

Regional Coordination Mechanism for the Arab States

Task Force on SDG Data

Review of availability of data on Sustainable Development Goals

UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA)

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Summary

The documents summarises the assessment of SDG data availability in 2017 and 2018. Overall proportion of availability of at least one data point per indicator/country since 1990 was 25% in 2017 and 29.3% in 2018. At the same time, there was a 60% of increase in reporting requirements. The proportion of availability of 3 and more data points since 1990 was 12% in 2017 and 15% in 2018.

The document further describes the sources of data for these assessments that include the UN SDG database, databases of UN agencies (custodian agencies) and available national sources of data.

Background and methodology

UN-ESCWA has undertaken a review of availability of data on SDGs for 22 Arab countries. Being the agency in the region with the most widely reaching statistical programme, this exercise was important in order to identify areas that are of need of statistical capacity development. The results were shared with the national statistical offices, in order to provide them with a basis when for management decisions on addressing the internal capacity – of the office, as well as of the entire national statistical system. The two assessments on availability of data were undertaken in early 2017 and late 2018. The two main factors that impacted the results, and resulted in a change and different results between 2017 and 2018 assessments, are the following:

- (i) An increase in the number of indicators with Tier I or Tier II status¹ - this has caused, in some cases, a decrease of the proportion of available data as compared with Tier I and Tier II requirements;
- (ii) Increase of data availability for individual countries and indicators – this resulted in an increase of the proportion of available data.

A basis of the assessment was the official UN SDG database maintained by the UN Statistics Division (UNSD) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA). Data to the database are provided by the custodian agencies identified in the Global Framework of SDG Indicators² from, in principle, national sources. Due to the time gap in updating the UN SDG database, UN-ESCWA also looked to database of the custodian agencies – that contain some recent additions that did not pass the full way to the UN SDG database, and to the national sources of data (including national data that are already in the UN-ESCWA database). The assessment had a form of a desk research using the on-line accessible sources of data, thus avoiding an increased burden on national statistical offices.

Data availability for each pair indicators/country was evaluated in four categories:

- A Unavailable: no data available;

¹ The tier status is assigned by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG) in a semi-annual process. The IAEG-SDG was established by the UN Statistical Commission in 2015. Recommendations. Tier I and Tier II indicators are those that have agreed upon definitions, concepts and methods for their compilation, as opposed to Tier III indicators. Recommendations of the IAEG SDG are endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission and subsequently by the Economic and Social Council of the UN.

² The list of indicators is annexed to the General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/313. More details are then provided on the UNSD website: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>

- B Minimal: 1 data point available beginning from 1990;
- C Intermediate: 2 data points available;
- D Available: 3 or more data points available.

The total scores for availability of data were calculated as the proportion of pairs indicator/country to the total number of pairs (5786 in 2017, 9196 in 2018). In case of sub-indicators³, these were taken as independent indicators, and each of them was evaluated separately.

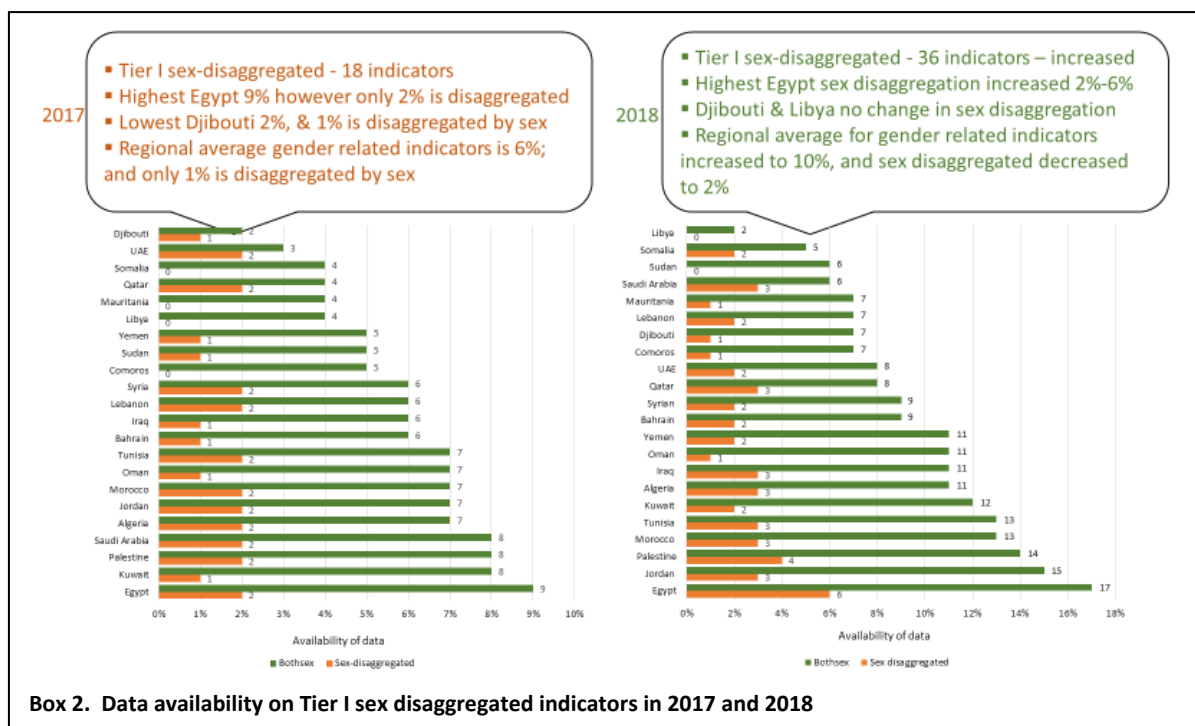
Increase in the number of indicators

Box 1. shows the change of the number of the indicators with Tier I and Tier II status from 2017 to 2018. Tier III indicators should be eliminated, and therefore the IAEG-SDG conducts electronic consultations with the custodian agencies, with a view of reaching an agreement on definitions, concepts, methods and data sources. The reviews by IAEG-SDG are undertaken semi-annually and concluded at two face-to-face meetings around March and October each year. The number of indicators between the 2017 and 2018 reviews have increased by 60% adding to the data reporting requirements.

Box 1. Change of the number of Tier I and Tier II indicators between 2017 and 2018

	2017	2018
SDG1	24	43
SDG2	15	18
SDG3	43	67
SDG4	60	37
SDG5	12	68
SDG6	9	22
SDG7	4	4
SDG8	28	48
SDG9	15	15
SDG10	4	4
SDG11	10	23
SDG12	10	7
SDG13	4	3
SDG14	1	4
SDG15	9	22
SDG16	8	15
SDG17	7	18
Total	263	418

Such increase may negatively affect the availability of data. This can be explained by taking an example of sex-disaggregated data with Tier I status (See Box 2.). Their number has doubled between the two assessment from 18 to 36 indicators. While 44% of data for Tier I sex-disaggregated indicators were available for Arab countries in 2017, this percentage has decreased to 42% in 2018. Logically, no data were withdrawn, and there were even more sex-disaggregated data available in 2018.



³ Some of the indicators of the Global indicators are, by the means of their definition, split into several indicators. For example Indicator “4.1.1 Minimum proficiency in mathematics and reading, by education level and sex (%)” splits into 6 indicators: two sub-indicators by subject (mathematics and reading) and each of these to three by sex (total, female, male).

Total data availability

The overall data availability for Tier I and Tier II indicators for Arab countries was 25% in 2017 and 29.3% in 2018, with the following details:

	2017	2018
No data available	75%	71%
1 data point since 1990	9%	11%
2 data points since 1990	4%	3%
3 and more data points since 1990	12%	15%

The availability of data varies between countries and indicators, and the assessments gathered information permitting a detailed look into the availability of data, and this information shall be further used for designing capacity development programmes and search for additional data.

The following table shows the overall availability of data for 22 Arab countries:

<i>country</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>1 data point</i>	<i>2 data points</i>	<i>3 and more data points</i>
Algeria	69%	14%	2%	15%
Bahrain	78%	8%	4%	10%
Comoros	67%	16%	4%	13%
Djibouti	76%	7%	1%	16%
Egypt	56%	15%	11%	18%
Iraq	78%	8%	6%	8%
Jordan	61%	12%	3%	23%
Kuwait	71%	12%	1%	16%
Lebanon	65%	13%	3%	18%
Libya	87%	6%	0%	6%
Mauritania	76%	11%	1%	12%
Morocco	61%	10%	5%	24%
Oman	75%	9%	4%	12%
Qatar	67%	17%	2%	15%
Saudi Arabia	79%	8%	0%	13%
Somalia	75%	17%	1%	7%
Palestine	59%	8%	12%	21%
Sudan	77%	12%	0%	10%
Syrian	71%	9%	0%	20%
Tunisia	60%	11%	2%	27%
UAE	80%	5%	3%	12%
Yemen	68%	12%	3%	17%

There are also significant variations of availability across the goals. These variations invite to consider, from the policy perspective, priorities of the Arab region and the regional SDG framework. Low (or none) availability of data may be related to the level of relevance of the goal and connected indicators for the

Arab region. While the non-availability of data may be related in part to technical issues of official statistics, it may also suggest that there is a lack of relevance in particular goals, targets or indicators.

<i>goal</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>1 data point</i>	<i>2 data points</i>	<i>3 and more data points</i>
SDG1	59.7%	12.3%	8.2%	19.8%
SDG2	29.3%	27.3%	3.3%	40.2%
SDG3	90.4%	1.9%	0.8%	6.9%
SDG4	46.7%	17.0%	4.7%	31.6%
SDG5	80.3%	11.5%	3.4%	4.8%
SDG6	84.9%	11.8%	2.1%	1.2%
SDG7	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
SDG8	67.4%	10.7%	2.1%	19.8%
SDG9	58.2%	15.8%	2.7%	23.3%
SDG10	63.3%	15.5%	2.0%	19.3%
SDG14	75.0%	1.1%	0.0%	23.9%
SDG15	76.2%	1.4%	0.2%	22.1%
SDG16	62.1%	18.8%	4.8%	14.2%
SDG17	87.4%	5.3%	7.3%	0.0%

Further details of the assessment are available from UN-ESCWA on request.

Availability of metadata

Availability of metadata is a pre-condition for an improved availability of data, as metadata describe the right methodology for compilation of each indicator. The standard metadata are available from the UNSD (DESA). An English-Arabic bilingual e-Handbook on SDG Framework and Metadata⁴, produced by UN-ESCWA, comprises most of the Tier I and Tier II indicators, and other relevant organizations. UN-ESCWA currently works on translations for indicators the were recently converted to Tier I and Tier II.

Follow up to the assessment of data availability

The RCM may consider the results of the assessment of data availability with respect the future work, and in particular:

- (1) Use of the data availability assessment as an indicative, when studying relevance of goals and targets, and formulating the Regional Framework for SDGs;
- (2) Seek new data sources, in cooperation with the custodian agencies, to cover the gaps revealed by the data availability assessment;
- (3) Design statistical capacity development programmes, having in mind that such programmes must be undertaken in cooperation between the regional actors and the headquarters of the custodian agencies, and to cover a broader scope of official statistics development⁵.

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⁴ The English version of the e-Hanbook is available at:

<https://www.unescwa.org/ehandbook-sdg-framework-metadata>

The Arabic version of the e-Hanbook is available at:

<https://www.unescwa.org/ar/الدليل-الإلكتروني-لإطار-أهداف-التنمية-المستدامة-البيانات-الوصفية>

⁵ The capacity development programmes should focus on a wide scope of all underlying data, not only on the pure definitions of the indicators.