

## POST-2015 ZERO DRAFT: WHERE DO WE STAND ON CITIZEN-GENERATED DATA?

**By Jack Cornforth, Senior Project Officer and Kate Higgins, Manager, DataShift, CIVICUS** - June 2015

After years of preparatory consultations and months of negotiations, the [zero draft](#) of the Post-2015 Summit outcome document was published earlier this month. There has been some useful commentary on where the draft does well and where it falls short (for example, from [Elizabeth Stuart at the Overseas Development Institute](#)) and numerous responses to the draft (for example, from the [Transparency, Accountability and Participation \(TAP\) Network](#), which we at CIVICUS have endorsed). At the [DataShift](#) we are particularly interested in what the zero draft has to say about the role that citizen-generated data could play in tracking and driving progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As we outlined in a recent [briefing note](#), we think citizen-generated data has a powerful role to play in SDG implementation and monitoring at the national, regional and global levels. As data that is produced directly by people and their organisations to monitor, demand or drive change on the issues that affect them, it can complement official sources of data, fill data gaps that exist in a timely way and supplement official reporting when data quality is insufficient.

Beyond this, it is often produced in real or near-time, is grounded in local context and can amplify citizen voices and perspectives on sustainable development progress, including of those typically marginalized and hard to reach. It also has the potential to facilitate the direct, active and invested participation of people in the SDGs.

So what is our read-out? How does citizen-generated data feature in the zero draft? We are pleased to see a broad recognition of the importance of agreeing in September an inclusive post-2015 agenda that provides space for civil society to engage in the SDGs. This includes a set of guiding principles for follow-up and review (section III, para. 3) which includes some of the document's most encouraging language, stating that the process should be 'open and inclusive, supported by an enabling environment for the participation of all people and stakeholders.' The document also acknowledges the need for the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) to provide a platform for partnerships with civil society and others (section III, para. 9) and an important recognition that official reporting could be complimented by contributions from civil society and other stakeholders (section III, para. 5).

But when it comes to specific commitments about how citizen-generated data could

contribute to monitoring the SDGs, the zero draft is silent. Despite growing recognition – including from the [UN Secretary General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development](#) – of the need to harness new, innovative and diverse sources of data, including citizen-generated data, to best implement and monitor the SDGs, the zero draft does not acknowledge the role that these new sources of data could play in supporting effective follow up and review processes.

So concretely, what do we suggest? Beyond changes to the text to more directly promote civil society participation in the both the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs, which is aptly covered in the [TAP response](#), we recommend the following specific additions:

- Expand the commitment made to scaling up public-private cooperation on data (para. 39) to include all other stakeholders and specifically reference citizen-generated data alongside geo-spatial information.
- Include an explicit reference to the complementary value of third party data in providing timely, reliable and disaggregated information in guiding principle (e) for follow-up and review (section III, para. 3).
- State that the UN's annual SDG Progress Report be based on third party data, including citizen-generated data, as well as data from national statistical systems (section 111, para. 12).

If the post-2015 agenda is to be as transformative as many of us want it to be, we need to take a transformative approach at all levels and across all dimensions. This includes tracking progress on the SDGs. While investing in improving the availability

and quality of official statistics and building the capacity of national statistical offices is absolutely critical, it makes sense for official data to be complemented by third party data. As Thomas Wheeler from Saferworld outlines in his [very useful piece on SDG monitoring](#), third party data can fill data gaps, drive innovation, support broad ownership of data and enhance accountability. If methodological standards are followed, there should be little concern about data quality and drawing from multiple sources of data to monitor the SDGs is consistent with the multi-stakeholder approach that is being taken to conceptualise, finance and implement the SDGs.

We hope that the outcome document Member States agree in September this year will acknowledge the value of third party data, including citizen-generated data, in monitoring the SDGs. Regardless of whether this happens, we believe civil society stakeholders need to work together to establish how we want to draw on civil society and citizen-generated data to track and drive progress on the SDGs – either through official SDG follow-up and review processes or via some form of shadow monitoring.

To move this conversation forward, the DataShift team at CIVICUS is setting up a conference call to brainstorm ideas for a more coordinated approach to drawing on civil society and citizen-generated data to monitor the SDGs. The call will take place on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July at 09:00 EST and is open to anyone who would like to participate. For more information, please visit the DataShift website [here](#).

We hope you will join the conversation!