An overview of citizens' contribution to data and policy: why, what and how?

Expert Group Meeting on Harnessing Data for public policy and SDG monitoring – 10-11 November, 2022

Haoyi Chen
UN Statistics Division

Information on the paper based on

- Questionnaire responses from all participants and partners
- Literature review:
  - Major papers and other published studies
- Discussions around this topic in the past 5? years

The more we review, the less-confident we are on the comprehensiveness of our review.

Why do we need citizens' contribution?

Already covered in session 1, but needs to be strengthened in the background paper

Terminologies

- Citizen science
- Citizen-generated data
- Crowdsourcing, volunteered geographic information, citizen observatories, citizen engagement in social innovation, community-driven or community-generated data

Towards common definitions?

- Citizen science

- Citizen-generated data

- Crowdsourcing, volunteered geographic information, citizen observatories, citizen engagement in social innovation, community-driven or community-generated data

Terminologies

- Citizens' contribution varies by:
  - <u>Collecting data or not</u> – is data collection required? Or can contribute to any stage(s) of the data value chain
  - <u>Level of engagement</u>: passive (data from webscraping), semi-active (complaints filed) or active (trainings provided for citizens to contribute to the process)
  - <u>Informed and active consent required</u>? (social media versus other citizens' contribution)
    - Social media as a safe place to express opinions: a good channel to have input on sensitive topics
  - <u>Voluntarily participating</u> in data collection? Does financially-compensated ones count (sustainability)?
  - <u>Level of expertise</u>: "democratization of science" vs. "experts within their local environment"
    - <u>Some engaged citizens are super technical – is it the "Official/non-official" divide?</u>
  - <u>Is the educational aspect important for citizens' contribution? Or it is mutually benefiting?</u>
  - <u>How are citizens recruited</u>: general volunteer call, somewhat designed, everyone in the community?
  - <u>Review process/quality assurance</u>: Scientific peer-review process/external review (validation)?

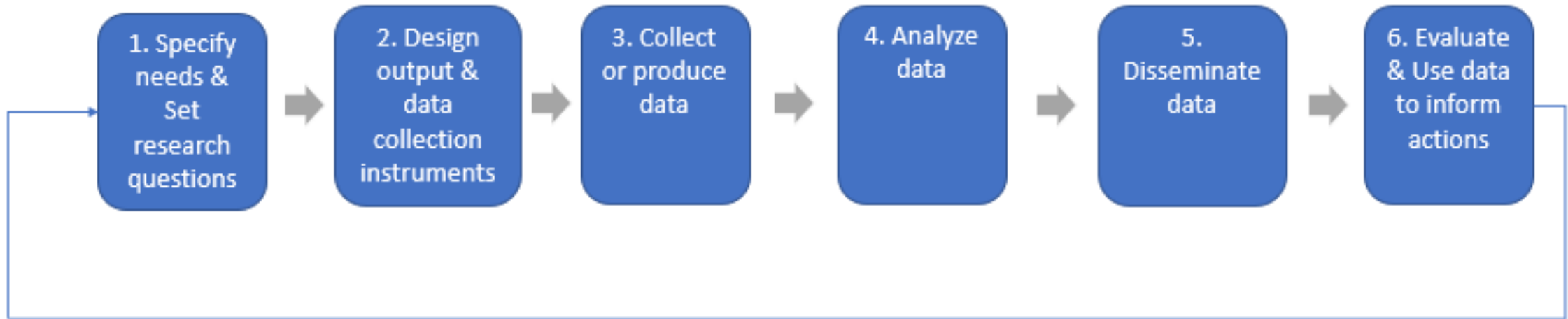# Objectives of citizens' contribution

1. Increase public understanding and awareness, mobilize actions around specific issues and empower local communities especially those the marginalized population groups.
2. Provide evidence for scientific studies and research
3. Evaluate and/or monitor impact of interventions and to support legal and policy actions.

Other qualitative and cross-cutting goals. In a way the divide is artificial, and the line is blurred. But helpful for the quality discussion, as the quality requirement is different

Objectives of citizens' contribution

1. Increase public understanding and awareness, mobilize actions around specific issues and empower local communities especially those the marginalized population groups.
2. Provide evidence for scientific studies and research
3. Evaluate and/or monitor impact of interventions and to support legal and policy actions.

Other qualitative and cross-cutting goals. In a way the divide is artificial, and the line is blurred. But helpful for the quality discussion, as the quality requirement is different

Engaging citizens in the data value chain

About data quality

- Citizens' contribution very diverse
- Fit-for-purpose, depending on
  - Objective of the engagement/contribution
  - Stages of the data value chain: data, methods, or both
- (Relatively) common elements across 3 country example:
  - Need
  - Transparency and accountability
  - Privacy
  - Accuracy and reliability/methodology soundness
  - Timeliness
  - Accessibility
  - Interpretability
- Two stages of requirements: gateway requirement before moving on to the others

Key challenges and opportunities

- A common framework for citizens' contribution?
  - Concepts, definitions, quality?
- Collaboration between "state" and "non-state" actors
- Capacity-building needs, for both NSOs and CSOs

To be discussed

How?

United Nations | DESA Statistics Division

Thank you