resources to make use of new technologies and to respond to an increasing need for information.

Rationale and Objectives for this Event

Referencing the SDG indicator framework that will be endorsed by UN Statistical Commission in March 2016, this event will scrutinize new technologies and innovations such as "now-casting, remote sensing, crowd sourcing and third party data delivery models" and discuss their impact on data and statistical frameworks in countries. This session will also be an opportunity to discuss data capacity building challenges for NSOs and national governments in developing countries that stem from the above-mentioned developments.

By involving the perspectives of major data users such as the Senegalese Ministry of Economy and Finance and Planning and the Central Bank of Morocco, a data gathering start-up with the example of PREMISE, and PARIS21 with its expertise on national statistical capacity development, the discussion will focus on how data processed by National Statistical Offices can support decision making processes.

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[1] Cf. Agenda 2030 outcome document

[2] For further information, see the UNSG's report "A World That Counts"; the importance of the Data Revolution for making sustainable development work has also recently been recognised in the 2016 World Development Report (p.244-247)

[3] High-Level Panel Report on the Post-2015 Agenda (p.26)

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The event aims at delivering ideas on how national governments can respond to the challenge of measuring the SDGs by making strategic use of the opportunities of the data revolution and improving support from international partners such as the OECD and PARIS21.

Questions for discussion:

- How will the agreed global indicators affect national statistical systems? How can we ensure that the new set of indicators will drive policy change that helps implement the SDGs at the national level?
- What technologies and innovations are promising new data sources for NSOs? What will be the biggest challenges for governments in using these sources?
- Practical examples for successful statistical capacity building: what has (not) worked?
- Who are the stakeholders that need to be involved in the future besides governments and development agencies?
- What are the possible forms of partnerships that can enable governments to make use of technological innovations and benefit all stakeholders?
- How can NSOs integrate the user-perspective and produce data that facilitate government officials' policy making?