CASE STUDIES ON DATA FOR DEVELOPMENT

Development Co-operation Report 2017

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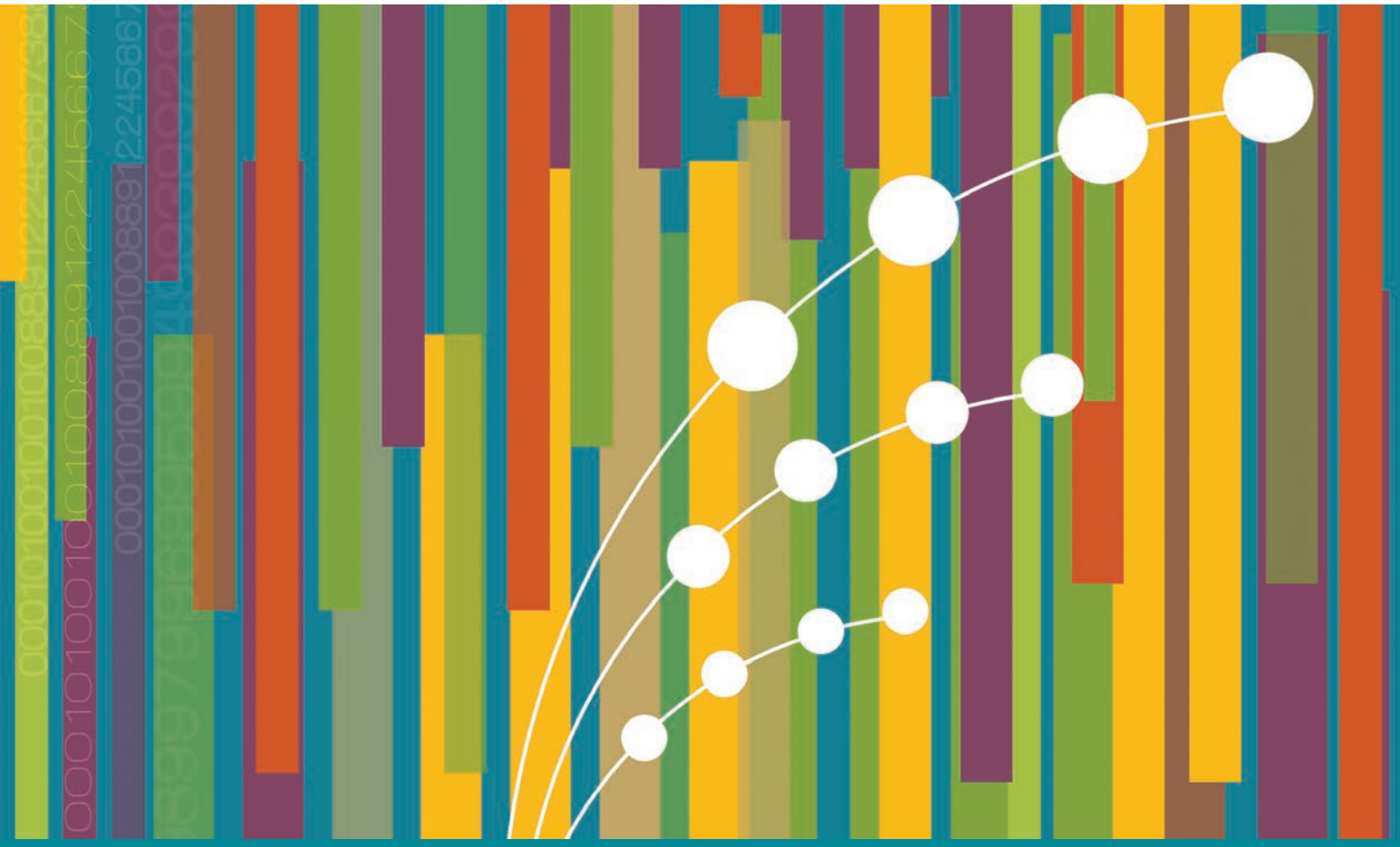

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Making Sustainable Development Goals accountable through Data Test

Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals
southernvoice.secretariat@gmail.com

The challenge of managing data demands with Agenda 2030

In the discussions prior to adopting the 2030 Agenda, data emerged as a relevant and important topic. Monitoring the progress of Agenda 2030 called for new efforts on data generation and use, particularly in the context of the data revolution. However, the key challenge has been understanding what this means practically for national governments and other actors as there was no concrete evidence of how ready both developing and developed countries were for a new framework in which they would have to generate and manage data, and monitor progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There was also scant knowledge about what aspects of data management were most critical to focus on, in view of the new SDG agenda.

Mapping data needs with the Post-2015 Data Test

In May 2013, the Post-2015 Data Test (Data Test) initiative was conceived in order to scope where countries stand in terms of their data capacities. It was carried out by teams of researchers from Bangladesh, Canada, Peru, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Turkey. The initiative drew upon country studies to explore how the global agenda interacts with country-level realities and identify where investments in the data revolution were to be made. Researchers applied the new SDG framework in their respective countries, identified the priorities and indicators in their particular country contexts, and examined the availability and quality of data for tracking them. Research teams also fostered debates with a wide range of stakeholders with regard to SDG-related data priorities and challenges. The teams synthesised the findings from the seven country studies in order to highlight to global and regional fora that these processes must be informed by the realities faced on the ground.

Success factors: Overall national engagement on the data agenda

One of the most powerful aspects of the Data Test initiative was that it tested the political will and the technical capacity to generate the necessary data. As a result, governments began undertaking mapping exercises to identify data gaps as a policy response to the demands created by the Data Test initiative. Bangladesh Planning Commission's own report on the data revolution is an example.

The Data Test initiative was carried out by research teams from each country who know the local context and are embedded in national debates. In Canada, the country study report highlighted the need to ensure that "no one is left behind", in particular the indigenous communities, and recommended that the country needs to further invest in disaggregating its data. In Bangladesh, the country study report defined concrete initiatives that were needed to generate new data, and also where available administrative data would need to be calibrated in view of the various SDG indicators. Each of the country reports recommended actions on practical issues, including human capacity building, deploying adequate financial resources and creating proper institutional mechanisms; the relevant governments took note of these when designing their national strategies. The interest and enthusiasm generated by the Data Test exercise had a role in the Bangladesh Government deciding to take part in the Voluntary National Review in 2017. The Data Test report was launched in New York in the presence of high-level SDG-related experts from the United

Nations and other agencies, and findings of the study were discussed at various global fora. These events helped generate awareness about status, deficits, capacity building and financing needs in the context of SDG data, particularly for developing countries.

The key message coming out of the Data Test initiative was that a strong partnership was required between national statistical offices and non-state producers of data. The national statistical offices have a central role in overseeing the data ecosystem, but other actors can support with complementary expertise. For example, the Turkish National Statistical Office valued how the country study complemented their work on data generation and SDG prioritisation. In Senegal, the initiative led to an ongoing collaboration to improve the data for SDG implementation, including administrative data.

The initiative communicated findings through national, regional and global platforms to raise awareness among concerned stakeholders. The report was presented at the Sustainable Development Solutions Network Turkey Conference, with wide multi-stakeholder participation. In Canada, citizens, civil society, the private sector, government institutions and parliamentarians were engaged in the discussions. The Auditor General of Canada is also examining Canada's readiness to implement the SDGs. Momentum is building and expectations are high, particularly as Canada has also agreed to a Voluntary National Review in 2018.

KEY POINTS:

- The initiative was timely, generating evidence before the SDG indicators were finalised.
- The programme was well-positioned in national and international policy circles.
- Researchers actively engaged with the national statistical offices.
- Data demand was identified and initiatives to address data deficits were put forward.
- Other stakeholders were motivated to participate in the data debate.

This booklet presents 45 case studies about making data work for development, which support knowledge sharing on what works, what doesn't and why. The case studies provide insights, good practices and lessons from a diversity of actors, including national statistical offices in developing countries and OECD member states, providers of development co-operation, civil society organisations, business, international organisations, philanthropic foundations and academia.

The case studies showcase experiences in collecting and using quality data about people and the planet to inform good policies and help deliver development results. The case studies are presented under three categories:

1. Filling data gaps to deliver the SDGs and leave no one behind
2. The power of new technology and big data for development
3. Building statistical capacity

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