SDGs: Opportunities and Challenges for Health Sector – The Importance of Data

Health is a prerequisite to promote sustainable development and outcomes of development policies. According to Norheim et al. (2014) if supported by sustainable measures, the number of premature deaths can be reduced by 40% in next two decades. It can reduce the under 50 mortality as well as reduce one-third mortality of 50-69 years age. In fact, development returns to investing in health are even greater than initially thought. Under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 3 is related specifically to health, but there are many other goals which also have a huge impact, whether it relates to environment, poverty, nutrition, hunger, sustainable production and consumption, climate change, agriculture or education. The healthy lives for all depend not only on health sector development, but on the progress made in other sectors.

Taking the health sector into consideration, SDG 3, which focuses on healthy lives and well-being for all, has nine targets and four additional/optional targets (totalling 13 targets and 26 indicators). Of these, three were also included in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), three are related to the emerging issue of non-communicable diseases and injuries, while three are cross cutting and related to health systems.

In the wake of implementation of these SDGs, the monitoring of health related targets and indicators, is of critical importance; as are country health information systems. Having the information system and monitoring framework is, of course, vital, but the most crucial prerequisite is data. To implement and monitor the SDGs, data will be required from multiple sources including household surveys, health facilities and administrative records etc. The timely availability of quality data can lead to evidence-based policy making and attainment of the SDGs as well as strengthen the accountability of key actors responsible for implementation of policy and delivery of health systems. The requirement to have consistent and timely data requires building the capacity of key actors to collect, analyse and use reliable health data, as well as to collaborate and coordinate with all stakeholders within and outside the health sector. The lack of data makes it really difficult to draw attention to where further efforts are required to make progress and where one is on track in terms of the SDGs. In addition to that, disaggregated data is required for gender, geographical area, administrative level, risk groups and socioeconomic groups, etc.

This panel seeks to explore the challenges and opportunities in the health sector pertaining to the generation, availability, and use of data and evidence to attain the SDGs. The following points will be brought forth in the panel discussion:

- What is the current status of data availability on health related SDGs, globally and in different national contexts?
- How can we incorporate the social determinants of health in context of data and evidence to achieve the goal of healthy lives and well-being?
- How can data gaps be filled and what collaborations and monitoring mechanisms are needed to help do that?
- What steps are needed to maximise the use of data, statistics and evidence for policy making in health sector, including collaborating with other sectors, and monitoring of other health-related indicators e.g. data on determinants and risk factors for health?
- How can we facilitate the evidence and analysis for health policy; and for systematic follow-up and review of SDG-related implementation?
Reference

Panel Organiser:
Ms Saadiya Razzaq, Team Leader/ Senior Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute
Email address: saadiyarazzaq@sdpi.org
Potential Speakers: (5-6)

Co-Facilitators: Peter Taylor, IDRC and Saadiya Razzaq, SDPI

Pakistan
1. Dr. Sania Nishtar, President, Heartfile, Islamabad
2. Dr. Assad Hafeez, DG, Health and Executive Director, Health Services Academy, Islamabad

Bangladesh
3. Mahbub Elahi Chowdhury, Ph.D., Scientist, Health Systems and Population Studies Division, ICDDR, B

Nepal
4. Dr. Mahesh Maskey, President, Nepal Public Health Foundation

Srilanka
5. Dr. Samath Dharmaratne, Associate Professor in community medicine, University of Peradeniya

India
6. Prof. Indrani Gupta, Head of Unit, Health Policy Research Unit (HPRU), Institute of Economic Growth (IEG)

Chief Guest:

Dr. Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Planning Development and Reforms (TBC)

Panel Organizer

Saadiya Razzaq, Team Leader, Pakistan Data Portal/ Senior Research Associate