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**Where are the SDG data gaps in Asia-Pacific?**
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I.   INTRODUCTION

1.   The statistical community has made considerable advances in producing data for the SDG indicator framework since 2015. In Asia-Pacific, the availability of indicators is steadily increasing[1] and has almost doubled since 2017 (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Data availability for SDG indicators in Asia-Pacific region, 2017-2021
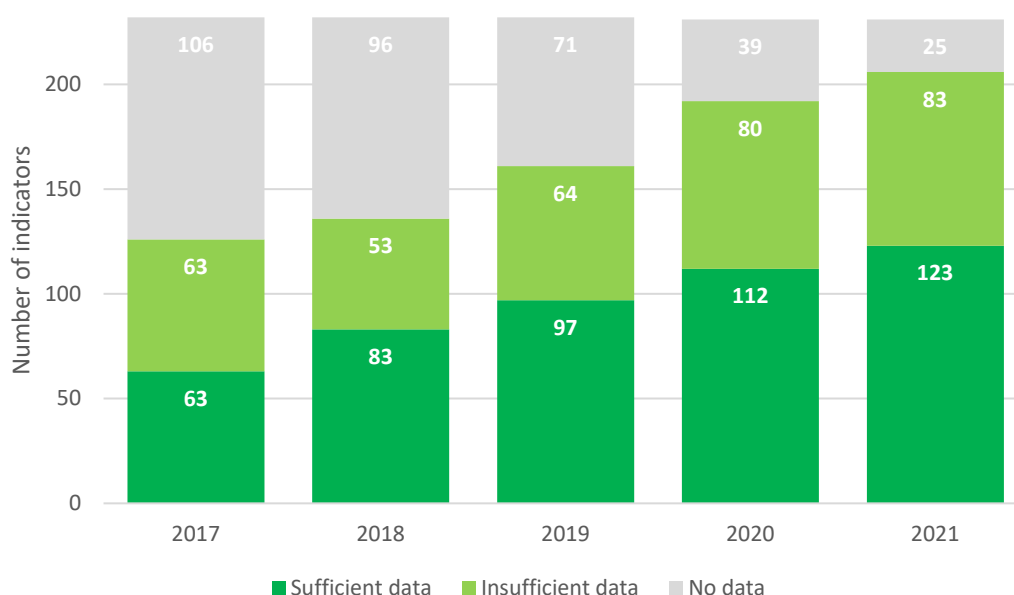
Note: An indicator is considered with "sufficient "data if at least two data points for more than half of the countries and territories in Asia and the Pacific are available since 2000. Otherwise, data is "insufficient" or there is "no data" available for that indicator.

2.   If we are already approaching the mid-point of the 15 years of the SDGs, why aren't more data available? There is no simple answer. Arguably there may be up to 231 answers, one for each indicator. ESCAP examined each indicator to understand how they are compiled at national and international levels and then mapped them on publicly known availability of data for all countries in Asia-Pacific region to draw insights into the major sources of data and priorities for filling data gaps. The results revealed the significant role that international cooperation plays in compiling data on nearly one-third of the SDG indicators. It also

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[1] ESCAP. Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2022.

underscores the importance and potential of regular household surveys for producing SDG data.

II.   DATA SOURCES

3.   Data for the SDG indicators come from several different sources – at local, national, and international levels. For the purpose of this analysis, data sources were categorized into nine broad groups described in Table 1. When an indicator is compiled with data from multiple sources, a primary or main source is selected, and the others are tagged as alternative or complementary sources.

Table 1
Categories of SDG data sources

| Source type	Description
Household survey	Such as M*ultiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS),* d*emographic and health surveys* (*DHS*), labour force surveys (LFS), living standards measurement study surveys (LSMS), and household income expenditure surveys (HIES)
Administrative data	Data collected by governmental agencies for administrative purposes
Population census	National population and housing censuses
National accounts	Systems of national accounts
CRVS	Civil registration and vital statistics
Big data	Such as web-scraping, mobile phone data, social media data, scanner data, and satellite imagery data
International reporting	Data reported to international agencies by national focal points/coordinators but not necessarily compiled and officially published at the national level. The data could come from multiple sources at national and subnational levels.
International database	Data compiled and monitored by international agencies directly. For example, a custodian agency may compile an indicator based on data collected through a global questionnaire or directly collected by the agency and verified by countries.
Others	Based on agriculture, enterprise, and individual surveys; price data

III.   ANALYSIS

4.   Two types of assessments were carried on. First, each indicator's global SDG metadata repository[2] was reviewed to identify primary and alternative/complementary data sources for the indicator (using source categories presented in Table 1). Second, data availability for each country was evaluated based on the latest dataset from the SDG Global Database. The data gaps were then mapped on primary data sources to identify patterns of data availability by each

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[2] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/

source. For example, for a randomly selected country (Country X), the distribution of indicators along the nine source categories is in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Availability of data according to data source classification for Country X
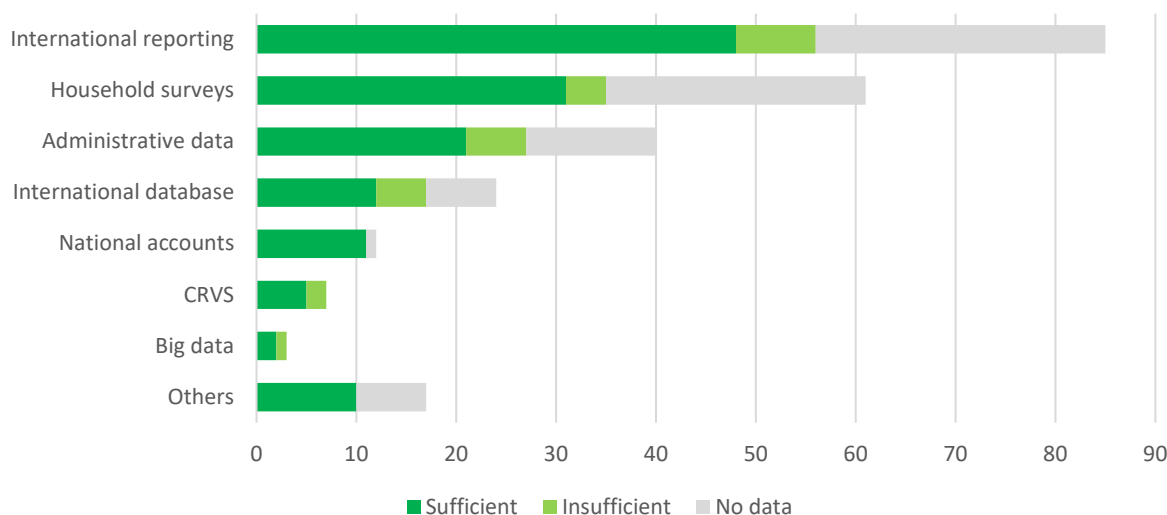
Note: An indicator is considered with "sufficient "data if at least two data points are available since 2000. Otherwise, data is "insufficient" (one data value since 2000) or there is "no data" available for that indicator.

5.   Dissecting the availability by source allows the country to identify the data sources required to fill most prominent data gaps – in this case, international reporting through cooperation with international agencies, household surveys, and administrative data, together provide data for 75 per cent of the SDG indicators.

6.   Focusing on one source category can provide useful information for more detailed data planning. For example, for the same Country X, indicators in Goal 1 that mainly come from household surveys are listed in Table 2, classified by availability and details on the type of household surveys most appropriate for each indicator. Indicators 1.2.2 (Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions[3]), 1.4.2 (Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, [a] with legally recognized documentation, and [b] who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure[4]), and 1.b.1 (Pro-poor public social spending[5]) have no data for country X. In contrast, other household survey-based indicators on poverty have sufficient data in this country.

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[3] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-01-02-02.pdf
[4] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-01-04-02.pdf
[5] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-01-0b-01.pdf

Table 2

Data availability in Country X for indicators under Goal 1 for which household surveys are the main source

| | SDG indicators | Data availability and source | | |
		No data	*Insufficient*	*Sufficient*
1.1.1	International poverty	-	-	HH survey with inc/exp module
1.2.1	National Poverty	-	-	HH survey with inc/exp module
1.2.2	Poverty according to national dimensions	Multipurpose HH survey	-	-
1.3.1	Social protection	-	-	World Bank ASPIRE
1.4.1	Access to basic water & sanitation services	-	-	Multipurpose HH survey
1.4.2	Land tenure rights	HIES/ Multipurpose HH survey	-	-
1.b.1	Pro-poor public social spending	Multipurpose HH survey	-	-

7.   Assuming the household surveys are used for data collection for the existing indicators, recommendations can be drawn on producing data for the missing indicators, thus filling in gaps in Goal 1. For example:

- 1.2.2 – since country X already produces 1.1.1, 1.2.1, and 1.4.1 from household surveys with information on income/expenditure and household access to basic services/needs, the required information for producing multidimensional poverty statistics is likely available. Recommendation: use existing data from household surveys and work with international agencies (such as UNDP and World Bank Group) to produce national multidimensional poverty statistics.
- 1.4.2 – the compilation of the indicator depends on adding relevant questions to censuses or existing household surveys. Recommendation: ensure that modules are added to household surveys.

8.   Finally, a comparison across countries for these selected indicators (Table 3) shows that:

- 1.b.1 is not available for any country in Asia-Pacific (or any area in the world) thus the data gap is beyond the national scope.
- 1.2.2 and 1.4.2 are compiled by only nine and six countries in the region, respectively. Most countries have only one data point (insufficient data), indicating that they have just started compiling this indicator.

Table 3
Availability of selected indicators by number of countries or territories in Asia-Pacific

	SDG Indicators	Number of countries or territories		
		No data	Insufficient	Sufficient
1.2.2	Poverty according to national dimensions	46	3	9
1.4.2	Land tenure rights	51	7	0
1.b.1	Pro-poor public social spending	58	0	0

IV.   CONCLUSIONS

9.   Data planning for monitoring the SDGs is complex and requires treating every indicator differently. The global flow of SDG data and metadata provides valuable evidence-base on availability patterns, key data sources, and stakeholders, informing national efforts for more effective data planning.

10.   This paper presented the findings from an analysis conducted by ESCAP for Asia-Pacific countries, mapping SDG data availability on primary data sources. Results show that the top three sources of data for SDG indicators are international reporting, household surveys, and administrative data. The example from one country illustrates the value of mapping exercises for targeted data planning. For instance, three different indicators lacking data under Goal 1 (no poverty) may require different treatments: using existing data (1.2.2), advocating for adding new variables to existing surveys (1.4.2) or working with the international community to establish new standards/methods, and meanwhile looking for alternative data sources (1.b.1).

11.   Further work is underway to build a tool to facilitate this analysis and share results with national statistical systems, policymakers, and the general public.

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