



SESSION NUMBER & TITLE
Parallel session 20: Evaluating SDGs for the “world we want”: Measurements, innovations and challenges
SESSION TAKE AWAY
CLEAR SA proposes to convene a panel discussion as part of Asian Evaluation Week and bring together its partners and organizations working on “SDG measurement, monitoring and evaluation”. The panel will discuss the value of monitoring and evaluations of SDGs and scaling of programs that work. The panelists will also share experience working with governments, particularly in developing countries on localization of SDGs.
SUBTHEME
Inclusive partnership
ORGANIZATION/S
CLEAR South Asia
PANELIST/DISCUSSANT #1: [Sonia Chand Sandhu, Principal Evaluation Specialist, IED, ADB]
KEY MESSAGES
<p>1. Progress in implementing the SDGs in Asia & Pacific 5 years since the agreement is behind across all 17 goals and 169 targets (based on limited regional data). Without a significant change in course, it is unlikely that the region will achieve the SDGs by 2030. This is based on available subregional and country-level data. Consequence is that many counties in the region suffer from degraded marine and terrestrial ecosystems and resource-intensive consumption and production patterns. Urgent action is required to mitigate this unsustainable development path compromising region’s prospects for delivering prosperity to its people.</p> <p>2. The region is not expected to meet any of the SDG targets relating to poverty, hunger, gender equality, and reduced inequalities within and between countries by 2030. Nevertheless, there have been promising gains in food security, women’s role in decision-making, and access to basic sanitation services. Significant data gaps on progress toward achieving the SDGs already existed before the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, of the 17 SDGs, SDG 11 (make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable) had the highest share of indicators with no data at 64%, or 9 out of 14 indicators, in Asia and the Pacific. The poor data availability for SDG 11 may be attributed to a lack of good environmental data and difficulties in disaggregating data for municipal or city indicators. However, this still leaves more than half of the SDG indicators with unavailable data. Mobility restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are hampering the data collection activities of national statistical offices in many countries.</p> <p>3. Efforts to strengthen social solidarity and ensure that “no one is left behind” must be redoubled.</p>
PANELIST/DISCUSSANT #2: [Dayyan Shayani, Statistician, Statistics Department, ESCAP]
KEY MESSAGES
<p>1. SDG data availability in Asia-Pacific has been slowing down due to lack of coordination. There is a lot of data from different organizations and government agencies. However, lack of</p>

coordination prevents data being available. Priority also becomes an issue as some data owners would say that data is not applicable to them and sensitivity information comes into play.

2. To address gaps in SDG data, the following factors should be taken in consideration: (i) understand data gaps and existing data production systems, (ii) planning advocacy for data production, (iii) support better coordination (in-country and with custodians), (iv) use data and increase demand at international and national levels.

PANELIST/DISCUSSANT #3: [Radhika Lal, SDG Finance Policy Advisor, UNDP-Thailand]

KEY MESSAGES

1. SDGs has catalyzed work at the national level to get much better meta-standard, and data interoperability. Sustainability dimension and access should be integrated in their work.
2. Data visualization has helped evaluators in finding and making data accessible as is not necessarily everyone's expertise.
3. We don't want data to be hidden. Open engagement around data is key. Open data networks is important in sharing and making data available. UN has been setting up data advisory committees to foster coordination and understand how data is being used, as well as identify what kind of data one needs for work.

PANELIST/DISCUSSANT #4: [Akhilesh Kumar, Director DMEO, NITI Aayog]

KEY MESSAGES

1. NITI Aayog has released SDG India Index based on MoSPI's National Indicator Framework (NIF). NIF for SDGs is highly interconnected and the largest ever monitoring framework in the country. It has relevant targets and is nationally acceptable as developed after detailed consultation. Data is from official statistical system and ownership by Ministries. Data sources and periodically included in the framework. The framework also relies mainly on statistically measurable outcome indicators, and dynamic in nature.
2. NSO India's SDG monitoring framework has bridged data gaps on SDG indicators. It launched nationwide new surveys in the line of MICS module. Existing surveys have been aligned with SDGs. NSO has also developed a documentary on SDGs in major languages to create awareness in India.

PANELIST/DISCUSSANT #5: [Sabina Alkire, Director, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)]

KEY MESSAGES

1. In measuring SDGs indicators, linking measurement with action is essential. Learning about the extent of poverty is important but the link with action marks out this issue from many other subjects of study in the social sciences. Monitoring confers accountability – If we cannot monitor SDGs in all relevant dimensions, the political commitment has no force.
2. Data revolution is leaving poverty data from household surveys behind but big data cannot yet see if a household has an undernourished child and a few other deprivations simultaneously. Merging is not yet feasible in many contexts.

MODERATOR: [Sohini Mookherjee, Senior Training Manager, CLEAR/J-PAL SA]

KEY MESSAGES

1. We have come a long way in measuring our progress towards the world that is envisioned in the 2030 Agenda. Over a span of 7 years the number of indicators in the global SDG database has increased from 115 in 2016 to 225 in 2023 with the corresponding number of data records increasing from 330,000 to 2.7 million in the same time period. Today, many indicators have well-established and internationally agreed upon methodologies ensuring that our measurements are comparable, accurate, reliable and, most importantly, useful in uncovering not only successes but also the gaps. However, there are still many challenges.
 - (a) Geographic coverage, timeliness, disaggregation, and capacity of national statistical systems still remain areas of concern.
 - (b) Even today, cross-cutting goals such as gender equality (Goal 5), climate action (Goal 13), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (Goal 16) face challenges of availability, and quality of globally comparable data.
 - (c) The latest global-level data and assessments from custodian agencies paint a rather concerning picture: of the approximately 140 targets that can be evaluated, half of them show moderate or severe deviations from the desired trajectory. As the Special Edition of The Sustainable Development Goals Report for 2023 so eloquently puts it, and I quote “The Sustainable Development Goals are disappearing in the rear-view mirror, as is the hope and rights of current and future generations. A fundamental shift is needed – in commitment, solidarity, financing and action – to put the world on a better path.” Thus, it should be our responsibility as part of the global community to better tackle the shortcomings of our statistical and M&E systems.
2. Innovations and new technologies for data systems is not a silver bullet. Value of traditional tools, like surveys is recognized.
3. Systematically measuring concepts, like climate change adaptation, is challenging.
4. Data is political. Data use and policymakers raise an important issue in monitoring progress of SDG indicators.

Q&A SUMMARY

How do we address challenges in the region in terms of M&E of SDGs

- Capacity development needed to get a better picture of SDGs. Example provided by the participant from the Philippines is also experienced in other countries.
- Establishing national reporting platforms, which map schemes to indicator and connect budget is important.

How evaluators can contribute in reporting on SDGs?

ADB uses OECD criteria to assess the sustainability and granularity of projects.

SESSION COORDINATOR

Bryan Noel Lazaro