**Timeliness of Data Sources**

We have discussed that indicators are out there, that some organizations collect and estimate them and others use it to justify projects and activities that will hopefully change society. But, as you might have guessed, we missed a very important part of the process: **time!** Of course data are out there, even when some are not updated so frequently (decades, even). I invite you to submerge into another complex topic DG has been working on: timeliness of data sources.

Let's start with a simple idea: some indicators are dependent on country reporting. This idea brings a big problem... not all countries can report in a fashionable manner. Even when countries are willing to inform agencies they might not have the raw data to do so. For example, certain government ministries can take years to publish raw data or indicators. A correlation question of whether the countries that are not able to report are the ones that need more aid is sure to come up. The answer is that it depends. Some developing countries receive financial aid to calculate these indicators or are guided through the process, so they might have the data. Also, other political factors and no clear incentives to make the data public might be the cause.

Another important theme is that representative data is usually costly. Some indicators are not updated so frequently because collecting the information requires large investments from agencies. For example, the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and the Agricultural Census are conducted every 5 years by WHO/UNICEF and FAO, respectively. The indicators that come from these methodologies are country representative, but are not updated as frequently as users might want. Therefore, users are faced to a trade off to either use annually country report data or quinquennial representative data.

Also, some indicators are not updated in a specific time frame, which makes the process even more complex. Agencies might need certain outcome measurement to understand if their projects are having an

- Random updates:

* Improved drinking water sources (1990, 2000, 2015).
* Hospital beds last updated: 2012
* FAOSTAT: 2009-2013

- What happens when we do not have timeliness data? -

* Project decisions are not correctly based
* Country indexes are not comparable

- What can we do to improve data? / How can we fill the gap?