

## Post-2015 Data Test Turkey Case Study in Progress

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### CURRENT STATUS: TURKISH CASE STUDY

#### *Progress to Date*

The Turkish case study is being undertaken by a team of seven senior researchers with experience in data utilization and established contacts with data sources. Responsibilities are shared among the researchers, each of whom is responsible for one of the proposed goals under the Post-2015 Data Test initiative. To date, researchers have reviewed the potential Post-2015 targets and indicators identified by the initiative in terms of their relevance to Turkey and data availability. As a next step, the team will identify preferred national level targets and indicators for Turkey and provide detailed comments on all the indicators reviewed.

#### *Implementation: challenges*

A number of challenges exist for implementing the Post-2015 Data Test in Turkey. The Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Post-2015 process are not among the principal concerns of the Turkish public. Very few academics or civil society organizations are conversant on the issues and only some government officials are involved in the Post-2015 process. As a result, the data requirements for measuring Post-2015 have never been considered.

In this context, the first step in the implementation of the Turkish case study was to create, or revive past interest, among researchers in MDGs and the Post-2015 process. Research team members now feel that their familiarity with data in a particular domain, as well as their concern with development in Turkey, can be utilized to undertake analysis and produce results of interest at the global level.

### SUBSTANTIVE FEEDBACK TO DATE

#### *Targets and Indicators*

The Turkish case study highlights a number of challenges related to applying a universal global agenda to a variety of country contexts. Some of

the targets and indicators selected to be examined for all countries under the initiative do not make sense for Turkey. For example, with respect to the target of ending extreme poverty, some of the minimum thresholds for poverty levels (proportion of the population living under USD1.25 [PPP] / day) appear too low for middle- and high-income countries, including Turkey. If the SDGs are meant to be universally relevant, some adjustments will be necessary to address this heterogeneity. A possible solution here would be to allow each country to choose its own benchmark based on country reality.

The research team has also noted that a number of indicators may need to be more clearly defined. For instance, it is unclear whether some of the indicators – e.g. “productive employment” – are qualitative or quantitative in nature.

Additionally, official data might be unobtainable for some of the indicators. For example, although child employment is observed in many countries, it is an illegal practice and as such, there is little or no official data available. Environmental sustainability indicators pertaining to legal frameworks and policy environments share similar limitations. Despite the existence of national laws concerning the environment in Turkey and elsewhere, the impact of these legal frameworks in practice remain open to question, particularly from a measurement perspective. Though legal associations and environmental non-governmental organisations could be a good source for tracking the impact of laws and legal procedures on environmental outcomes, consistent information gathering would be required for it to be meaningful. What to do with unofficial data when they are the only available indicators needs to be addressed.

Finally, the team noted that indicators on Global Partnership for Sustainable Development may need to be rethought in order to apply to individual countries – most indicators as stated so far, are “global” figures. Furthermore, it would be good to select indicators that reflect the degree to which the needs of recipients are addressed by traditional and emerging donor states.

## *Data Availability and Accessibility*

Challenges exist in collecting representative data for some of targets and indicators. For instance, there might be increasing difficulty in obtaining disaggregated data on rural/urban differences due to a recent change in the law on metropolitan areas. The law categorizes all areas, including rural regions that share a metropolitan centre, as part of the metropolitan area – thus, classifying these areas as “urban.” This affects nearly all indicators where the rural/urban divide is important to capture. It is particularly significant for fundamental indicators such as the proportion of urban and rural populations below the poverty line or for measuring access to infrastructure.

### *National Statistical System*

Legal and regulatory frameworks underpin data collection efforts in Turkey, including how various groups are defined. The capacity of the statistical office is the key determinant of data availability in Turkey. Since the mid-2000s, data collection has been satisfactory. Surveys detailing household living conditions and household budgets, as well as economic statistics, are published every year and cover many of the indicators under the Post-2015 Data Test. Several ministries, such as the Justice Ministry, also generate useful data. Furthermore, sporadic complementary surveys are produced by academic and government institutions such as the Ministry of Family and Women’s Affairs.

The establishment of an electronic national population database has been an important improvement to the national statistical system in Turkey. A significant amount of data is generated through this database, although the system is also prone to providing misleading results. For example, erroneous reporting has been generated by the automaticity in the area of education. Each year, all school-age children appearing in the population database are digitally and automatically registered in school. Thus, full enrollment appears to be achieved for every child with a national identity number. However, the actual enrollment rates derived through household surveys reveal a different result – showing a gap with the published results.

## *Data Sources*

An important question to consider in this study is the extent to which unofficial sources of data can be used to monitor progress towards Post-2015 indicators. International databases can be useful for examining progress in Turkey. For example, data for many potential governance indicators are captured by international sources. In fact, the use of international databases – if acceptable to governments – would provide for better comparability across countries. In the case of Turkey, detailed information is sometimes more readily obtainable through international sources than national ones. Some new databases for Post-2015 indicators could also be proposed and maintained by international bodies or civil society organizations. Substantial data for many indicators could also be generated through academic research or by combining and manipulating available information. Such efforts are, however, typically undertaken sporadically and therefore, cannot be relied upon for future use unless funding exists for sustainable and dedicated production of data.

## **NEXT STEPS**

In May, the team held a meeting on the research process. The meeting allowed team members to share information on research findings to date, including views on data sources, data availability and targets and indicators. This will ensure research consistency, especially since the Turkish team was delayed in joining the initiative compared to other country partners. The participation of Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue, enabled a much better linking of the whole Turkish team with the progress in other countries.

Preparation of inputs will be followed by the drafting of the compiled report and a validation meeting with national and international participants. While the initial work is being undertaken by Istanbul-based researchers, the meeting will comprise participants from outside Istanbul, including government officials from the national statistical office, Foreign Affairs, as well as members of civil society. The workshop will seek to provide enlightened inputs to Turkish negotiators on the Post-2015 framework and stimulate the generation of data in some areas of the SDGs. Media participation will be sought to promote public discussion on the Post-2015 process and sustainable development concerns. An indirect impact may be to implant some ideas about indicators that can and should be monitored by the government and/or civil society outside the SDG process.