MONITOR -- THE IMPORTANCE OF DISAGGREGATED DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE

While all SDG targets and indicators affect the lives and well-being of children, adolescents and youth in some way, UNICEF has identified 35 indicators that most directly concern children [1], out of a total of 232 in the global SDG monitoring framework.[2] The list of indicators for global SDG monitoring, measuring the 169 targets across the 17 goals, was formally approved at the 48th session of the UN Statistical Commission and subsequently adopted by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in June 2017.

The availability of recent, comparable and high-quality disaggregated data for children remains a significant challenge for many countries, regardless of their income levels. It is therefore essential to improve the availability and quality of disaggregated data and, in turn, use that data to inform decision-making processes for the successful implementation and monitoring of the SDGs, and to align with the SDG pledge of leaving no one behind.

KEY ASKS
UNICEF encourages governments and national stakeholders to highlight the following practices and experiences in their 2020 VNRs in the following areas:

1. Ensuring that national SDG monitoring framework includes child-focused indicators.
What gets counted is more likely to be valued. Unless national SDG monitoring frameworks contain child-focused indicators, issues around child development and well-being might get lost in policy discussions. Thus, it is essential that the national SDG monitoring and indicator framework is reviewed and updated to include child-focused indicators. This may require the review and updating of national development strategies and plans to ensure that the policy goals and targets are specific about children and their issues. After all, indicators are to measure policy goals and targets. In addition, it is important the goals and targets are also specific about population groups and issues for policy interventions in order for governments to fulfill their commitment to "leave no one behind." As a starting point, the 35 child-focused indicators in the global monitoring framework can be used to guide the review and possible updating of both the national SDG monitoring framework and/or national development strategy/plan.

2. *Leave no data source behind.* Highlighting use of statistical data from a variety of sources in assessing SDG progress.
While there are enormous gaps in the availability and quality of official statistics to meet the demands for SDG progress assessments at sub-national, national, regional and global levels, at the same time there are large amounts of existing data yet to be accessed and used for evidence-based policy advocacy and analysis. Only when data from various sources are used can their value be recognized, which in turn strengthens the case for boosting investment in further data improvements.

A positive development over the last several cycles of VNRs is that an increasing number of national reports use indicators to highlight patterns of development by citing data coming from a variety of sources, including censuses, sample surveys (including sample household surveys) and administrative records. There are also ongoing explorations to use such emerging big data sources as geospatial information to gain insights in SDG implementation. Governments are encouraged to cite the use of data from a variety of sources to inform SDG implementation.

3. Showcasing concrete actions by governments to strengthen national capacity to improve the availability and quality of disaggregated data.
The need for strengthening the capacity of national statistical systems has been a recurring theme during the last rounds of the VNRs, highlighting the gap between demand for and the provision of high quality and disaggregated data for monitoring the SDGs. Some countries have formulated plans to improve the statistics and data underlying their national SDG monitoring and indicator frameworks.

In Myanmar, the development of a child-focused SDG indicator list was undertaken together with a 7-point action implementation plan, including such priority areas as: developing metadata of indicators; harmonizing data sources; increasing data access and data sharing; and improving administrative data. In Colombia[3], the government's national policy on SDG implementation presents the vision for the country for 2030 and establishes a follow-up framework with national indicators, measurable targets, institutional responsibilities and a prioritization and regionalization exercise that includes a set of benchmark targets designed to stimulate progress in the other targets of each SDG. In particular, the policy document also includes a plan to improve statistical data and a territorial strategy designed to maximize ownership and the utility of

the SDGs in the transformation of territorial realities while respecting local autonomies and priorities. The formulation of a SDG-focused data improvement plan should ideally be aligned with existing national statistical development strategies and plans, and should have specific budgetary allocations.

UNICEF has provided support to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in many countries, especially low- and middle-income countries. MICS 6 tools have been comprehensively updated to support SDG monitoring during the next round of surveys. MICS 6 (2016-19) generates data for close to half of all SDG indicators that can be sourced to household surveys, across 11 goal areas. The updated questionnaires and indicator lists are available on the MICS website[4] and include new modules on reading/numeracy, water quality and child functioning. Various modules have been included in other household surveys, e.g. 'Health and Morbidity Survey' in Malaysia and SUSENAS in Indonesia. Including these child-related modules in household surveys in countries where a MICS is not being conducted has the greatest potential to fill the gaps in data for children in such countries.

In general, the VNR preparation should be used as an opportunity for the government and other national stakeholders to take stock of their achievements and document lessons and experiences in their collective efforts to strengthen the capacity of national and sub-national authorities to collect, analyse and report official statistics with a particular focus on ensuring that these are disaggregated, where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location, or other characteristics, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.[5]

To provide additional support on sector-specific SDG Monitoring, UNICEF has also developed a set of briefing notes on SDG global indicators related to children, covering the following topics: child poverty, nutritional status, maternal mortality & skilled attendant at birth, child mortality, universal health coverage, learning, early childhood development, violence against girls and women, harmful practices, drinking water, sanitation & hygiene, child labour, abuse, exploitation and violence and birth registration. Please see here for the full set of briefing notes[6].

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[1] See https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SDG-briefing-note-1_national-and-global-monitoring.pdf Some of the indicators contain multiple components. For instance, indicator 1.4.1 is "Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services", where "basic services" is interpreted to refer to: basic drinking water services; basic sanitation services; and basic handwashing facility with soap and water available on premises. When such components are viewed separately, the number of indicators becomes 44.

[2] http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/

[3] http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/HLPF/2018/5&Lang=E

[4] http://mics.unicef.org/tools

[5] https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/fundprinciples.aspx

[6] https://data.unicef.org/resources/sdg-global-indicators-related-to-children/