

Changing the Focus: Moving Beyond Siloed Monitoring of Progress Towards Inclusive Action to Achieve the SDGs

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SUMMARY

In September 2015, world leaders unanimously approved the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a comprehensive set of 17 goals and 169 targets, referred to together as the 2030 agenda. This marked an important moment for the land sector, because, unlike the Millennium Development Goals that preceded the SDGs, land rights were included in the targets and thus finally acknowledged by the wider development community as an essential element to achieving sustainable development.

The land sector now has the responsibility to carry this forward and to ensure that data collection and data monitoring are carried out, and that required and specific action is being taken to get close to these targets. However, the broad range of land-related data and information needed to effectively monitor the land-related indicators in the SDGs has thus far been largely inaccessible, unavailable, or dispersed across various websites and databases. To both implement and monitor progress on the SDGs, decision makers need data and statistics that are accurate, timely, sufficiently disaggregated, relevant, accessible and perhaps most importantly, easy to use. To that aim, numerous monitoring initiatives have been established that aim to track tenure security thus far.

These are all important initiatives and contribute their own necessary value to the overall process of achieving the SDGs. However the multiplication of initiatives, exacerbated by a complicated landscape of different stakeholders and official and unofficial monitoring processes, means that the risk of losing the overview is high. There is a great need to consolidate and harmonize approaches in a coherent way that is useful for decision makers. After all, monitoring progress is just the beginning. Once we know where we stand, changemakers need to make evidence- based decisions, using this data.

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A data revolution is indeed necessary for the success of the SDGs, but while we tend to focus on data availability, data availability is only truly powerful if the data at hand is presented in a way that is easy to use and interact with. The question moving forward is: how do we ensure that we have harmonizing - instead of competing - efforts to monitor progress against the SDGs for the various land indicators? And furthering this question, once we know where we stand in terms of progress against these targets, how can we ensure that we can collectively work towards achieving them?

In order to achieve the SDGs land-targets by 2020, there is a need to build capacities of more actors to engage with and take action based on monitoring data. Engaging with the monitoring data is not something that should be left to National Statistical Offices or data scientists. To achieve the SDGs, we need a much broader community working and contributing towards these goals. In this paper, we want to explore how we can harmonize the ongoing monitoring initiatives and, most importantly, present this monitoring data in a way that a large community, with various levels of expertise, can all contribute their part in achieving the SDGs.

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