



**Global  
Partnership**  
for Sustainable  
Development Data

**FIVE-YEAR  
STRATEGY  
2019-2023**

# UNITED NATIONS DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL FOREWORD FOR GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DATA FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY 2019-2023



We live during a time of formidable challenges, but also of tremendous opportunity to improve people's lives. Our blueprint is the universally agreed collective vision of a people-centered and planet-sensitive future: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Data is a crucial element in bringing this vision to life. Data is the lifeblood of planning. Only with accurate, timely, representative, inclusive and disaggregated data can we comprehensively assess the challenges we face, measure progress we make and identify the most appropriate solutions.

Three years since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and our report "A World That Counts: Mobilising a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development", we have a long way to go in putting in place the datasets required to monitor the SDGs. Gender disaggregated data continues to be a challenge, as baselines have yet to be established. We have a shared roadmap for this effort -- the Cape Town Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data -- but we need to strengthen support for it.

New technologies and the rise of big data have demonstrated the potential to use data in exciting new ways for the betterment of society, including by deepening multi-sectoral analysis, improving our understanding at the community level and taking stock of progress in real time. Satellite data offering population insights can show, month by month, how cities are growing and help municipalities plan transport routes or provide for growing populations. Robust data are providing early warning systems for deadly disasters such as landslides or earthquakes.

For these promising examples to spread everywhere they are needed, we need to overcome technical challenges while mobilizing commitment from all layers of government and society. Moreover, if data is to be shared, used responsibly and reach the people and places where it is needed most, policies on privacy and data governance will be needed and risks must be assessed, managed and mitigated. More extensive financing will also be critical to deliver better data at scale.

The United Nations looks forward to working with the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data over the next five years to build a world where better data drives better decisions and better lives for all. Together, we can safely and responsibly harness the power of data to accelerate progress, achieve the SDGs and usher in a future in which no one, absolutely no one, is left behind.

*Amina J. Mohammed*



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# OUR VISION AND MISSION

## Our vision

Our vision is a world where the opportunities of the data revolution are available to and for all of humanity, helping to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We envision a world where data is a force for good, a world where:

- Governments, civil society, UN agencies, academia, and the private sector are investing in the technology, relationships, and people to ensure the right data is available at the right time and used to make decisions that drive progress on the SDGs, leaving no one behind;
- Robust accountability by parliaments and other actors is supported by timely data on SDG progress and investments in people to ensure all voices are heard;
- People are protected from abuses of data, whether that involves personal privacy or undermining democratic principles and systems;
- The private sector has the data they need to make investments that promote sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda.

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## Our mission

Our mission as the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data is to address the world's most urgent problems with effective data to drive good decisions.

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## The problem

Collectively, challenges such as climate change and mass displacement caused by conflict, poverty, and widening inequality are so great that we cannot hope to solve them without huge leaps in information and knowledge.

Around the world, we are not collecting, sharing, or analyzing data optimally to make lives better.

Too many people are invisible in data and therefore invisible in decision-making. Too many countries simply do not have the resources for comprehensive birth or death registration systems, for mapping fields and houses, tracking the impact of climate change and disasters, and for collecting and sharing information about people's health, access to water, to food, and to other basic services.

Setting policies without core information or timely analysis means resources are wasted and their impact is limited. Lack of timely and comprehensive data also means that investors do not have all the information needed to target financial investments to promote sustainable development.

People around the world are increasingly fearful of technology. With a policy environment that is lagging behind technological change, sometimes, those fears are realized. Public fears, lack of regulation, and lack of leadership mean that many governments and NGOs are not applying the power of data for decision-making, data is being abused, and companies are hoarding vast data resources.

We face the possibility that the world is on a course where the opportunities of the data revolution are open only to a few, and where data is used in ways that reduce public trust, rather than serving the public good.

The actions of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and of our 320+ partners will help countries and the international community usher in an era of positive adoption of data and technology - an era that harnesses solutions to help achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



**OUR GOAL** is to drive better decisions and better lives for all by facilitating the production and use of better data. In the *next five years*, through strategic partnerships, advocacy, technical assistance, and pilot initiatives, we will support our partners at the global, regional, and national levels to:

- Harness the use of new technologies and data sources at scale, building on existing systems, to improve government decision-making;
- Foster a global movement of government, business, and civil society leaders promoting responsible data sharing and use, building public trust, and showcasing pathways to success;
- Advocate for standards of interoperability in global frameworks on data and statistics, making progress towards a world where data interoperability is the norm;.
- Scale up the use of timely, robust data for SDG monitoring and forecasting of trends so that by the halfway point to 2030, the world has a clear picture of progress on the SDGs and can take actions to accelerate it.

## HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE CHANGE

Our goal is to drive better decisions and better lives for all by facilitating the production, sharing, and use of better data.

In the next five years we will do this by developing partnerships between different organizations to achieve two, mutually reinforcing, objectives:

### Objective 1

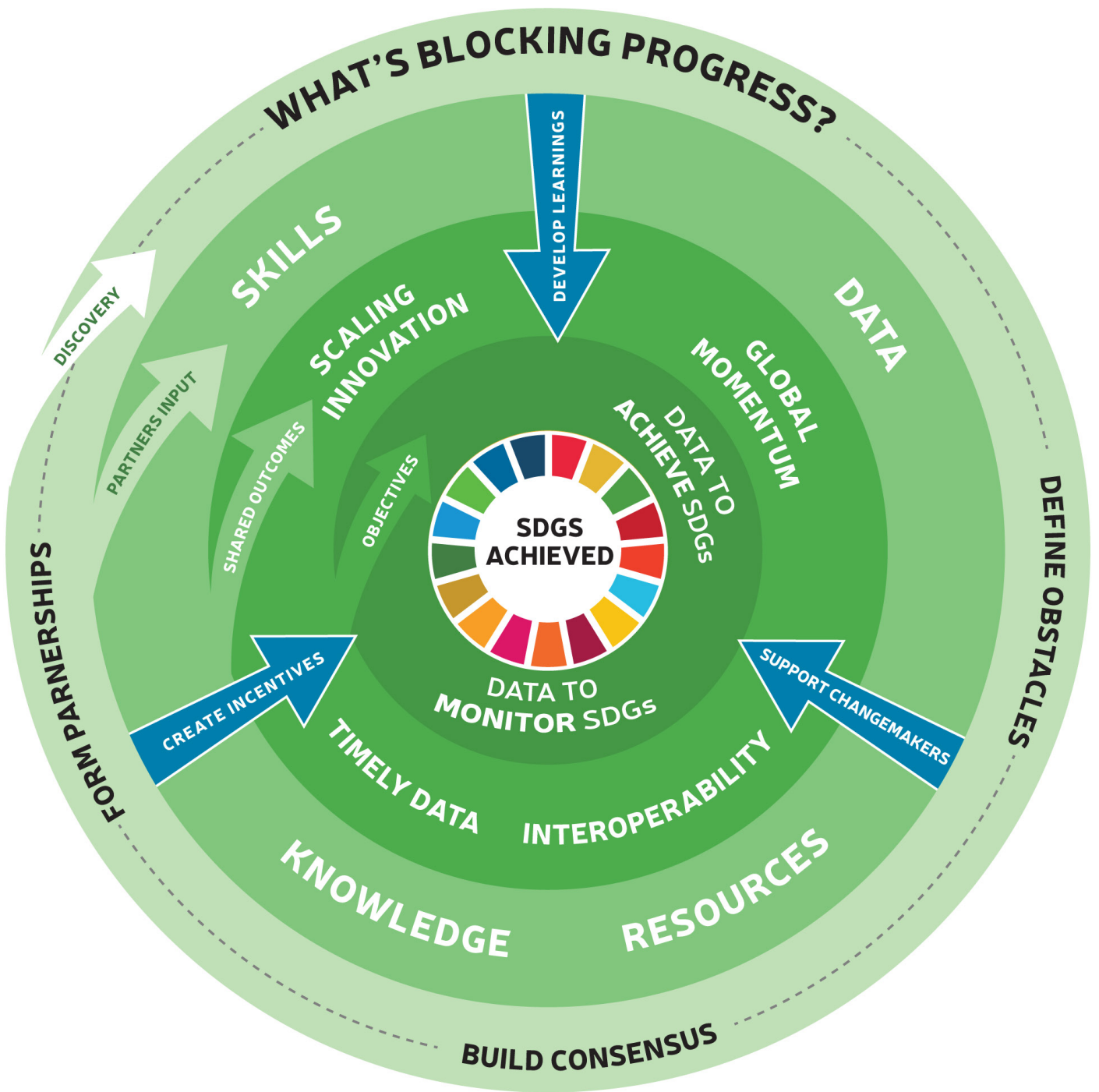
**MORE AND BETTER DATA IS USED TO ACHIEVE THE SDGS**, leading to better decisions and better lives. This data is widely used, high quality, and interoperable; and driven by an institutional framework that protects people's rights, incentivizes partnership, and drives innovation.

### Objective 2

**MORE AND BETTER DATA IS USED TO MONITOR THE SDGS**, so that governments and people have an accurate and timely picture of progress in order to better target policies and resources; inspiring action to improve lives, protect the planet, and leave no one behind.



# THE DATA4SDGS APPROACH



## Our building blocks for change

We will achieve our objectives by bringing partners together to achieve change at national, regional and global levels. We seek to support and advance the ambitions and actions outlined through the *Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data* adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 48th Session in March 2017. The following priorities, based on our experience, underpin our strategy:

- We prioritize **Supporting Changemakers** within existing systems, both public and private, and creating opportunities for sustained change. We do this because evidence suggests that investing in data ecosystems is the key to better data. Simply building new tools and platforms, or releasing new data, does not lead to sustained change in either public or private sector, unless they are embedded within an ecosystem that incentivizes and actively enables data production, sharing, analysis, and use.
- We focus on **Creating Incentives** for change at the national level. This is because, to safeguard public interests and drive progress at scale, governments are in the lead, through their role in producing, sharing, and using data within the national statistical system and through the legal and regulatory frameworks they create to guide the production, sharing, and use of data by others in the system. Working together, national governments set the global norms, rules, and frameworks which ensure that data works for all.
- We emphasize **Developing Learnings**, to increase the basis for mutually beneficial partnerships based on shared understanding of the evidence. This is because partnership is vital. Given the number of organizations and institutions involved in the production and use of data, making the data revolution a force for good will require partners from inside and outside governments to work together in new ways, in the process building the global system that works for all.

**As a neutral broker, harnessing the power of our network, we will establish and support partnerships that help individuals and organizations achieve their objectives in strengthening enabling policies and data ecosystems.**

**Using our expertise in communications and advocacy, we will provide visibility to leaders in the field, create mechanisms for engagement, and build coalitions for change, to promote innovation and investment that supports the production, sharing, and use of data for decision-making to accelerate progress on the SDGs.**

**Our diverse and rapidly growing network of data pioneers includes actors from all relevant sectors. As well as the practical collaborations we catalyze, we share, aggregate, and amplify our network's knowledge and expertise, so all partners can learn and show what can be done and how to do it.**

But we also recognize that **we don't know everything**. Working in a new field, in a new way, we will need to approach our work humbly and in a spirit of questioning, prepared to adapt our approach as we learn.



## OBJECTIVE ONE:

### More and better data is used by governments, companies, investors, and civil society to achieve the SDGs

Too many governments, companies, investors, multilateral institutions, and civil society organizations do not have the data they need to make the right decisions to drive progress on the SDGs. We will work with partners to increase the access to and use of data within stronger and more robust systems at national level, increasing the effectiveness of government policy and government budgeting, and their accountability to their citizens.

#### Supporting Change-makers:

The systems within which data are produced, shared, and used need to be strengthened, and we work with changemakers to achieve this.

Through our global network, our investment in relationships, and our neutral stance, we aim to connect those governments who want to innovate and experiment with organizations from the private sector, academia, civil society, the United Nations, multilaterals, and development partners who can help them to do so.

We can bring in technical expertise from the many networks connected to the Global Partnership. We can connect changemakers in the private sector with policymakers to experiment with models enabling the use of privately held data to achieve the SDGs. We can bring the voices of the most marginalized people into the data through brokering relationships with civil society organizations. We will work with our partners in support of governments and parliaments to better utilize data for evidence-based policymaking, targeting investments, and tracking SDG progress.

Through the power of the Global Partnership network, we can enable partners to achieve their objectives more quickly and more effectively than they can alone, connecting those with data, resources, skills, or knowledge with those who need them, to increase the scale and reach of each partners' work and ultimately improve the use of data to achieve the SDGs.

Our commitment to systems and to working with all actors means that we have the relationships and the expertise to find or test new approaches and bring them to scale, leveraging the huge benefits that this can bring and sharing the learnings with the wider world.

#### ***In the next five years we will harness new technologies and data sources at scale, building on existing systems, to improve government decision-making. We will:***

- Increase the number of governments using Earth observation data for decision-making by a) working with partners to scale up the Africa Regional Data Cube, currently serving five countries, into Digital Earth Africa (a pan-African open data cube) and b) by establishing a Latin America Data Cube for at least **ten countries**.
- Increase the number of governments using privately held big data for decision-making by brokering at least **ten public-private partnerships** that can turn promising pilots into scaled approaches. In doing so, connect the innovators in private sector, academia, multilateral organizations, and civil society to data users, who can test their methods in the real world and help overcome stubborn barriers to scale.
- Facilitate multi-stakeholder collaborations in at least **ten countries** to increase SDG-relevant data availability and use by decision-makers in different sectors, such as health, education, or agriculture; we will then disseminate learning through the network. A significant portion of these collaborations will focus on data to 'leave no one behind'.



## Creating Incentives

If more and better data is to be used to improve lives and achieve the SDGs, leaders must want to create the conditions for this to happen. Governments must choose to allocate resources to invest in data systems, choose to develop the regulatory and legal frameworks to promote the safe sharing of data and the protection of rights, and create a culture for the routine use of data in decision-making and accountability. Companies have to choose to share their data in an accessible and affordable manner, and use it to make decisions that advance the SDGs. Data collected and reported by multilateral organizations and other international development partners must be harnessed and leveraged. Civil society leaders need to amplify people's voices in the data they collect and use for social change at a local level.

Our commitment to working at a political as well as technical level, and our investment in communications, means that we can effectively support and strengthen champions and coalitions for change, working nationally and internationally with other key institutions and networks. By cultivating platforms to offer visibility to governments, companies and other actors that are leading by example, while amplifying successful approaches, communications can prove a powerful tool to incentivize and legitimize data innovation at scale.

### ***In the next five years we will create a global movement of governments, business, and civil society leaders promoting responsible data use, building public trust, and showcasing pathways to success. We will:***

- Increase to at least 50 the number of governments, companies, and civil society organizations signed up to and implementing action plans from the Inclusive Data Charter.
- Identify, develop, and share examples of public-private data sharing that can balance diverse interests and protect the public, while encouraging innovation and adoption of new technologies for public good.
- Aggregate the evidence for increasing investment in data and work with partners to create a strong advocacy movement in support of greater investment, particularly in foundational data systems such as civil registration and administrative data.
- Provide resources for others who are working to effect change by growing the number and visibility of research and advocacy products from our network, evolving our approach in line with evidence of impact.





## Developing Learnings

Our combination of technical and political approaches, and our ability to engage partners from inside and outside the official statistics community, means that we are able to build an effective knowledge base to solve problems across the whole spectrum of data production, sharing, and use, and then effectively disseminate that knowledge through our partner network at global, regional, and national levels.

One key barrier to progress across many areas is lack of data interoperability. We will build on recent work to increase and institutionalize knowledge of how to increase interoperability, increasing knowledge and changing practice among and beyond GPSDD partners.

**In the next five years we will embed standards of interoperability into global frameworks on data and statistics, making progress towards a world where data interoperability is the norm. We will:**

Institutionalize principles for data interoperability within the official statistical system, in particular the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

- Develop and maintain technical advice on interoperability through the jointly produced GPSDD/ United Nations Statistics Division's 'Interoperability Guide', and aim to have the guide regularly used by at least 20 National Statistical Offices.
- Put the principles and technical advice in the interoperability guide into practice through our own collaborations and support to changemakers in different sectors, documenting lessons for others.

We will also invest heavily in building the broader knowledge base throughout our network, through peer to peer learning, publications, convenings, and other opportunities to learn from each other and increase our effectiveness and impact. We will share the experience and learning of changemakers across government, private sector, academia, and civil society as they implement new approaches at the country level to show what is possible and scale up workable models to create change at regional and global levels.



## OBJECTIVE TWO:

### **More and better data is used by governments, companies, investors, and civil society to monitor the SDGs**

Monitoring the progress of the SDGs requires better data. Too much is still unknown, or known too late. The SDG monitoring framework presents the opportunity to tell the story of the SDGs to the wider world, inspiring and focusing action where it is most needed. However, the data currently used to tell that story is out of date and incomplete.

This is an urgent problem that will inhibit progress on the whole agenda. With our wide network of data producers and users, and our commitment to communications and advocacy, we are well positioned to develop the collaborations for rapid action.

By 2023 – the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda – governments, parliaments, companies, and advocacy organizations must be in a better position to understand, from the data, what progress has been made, where the biggest obstacles are, and who is being left behind.

**In the next five years we will scale up the use of timely and robust data for SDG monitoring and forecasting of trends so that by the halfway point to the SDGs, the world has a clear picture of progress on the goals.**



## Supporting Change-makers

Much research and testing has gone into developing new approaches to improve the timeliness, coverage, and accuracy of SDG monitoring. Our wide network of changemakers in governments, academic institutions, companies, civil society organizations, and others will put that research into practice, adopting relevant approaches, increasing our understanding of progress, and inspiring greater efforts.

In particular, we will focus on how to capture the lives and experiences of the people who are currently invisible in the data, ensuring that the SDGs keep the promise to 'leave no one behind'. We will:

- **Foster collaboration with relevant researchers, data providers, and technology partners to test new methods that fill data gaps and make data more timely;**
  - **Strengthen administrative and other sources of foundational data, thus providing more timely and accurate population data to ensure a more accurate denominator for SDG indicators, and improve the representation of marginalized groups through increased granularity;**
  - **In instances of limited national and disaggregated data, work with partners from UN agencies, NGOs, and the private sector to create a picture of progress on the SDGs.**
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## Creating Incentives

Our work will inspire action by policymakers, investors, and other leaders to increase the coverage and use of data to monitor the SDGs. We will:

- **Cultivate high profile moments to showcase timely data on the SDGs, where partners can show progress and results;**
  - **Deliver high-level and high profile moments at United Nations General Assembly to launch initiatives that mobilize resources, unlock data and develop collaborations on data on the SDGs.**
  - **Work with civil society organizations who want to use timely data for SDG advocacy, increasing public support and pressure for progress on the SDGs;**
  - **Work with a group of pioneer companies using data on SDGs to drive investment decisions to accelerate progress on the SDGs.**
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## Developing Learnings & Enhancing Data Literacy

Current SDG monitoring methods and data sources do not yet fully exploit the use of big data analytics, geospatial data, and other technological advances. We will work to increase awareness and learning about robust methods, to encourage take-up at scale both inside and outside official systems. We will:

- **Aggregate and amplify new tools, methods, and approaches pioneered by GPSDD partners for more timely and accurate SDG monitoring to foster widespread adoption and use.**
- **Document and share knowledge and practical examples of how new data sources can be used to monitor the SDGs for the official statistical system and other users.**



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## **CONCLUSION:**

### **The Global Partnership in 2023**

The 193 countries of the UN General Assembly agreed a plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity. To make that plan a reality, governments, civil society organizations, and companies need access to reliable and up-to-date information from many sources, to inform decisions, and to track progress. If we are to achieve the SDGs, then by 2023, more and better data should be the norm.

The Global Partnership and its 320+ partners, drawn from all sectors, are the vanguard for forging this path, while bringing others along with us. Our core function is to help countries achieve scale in data-led decision-making to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. We develop collaborations and learning that can support changemakers to overcome the barriers that impede progress. We inspire leaders to take the decisions that will strengthen their national systems and drive the international cooperation needed to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities posed by technological change. Each step of the way, we share knowledge on how to make progress and ensure that no one is left behind, so that all resources are used to the best effect to take us to the final target of 2030 and a sustainable future for us all.

The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data has a plan to drive progress towards the world of data we want and need, on the basis of freedom and rights, equality and collaboration. We look forward to working in partnership with you.



## THE GPSDD IN ACTION: The Africa Regional Data Cube

Over the last three years, our partners have made huge progress towards better data to achieve the SDGs. The Africa Regional Data Cube is one example.

Throughout 2016 and 2017, our country partners called for more useable Earth observation data for providing insights that could be used by governments for decision-making in agriculture, environment, and other sectors. In 2017, we began to discuss this with GEO, NASA, the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS), Amazon Web Services (AWS), and our government partners.

The result was the Africa Regional Data Cube (ARDC), launched in May 2018 to support five countries: Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. Based on the Open Data Cube (ODC) infrastructure, and hosted by the Government of Kenya and Strathmore University in Nairobi, this open source, big data architecture gives our partner governments improved access to and use of Earth observation data, in an analysis-ready format that makes it easy for users to gain rapid insights.

NASA is providing training for partner governments, building up a cadre of experts across government who can use the ARDC to extract insights for decision-making. The ARDC supports these changemakers to work more effectively, and to make the case to senior politicians that data is worth their time and investment. As Mr. Benedict Mugambi, Head of GIS at the Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics, puts it:

*“The data cube can do in a few hours what used to take me several months to do in accessing and preparing the data for analysis. Our Minister of Environment has committed to attend (in person) the next ARDC virtual training; having seen just how valuable and relevant the data is to his Ministry.”*

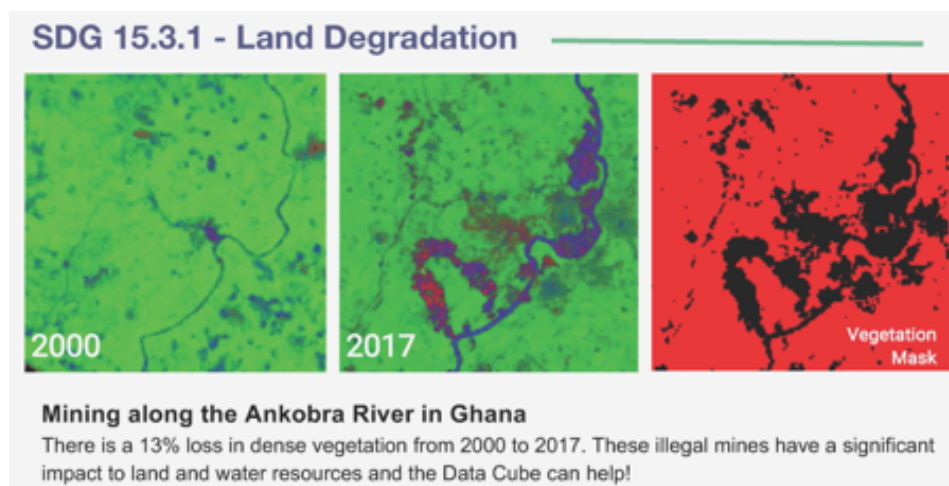
A different algorithm run on change in vegetation cover from 2000 to 2017 (third image) produced similar results, with areas affected by illegal mining (black spots) matching with second image. The Ghanaian government is using the analysis to coordinate more targeted and efficient intragovernmental efforts across ministries, departments, and agencies in tracking and tackling illegal mining; saving time and money in the process and protecting the environment and human health.

Since the ARDC's launch, we are seeing the emergence of new and stronger data systems, with a growing number of partnerships within and outside government. As well as investing significant time and capital in the strengthening of systems within government, the Government of Kenya has brought on board more partners to provide additional technical support. These include the East Africa Data Centre for additional computing power and Maasai Mara University for capacity building. Other ARDC partner countries are likely to benefit from a partnership with Liquid Telekom being brokered by the Kenyan government to strengthen internet connectivity and therefore access to ARDC data.

We are also building knowledge by supporting an ARDC Regional Oversight Committee, which will include all the ARDC partners and serve as a platform to share experiences, use cases, and good practices. We will periodically publish insights from ARDC implementation, to help other governments increase their use of Earth observation data for the SDGs. Partner governments have shared their experience and lessons at global events including the UN World Data Forum in 2018.

Senior politicians from all five countries have used the ARDC as an example of their forward-thinking approach to innovation and data, and it has inspired considerable media attention, further increasing the incentives for others to get involved. The demand from other governments has led to plans to scale up the initiative to cover the whole region, evolving it into 'Digital Earth Africa' during 2019-2020.

All of this means that data from the ARDC is already increasing the use of data for decision-making in the five partner governments. To take one example, in Ghana, the ARDC is being used to assess the location, extent, and impact of illegal mining along the Ankobra River. The images below show a Fractional Cover (FC) analysis (Green images), revealing a 13 percent loss in dense vegetation along the river between 2000 and 2017. The analysis revealed areas with potential illegal mining activity (red and purple spots in the second image).



# THE GPSDD IN ACTION: Inclusive Data Charter

The aspiration to 'leave no one behind' is one of the most powerful parts of the 2030 Agenda. To meet this goal, we need timely, comprehensive, and granular data, to better understand the situation of the poorest and most marginalized people worldwide and to monitor change. But very little data is routinely disaggregated, meaning governments cannot effectively measure SDG progress in general, or whether specific population groups are being left behind.

The Inclusive Data Charter (IDC) was initiated by a group of GPSDD partners to create incentives for action to address this problem. Driven by a recognition that political barriers often prevent action on disaggregation, the group developed the IDC as a way to mobilize support from governments and foster concrete actions to increase granularity of data sets and make data more inclusive.

The Charter includes two parts: a high-level vision with five principles that countries and organizations sign up to, and a bespoke action plan that each signatory develops and implements themselves. The action plans articulate the practical steps the country or organization is taking towards achieving the high-level vision and principles. The Inclusive Data Charter principles are:



**Principle One - All populations must be included in the data:** We can only achieve the "leave no one behind" goal by empowering the furthest behind. This means ensuring their voices are heard and their experiences are represented through data and analytics. We need to acknowledge all people, make them visible in the data to understand their lives, and include them in the development process.



**Principle Two - All data should, wherever possible, be disaggregated in order to accurately describe all populations:** We recognize that data should be disaggregated by sex, age, geographic location, and disability status and, where possible, by income, race, ethnicity, migratory status, and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.



**Principle Three - Data should be drawn from all available sources:** We recognize the need to make high-quality, timely data from official and non-official sources accessible, and that these should include new data sources, where consistent with internationally accepted statistical standards.



**Principle Four - Those responsible for the collection of data and production of statistics must be accountable:** We will balance the principles of transparency - maximizing the availability of disaggregated data - confidentiality, and privacy to ensure personal data is not abused, misused, or putting anyone at risk of identification or discrimination, in accordance with national laws and the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.



**Principle Five - Human and technical capacity to collect, analyze, and use disaggregated data must be improved, including through adequate and sustainable financing:** We recognize that collecting and analyzing disaggregated data needs specific skills and these must be built. We recognize the need to finance data collection, analysis, and use appropriately and sustainably so that high-quality data can be collected and used by governments as well as by businesses, civil society, and citizens.

The Charter has been designed to enable a wide range of actors to sign up, creating a broad movement in support of inclusive data. This includes governments of high, middle, and low-income countries, city-level governments, multilateral organizations, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Fourteen champions are currently signed on, ten of which joined the launch in July 2018<sup>1</sup>.

Going forward, we expect to:

- **build the movement by creating incentives that engage new champions, and by providing a platform for champions to report on their progress and make new commitments,**
- **support changemakers to implement those plans by connecting champions with partners who can help them achieve the priorities they set out in their action plans,**
- **use this experience to develop learnings in this area by fostering an active community of practitioners, experts, and policymakers who can share learning and resources.**

Already, we have seen progress in places like Ghana where the Ghana Statistical Service is working across ministries, departments, and agencies to improve the way administrative data is collected so that they can derive disaggregated statistics for SDG monitoring. The Philippines Statistical Authority is also actively engaged in strengthening administrative data as part of their action plan implementation, having identified that a substantial proportion of the data needed for SDG indicators can be derived from these systems. They are also championing the Charter in the Asia-Pacific region through presentations to the ASEAN and UN-ESCAP communities of statisticians in October 2018. Among its commitments, UNICEF will improve its support to countries on SDG monitoring through several household survey programs and by strengthening and joining up data across administrative systems. Sightsavers is supporting ongoing work and advocacy for using the Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions in censuses and national surveys to improve disability disaggregation in SDG monitoring.

<sup>1</sup> Current IDC champions are: Colombia, Ghana, Kenya, Philippines, UK Office for National Statistics and Dfid, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group, Data2X, Development Initiatives, HelpAge International, Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, and Sightsavers