As the Major Group of Children and Youth, we acknowledge the importance of the indicators to measure the Sustainable Development Goals. A strong indicator framework is needed for us to understand progress made against the commitments and to identify gaps in the implementation. It also ultimately links to strong monitoring and accountability regarding the Post-2015 agenda - issues that have been called upon as crucial by young people from the outset of the discussions on Post-2015. We agree with the UN Statistical Commission that this is a technical process which requires time and needs to be conducted in stages, and although we understand the need for a dialogue with the political process, we call for the indicators to not be politically negotiated.

It is crucial to recognise children and young people’s role and participation in all stages of SDGs, hence also in the identification of the indicators and monitoring & review mechanisms, and support children and young people’s inclusion that so far has been championed throughout post-2015 process, from consultations to for example the recent UNSG Synthesis Report. What is measured, counts. Children and Youth people want to count and be counted.

These are our key recommendations for the March Intergovernmental Negotiations:

1. **Process:** We agree with the UN Statistical Commission that this is a technical process which requires time and needs to be conducted in stages. We understand the need for a dialogue with the political process and intergovernmental negotiations on the goals and targets, but indicators should not be politically negotiated. Further, research and development of the indicator framework should remain open after the UN Statistical Commission meeting in 2016. The indicator framework should not be perceived as a discrete agreement to be adopted at a single point in time; there must be scope for further elaboration of it in the coming years.

2. **Role of Civil society:** We acknowledge the leading role of national statistical offices in developing the indicator framework to ensure national ownership. However, we also
want to stress the importance of collaborating with civil society, in particular children and young people and their organisations, around this area. Civil society has a great deal to offer, particularly with respect to the development of indicators for targets that resist quantitative measurement. At the global level, this could mean giving civil society a formal role in, or clear ways to contribute to, the work of the Inter-agency Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (IAG-SDGs) and the High-level group (HLG) that will provide strategic leadership for the SDG implementation process. This will be important not only for the development of indicators, but also in the following years. Civil society should be engaged to be able to share experiences, encourage good practices and to identifying missing indicators and gaps along the way. Including civil society in this process is not only necessary at the global level but also at the national level. Governments and National statistical offices should guarantee the involvement of civil society in the national indicator setting, data collection and monitoring of the SDGs, and ensure their voices are heard. Finally, we are calling for a balanced regional representation in those new bodies, and funding should be made available to ensure meaningful representation from the Global South.

3. Data disaggregation: Although most stakeholders seem to agree on the need for data disaggregation, we are calling for a platform for further discussion and work on this. Only including a preamble which states that all indicators will be disaggregated ‘where appropriate’ or ‘where possible’ will not be sufficient. The need for disaggregated data is paramount. For example, today, 50% of the world’s population is under 25 and young people represent the largest generation in history. At the same time, many young people are experiencing challenges with finding employment, and children and young people, specially the most vulnerable, can’t access resources to assist them with issues related to health, education and inequality. In order to address these global issues and the risks associated with them, policymakers, decision makers and civil society must be armed with good quality, readily accessible and disaggregated data on children and youth. Currently this data is lacking globally, and there is inconsistency in how data is disaggregated, and how young people are defined. We call for data disaggregation by gender, and by age in five-year intervals, which is crucial to understand key demographics such as adolescent girls and early childhood. Investing in resources and capacity building for disaggregating data is essential to ensure we have the right data to make the right decisions for a sustainable future.

4. Beyond official statistics and data: Single indicators are often not enough to measure a target. There is a need to not only measure the objective situation, but also gather information on people’s perceptions on certain issues (perception-based indicators). Only then we will be able to state if progress has been made or not, and if we are on the way to achieving the commitments made. Asking people what matters to them most and their opinions of change will also help stimulate public debate and is essential for holding decision-makers to account. Qualitative data should be an essential part of the new indicator framework. Innovations in data collection can, and are already, producing this kind of data, through for example participatory monitoring and research, which is a great way to engage citizens in monitoring and data collection. Further, if the post-2015 framework is to be truly transformative, it must harness the unique ways children and young people are generating data. These data, and the means through which they are created, also offer limitless opportunities for how the
development agenda more broadly is owned by the next generation, and should hence be considered in this discussion.

The indicator framework should therefore:

- **Build on existing data**: The post-2015 indicator framework must capitalize on existing measurement systems, and make effective use of existing data.
- **Include new indicators and data**: There should be room for the development of new indicators to better capture information on areas where data is already being collected (e.g. health including sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, early childhood care and development, education). Further, there will be a need to develop new indicators and ways to measure ‘newer’ areas such as inequality, discrimination, inclusive and responsive governance and means of implementation. Finally, the indicator framework should be understandable to the wider public to also enhance communication between policy makers and their constituency.

5. **Global and national level indicators**: In order for us to be able to compare progress against the SDGs, which is a universal agenda, the SDGs need to have universal indicators that can be shared across countries. Throughout the development of the SDGs, policy and decision-makers and civil society alike, have been calling for an ambitious, inclusive and long-term agenda. We recognise the capacity constraints of member states, but hope that with substantial financial and capacity building support, and with the involvement of civil society and private sector, we can also aim for a strong, effective and ambitious indicator framework.

6. **Open, accessible data and role of children and young people in monitoring SDGs**: Further, the role of civil society and citizens, in particular young people and children organizations and youth organisations, in the actual monitoring process, needs to be acknowledged. All children and youth organisations should be empowered to monitor and implement the Sustainable Development Goals, through access to good quality, open, timely data and information accessible and understandable by children. Evidence shows that generating real-time data that can contribute to children young people’s ability to monitor implementation and communicate findings can be an effective and immediate method of promoting accountability. Availability and access to data are essential components of inclusive, effective development.

7. **Capacity building**: Based on the discussions and feedback from the UN Statistical Commission, we agree on the need for capacity building of national statistical offices to be able to meet these new expectations. Further, it is also important to recognise the need to match this by a concerted and comprehensive effort to build the capacity of the stakeholders who can help generate and use this data. Civil society organisations and citizens, especially children and youth, are often ill equipped to collect, analyse, interpret and manage data effectively. This impedes their ability to undertake evidence-based actions including policy development, advocacy, and decision-making. These standards should be relevant, fit for purpose, and translatable for the most basic community operations, such as small grassroots youth organisations, to ensure no one is left behind in the ‘data revolution’. Finally, there is an urgent need to concretize financing and capacity-building mechanisms to put this into practice, in particular in
developing countries. Innovative financing to fund the data revolution should not come at the expense of the building the capacity of the state to collect data, but complement this.

Sources:


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