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Development Co-operation Directorate  
Development Assistance Committee

## DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics

### DATA COLLECTION ON SDG FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION ACTIVITIES

Summary of the WP-STAT Workshop held on 11 October 2017

*Please note that this document is available in PDF format only.*

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## **Data collection on SDG focus of development co-operation activities**

Workshop 11<sup>th</sup> October 2017  
OECD Conference Centre - Paris

### Résumé of the discussions

This informal workshop on “Data collection on SDG focus of development co-operation activities”, organised in follow-up to the June 2017 meeting of the Working Party on Development Finance Statistics (WP-STAT)<sup>1</sup>, was chaired by Mr. Jérôme Le Roy (EU) and Ms. Megumi Muto (Japan). The list of participants is available in Annex I.

The scope of the meeting was to discuss the potential introduction of an SDG field in the CRS database, its implications in terms of data collection and use, its relation with the current systems of purpose codes and markers, and to provide examples of the systems being designed by some reporting countries in this area. The agenda of the meeting (Annex II) included presentations by OECD Secretariat and participating countries, plenary and group discussions. The main points of discussions are summarised below.

#### **1. Opening Session.**

The meeting was opened by interventions from the Chair and from the Secretariat that set the ground of the discussion highlighting in particular that:

- The WP-STAT has been working on this subject since 2015, firstly identifying the possibility of adjusting the classifications and linking them with the SDG targets, noting however that this route would not be sufficient and thus exploring the proposal of implementing a specific field to indicate the connection of each activity with SDG goals and targets in the CRS database. The objective of the workshop is to provide the basis for a proposal to be elaborated for discussion at the next WP-STAT in January 2018.
- The timing to implement such reform is limited. Some donors will start to report on their SDG commitments in 2019, for 2018 flows, and there is the necessity to keep the reform proposal simple and concrete to be easily implementable.
- The major danger for any statistical system is to become obsolete. Given that the SDGs are most relevant in today’s development co-operation, there is a strong case for their integration in the systems and classifications that track development co-operation.
- The proposed inclusion of an SDG field is not the only reform that is being discussed to keep the statistical system up to date and in line with the current challenges. The implementation of multiple purpose codes in the CRS will increase the flexibility of the system and its ability to precisely track the activities. The ongoing discussion on Private Sector Instruments (PSI) and in-

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<sup>1</sup> See WP-STAT summary record [DCD/DAC/STAT/M\(2017\)2](#), paragraphs 55-57 and email STAT(2017)47 issued on 14 September 2017.

donor refugee costs as well as the development of TOSSD are other examples of the modernisation of the statistical system needed for it to be fit for purpose for the future.

## **2. Strengthening providers' results frameworks through SDG targets & indicators**

The session was opened by a presentation by Poul Engberg-Pedersen and Rosie Zwart (OECD Secretariat, REED) on the topic of the inclusion of SDG targets and indicators in the existing and evolving results frameworks of providers of development finance. The main points of discussions are summarised below.

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development expresses the vision and aspirations of the international community, setting up an ambitious results framework with SDGs, targets, indicators and deadlines (mostly by 2030). The 2030 Agenda offers a results framework for development, but not for development co-operation per se (including official development assistance, ODA), nor for the development co-operation efforts of individual providers.
- The SDG Goals are too wide to be usefully linked to activities and results of development co-operation, however there are more than 160 SDG targets and indicators and only a part of them are narrow and robust enough to provide useful linkages between inputs and outputs, activities and results. The Secretariat identified a menu of 42 SDG outcome targets (supported by 53 robust indicators) and 18 SDG- Means of Implementation targets (supported by 18 robust indicators) that can be usefully employed in a result framework covering development outcomes, development co-operation outcomes and provider performance. This list of targets and indicators can be used as a starting point for a discussion for their inclusion in various forms in the statistical system used to track development co-operation activities.
- The CRS is a powerful tool and at some point providers will have to report on how much they do for each SDG target and goal. The main question is if the linkages between the SDG targets and the activities should remain in the result framework of each finance provider or if they should be included into the CRS.
- There is a logic chain that takes us from input to output to outcomes to impacts. However this logic chain is obviously influenced by several external factors, including some non-predictable. Moreover, some of the targets are political and the linkages between purpose codes and SDG targets may be difficult because of transversal, cross-cutting issues. Also, if there exist 42 targets with robust indicators, there are much more targets for which robust indicators are not available. This will lead – both on the side of the provider countries and partners – to the use proxies with related comparability issues.
- The CRS tracks development co-operation inputs and would need a major reform to allow also the reporting on results. The attribution of funding against SDG targets is relatively easy, while the linkages to results are a much more complex matter. In this context, it has to be clarified what are the exact objectives to be achieved in the CRS. At the technical level the IATI exercise has been useful to help link information from implementing partners back to funders.
- The mapping and reporting of both ODA and non-ODA development finance to SDG targets would be very useful. This would allow linking all financial flows to a common results framework, and a clearer understanding of the contribution of the different financial institutions to the

targets in the partner countries. Potentially it will lead to an increase of coordination and effectiveness of the sector.

- There is a need to be aware of the “indicator bias”. In some cases targets are generic and the indicator will cover in a precise manner only one aspect of the target. SDG targets were designed as a general roadmap for development and, although they are a great tool for development partnerships, it can be challenging to cover this broad agenda in its entirety. Development partners have to make their best efforts to report on their activities independently from the fact that some targets have / have not corresponding measurable and robust targets and indicators.
- An important question is if some of the more generic and cross-cutting targets must be excluded *a priori* or not. For example, the target 1.1 on poverty shall be excluded because this is an umbrella objective for all development co-operation? Shall anyone report as poverty reduction any specific activity, or not? An earlier experience in attempting to map development cooperation activities with the target 1.1 resulted in the exclusion of the target because it was too wide.
- Some attempts of automatically linking activities with SDG targets have been tried with machine learning algorithms, but have not succeeded. The mapping between purpose codes and SDG targets initiated by the Secretariat also showed that it is impossible to properly identify SDG-related aid activities with the current instruments. To establish this linkage, given the current system architecture, there is no other way than manual reporting on the targets by the finance providers. A reform is needed, therefore, in the shortest possible time. The questions to be answered include, firstly, what is the precise objective of this reform? Secondly, what are the practical modalities of the reform? Thirdly what group of targets (and/or) indicators should be used? It is necessary to make proper design choices and narrow down the analysis to develop a concrete proposal for the WP-STAT.

### **3. Importance and relevance of the work on linking development co-operation contributions with the SDG targets.**

The session was opened by the OECD Secretariat, followed by a group discussion over the issues of motivation, relevance and opportunities for including an SDG field in the CRS statistical system in response to the new needs. The main topics discussed were the following:

- The SDGs alignment is an inherent characteristic of the current development flows, perhaps one of the most important, and the DAC/CRS classification actually in use to track development finance is not, in its actual form, able to comprehensively track this aspect. The inclusion of an SDG field into the CRS reporting would assure to maintain the system up to date and relevant, and best suited to fulfil its objective of tracking the relevant characteristics of the development finance flows. An optional SDG field data, indicating the SDG targets of the recorded activities, would permit to establish clear linkages between the project(s), the sector(s) involved and the goals/targets to which the activity is contributing to.
- The SDG data collected would be useful to both development institutions and countries to better align their frameworks, identify sectoral priorities and funding gaps, improve the coordination between development partners and the overall efficiency of the development finance. An SDG field would permit to establish a linkage of the activities with the relevant indicators, allowing a

greater transparency of the systems and therefore contribute to improve the overall effectiveness of development cooperation.

- The implementation of an SDG field opens possibilities to link DAC with UN data, and build appropriate information tools to inform the decisions.
- SDGs are used by partner countries to track their own funding. In Colombia for example, the central government has set some targets that could be achieved with its own resources. The availability of funding information per target would encourage the reorientation of the financing to the national funding gaps and the coordination of the initiatives.
- An issue to be discussed is how core contributions to multilateral institutions and development partners could be reported on within the SDG target systems. The SDG contributions of a country that commit large part of its development budget through these channels might result in grossly underestimated amounts without a clear mechanism to track back and report SDG contributions to the original funding source.
- One of the purposes of an SDG field might also be to establish a standard that can be used by others. For example NGOs do not report to the CRS and do not use its purpose code system, however they might find it possible to report towards SDGs targets that they might already use in their system, allowing cross linking of the data.
- Some extremely important development co-operation activities - such as policy dialogue – have no clear SDG targets attached to them but nevertheless they are essential to the success of the co-operation. We should be careful of establishing a rigid linkage between financial data and outcomes.
- The idea of a system linking SDGs to activities is appealing, but we should acknowledge the limits of such a system. It is unfeasible to allocate budget to 160+ SDGs targets or to establish the global viable cost of reaching each SDG. However, at the country level, budget allocated per SDG target and goal makes much more sense and might help coordination.

#### **4. Relation between policy markers and a potential SDG field.**

The Session was introduced by a presentation of the OECD Secretariat highlighting the complex relationship between Rio and Policy markers and the SDG targets, and was followed by small group discussions on the general topic and on specific markers. The main issues discussed included:

- Rio and Policy markers address the needs of identifying cross-cutting and qualitative aspects of development finance that cannot be (easily) identified with purposes codes alone. There is increasing pressure to expand the marker system with discussions currently ongoing on 4 new markers. Yet the usefulness of marker data for quantitative analysis is regularly challenged. The relation of Rio and policy markers with SDG targets is multi-faceted, with some markers that find a very good correspondence with policy markers, while some others are only partially or generically linked with SDGs. SDGs targets and markers are systems designed for different scopes, the creation of an SDG field might reduce the need for new markers, but obviously not eliminate it completely.

- Markers and an SDG field could usefully cover different aspects of development finance. Markers are qualitative (although often used in a quantitative way) while an SDG field could be designed to cover quantitative aspects (similarly to the multi-purpose codes).
- Among the markers under discussion, most have clear linkages with SDGs (such as nutrition, disaster risk reduction, decent work), while it was not possible to identify a clear SDG target of reference for the disability marker.
- The proliferation of policy markers is clearly an issue that needs to be addressed. An SDG field might reduce the need for new markers but in any case the issue of removing markers that are no longer relevant remains. One possibility could be to agree on the maximum number of markers to include in the CRS and link the creation of a new marker to the deletion of another one no more relevant or little used.

## 5. Definition of the SDG field.

The session was opened by a presentation by Sweden on its experience in back-tracing a subset of Sida's co-operation activities to SDG targets. It was followed by a presentation by the OECD Secretariat on possible implementation modalities for an SDG field. Discussions included the following topics:

- Two methods can be used to map SDG targets to activities, a qualitative one (similar to the Rio Markers) and a quantitative one (similar to the climate components of MDB reporting). This exercise tested both but found the implementation of a quantitative method easier to communicate and to understand. It has also to be highlighted that some SDG targets had been excluded from the mapping (notably the ones relating to poverty) due to their too generic specification. Furthermore, a maximum number of targets was set (8) to maintain the exercise manageable. The quantitative method did use the shares but which did not necessarily add up to 100% (meaning that some activities could not be entirely mapped to SDG targets).
- From the technical point of view an SDG field can be implemented in various ways including 1) flags, 2) qualitative (principal/significant) and 3) quantitative (component shares). All methods can be integrated in the database with different technical solutions.
- The issue of verticality or horizontality of the SDG field (so a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach) shall be discussed in depth, in particular for their linkages with existing systems. The choice is not trivial and some members might prefer one solution over the other.
- The SDG field could be defined as being applicable to only a subset of targets, but this should be a well-informed decision by members. One could also consider the establishment of "business rules" to link SDG targets to specific purpose codes and markers, in order to simplify and structure the output in a more coherent way.
- Another issue to be considered is the level of skills required at the data collection / processing point. A too demanding process might undermine data quality or the coverage of the indicators, being counterproductive. Furthermore rules to clearly identify and interpret the targets should be put in place or the compatibility of the system – and thus its usefulness – would be jeopardised.

## **6. Rationale for mapping CRS classifications to SDG targets.**

The session was introduced by a presentation of the UAE on its experience in mapping the SDG targets addressed by the development co-operation. The topics discussed included:

- The UAE experience was centred on the question how much UAE is giving to SDGs in a particular year. The methodology used was based on identifying the main purpose of projects and the mapping up to 12 targets. The exercise looked at indicators and ended up establishing a relationship of one project one target. Double counting was excluded, and manual attribution was used, although it remains open if this can be automated by keywords. Goals 1, 10, 17 were the last to be selected when no other targets were appropriate.

## **7. Conclusions**

The workshop highlighted the rationale of adding an SDG field to the CRS, its usefulness and limits, and the challenges to its implementation. The participants largely agreed on the utility of such a field. Building on the ideas and views exchanged at the workshop, the Secretariat will elaborate a proposal for discussion at the WP-STAT in January 2018.



## **Annex I**

### **Participants List for Workshop on data collection on SDG focus of development co-operation activities**

11/10/2017

All Sessions

#### ***Australia/Australie***

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## Annex II

### Data collection on SDG focus of development co-operation activities

*Concept note and draft agenda for WP-STAT workshop to be held on 11 October 2017, OECD Conference Centre, Paris*

The Working Party on Development Finance Statistics (WP-STAT) discussed -in a series of meetings since 2015- possible **adjustments to the CRS classifications** (purpose codes and policy markers) to better track development co-operation in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A preliminary mapping of the CRS classification to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was presented in March 2015 [[DCD/DAC/STAT\(2015\)9](#)]. In March 2016, a **matrix** was distributed to members demonstrating that, even though some SDG targets can be linked to CRS purpose codes, these linkages are not necessarily unique, gaps and overlaps do exist, and in some cases it is difficult to map the targets to a limited number of purpose codes. For example, for goal 12 “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”, the Secretariat tried mapping targets to purpose codes using only the corresponding outcome targets (i.e. targets 12.2, 12.3, 12.5) but could identify, for each, between 10 to 63 relevant purpose codes. Furthermore, the fact that goal 12 is **crosscutting** and relates to various sectors of the economy [as several other SDGs such as SDG 1 (poverty), SDG 8 (employment and decent work), SDG 9 (resilient infrastructure) and SDG 10 (inequality)] increases the complexity of linking its targets to only a limited number of purpose codes.

Some providers have tested this approach in their internal systems. The **United Arab Emirates** recently mapped their foreign assistance to the 2030 Agenda – they developed a “SDG Mapping Matrix Tool”, shortlisting the targets that could align with UAE’s development co-operation activities. However, the UAE recognises that the tested method (i.e. one target by type of project) may not fully capture the intended purpose of the development activity, and needs to be further improved.

Work has also been undertaken to adjust the classifications to **facilitate the identification of activities carried out in areas relevant to the SDGs**, and thereby make the classifications more flexible for the monitoring of development co-operation in support of the 2030 Agenda. These adjustments will not, however, allow for the establishment of direct and univocal links between development co-operation inputs (donor contributions) and development outcomes (results) outlined in the SDG goals and targets. It has therefore been proposed that a specific field be introduced in the CRS for reporting on the SDG focus of development co-operation activities.

Approaches in this area are already being tested by members. Sweden conducted a pilot study on aligning international development co-operation to the 2030 Agenda [[DCD/DAC/STAT/RD\(2017\)3](#)], concluding on the practicality and relevance of such a measure to see how international development co-operation finances the SDGs. Sweden also found that ODA consists of overarching targets, and that reporting should be done distributing disbursements across the identified SDG targets. According to the results of the pilot, the number of identified targets should not exceed eight, or five (notably for smaller projects).

OECD analysis (Results Team in the Secretariat) of the SDG targets identified that half of the 169 targets relate to **development outcomes**, while the 2030 Agenda designates 62 targets as **means of implementation**. It is suggested that a sub-set of these could be usefully integrated in providers’ results frameworks. The analysis points to a menu of 42 outcome targets with 53 robust indicators, and 18 means of implementation targets with 18 robust indicators. This narrower list of targets could be the basis to establish a link between development co-operation activities and SDGs.

At the last WP-STAT meeting on 21 June 2017, following the presentation by the Secretariat about linking SDG targets to development co-operation [[DCD/DAC/STAT\(2017\)20](#)], Sweden suggested setting up an informal

working group to discuss and put forward a concrete suggestion on how to report ODA in accordance with SDGs, also using inputs from ongoing work in other relevant working groups within the DAC. Several other countries showed interest in this proposal, including Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, the European Union, France, Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain. Some members also expressed concerns, notably Germany about the quality of the reporting, which could be lowered by the addition of a new field. Also, Denmark challenged whether CRS data could address development outcomes given that the reporting was on inputs. These concerns will need to be taken into account when developing the proposal.

Objective of the workshop: Produce a concrete proposal on data collection in the CRS on the SDG focus of development co-operation activities, to serve as a basis for discussion at the next WP-STAT (30-31 January 2018).

Suggested discussion items:

- a) *Can the current reporting system be used to report on the contribution of development co-operation to SDGs, using a mapping table, or should a new field be introduced to allow more precise reporting?*
- b) *If a new field is introduced, how should it be defined and how should the data collection be structured? Should the field be mandatory? What could be an adoption timeline, considering that the process has to be relatively fast?*
- c) *How would the potential introduction of a new field impact on the quality of reporting, particularly from members with a more limited capacity?*
- d) *Can the creation of a new SDG field reduce the need to add other policy markers in the CRS in the future?*

## Draft Agenda

OECD Statistics and Development Finance workshop

11 October 2017

Room CC20

OECD Conference Centre

2, rue André Pascal, 75016 Paris

9:30 – 9:45	<b>Opening remarks</b> by the Chair and the Secretariat	Jérôme Le Roy Julia Benn, (DCD/SDF)
9:45 – 11:00	<b>Strengthening providers' results frameworks through SDG targets &amp; indicators.</b> <i>The proposed results framework distinguishes between i) SDG targets that are about development outcomes and that can be monitored through robust indicators and ii) SDG targets that deal with policies, partnerships, institutions and processes, including "means of implementation".</i> <i>Discussion will be invited on the question of whether data collection on the SDG focus of development co-operation activities should cover only the outcome targets or all SDG targets.</i>	Poul Engberg-Pedersen, Rosie Zwart (DCD/REED)
11:00 – 11:15	<i>Coffee break</i>	
11:15 – 12:15	<b>Importance and relevance of the work on linking development co-operation contributions with the SDG targets.</b> <i>Why are we doing this? What will the data be used for? What needs are we trying to address? How can the system help providers of development co-operation to better orient their activities in support of the SDGs?</i>	Group Discussion
12:15 – 13:00	<b>Relation between policy markers and a potential SDG field.</b> <i>How can the creation of a new field reduce the need to add new policy markers in the system?</i>	Discussion in small groups based on case studies.
13:00 – 14:30	<i>Luncheon</i>	
14:30 – 15:00	<b>Feedback from groups</b>	
15:00 – 16:00	<b>Definition of the SDG field.</b> <i>How could the SDG field work in practice? What metrics to use? Flags, multiple coding, percentages? Is there a need to also track expected outputs?</i>	Presentation by Sweden on their pilot on flagging SDGs, Group Discussion
16:00 – 16:15	<i>Coffee break</i>	
16:15 – 17:15	<b>Rationale for mapping CRS classifications to SDG targets.</b> <i>Could the matrix help us to set a baseline for monitoring the development co-operation in support of the SDGs? Could the use of machine learning technologies be helpful in this context?</i>	Presentation by the UAE on the mapping of their projects to SDG targets, Group discussion
17:15 – 17:30	<b>Closing remarks. Next steps and timeline for drafting a proposal for WP-STAT.</b>	Jérôme Le Roy Julia Benn, (DCD/SDF)