

SDGs and Targets: Informing Indicator Work

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Rio+20: *The Future We Want*

“... sustainable development goals should be action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries, while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.” (para 247)

OWG process and proposal

Process:

- Innovative – troika-based; open; inclusive; technical and political in dynamic tension; facilitated dialogue, exchange of ideas

Proposal:

- Ambitious: ‘transformative’ in any number of ways – for the poor, vulnerable and excluded; for women; for growth models; for managing the global environmental commons
- Universal:
 - links poverty eradication to SD as global challenges, ambitions
 - responsibilities and actions expected of all countries, all stakeholders
- Building on MDGs: complete unfinished business; learn from MDG limitations, notably with respect to need to:
 - focus on poorest and most vulnerable: ‘leave no one behind’
 - measure quality of services (education, health, ecosystems) and quality of life
 - address structural drivers of progress and problems (e.g., innovation, SCP, inequalities)
 - address three dimensions of sustainable development across and within goals.

OWG report chapeau

“The sustainable development goals are accompanied by targets and will be further elaborated through indicators focused on measurable outcomes. ... Targets are defined as aspirational global targets, with each Government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition, but taking into account national circumstances.”
(para 18)

From global to national

- How are global targets to be translated to national levels of ambition?
 - What about case of “universal” or “zero” targets? What does differentiation mean here?
 - Where is it important that national levels “add up” to the global ambition level?
- Aggregation to regional, global levels: will it be possible across goals and targets?
 - If not, what is the monitoring and review process meant to do? May need to rethink approach

Common and/or differentiated indicators?

- As with targets, where countries may not always want to hold themselves to a common target level ...
- So with indicators, countries may choose not to use the same indicators in all cases
 - but there would presumably need to be some common, shared set if regional, global reporting is to add value
- If, in some cases, it is important to know whether national efforts “add up” globally, then we will need common metrics to be able to answer that question.

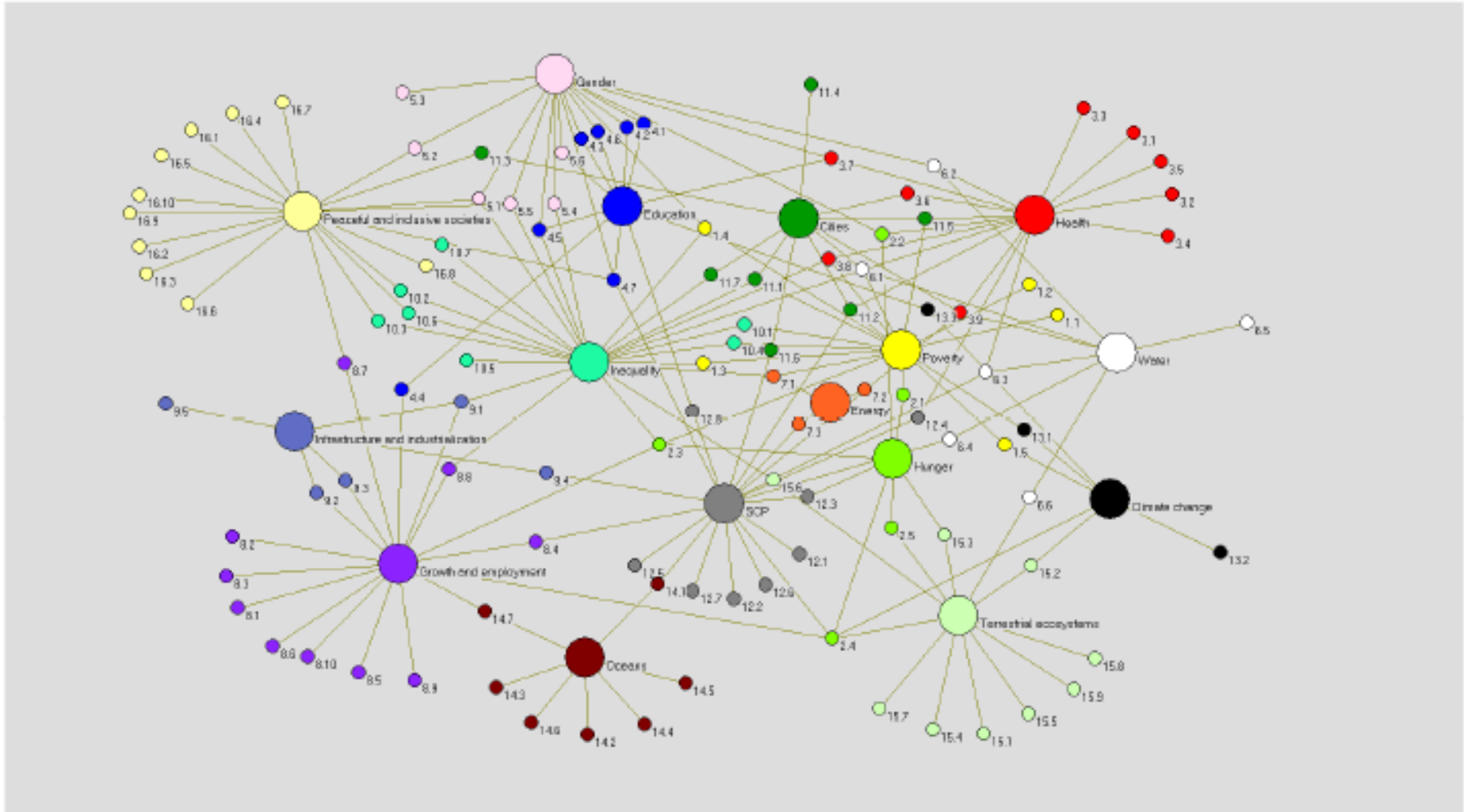
Final word on numbers

- $169 = 13^2$
 - For the superstitious, not very auspicious
 - Unless squaring an unlucky number makes it lucky
- $169 / 17 \approx 10$ targets per goal

Question: given the number of targets, what would it take to hold indicators to a number consistent with ensuring statisticians' healthy lives and well-being (as per SDG 3)?

Goals interconnected through targets

Figure 1: The SDGs as a network of targets



Source: David Le Blanc, "Towards Integration at Last? The SDGs as a Network of Targets", Rio+20 Working Paper 4.

Can some indicators do double duty?

Given a concern about the number of indicators that can feasibly be measured and reported in a timely fashion ...

Question: does such a network mapping help identify possibilities for indicators that might measure progress against more than one goal/target?

Example

6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity

and

12.2 By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources

Political process going forward

- March 23-27: IGN deliberations on SDGs, targets (and indicators)
 - MS looking forward to a progress report on indicators work (“indicative list”)
 - MS will also consider the proposal of the OWG with its 17 goals and 169 targets
 - Jury out on whether/how far they will agree to consider “technical tweaking” of specific targets
 - Political risks well understood

Synchronizing IGN and indicators work

- Former: pre-eminently political negotiation, but one informed by science, evidence
- Latter: pre-eminently a technical process, but one informed by sensitivity to political dynamics
- Timing question: value in having two processes proceed in parallel – both political and technical
- Question remains: how far do MS wish to “agree” to indicators when their Heads of State and Gov’t agree to goals and targets in September?