SDG16 Briefing for UN Delegations - Friends of Governance Group

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Jack Cornforth, CIVICUS

<u>Introduction to the initiative</u>

DataShift is a global, multi-stakeholder initiative convened by CIVICUS, world alliance for citizen participation. It leverages the potential of new technologies for innovative, community-grounded social accountability.

It does this by helping civil society organisations (CSOs) produce and use data, especially citizen-generated data, to directly influence policy making on the issues that matter most to them. By facilitating cross-sector learning, building skills and knowledge, and coordinating focused action, DataShift is bringing people-powered accountability to the heart of sustainable development.

Citizen-generated data is data that people or their organisations produce to directly monitor, demand or drive change on issues that affect them. It is actively given by citizens, providing direct representations of their perspectives and an alternative to datasets collected by governments or international institutions.

There is a strong consensus, partly based on lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), that citizen and civil society engagement is critical to the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.

In the context of the SDGs, citizen-generated data can play an important role driving progress on sustainable development, especially at local levels. This is because it can "raise the flag" when official sources of data miss or mask progress, violations or inequalities between groups, especially at the local level. Or in other words, provide "groundtruth" by verifying that official data reflects the reality on the ground, supplementing official reporting to explain the why behind the numbers.

The production and use of citizen-generated involves a powerful process that builds citizens' and civil society's technical skills and confidence to engage in governance processes. This applies to amplifying citizen voices and perspectives on SDG progress, including of those typically marginalised and hard to reach. It can also enable trust and relationship building

across diverse groups of stakeholders, to engage in dialogue and establish new norms for social action to achieve the SDGs.

During an initial two-year pilot phase, focusing our activities in Kenya, Tanzania, Nepal and Argentina, DataShift worked towards four primary objectives:

1. Increase the **coverage** of citizen‑generated data initiatives across the world, particularly in the Global South.
2. Strengthen the **credibility** of citizen‑generated data, so that it is taken into account as legitimate and reliable
3. Enhance the **complementarity** of citizen‑generated data, both within civil society and across other sectors, including government.
4. Accelerate data-driven **campaigning** by civil society

<u>Key activities of the Initiative</u>

Research
DataShift has conducted extensive research and analysis on citizen-generated data. This includes partnering with Open Knowledge International to publish a three-part [research series](#) that investigated how citizen-generated data can be used to monitor progress around the SDGs. This research has provided recommendations for CSOs working on citizen-generated data projects to link up with the SDGs in mutually beneficial ways, along with suggestions for how DataShift could support them to do so. As a consequence, DataShift has identified SDG 16.10 in particular as a priority area for further activities.

Capacity development
For the past year, DataShift has focused on this workstream via the [Data for Action](#) capacity building programme, a two-week facilitated online course that is helping civil society organisations to develop the skills to improve their data literacy, collect citizen-generated data, and use it to power local campaigns which contribute towards achieving the SDGs. Data for Action is the culmination of two years of working with expert partners at the national level across four pilot countries, to co-create and implement tailor-made support processes to improve their collection and use of citizen-generated data.

International collaboration and advocacy
To achieve its lofty objectives, DataShift continues to rely heavily upon existing partnerships, as well as striving to forge new partnerships to further increase its activities, reach, and ultimately the uptake of citizen-generated data as a vital complement to official (government) data.

In its current phase, DataShift is continuing its work towards these objectives in a more streamlined way. Having focused in on which approaches are most successful at the community and micro-intervention levels, DataShift is now concentrating on using citizen-generated data to strengthen stakeholder engagement, empower marginalised communities through increased skills and stories of their accomplishments (eg. data place-making), and build trust between governments and civil society. More specifically, we are doing this

through CIVICUS initiatives such as [Speak!](#), MobLab's [Campaign Accelerator](#) trainings, as well as a pilot survey and engagement approach guide.

Via the integration of a data-driven approach into other CIVICUS initiatives, DataShift is reaching more actors in more segments of civil society and more geographies. The initiative is thus becoming one of the organisation's key offerings to more than 4000 members of the Alliance in 186 countries.

<u>What the Initiative had achieved so far</u>

Through groundbreaking research, an extensive capacity strengthening programme, ongoing engagement with government and other key stakeholders, along with deep dives into SDG 5 on gender equality, DataShift has made significant gains towards each of its four priority objectives (increasing the coverage, credibility, complementarity of citizen-generated data, along with its use in campaigning). This applies both within its initial four pilot countries and at the global level.

Put citizen-generated data on the map and created a global community of champions
DataShift has been instrumental to seeing citizen-generated data go from being a niche, poorly understood concept, to a key tool at the disposal of both civil society and governments to mobilise citizens and better understand our progress on sustainable development. This includes making major inroads in the recognition of citizen-generated data as a crucial source of 'non official' data for SDG monitoring and accountability

Gender [Thematic Forums](#) in Tanzania and Argentina have brought together civil society organisations, social movements and other stakeholders, to develop collaborative approaches for increased cooperation on data generation and use on a range of gender-related issues, including with (often initially reluctant) government agencies. Through these processes, promising breakthroughs have been made in both countries on government willingness to work with civil society around gender data collection, sharing and use.

DataShift helped to create a Citizen-Generated Data Task Team within the [Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data](#)'s 'Leave No One Behind' Working Group. This group has become the main channel for cooperation and advocacy on citizen-generated data at the international level, and is currently developing a set of citizen-generated data case studies that have been specifically selected due to their potential for replication and scaling.

Built civil society's capacity and confidence with data
DataShift has provided over 30 organisations (and counting) across Argentina, Nepal, Kenya, and Tanzania with tailored training on data generation and use that has enabled them to work towards their objectives in smarter, more impactful ways. Each organisation worked with in-country expert partners to co-create and implement tailor-made support processes to improve their collection and use of citizen-generated data. Subsequently, these experiences have been analysed and aggregated to create a two-week online Data for Action course to help organisations.

Identified where and when citizen-generated data can support action on the SDGs

Through extensive research, DataShift has identified clear opportunities for citizen-generated data (CGD) to be leveraged to drive action on SDGs. We have revealed that CGD is usually more useful for catalysing local action than high-level policy-making. On the other hand, the pilot phase has suggested that CGD is particularly useful for measuring certain SDG issues, especially those which governments have little or no data on. This includes certain targets pertaining to Goal 16, such as 16.5 (corruption) and 16.6 (strong institutions). Thus if existing CGD projects (e.g. I Paid A Bribe and Pulse Lab Jakarta) on these priority issues can be strengthened, scaled across other localities within a country, and efforts to support the aggregation of the data they produce are well resourced, then there remains much potential for CGD to support SDG monitoring. This applies to both its integration into official government follow-up and review efforts, or something pursued via independent initiatives led by civil society. More specifically:

- CGD can help combine quantitative with qualitative data to increase the validity of the SDG indicators
- CGD can deliver parts of the necessary data, or at least rich contextual information, whenever indicators measure a causal relationship
- CGD can often be flexibly applied across cross-cutting SDG targets and themes, thereby overcoming silo thinking and creating alternative indicators
- The SDGs can be used as a common framing to build connections across CGD initiatives and facilitate communication and prioritisation of issues
- Because a lot of CGD focuses on building local capacity, there is a lot of room for CGD to contribute to progress on SDG 16. Local citizen-generated data projects which speak to targets like 16.10, need to be scaled up to tie-in to national SDG monitoring and accountability efforts.

In addition, DataShift has worked to domesticate SDG 5 at the community level in Lanet Umoja, Nakuru County in Kenya. Through this "Global Goals for Local Impact" project, DataShift worked with the community to use citizen-generated data to better understand and then demand action on their gender-related development and governance priorities. The project went beyond the mere collection of citizen-generated data, to empower the community to undertake advocacy campaigns targeting local government decision-making and budget processes, and secure new resources for services that empower women and girls.

Challenges the Initiative has faced

Scaling and aggregating citizen-generated data
While there are some great examples of CSOs and citizens generating new data on important aspects of development, these initiatives still vary greatly in terms of their quantity, quality and sophistication. While DataShift has been successful at building the capacity and confidence of a number of CSOs to use new technology to generate data, and use it in ways that can support their decision making and bolster their campaigns, scaling this impact remains elusive. However, a specific citizen-generated data task team within the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data sees DataShift collaborate with other established campaigns and partners all collectively working to help scale-up the generation and use of this data source.

Furthermore, the highly localised nature of these initiatives means it is often not possible (nor necessarily desirable) to replicate them in other places. Nevertheless, there are a number of citizen-generated data initiatives (e.g. SafeCast; FixMyStreet; HOT) which do indeed seem more suitable for scaling, and thus possess more potential for contributing to SDG monitoring efforts at the national level. Yet in order to compare or aggregate the data these initiatives produce across different localities, collective data standards, metadata, or other documentation still need to be developed, which is likely to be a slow, labour intensive task. However initiative such as Everyone Counts are making important progress here.

Knowing exactly when and how to use citizen-generated for SDG monitoring
Aside from a number of more practical barriers identified in the next paragraph, theoretically speaking there remains a mismatch between citizen-generated data (CGD) & SDG monitoring in a number of ways:
- CGD has more focus on local action than high-level policy-making
- CGD tends to focus on SDG targets rather than indicators, using different units of analysis
- CGD can deliver contextual information to drive progress around sustainable development, but the causal relationship between CGD and how it connects to the SDG indicators is often unclear
- It is often the action that is undertaken as a result of CGD that will contribute the most to drive progress around sustainable development. Yet this local action needs to be scaled up to tie-in to national SDGs

Official recognition of the value of citizen-generated data

Despite making progress with a handful of governments, the remains almost zero official recognition of the value of citizen-generated data (along with other sources of non-official data) in supporting SDG monitoring and accountability. Similarly, the lack of clear mechanisms or opportunities for civil society to input data into the formal Follow-Up and Review process remains a major hurdle for realising the true potential of citizen-generated data. While international, multi-stakeholder initiatives like the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development have provided new opportunities for making progress on these challenges, little has actually been achieved in concrete terms, owing largely to a lack of clear commitments and resources from most member governments to work with CSOs to come up with long-terms collaborative programmes for demand-driven data generation and sharing.

What should the Ministerial Declaration in 2019 say to address outstanding challenges

The primary accountability relationship is that between a State and its people. Therefore, the Post-2015 accountability architecture should be rooted in inclusive national accountability processes, premised on robust and participatory data-gathering and monitoring – including citizen-generated data. Processes at the global level should draw clearly on feedback, outcomes and information from local and national levels, including reports and data from civil society and communities.

An inclusive follow-up and review process which includes clear mechanisms for governments and civil society stakeholders to work together in partnership would help

increase the coherence, coordination and utility of this data for SDG monitoring. And if non-official data producers follow the same methodological standards as NSOs – and are open to similar levels of scrutiny – then there is every reason to view their data as equally valid.

Therefore the ministerial declaration should contain a clear commitment to collaborating with civil society (and other stakeholders) to better measure progress on SDG 16. More specifically, governments should commit to:
- Use citizen-generated data process to better understand and address their citizens' needs in order to reach their SDG commitments
- The creation of a process which aims to create a mechanism for the creation and flow of non-official data into official SDG Follow-Up and Review processes at the national level.
- Linking and aggregate multiple data sources at different spatial scales, depending on the governance level addressing the issue
- Build methodological capacities around standardisation of both data types and collection methods to facilitate comparison and foster trust in the data
- Work with and build on existing government processes to help align interests

Capacity building for data collection and monitoring: Advances in technology have led to a dramatic increase in the types and volume of data available. However, data often has "baked-in" bias which is used to mask inequalities and justify the status quo. Marginalised groups in particular have had data used against them and not had the knowledge or resources necessary to engage in dialogues that affect their lives. Financial support and resources should be put towards building the capacity of civil society and local government staff, including communities and individual women, men and children, to gain the data literacy skills and confidence to engage in governance processes. This will empower civil society to provide specific recommendations in SDG-related reports and consultations and to monitor progress.