Measuring the Sustainable Development Agenda in Peru

Report Highlights

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Report Highlights

In 2012, the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development pledged that governments will propose a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the post-2015 period. The SDGs – agreed to in September 2015 – replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which expire in the same year. The SDGs take into consideration positive experiences from the MDGs and aspects that were excluded from or not achieved with the MDGs. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs are universal in nature, applying to all countries. To contribute to ongoing discussions on the post-2015 agenda, Bangladesh's Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and Canada's Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University, in association with Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals, launched "The Post-2015 Data Test: Unpacking the Data Revolution at the Country Level," an initiative to examine how the SDGs can be applied and monitored across low-, middle- and high-income countries. The initiative includes the mapping of available data to measure post-2015 sustainable development indicators and the identification of challenges and opportunities that countries may face during the implementation of the SDGs. This report presents the key findings of the Peru case study under the initiative.

The Group for the Analysis of Development (GRADE) is the multidisciplinary research institution responsible for the Peru case study. The study includes an examination of targets and indicators for roughly 12 of the 17 candidate SDGs, grouped into seven key areas: (i) poverty, (ii) education, (iii) employment and inclusive growth, (iv) energy and infrastructure, (v) environmental sustainability and disaster resilience, (vi) governance and (vii) global partnership for sustainable development. Furthermore, this report identifies the challenges for monitoring the SDGs and their respective policy implications and recommendations for the achievement of the SDGs in Peru.

As the finalised SGD document points out, "poverty eradication is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development" (UN 2015). This statement is particularly relevant for the Latin American region, including Peru, since it is one of the worst-rated regions in the world in terms of inequality. Although poverty rates continue to decrease, the probability of falling back into poverty will persist if inequalities based on gender, ethnicity and territorial factors remain.

To overcome these key challenges and produce real change in the lives of people, it is necessary to focus on the ones who have been "left behind" and have the least. In Peru, minorities (e.g., women, indigenous, Afro-Peruvians) are the people who need the most attention. There is a need for more disaggregated data to better understand how these groups live and what they have, think and feel.

In this context, the report provides an analysis of SDG priorities for Peru and examines data availability for monitoring and following through on the SDGs at the country level. Furthermore, its comparative matrix of targets and indicators will be useful for policy-makers during their planning phase for implementing the SDGs at the national level. Additionally, the unpacking of the data revolution in Peru will be an excellent input that can help start the same process in other Latin American countries.

Key findings

Post-2015 Agenda in Peru

Peru's development advocates urgently need to connect more meaningfully with key constituencies through discussions about policy priorities in order to raise awareness and increase levels of engagement with development policy issues regarding the SDGs and the data revolution, with the ultimate purpose being to influence policy-makers.

Peru's achievements in terms of the MDGs have been satisfactory. Moving forward, the public sector, international organisations and academia in the country have engaged on the post-2015 agenda and associated indicators. The Peruvian government has held discussions with different sectors on the SDGs in advance of their establishment. Additionally, the United Nations System in Peru completed a national consultation process between November 2012 and March 2013. The consultations were centred on the question of what kind of future citizens want for Peru and traced an agenda for sustainable development after 2015. The consultation process was highly inclusive and included inputs from government, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, the private sector and academia. As a result, a thematic agenda was proposed and key messages emerged on participatory monitoring for accountability in the post-2015 agenda.[1]

Consultations demonstrated that Peruvians consider the country to have "progressed" in recent years, but "there is much to be done" to become a developed country. Civil society values social and economic issues (i.e., education, health, employment) as priorities and has interests in strengthening governance mechanisms (e.g., the decentralisation process, ending insecurity and corruption) and protecting the environment (e.g., regulation of water resources, land management, addressing natural disaster risks and climate change). It is important to highlight the participation of civil society because it allows a voice to people who usually have no access to debates or planning the national agenda and allows them to participate in the policy making that affects their lives.

The Peru research team took into account the perspectives of stakeholders, including the government and private sector, voiced during focus group discussions and interviews as part of the research process. They viewed that policies need to be focused on: (i) gender equality, (ii) climate change, (iii) financial inclusion and (iv) industrial technical innovation for diversified production (GRADE 2014). Also, the research team selected (i) women, (ii) indigenous peoples, (iii) early aged children and (iv) young people as priority groups that need special attention in the country. The team developed specific national indicators for these themes and groups.

Taking into account the points of view of all participants in the consultation and research processes, the research team agreed that Peru needs to act on several factors during the post-2015 period: (i) reduce poverty in all its forms, (ii) improve the quality of education at all levels and education infrastructure, (iii) maintain the balance between economic growth and environmental protection, (iv) improve air and water quality, (v) ensure full access to developed infrastructure, (vi) establish a strong state and fight against corruption, (vii) improve relationships between the government, companies and communities and (viii) improve security and reduce violence in all its forms.

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[1] For more information, see UNDG (2015).

In this context, the SDGs emerge as particularly relevant for Peru. While the country is considered by the International Monetary Fund to be one of the most stables economies in Latin America (Vera and Wong 2013), it obtained the worst scores in international educational assessments in the last years that it participated – 2012, 2009 and 2000 (OECD 2014). Recognising that Peru has a lot of work to do to become developed, policy-makers are working strongly on social areas such as education, poverty and employment. Some issues recognised as relevant for society require more efforts. For example, to achieve the goal on environmental protection, it is necessary to have clear and continuous indicators and real compromise among involved actors. Discussions about policy priorities would raise awareness, increase engagement with development policy issues linked to the SDGs and data revolution and influence policy-makers' decisions.

It is important to highlight that the lack of proactive and strong leadership within government institutions makes building synergies for the post-2015 agenda difficult. Due to past experiences, it has been generally difficult for all political parties to engage in long-term policy making. Presidential elections are coming up in 2016 and the post-2015 agenda has not been mentioned in electoral platforms. Except within the National Center for Strategic Planning, a specialised technical body of the government, and civil society organisations, the SDGs have not inspired a widespread call for a data revolution in Peru.

Monitoring the Post-2015 Agenda

Peru has a trustworthy national statistical system that is generally prepared to measure progress on the post-2015 agenda. The National Institute of Statistics and Information Technology (INEI), which is Peru's national statistics office, and other government entities produce relevant, accurate and timely information. The majority of databases can be accessed by the general public. The INEI provides quarterly and annual indicators, microdata archives and systems to cross-check variables in a user-friendly way, every ministry and other government entity has a "statistics" section on its website. Therefore, data users do not have problems accessing available data. Nevertheless, data availability varies by SDG area and targets.

The SDGs bring with them two major challenges for the INEI. First, deficiency in the decentralisation process affects data producers and the poorest government entities precariously use the provided statistical information. Second, due to changes in budgeting in recent years, the need for specialised information from all sectors has increased, but the law states that the sectors are not responsible for collecting data. For that reason, the INEI is responsible for managing too much data, conducting several surveys and serving many sectors.

The indicators reported directly by the INEI generally do better in terms of data quality when compared to indicators reported by other government entities. For instance, the candidate targets and indicators under the goal areas on poverty, education and employment obtained high scores according to the data quality assessment framework used under the Post-2015 Data Test. This is because databases for these goal areas follow pre-defined quality standards, technical documents are available, a system for user consultation exists, time periods for data collection and release have been determined, data are credible and data are in agreement with user "demand" so they are relevant. However, data availability and quality for the goal areas on environment, governance and global partnership require improvement. This is due to the fact that the candidate indicators under these goal areas are calculated with administrative data, specific technologies are needed for data collection and data come from ministries not directly directed by

the INEI. Because resources, expertise and efforts to collect and produce data vary from ministry to ministry, the quality of data and indicators also changes.[2]

According to a data-mapping exercise undertaken for the Peru case study, 68 percent of indicators examined in this study are calculated by the INEI or can be calculated using data that can be accessed relatively easily through an information request to the INEI. It is important to note that one source, the National Household Survey, collects much of the data needed for the goals areas on poverty, education and employment. The situations for the rest of the indicators are mixed. Six percent can be calculated by custom tabulation of data producers because information exists but is not systematised. Ten percent of indicators are currently calculable, but data are not available for the proposed baseline year of 2010. This study did not consider using non-official sources to measure post-2015 progress given that they do not necessarily follow the same level of rigor and transparency as the INEI. However, identified non-official data sources could be used to monitor 8 percent of indicators. It is important to note that non-official sources can only be used for the country's weaker areas – energy and infrastructure, environment and governance. Further, there are three global indicators under the goal areas on energy, governance and environment that cannot be measured because data are not collected by the INEI, non-official sources or international sources.

The low level of data disaggregation is a challenge that needs to be overcome. Most of the indicators can be disaggregated by place of residence (urban and rural), region (political organisation) and age, but data disaggregation by sex (important for indicators regarding financial inclusion) and minority group (e.g., Afro-Peruvians) is important and requires more efforts if no one is to be left behind during the post-2015 period.

Political Economy Dimensions of Data in Peru

Over time, the collection of data for social indicators in Peru has changed due to various factors, such as laws, political pressure, budgets, technical difficulties and methodological innovations, among others. Since 2000, two legal reforms were enacted because the government wanted to increase efficiency, meet citizens' demands and improve accountability: the Law of Transparency and Access to Public Information and Law of Public Sector Budget that prescribe results-based budgeting. The former obliges all public administration entities to publish information on their respective websites or in journals that are widely circulated and to provide information to citizens upon request, while the latter changed the administration of the public budget with the objective being to make state social projects and programmes more efficient and equal in reducing poverty and exclusion.

In this context, some changes in INEI practices and methodologies for data collection have occurred in recent years. First, the INEI has been implementing a decentralisation plan since 2001 and its headquarters now works with decentralised offices to ensure the use of common methodologies and standardised processes. Second, the INEI began to receive support in 2007 from an external Adviser Committee to improve the methodology and collection of information in surveys that measure poverty. In 2011, the INEI started to use technologies for data collection and more data disaggregation.

Regarding the financing side, results-based budgeting anticipates the Peruvian population's central problems and conceives likely results of interventions by government entities oriented towards development and research. Attention to specific central problems is prioritised over other secondary

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[2] For instance, the Ministry of Environment was created in 2008. In 2012, the unit of the ministry in charge of statistics only had eight workers and no quality controls for information sources and coding (INEI 2013b).

objectives. It is stipulated that every intervention should generate a product and every product should be oriented towards a goal. Indicators are generated for the conceived results in a way that the progress of the Peruvian population in all areas can be measured. The budget mainly depends on the capacity of each ministry. Entities such as the Ministry of Environment must enhance their capacity in order to measure progress on all the candidate SDGs.

Key Recommendations

This study arrives at various recommendations that could be followed by different developing countries to generate indicators that answer to national and international demands for information. A key recommendation is to create a tool that enables all countries to systematise and map all available data and information as well as identify data gaps in different areas. For instance, the data quality assessment framework used in this study helped the research team to undertake the data-mapping exercise and identify the quality and availability of data and information for measuring progress on sustainable development.

Although many indicators can be measured and monitored, greater efforts are required from the INEI and the broader national statistical system in a number of areas. First, the INEI should work together with various data producers at different levels to standardise data collection processes, including methodologies and digitalisation, across government entities. Second, the INEI should include some new questions in the National Household Survey (or specialised surveys) to measure the finalised SDG indicators. Regarding indicators on energy and environment, Peru can create synergies with international organisations to measure indicators that it by itself cannot. Synergies could also facilitate the transfer of technical knowledge and strengthen cooperation between government and international partners. Third, the INEI needs to build capacity in terms of personnel and infrastructure, since the demand for information from government entities is increasing and the development of a monitoring system for the SDGs will soon begin. It is thus necessary to increase the INEI's budget to hire personnel, improve infrastructure, adopt new technologies to collect data and build capacity in other entities. Finally, all political parties must embrace the post-2015 agenda since it will be part of the policy frameworks of many governments.

Moreover, ministries should make the following changes in order to improve data: (i) implement results-based budgeting, (ii) disseminate information and analysis on the processes and results of government interventions, (iii) improve human capital and standardise heterogeneous visions, (iv) build a culture of accountability that feeds back on management, (v) strengthen the development of indicators and improve the clarity of priorities, (vi) collaborate with the INEI to standardise data collection processes, (vii) improve coordination between current and capital expenditure and (viii) strengthen territorial articulation.