

Data, knowledge sharing and the SDGs. Where Russia stands?

Anastasia Maximova

National Research University Higher School of Economics, Russia

Not only shortage of finance but also lack of know-how and data might be impeding poverty eradication and achievement of Sustainable development goals (SDGs). Data is important to new development agenda in several respects. First of all, data is needed for making informed decisions on best ways to address various development challenges. Knowledge and expertise sharing is also required to facilitate development. Second, rigorous data is usually needed to assess if the funded projects were beneficial for the target population. Third, since SDGs are more complex and multidimensional than their predecessor, MDGs, more sophisticated data will be needed to assess their achievement.

Data is difficult to collect. Some MDGs poverty data were in fact projected data due to inability to collect timely information¹. It is estimated that \$1 bln will be needed every year for world's poorest countries to put in place statistical systems that are able to measure SDGs². Other estimates are even higher and somewhat alarming³.

We are witnessing an enormous quantitative increase of available data relevant for development, big data revolution. But at the same time it might be just data deluge as much of the data collected just sits on shelves and does not play a positive role in development. For data to be useful it has to be high-quality, timely, reliable and most importantly relevant to information needs of those who will use it. According to a recent survey only 28% of development professionals have actually seen examples of big data being used⁴.

So in relation to data revolution researchers might be asking themselves questions on what is the cost-benefit ratio of rising amounts of data and what are the ways to ensure that increased amounts of expensive data actually play a positive role in SDGs.

Russia has been engaged in knowledge sharing with its development partners for long time. Technical cooperation is provided mostly to CIS countries in education, including its quality assessment, health, including pediatric care and infectious diseases control, agriculture, financial management etc. Russia has been supporting development of statistical systems in East Europe and Central Asia. At the same time there is a lack of data and information on Russian development assistance itself which might be impeding its effectiveness. So far Russia has been collecting and providing to OECD only aggregated data, no information on sectoral distribution or

¹ Cost of gathering data on new development goals could be crippling. Bjorn Lomborg, 24 September 2014, URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2014/sep/24/gathering-data-sustainable-development-crippling>

² Data for Development: A Needs Assessment for SDG Monitoring and Statistical Capacity Development, April 17, 2015, URL: <http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Data-for-Development-Full-Report.pdf>

³ Benefits and Costs of the Data for Development Targets for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Morten Jerven, URL: <http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/publication/post-2015-consensus-data-development-assessment-jerven>

⁴ Is #globaldev optimism over big data based more on hype than value? By Mario Villamor, 27 August 2015, URL: <https://www.devex.com/news/is-globaldev-optimism-over-big-data-based-more-on-hype-than-value-86705>

project level is available. Also there is no evaluation system in place. Much is to be improved in that respect.