



Statistics and Human Rights: A Long-standing Relationship? Existing Roads towards Human Rights Statistical Indicators

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Abstract

Human rights matter for statistics, and statistics matter for human rights. This paper discusses the interdependence between human rights and statistics, their mutual benefits, but also the tensions that may arise between the two. It builds on a series of initiatives launched by statistics and human rights actors and on the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on human rights indicators. As the world embarks on new Sustainable Development Goals, and calls for a data revolution to support their measurement, critical human rights challenges and opportunities arise. The paper suggests practical steps for the development of statistical indicators useful in measuring the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and at the same time consistent with States' obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. The introduction addresses the relationship between statistics and human rights, related misuses of data and denial of rights of individuals and groups, including the statisticians and data analysts themselves. The second section describes the international human rights normative framework and its expectations in terms of statistical measurement. The paper then suggests using common concepts and expanding data sources to facilitate the translation of universally accepted human rights standards into statistical indicators relevant at country level. The fourth section draws the contours of a human rights-based approach to statistics. Finally, the paper encourages further dialogue and collaboration between the statistics and human rights communities, both at national and international level.

Keyword: accountability, governance, sustainable development goals, data revolution