First Expert Group Meeting
Summary Report
14 December 2016

Introductions

Hosted by INEGI, and attended by 30 participants, the IAEG-SDGs Working Group on Geospatial Information (the Working Group) convened its first substantive technical meeting in Mexico City from 12-14 December 2016 in order to focus and work to identify, prioritize and begin to develop the "how" to address identified geospatial information contributions, issues and gaps to the global indicator framework and the SDGs.

Following welcome messages by the Co-Chairs of the Working Group, Mr. Rolando Ocampo (Mexico) and Ms. Marie Haldorson (Sweden), the Meeting was officially opened by the President of INEGI, Dr. Julio Santaella Castella, whom noted the immense value of the integration of statistics and geography to produce sound, rigorous, timely and effective ways of monitoring the SDGs, and welcomed the formation of the Working Group. Framing the relationship like a marriage, Dr. Santaella reiterated that it is both unprecedented and encouraging that experts from the geospatial, earth observations and statistical community – from all regions, and a diversity of institutions and organizations – are able to meet and work together in order to develop a common understanding of how to enhance the SDG indicator framework, through an integrated application of disciplines, methodologies and experiences to ensure that progress is uniform and aligned.

In his keynote presentation Mr. Enrique Ordaz, Co-Chair of the IAEG-SDGs, provided a global status report of the indicator framework, particularly in relation to the 4th meeting of the IAEG-SDGs, convened in Geneva from 15-18 November 2016. Mr. Ordaz explained the current status of the global indicator framework, including the working groups of IAEG-SDGs; the tier classification; the work plan for Tier III indicators; refinements and revisions of indicators; additional indicators being considered; and data disaggregation. Importantly, the IAEG-SDGs has developed a mechanism for updating the tier system on an annual basis, with revised classifications published annually following the IAEG-SDGs meeting. The Tier III work plan and next steps will have a number of "fast tracked" indicators for the March 2017 meeting of the IAEG-SDGs. Mr. Ordaz thanked the Working Group for considering the indicators through the geographic lens, in order to add value to the indicators, and looked forward to the progress of the Working Group being reported to the IAEG-SDGs at its next meeting in March 2017. In this context, he invited the Working Group to have an exchange of points of view and provide proposals at the 5th meeting of the IAEG-SDGs.

Programme of Work

The main task of the Expert Group Meeting was to review the global indicators (with a particular emphasis on Tier III indicators) through a 'geographic location' lens, inclusive of reviewing the metadata compiled for the indicators, identifying existing geospatial data gaps, geospatial methodological and measurement issues, and considering how geospatial information can contribute to the indicators and metadata.

The Meeting commenced its programme with reports by countries and international organizations on work and analysis they have undertaken towards informing the global indicator framework with geospatial and earth observations information; including gaps and issues identified, and

methodological approaches that may have been developed. During this process, a number of overarching 'cross-cutting' issues were raised that the Meeting will need to consider in context of the role/contribution of geography to the indicators. These included: (a) should we include technology as an enabling mechanism; (b) should we consider crowd-sourced data or volunteered geographic information and other alternative data sources; (c) data disaggregation, urban/rural in particular; (d) national versus international (global) data; (e) what is the purview of the geospatial framework we work within; (f) what options and/or recommendations are we making; and (g) how do countries decide what and how they implement.

The Meeting, through three break-out groups, concluded a systematic approach to reviewing the indicators and then subsequently short-listed indicators which identified existing geospatial data gaps, methodological and measurements issues, and which could benefit from geographic location, including with relevance to disaggregation, starting with Tier III indicators first. The short list, consisting of approximately 30 indicators, were then subset further by consensus to 16 (5 Tier I, 3 Tier II, 8 Tier III) indicators which are considered priority in order to provide comprehensive guidance to the IAEG-SDGs and relevant international custodian agencies.

With regard to the 5 Tier I indicators, in its deliberations the Working Group noted that there are a number of indicators, which would be much more relevant to the indicator framework once being disaggregated through geospatial information from national to sub-national levels. Geospatial information is able to provide enabling methodologies and processes for disaggregation. For example, disaggregation of national statistical data is only made viable by use of geospatial information. This is acknowledged within the principles of the global statistical geospatial framework which should be adopted. As referenced in the Working Group's terms of Reference, the Working Group is able to undertake methodological work and provide guidance on specific areas for improving disaggregation by geographic location to the IAEG-SDGs for national and sub-national reporting.

As a means to provide tangible outcomes to the IAEG-SDGs and to demonstrate the value of geospatial information and how it is able to contribute to the indicators and metadata, the Working Group has decided to focus on 3 indicators and to deliver to the IAEG-SDGs at its 5th meeting in March 2017 its initial findings and advice. These indicators are: 6.6.1, 9.1.1 and 15.3.1 (water, rural population and land) and are able to demonstrate methodological approaches, data availability, disaggregation, the perspectives of international (global) data, and working with the custodial agencies.

Related Discussion Topics

a)   Continue inspecting and analyzing the indicator framework as a dynamic process. Also, pre-emptively analyze the additional indicators proposed by the IAEG-SDGs.
b)   Geospatial information is able to offer 'global' or international data that is consistent. But what does that mean? How do we communicate aggregation and/or disaggregation?
c)   Providing internationally comparable data within different national domains. Global and regional aggregates.
d)   What data are being considered from the indicators for capturing in the 2020 Round of Census? Census will be greatly enhanced if a geographic location is captured and will have immense value for monitoring the SDGs in the years ahead. Identify connections with the SEEA.

e)   Review the methodologies and whether they need to be evaluated, established, and modified/improved. The current indicator process has some inconsistencies. Geospatial inputs could result in modifying existing definitions; developing comparable definitions; or creating a new definition.

f)   Do we have the data? Is it consistent – national, global, a mix? What data resolution, accuracy, currency is required? National versus international. What is the common level of geography? Consider the periodicity of data – baselines, synthesis, refresh rates, annual, biennial, etc.

g)   There was discussion concerning geo-centric and geo-enabled data. The desirability is for geospatially enabled data and information, essentially incorporating or adding geographic location to existing and new data and information including statistical data. This recognizes that all activities and situations have both a geographical and temporal context.

h)   Addressed issue of terminology, including those that would need further clarification to achieve more consistent approaches and methodologies, and ultimately clearer and more comparable indicators. These include, among others, of "urban" and "rural", "forests", "sustainable management", and "ecosystem approaches".

Actions for the Working Group to March 2017

1.   Continue to provide expertise and advice to the IAEG-SDGs on the geospatial aspects of the global indicator framework and complete the analysis to consolidate the shortlist of indicators that would benefit from geospatial information.

2.   Provide guidance to the IAEG-SDGs on data disaggregation.

3.   Focus on 3 indicators to deliver to the IAEG-SDGs at its 5th meeting in March 2017. These indicators are: 6.6.1, 9.1.1 and 15.3.1. Three task teams established for each of the 3 indicators to provide case studies that demonstrate methodological approaches, data availability, disaggregation, the perspectives of global data, and working with the custodial agencies.

4.   Three task teams established to address cross-cutting issues to deliver to the IAEG-SDGs at its 5th meeting in March 2017:

- Task on disaggregation, including urban/rural.
- Task on alternative data sources, including crowd sourced data and VGI.
- Task on national versus global data.