

Executive summary

The Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework is increasingly used in many countries as a shared framework for results and as a guide for development co-operation providers. Its potential to improve results-based management practices and guide development finance is still being explored.

This report documents progress in the use of the SDGs as a shared framework for results. It builds on the findings from three case studies in the education, sanitation and energy sectors, as well as on complementary research. It summarises emerging opportunities and obstacles for alignment, measurement and use of SDG indicators as a shared framework for results at country level. It also discusses four cross-cutting issues that require collective action to unlock the potential of the SDGs as a shared results framework at all levels.

The first case study explores the use of SDGs in the education sector in Ethiopia and Myanmar. The report finds that data availability for the SDG indicator (SDG 4.1.1 on learning outcomes) is growing but use of the SDG indicator remains weak. Most results frameworks still focus on school enrolment as the key measure of results, due to inertia with past standards. To ensure that the SDG is met, providers need to pool forces behind partner countries' national assessments on learning outcomes, instead of using disharmonised methods to monitoring education results.

With regards to sanitation and hygiene (SDG 6.2.1), inconsistent indicator definitions used by development co-operation providers and partner governments in Kenya and Myanmar limit opportunities for harmonisation, joint measurement and use of SDG results information. Inertia in using the former and simpler Millennium Development Goal (MDG) indicator appears as a key factor limiting the adoption of the SDG indicator. As a result, the reporting burden has increased for national stakeholders and data against many providers' results indicators are missing.

Development co-operation providers should advocate, in the context of sector co-ordination groups, for greater alignment to SDG 6.2.1; increase investments in sector-wide monitoring systems; ensure alignment of their project indicators with the official SDG indicator definition; and invest in monitoring systems capable of producing sex disaggregated and subnationally disaggregated data, to ensure no one is left behind.

The definition of SDG indicator 7.1.1 (access to electricity) is in line with well-established measurements of sector performance, which facilitated its broad adoption in Ethiopia and Kenya. In practice, however, many development co-operation providers are using a variety of proxy indicators and data collection methods that prevent joint measurement of the SDG indicator. Emphasis on output measures, reliance on survey data-collection methods, fragmented electricity markets, and the use of slightly different definitions make alignment and harmonised measurement of electricity access in these two countries all the more difficult.

The case studies also identify examples of active, government-led donor co-ordination groups using joint monitoring approaches in the electricity sector. Such groups are adequate platforms for using SDG 7.1.1 to harmonise collective efforts, and expand electricity access. Partnership with public and private sector utilities as main real-time data providers will also be key in this and other sectors.

Overall, this report finds that:

- Since 2016, the global SDG framework has been significantly strengthened and providers and partner countries are increasingly applying SDG indicators in their results frameworks.
- The cost of aligning results indicators with each specific SDG indicator varies depending on their quality and intrinsic complexity, measurement inertias, and other contextual factors affecting measurement and use.
- Providers that synchronise their results planning cycle with partner countries' own cycle are more successful in applying, measuring and using SDG indicators in synergy with partner governments and other providers.
- Sector and countrywide monitoring approaches help providers reduce the cost of SDG monitoring. The lack of results data against many indicators suggests a need for more consistent and coherent efforts to strengthen partner countries' statistical and monitoring systems, and ensure their sustainability.
- While gender and urban/rural data disaggregation is becoming more common in SDG indicator measurement, other locally relevant dimensions are rare, limiting the ability to capture results related to populations left behind in heterogeneous societies.



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