

Strategy: Using Behavioral Measures for Improved SDG Indicators

How it works: Frequently attitudinal measures are employed when practitioners or researchers are actually interested in behavior. For example, most impact evaluations have a large survey component that captures changes in trust, legitimacy, or other citizen attitudes, which can be appropriate. But those same surveys may also be used to ask about whether citizens would vote, or contact a politician, or accept a bribe. For many questions of interest, an individual's statement of expected behavior could differ markedly from their actual behavior. This mismatch could be due to social desirability, legality, lack of experience, or myriad other reasons. For example, asking a set of individuals whether they would attend a public meeting in response to some intervention may yield a very different answer than if one measures who actually shows up at a public meeting or what they do at that meeting. For many SDG indicators, behavioral measures may be better suited to capture the underlying concepts or expected outcomes of interest.

Examples of behavioral measures that could be used to measure SDG indicators include observing:

- Anonymous incorporation and banking practices that facilitate illicit financial flows (Target 16.4)
- Citizen reports to third-party websites (such as ipaidabribe.com) to measure levels of corruption and bribery (Target 16.5)
- Bidding on government procurement to detect possible corruption signals or offers (Target 16.5)
- Citizens' requests to government offices and/or the responses of government officials to those requests to measure effectiveness and accountability of institutions (Target 16.6)
- Whether citizens comply with behavioral targets in a new government program to measure effectiveness of institutions (Target 16.6)
- Level and diversity of citizen participation in public meetings, protests, petitions, and elections to measure the inclusiveness and representativeness of decision-making (Target 16.7)

Data gathering strategy: When expected outcomes are behavioral, consider replacing survey measures asking about expected behavior with systematic observation of actual behavior.

SDG goals this could be used for: Behavioral measures have high potential for use in measuring the SDG 16 targets related to illicit financial flows, corruption, accountability, and quality of participation (Targets 16.4, 16.5, 16.6, 16.7).

Advantages: May better capture people's likely or actual behavior

Disadvantages: May be difficult to generate settings in which behavioral outcomes are natural

- References:**
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