

**Expert Meeting on Global Ageing and the data revolution  
– the way forward in the post-2015 environment**  
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**Grace Sanico Steffan**

Good morning and thank you for inviting me to join this session. My contribution to this discussion is based on the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on human rights indicators. With inputs from a broad range of stakeholders we have a model that provides a standardized approach to develop human rights indicators, facilitating and giving structure to the translation of internationally agreed human rights standards, starting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, into contextually relevant and robust indicators at country level. Illustrative indicators were developed for rights and freedoms that find frequent references in international human rights treaties.

The OHCHR model provides a balance between universal and the need for contextualization in order to make the indicators more expedient at national level and for certain population groups, including for older persons. **Thus, contextualizing the existing OHCHR illustrative human rights indicators for older persons is feasible and should be seen as a good practice.** These are useful for measuring the implementation and follow-up on recommendations from international human rights mechanisms, to strengthen the human rights-based approach to development and governance, and in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Development of indicators through a participatory process is a distinctive feature of the OHCHR work. We push for collaboration among data producers and users, including National Statistical Offices (NSOs), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) to be reinforced. And I would like to share with you some examples from these existing collaborative initiatives that could be useful in responding to the challenges posed by the SDGs.

**The common cause of statistics and human rights**

The contribution of official statistics to the realization of human rights is significant. The human rights community, including the UN human rights mechanisms, rely on the use of statistics to measure implementation of rights and to support evidenced-based policy. For instance, the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities includes specific provisions on the role of statistics and data collection in order for State parties to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the convention. **Should an internationally agreed, legally binding standards to protect, respect and fulfil the rights of older persons be developed, such specific provisions on the role of data and statistics must be included.**

Likewise, the contribution of human rights in producing trustworthy statistics is significant. Rights to privacy, information, to be registered, data protection, self-identification, and participation; are all vital to ensure robustness and independence of official statistical systems. Implementing the rights of statisticians themselves could

help provide them a safe space to do their work, without fear of recrimination or even worse reprisal. The common cause of statistics and human rights is to improve peoples' lives, and collaboration between these two fields will gain importance as the work on measuring and monitoring the SDGs is underway.

In order to achieve this, it is imperative to explore the human rights approach to data as guidance on how we respond to the data challenge posed by the SDGs. This is especially so with our current data systems not fully measuring today's ageing world.

## **Human rights approach to data**

### *Disaggregation*

National averages are insufficient to help reveal who are the most deprived or to measure inequality and discrimination. For example, data on social protection disaggregated by older persons will make it possible to understand better the phenomenon of poverty in old age and help in designing effective policies. States have the obligation to produce disaggregated data by prohibited grounds of discrimination to the extent feasible. This includes disaggregation by age, covering the entire life-cycle from birth to death. Thus, increasing the capacity of statistical systems to produce and analyse more disaggregated data is necessary to measure disparities and monitor the reduction of inequalities. **For older persons and other groups that are nearly, if not completely, invisible in official statistics, new partnerships and use of innovative technologies and statistical techniques are required.**

### *Human Rights Standards*

The SDGs must measure availability, accessibility and quality of rights-related services and goods; use of maximum available resources domestically and internationally; access to justice and freedom from violence. These pose a challenge because for some of these priorities, data may not be readily available yet, although they are conceptually clear and with established methodologies. In fact, for many of these topics there are considerable data development and compilation in international organizations, some national statistical systems, and human rights organizations. Thus, a forward-looking approach to measuring the new goals and targets is needed, so that the priorities of the SDGs are not limited by existing data and data sources. In addition, serious investment in the development of new data, such as topics that are currently not part of official statistics; and data sources, such as non-traditional sources which meet relevant statistical and human rights standards, should be promoted. **To ensure that these new sources of data comply with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, statistical systems will have to play a more central role in coordinating the validation of data coming from these sources, e.g. civil society, human rights organizations, including big data.**

### *Participation*

The slogan "nothing about us without us" embodies the zeitgeist of the human rights movement. Facilitating participation of older persons in the measurement process does not only make sense to guarantee wider acceptance of the data but also to ensure their usefulness and accuracy. NHRIs and CSOs, due to the nature of their work and how close they work with older persons, would be strategic partners to facilitate this participation. By encouraging their participation in the preparation of the national

strategies for the development of statistics, or signing of memorandum of understanding, cross training on basic human rights for statisticians and basic statistics for human rights practitioners, national statistical systems could potentially strengthen this type of collaboration. **This requires developing governance mechanisms on a strengthened partnership of official statistics and human rights organizations.**

### *Data collection safeguards*

Human rights safeguards must be respected during the whole spectrum of data production. Data confidentiality, non-discrimination, self-identification, etc. must be observed during collection, processing and dissemination of data. This must be so if we would like that the surveyed population, data producers and users are able to operate freely and independently from political and other influence. The population, including older persons, must be able to control information regarding them and be protected from abuses of data. In the long run, the purpose of guaranteeing data collection safeguards is to ensure that data are used for their inherent function, to serve the public good. **Guidelines to ensure that the full spectrum of data production conform to legal and institutional standards on ethics, statistics and human rights should be developed.**

### *Accountability framework*

For States to know the extent of efforts needed to reach the SDG targets, they should be measuring not only outcomes, but their means (legal, institutional and policy). Strengthening accountability and policy coherence means that any new global review mechanism for post-2015 development commitments should explicitly refer to international human rights treaty standards, and should ensure rigorous independent review, effective civil society participation and high-level political accountability. For States not to dilute or retract from their legal and policy commitments at the global level there must be a clear and transparent national tailoring process. Accountability also means transparency in the work of statistical systems and more direct communication with the population they serve. **To this end, increased data literacy is crucial in allowing the population to better understand and use data.**

### **Final Words**

For a truly transformative new Sustainable Development Goals where no group of people, including older persons and key issues remain invisible, a human rights approach to data is critical. With this approach come opportunities and challenges that require collaboration among a broad range of data producers and users in order to help achieve the ambition of leaving no one behind in the new agenda.