

“Deep-Dive” on SDG data for RCOs, UNCTs & RCs

September 2021

- Independent report of GPSDD
- DCO-Consulted findings
- Background material & agenda

SDG Data deep-dive report from GPSDD



Introduction

In June 2021, the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO) hosted a series of clinics (the SDG Data deep-dive for RCs, RCOs and UNCTs) for the purpose of identifying challenges and opportunities to support the national statistical system (NSS). The discussions set out to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Resident Coordinators, their offices, UN country teams and entities at global and regional level that are physically not present in country; and to share how RCs can access the expertise across the UN system, and how these can be tooled to better support coordination in terms of support to the national statistical system at the country level. The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD) was invited to observe and provide the following summary report of the sessions.

It should be noted that while the summary conclusions are the opinion of GPSDD, all of the supporting material is made up of interventions from the speakers and audience, supplemented by a list of twelve key findings provided by the DCO team. These ideas have been paraphrased; direct quotations have not been used because the attribution of dozens of contributors would be at odds with the interest of brevity.

The clinics were organized around six topics:

- SDG data disaggregation
- Data dissemination and use
- Geospatial data for SDGs
- Capacity Development of the NSS
- Non-conventional data and SDG gaps
- Strategic partnerships and SDG data

Throughout the prepared presentations and open discussions, GPSDD noted three common themes that emerged:

- Leadership

- Coordination
- Support to NSOs

Data is primarily a political issue. It is both a source of power of institutions and a source of public concerns. Navigating this balance is the key. Technical problems have existing solutions, but what is needed is leadership. UNCTs have to develop capacity to engage politically with governments on data, developing advocacy and partnerships to create a system which has political support, is underpinned by good law and regulation, produces high quality and independent data that is freely shared across government, and is used to inform decisions.

A lot of data initiatives are less effective than they should be because of poor coordination. UNCTs have a critical role to play both in the UN system in-country and in making sure these efforts are joined up with the member state governments.

The UNCT can play a role in supporting the NSOs, bringing them into policy dialogues, and ensuring that data is represented at the heart of decision making.

Leadership

There is a desire for access to and knowledge of alternative data sources, yet there remains significant hesitation and resistance to incorporate alternative data sources, particularly when the data comes from non-institutional actors.

Governments and donors do not always prioritize data, and the development community has a tendency to advocate a human rights approach. The UN can be a leader in building advocacy for disaggregated data by emphasizing the development benefits such as savings on resources and better resource allocation while also benefitting underserved communities.

Leadership (cont.)

There has been limited advocacy and awareness on the application of geospatial data for accelerating SDG implementation. Environment is one of the main areas where geospatial data, GIS tools and platforms can contribute (biodiversity issues, oceans, etc). However, it is not easy to turn geospatial data resources into communicable products that help decision makers. Policy and decision makers are used to focusing on data by administrative areas. There is a need to show value in considering biomes, estuaries, and ecosystems that cross sub-national boundaries.

There are emerging risks in terms of human rights and data protection linked to Big Data use, including lack of guidelines and standards for use of non-conventional data. To strengthen political support, the UN needs to support governments in mitigating the risks linked to the use of non-conventional data. This requires guidelines/rules for privacy protection, data quality assurance and the modernization of statistical production. It also requires demonstrating how non-conventional data can help put people at the center and give more visibility to groups that are currently left behind.

This need for leadership is echoed in the key findings issued by the DCO, where they stressed the need for data literacy in leadership positions in the UNCTs. Implementing a data-driven culture at all levels will enable the responsible adoption of new and non-conventional data sources as well as embracing the benefits of disaggregated data.

Coordination

All participants discussed the need to connect different parts of the data ecosystem. In some instances, the national government does not recognize the RCO's role within the UN system, and the agencies are not collaborating with each other. UNCTs are not always aware of what

the line ministries are working on. The findings by the DCO team noted a demand for better information on which agencies can support which activities and how to reach them. Increased internal coordination among the UN will allow all parties to be more effective.

In the clinic on SDG data disaggregation, participants raised issues with data sharing – specifically, UN agencies not sharing valuable data with RCOs. There was a call for a clear, single roadmap developed between the RCO and government, as opposed to the current setup of multiple roadmaps with different ministries, agencies, and UN entities and poor understanding of what data different ministries hold.

There are also coordination concerns facing data dissemination and use. Partners aren't opening their data because they don't see the value of doing so. As the DCO observed, data is siloed in entity-specific portals. When global and national indicators don't have the same numbers, an explanation is needed. The UN should support national initiatives to collect and publish data from government systems without creating parallel reporting mechanisms.

Currently, there is fragmentation and duplication of geospatial programs. Many private sector startups are being created and this creates a lot of competition at the country level. There is difficulty understanding what companies are offering and what the limitations are. This includes geographic limitations as well as quality limitations that are not truly understood until after a country has an agreement with a private sector provider. Sometimes companies cannot offer disaggregated data and basic data is often missing.

Often it is difficult for a single country to engage with the largest tech companies. Global partnerships with big tech can leverage access to systems, data and tools in order to avoid duplication and redundancy on the tools and systems being implemented at the country level. This would improve standardization and reduce implementation costs. The DCO findings agree that the UN should play a coordination role, supporting the implementation of globally agreed geospatial information frameworks.

Coordination (cont.)

Besides the global level there is also a role at the regional level. There is an assumption that actors at the country level understand the regional level, but that is not always the case. This has led some to a feeling that coordination across the UN leads to duplication of efforts in some instances and work should be done at the national or local level, not at the global level. If the RCOs connect the dots this can lead to much-needed inter-agency cooperation at both global and local level.

Many of these same issues manifest when dealing with non-conventional data and SDG gaps. Most UN country offices are still struggling with conventional data and have not worked with non-conventional data. Lack of capacity and skills on the UN side (lack of data specialists) and also lack of coordination and buy-in of certain UN stakeholders on the ground are barriers to the successful use of even traditional sources, furthering the difficulty of adopting non-conventional data.

The DCO team noted a request for technical support with censuses and surveys, as well as more support for more rapid, timely and light data collection exercises, including guidance on how data quality can be assessed, particularly from MCOs. This supports the point above that more can be done to support the adoption of data-based decision making.

Better coordination is also needed for strategic partnerships. Participants identified a number of challenges. Having a clear, common purpose and adequate management and finding the right mutual proposition is needed to maintain engagement and commitment of all partners and stakeholders. It is difficult to prioritize the needs and gaps of capacity building, and if support is not available in the local language it will be difficult to receive. Limited funds within UN agencies make it difficult to maintain sustainability of partnerships. Fortunately, the DCO findings highlighted how the RCO can be effective in forming partnerships between academia, the private sector, and the UNCT.

Support to NSOs

Limited resources and capabilities are hampering progress in data production and use. Improved data literacy and strengthening internal data capacities are needed, as well as training in data science with applications in big data and machine learning. We heard that in some countries, SDG reporting is organized by the Ministry of Planning with technical support from the NSO, yet there are other countries with national plans not fully aligned with the SDGs.

For data dissemination and use, a tension persists between global data and national data. National data are not often aligned with global indicators, and SDG indicators are new, so countries haven't fully adapted. Analytical capacity is still lacking, and there are strong voices still wanting to focus on national data values, not global data values. Yet helpful advice was also offered: understand the needs of data users and their literacy level; know the priorities and sensitivities of your audience; use visualizations to help audience understand your message; try to identify representation and fill data gaps. Building the capacity of NSOs on dissemination and communication while promoting open data access policies will help make the connection to decision making and reach toward compatibility on the global level. More communication about methodologies being used and explanations of relevant metadata will help to show that discrepancies between national and global reporting are not necessarily problematic.

Geospatial data presents challenges for NSOs. Inadequate infrastructure for geospatial analysis coupled with limited skills means that despite the interest from the National Statistics Offices to improve in this area, a lack of resources holds many back.

Support to NSOs (cont.)

NSOs face a challenge when data from traditional sources (census, household surveys) does not align with new sources like mobile data and geospatial. A culture of trust is needed on both sides so that NSOs/governments can work with other data providers to improve and resolve quality issues that sometime arise in non-conventional data. More methodologies are needed, especially on how to integrate different datasets: non-conventional data should complement traditional data, not replace it.

Limited advocacy and awareness on the application of geospatial data for accelerating SDG implementation is a challenge that can be addressed through the data privacy commissioner's office or the Ministry of Justice in each country. They help guarantee required agreements are actually signed and put in place. Inability to share geo-referenced population data, including at lower administrative units, reinforces the need to review statistical acts and other legal frameworks.

The challenges that NSOs face on non-conventional data and SDG gaps mirror those of other themes: access to data (i.e. negotiations with private sector, data protection constraints), lack of data science skills and readily available data pipelines, data quality, and country ownership and validation. Again, understanding the legislation that is in place, especially in terms of privacy and data protection, as well as understanding the enabling environment is the key foundation to making progress.

Broad partnerships with public and private partners are needed to support the NSO and the data ecosystem. Sustainability is essential to make sure the partnership lasts beyond the initial intervention.

The UN has a role to play in capacity development of the National Statistical System, but this requires having a national plan for the creation of statistics as the basis for engagement and support. This should include guiding principles, methodologies and standards;

providing training and technical assistance to NSS members; and, offering platforms for peer-to-peer exchanges such as the UN Statistical Commission, Regional Statistical Conferences, and private sessions where individuals can learn from the experience of their peers from other countries.

We need to work together across indicators and custodians for general and coherent capacity development benefiting the NSS; strengthening foundations of legal frameworks, HR management, IT infrastructure, inter-agency collaboration and data exchange.

Cross-cutting issues

Many comments from participants focused squarely on one of the three major themes, and there were many comments that cut across themes.

Leadership and Coordination

In the clinic on SDG data disaggregation, a problem was highlighted of governments not being willing to give up data. The proposed solution was a centralized ask from countries so that they know what is expected of them. Coordination is needed across all UN agencies, and there is a role for RCOs providing the introduction for all UN agencies in-country and strengthening the role of the RC data focal point with all UN agencies in the country.

Coordination and Support to NSOs

On data dissemination and use, coordination is needed between the UNCT and the NSO if non-traditional data sources are being considered, to enable the acceptance of reports being disseminated. The issue is demand-driven: when focusing on dissemination issues, consider who needs the information.

Cross-cutting issues (cont.)

To increase capacity development of the NSS, the related UN agencies should come together and strategize on a coordinated and harmonized approach for supporting the NSS. Statistics departments of Ministries, Departments & Agencies often work completely independently of the NSO, so there needs to be a strengthening of the coordination between the NSO and line ministries. The DCO findings support this idea and take a step further, urging RCOs and UNCTs to find a balance between supply and demand so that capacity building is done sustainably.

Participants saw a need for partnerships to support NSOs. It was suggested that in countries with less capacities at the national level, there could be a close and strategic partnership with private sector for data collection with the NSO serving as quality control. Conversely, a question was posed as to whether governments can share data more broadly to CSOs so that they can use the data for decision making. There is also room for coordinated support for census programs, which can help avoid duplication of efforts.

Part of coordination and support to NSOs involves strategic partnerships for SDG data. The DCO team recommended that UNCTs should utilize RCs' partnership expertise to develop strategic partnerships on SDG data, as well as taking advantage of Regional Collaborative Platforms support to strengthen national capabilities.

Leadership and Support to NSOs

More leadership is needed on capacity development and expectation-setting for the NSS. Participants called for help making the case at all levels for increased domestic resources and advocacy for statistics. If NSO leaders were more empowered to be independent, they could do more on publication and disaggregation of data. While the NSO should

own projects in their own country, UNCTs can be more consistent in the level of disaggregation necessary for their work and clearly communicate expectations throughout the NSS. The DCO agreed, pointing out that the UN should lead by example, by disaggregating information in its own progress reports, and advising governments based on a system-wide policy.

Issues That Touch on All Themes

Countries recognize the need for timely data, but infrequent data collection is the norm. This was the case even before Covid-19 disrupted the 2020 census round just when the demand for administrative data was ramping up.

Actors at the country level need to have access to global resources, and it was suggested that a sort of "collective bargaining" power could be used to gain access to geospatial data. Coordination between national level (with relatively high capacity) and subnational/local level (relatively low capacity) is a hurdle being faced along with communication gaps from global/regional agencies on training being given to government officers. UNCTs are sometimes left out of the process and are unaware of the level of support being given.

On capacity development of the NSS, a clear focal point institution is needed (such as the NSO), and agencies within the UN system can provide guidance when needed. The RCO/UNCT can help develop capacity and foster a data stewardship role of National Statistical Offices. It can also ensure that trust in data remains by providing guidelines and access to cloud infrastructure and legal frameworks to embed non-conventional data.

Cross-cutting issues (cont.)

The DCO findings agreed that there are limited numbers of trained personnel (both within the UN system and in developing countries) in the areas of big data, data acquisition, integration, and management and recommended that RCs/UNCTs should be better supported to help governments strengthen institutional and governance arrangements (and where necessary, national statistical laws) to allow for non-conventional data in statistics. Further, it was noted that the RC system can be a vehicle for disseminating good practices relating to SDG data.

Conclusion

The SDG Data deep-dive clinics were a valuable exercise, demonstrating the need for open discussions and peer exchanges on multidisciplinary topics related to SDG data. A globally diverse audience showed that some measures of success can be implemented almost anywhere and showed that many of the challenges being faced are also shared universally. Based on the dialogues within the clinics we offer the following recommendations.

SDG data disaggregation:

The UN can be a leader in building advocacy for disaggregated data by emphasizing the development benefits such as better-informed decision making that allows resources to be spent more efficiently.

Data dissemination and use:

Understand the needs of data users and their literacy level; know the priorities and sensitivities of your audience; use visualizations to help audience understand your message; try to identify representation and fill data gaps.

Geospatial data for SDGs:

Environment is one of the main areas where geospatial data, tools and platforms can contribute. Avoid the trap of focusing only on data by administrative areas by showing the value in considering biomes, estuaries, and ecosystems that cross sub-national boundaries.

Capacity Development of the NSS:

There is a strong need for more coordinated capacity development of NSOs and the NSS, ideally also bringing them together in the same trainings. Challenges faced and where support may be needed are related to access to data and data sharing (both administrative data and other non-conventional sources), legal framework (including statistical acts), data quality, use of and access to geospatial information, data and IT infrastructure, partnerships and coordination as well as data dissemination and user engagement.

Non-conventional data and SDG gaps:

A culture of trust is needed on both sides so that NSOs/governments can work with other data providers to improve and resolve quality issues that sometime arise in non-conventional data. More methodologies are needed, especially on how to integrate different datasets: non-conventional data should complement traditional data, not replace it. Demonstrate how to integrate different datasets: non-conventional data should complement traditional data, not replace it. Non-conventional data can help put people at the center and give more visibility to groups that are currently left behind.

Conclusion (cont.)

Strategic partnerships and SDG data:

Better coordination is needed for strategic partnerships. Having a clear, common purpose and adequate management and finding the right mutual proposition is needed to maintain engagement and commitment of all partners and stakeholders. Global partnerships with big tech can leverage access to systems, data and tools in order to avoid duplication and redundancy on the tools and systems being implemented at the country level.

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This is an independent report. The analysis presented and views expressed within it are the responsibility of the Global Partnership and do not necessarily reflect those of the

contributors or their organizations.

Acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
GPSDD	Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data
MCO	Multi-country Office
NSO	National Statistical Office
NSS	National Statistical System
RC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCT	United Nations Country Team

DCO-consulted findings



1***Senior leadership skills on data matter.***

Resident Coordinators of Trinidad and Tobago (Marina Walter) and Malawi (Maria Jose Torres Macho) presented on behalf of their UNCT on big data and geospatial data, respectively. It is clear that where there is strong data literacy among leadership, the UNCT is able to take forward innovative approaches more seamlessly. Increasingly, data literacy should become a requirement for leadership positions in UNCTs. This will require the strengthening and reprofiling of skill sets and the scaling-up of related resources. Managers and leaders without such data skills should create space for others to lead, and the UN should support them with data savviness skills to lead data initiatives. Beyond the leadership level, a data-driven culture shift is required, where every UN staff member not only understands the role data plays in decision-making but uses data in her/his daily professional tasks.

2***Coordination capacities must not replace technical expertise at country and regional-level, and are best built on strong country-level governance mechanisms.***

The RCO is most effective when it works together with agencies on the strengthening of national system for SDG data. There is a mutually beneficial relationship that can be struck when technical colleagues leverage the Resident Coordinator and her/his office, in particular when it comes to forming partnerships between academia, the private sector and the UNCT (e.g. Cabo Verde). Strong governance mechanism, both within the UNCT (Sri Lanka) and between UN and Government (Costa Rica) are critical to a coordinated UN response to the multi-dimensional challenges relating to SDG data.

3***The UNCT could be more effective if the global & regional level were better coordinated internally. UNCTs would be able to deliver better if knowledge and expertise was more easily accessible.***

There is demand for better information on which agencies can support which activities and how to reach them. The development system must be much more cohesive and integrated in offering support to the country level and, to expand further on the offer of “whole-of-system” expertise to countries. That means enhancing joint analysis, better harnessing internal knowledge and making existing data sets and sources more accessible. Global and regional coordination mechanisms must bridge this gap, for the system to become more accountable for system-wide mandates and actions, as well as for collective results.



4

In recognition of the fact that strengthening data & statistics capacities is a development outcome in and of itself, Cooperation Frameworks should better reflect this as a priority.

The 2030 Agenda explicitly calls for strengthened statistical capacities at national level and the UNCTs are in a unique position to support countries deliver on this target. Aligned with context, all Cooperation Frameworks should look to develop and promote innovative strategies to ensure proper dissemination and use of data for sustainable development. Regional Collaborative Platforms, with statistical assets physically nearer to Member States, should be leverage their position to increase their support to strengthening national capabilities.

5

The UN development system still needs to refine its support to MCO country teams given the significant coordination challenge across countries and SDGs

A series of dedicated meetings between the UNSDG and MCO country teams of the Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean surfaced that that they are under-resourced to overcome the coordination challenge of covering several countries while working across the pillar of the SDGs. There was also a request for technical support with censuses and surveys, as well as more support for more rapid, timely and light data collection exercises, including guidance on how data quality can be assessed. Data analysis was flagged as a challenge in these contexts, and is an area in which RCPs could support with the establishment of regional academic partnerships for the respective MCOs. One immediate and specific requests for support was around the collection of data needed for concessionary financing for economies affected by the pandemic.

6

1A: A clearer policy on UN reporting and on the guidance we provide to Member States on disaggregation is needed.

The UNCT should agree what matters in its country and build capacity to collect the data. However, there are different practices and priorities on disaggregation of data between the entities that make up UNCTs (varying across those that act as SDG custodians). This ranges from the level of disaggregation that's necessary, to the definition of groups and categories used, and sensitivities associated with such reporting. When translated to the UNCT level, the issue becomes compounded by the lowest common-denominator, reducing even the amount of disaggregated data even in our own reports and analysis beyond the most traditional distinctions (e.g. women/men). Consequently, there is confusing and even contradictory advice we give to MS on the importance of including variables to disaggregate data in census and surveys, and on the need to report disaggregated data in progress reporting. The UN should lead by example, by disaggregating information in our own progress reports, and advising Governments based on a system-wide policy.

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1B: Data availability is not only the problem, access to data in one platform is the challenge at the country-level.

UNCTs need to take decisive actions to support Government and transform how data and statistics are produced and disseminated to inform development policy decisions. A current challenge is that the data remains in entity-specific portals, and is not brought together centrally. UNCTs need to support Governments with their choice of data, indicators and targets for the country-led 2030 Agenda while building their understanding of the global and regional data requirements and maximizing the coherence between the two. The UN should not create parallel country-processes but rather focus on supporting countries in setting it up systems themselves. Common Country Analyses are another vehicle to highlight national SDG data (and gaps therein) to track national progress towards the SDGs.

8

2A: UNCTs need to ramp up support to implement globally agreed frameworks on geospatial data, including through Cooperation Frameworks.

UNCT should ramp up support to countries with the implementation of globally agreed geospatial information frameworks (such as the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework), to enable the mainstreaming of geospatial information in all its forms within both countries' systems and the UN architecture for strengthening national systems (for which the Cooperation Framework should be leveraged). From this common basis, innovative approaches in the integration of statistical and geospatial information, the incorporation of Earth observations, and other forms of data will become easier and more readily available. This also offer a common architecture with which to support capacity development initiatives by the UN system in countries, and enables the generic geospatial capacity that is built to be leveraged by other stakeholders in the national environment.

9

2B: Country-level coordination for capacity development of the NSS is lacking – but more than coordination is needed – and the coordination must be “purpose-driven”.

Cooperation Frameworks should drive national capacity development priorities, and these should be explicitly well-aligned to national data priorities. Even so, in the status quo two challenges related to capacity development are a lack of coordination, and the supply-driven nature of the support provided. The RCO can help the UNCT coordinate among development system actors, and identify where thematic capacity building may be lacking and where it is over-supplied – it can also convene the necessary discussions with government to tailor data capacity investments to national development plans. Central to this is to not overwhelm national counterparts with too theoretical training, but rather to focus on concrete, sustainable and demand-driven initiatives as learning-by-doing (and on-the-job training). While coordination is important and leads to better results, strategically positioned UN support goes beyond coordination of what is already planned, moving towards joint planning, analysis, and strategies. Underpinning all coordination is the need for it to be “purpose-driven”.



10

3A: The RC/UNCT should be better supported to help Governments strengthen institutional and governance arrangements (and where necessary, national statistical laws) to allow for non-conventional data in statistics.

There is a limited number of trained personal (both within the UN system and in developing countries) in the areas of big data, data acquisition, integration, and management, and data pipelines are not mature. Having a data pipeline, providing information products, could lower response burdens and advance analytical objectives of national statistical systems and the 2030 Agenda. Without creating parallel systems, UNCTs should promote the strengthening of institutional and governance arrangements including, where needed, the revision of statistical laws and regulatory frameworks to enhance the status, independence and coordination role of national statistics offices and to develop a mechanism with Governments for the use of data from alternative and innovative sources within official statistics. UNCTs may benefit from templates and a general definition of data quality assurance procedure to minimize data bias and take into consideration the specific type of sources used in the collection of data, particularly non-conventional forms.

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3B: More UNCTs should utilize RCP expertise to develop strategic partnerships on SDG data

The data needs of the 2030 Agenda can benefit from partnerships across the public sector as well as with academia, civil society and the private sector. National Statistical Systems are grappling with the array of partnerships needed. UNCTs can support national governments to build, nurture and maintain strategic partnerships for SDG data needs as well as the technical and institutional capacities needed to improve the coverage, quality and frequency of data and statistics. UNCTs are looking for concrete and practical assistance in forming and nurturing partnerships. The Regional Collaborative Platforms are well placed to support the UNCTs. Opportunities for partnerships focused on joint diagnosis of challenges/opportunities and co-creation of solutions that build capacities can help ensure continuity beyond projects, and also build national capacities. This should go hand-in-hand with collaboration with international companies that collect, generate and use data for decision-making processes, as well as with specialized academic institutions.

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RC system capacities can help cross-pollinate good practices and the sharing of lessons learned across UNCTs.

DCO, working through the UNSDG network on data and reporting (and regional equivalents), can help UNSDG members identify, document and disseminate good practices relating the SDG data (through the UNSDG good practices database, here). These can then be institutionalized through the Cooperation Framework, which should be the primary document viz the development and use of quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data to inform national and UN policy formulation, and programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as risk management for development results.

Annex 1

Agenda and background



DATA REVOLUTION FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD



“It is time to move away from outlooks, behaviors and business models that pit one UN entity against the other; the RC against the UN Country Team and vice-versa.

We live in a world of networked multilateralism.

The UN is one player – a potentially important player.

We must be confident, but we must also be humble.

Our strength no longer lies in just being who we are.

In the era of sustainable development, our strength is contingent on our ability to mobilize the collective integrated capacities of our diverse UN family.

If we are to meet the expectations of Member States, we must embrace the Resident Coordinators as the clear but collaborative leader of our Country Teams, while recognizing the symbiotic relationship between effective UN Country Team members and effective RCs.

This is the essence of the reforms”

Secretary-General, 7 June 2021



WHAT?

The SDG data deep dive will look at:

- challenges and opportunities to support the national statistical system;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Resident Coordinators, their offices, UN country teams and entities at global and regional level that are physically not present in country;
- share how RCs can access the expertise across the UN system, and how these can be toolled to better support coordination UN delivery in terms of support to the national statistical system at the country level.

An independent report of the sessions will be prepared by the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, and will give a short overview with key recommendations and takeaways for UN country teams, regional level and global level.

WHY?

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to its very core. However, we must hold firm in our convictions and not let the crisis derail our hopes and ambitions. In fact, the principles on which the SDGs were established are key to building back better in the post-COVID-19 recovery. The continued pursuit of these universal Goals will keep Governments focused on growth, but also on inclusion, equity and sustainability. Our collective response to the pandemic can serve as a “warm-up” for our preparedness in preventing an even larger crisis – that is, global climate change, whose effects are already becoming all too familiar. Governments and businesses will need to heed the lessons learned from this wake-up call to formulate the kinds of transitions needed to build a healthier, more resilient and more sustainable world. Central to such transitions are timely and disaggregated data and statistics, from which effective and equitable measures and policies can be shaped.

OUTCOMES?

- Resident Coordinators, their offices and UNCT members are briefed and understand the multidimensional challenges and potential solutions for addressing data gaps in the national statistical system, including how the Joint workplans of UNDAFs and Cooperation Frameworks and Common Country Analyses can be best utilized across the UN development system.
- RCs, UNSDG members and Chief Statisticians come to a collective framing on the roles and responsibilities at global and regional level, and have a clear path to understanding better the specific needs for support at the country level, and how the various strategies and roadmaps fit together
- UNSDG at global and regional level will share how they can jointly support UNCTs in strengthening national statistical system.

WHO?

This deep dive is developed by DCO with the active participation of volunteers from the UNSDG Data and Reporting network (including DESA, UNICEF, RECs, UN-Women, OHCHR, UNDP, FAO, IOM, UNOSAT, UNHCR, Global Pulse, OCHA, WFP, UNHCR, ILO, WHO, UNODC, UNDRR, UNFPA, UNCTAD and EOSG).

iMMAP, Open Data Watch and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data will also contribute.



WHY?

In the words of the Secretary General: “Starkly and powerfully, the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates how critical data use, with a human face, is to protecting lives & livelihoods. The crisis is a wake-up call. We must accelerate a shift in our data and analytics abilities: To respond to COVID-19 and build back better, to drive the Decade of Action for the SDGs, to amplify climate action, to promote gender equality, to protect human rights, to advance peace and security, and to accelerate UN Reform – for greater impact on the ground.”

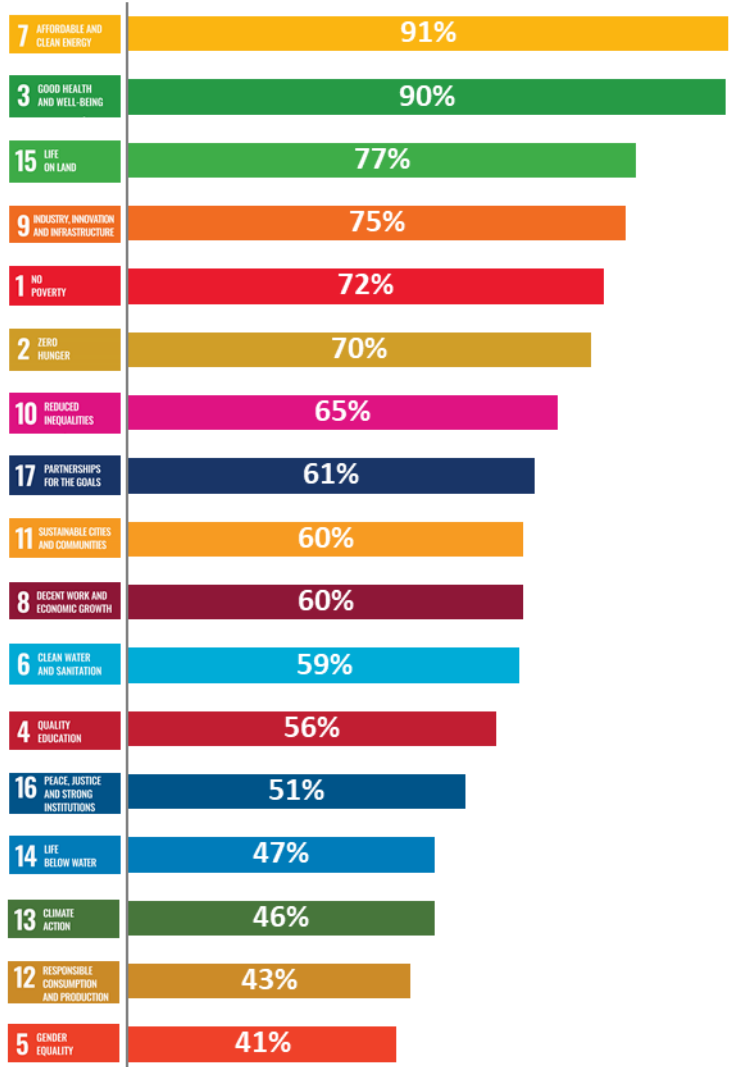
The importance of timely, quality, open and disaggregated data and statistics has never been as clear as during the COVID-19 crisis. Such data are critical in understanding, managing and mitigating the human, social and economic effects of the pandemic. They are also essential for designing short-term responses and accelerated actions to put countries back on track to achieve the SDGs. The 2020 SDG Progress Report found “continued unevenness of progress” and identifies areas where significant improvement is required. Areas of progress until the end of 2019 included declining global poverty, falling rates of maternal and child mortality, access to electricity for more people, and the development of more national sustainable development policies and signing of international agreements for environmental protection. At the same time, progress was stalled or reversed on the number of people suffering from hunger, the rate of climate change, and increasing inequalities.

Many of the data challenges encountered during the first five years of SDG implementation are severely limiting COVID-19 responses. These include the lack of basic health, social and economic data. To make matters worse, the crisis is disrupting routine operations throughout the global statistical and data system, with delays in planned censuses, surveys and other data programmes. Huge data gaps exist in terms of geographic coverage, timeliness and the level of disaggregation required, notably for gender-related data. Moreover, challenges remain in compiling and disseminating metadata to document the data quality of SDG indicators at local and national levels.

An analysis of the indicators in the DESA Global SDG Indicators Database revealed that for 4 of the 17 goals, less than half of 194 countries or areas have internationally comparable data. This lack of country-level data is particularly worrisome for Goal 5 (gender equality), where on average only about 4 in 10 countries have data available. Country-level data deficits are also significant in areas related to sustainable production and consumption (Goal 12) and to climate action (Goal 13). What’s more, even countries with available data have only a small number of observations over time, making it difficult for policymakers to monitor progress and identify trends.

Source: DESA SDG database, DCO visualization

Data coverage: proportion of countries or areas with available data (weighted average across indicators), by Goal (percentage)



Additional background



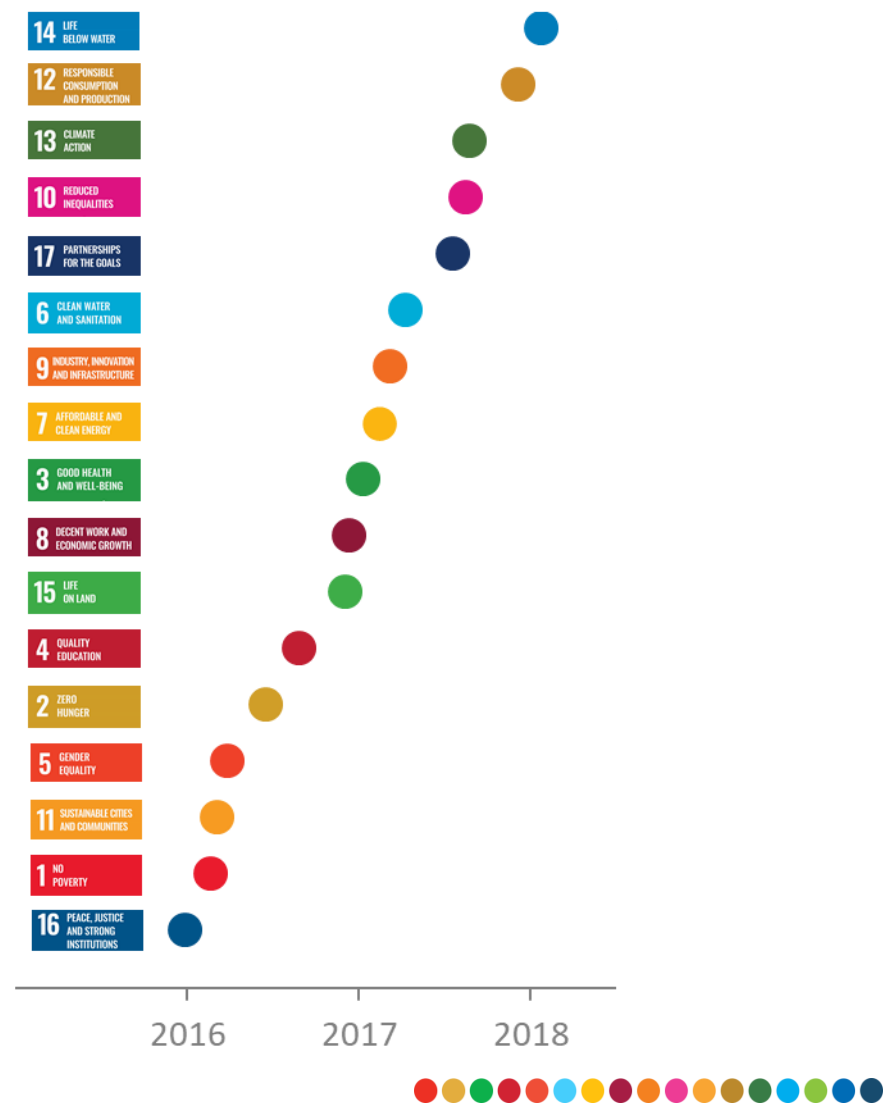
In addition, a large number of SDG indicators are available only with a significant time lag. For instance, in at least half of countries or areas in the DESA database, the latest data point available for poverty-related indicators (Goal 1) is for 2016 or earlier. A similar situation is found for indicators on gender equality (Goal 5), sustainable cities (Goal 11) and peace, justice, and strong institutions (Goal 16). The ability of many national statistical offices to deliver official monthly and quarterly statistics as well as the data necessary to monitor progress on the SDGs is uneven across all countries, which in turn prevents evidence-based decision making. This situation is further aggravated due to COVID-19. A recent survey conducted by the United Nations and the World Bank (with responses from 122 countries) shows that the pandemic has affected the operations of the vast majority of national statistical offices: 65% of headquarters are partially or fully closed, 90% have instructed staff to work from home, and 96% have partially or fully stopped face-to-face data collection. In sub-Saharan Africa, 97% of countries surveyed indicated that the production of regular statistics was affected, and 88% of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean indicated that they were having difficulty meeting international data reporting requirements.

According to survey results, 9 in 10 national statistical offices in low- and lower-middle-income countries have seen funding cuts and are struggling to maintain normal operations during the pandemic. In fact, 73 offices – 61% of those responding to the questionnaire – expressed the need for external support in addressing challenges associated with COVID-19. Priority areas cited included technical assistance and capacity-building, financial aid, and software for remote data collection.

If these needs are not filled, they will have a lasting effect on countries' ability to produce timely and disaggregated data for a large number of SDG indicators. In other words, the COVID-19 pandemic is not only creating a massive setback in the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but it is also exacerbating global data inequalities, which in turn hampers the ability of the UN and states to reverse setbacks to human rights and development caused by the pandemic. The statistical community and donors must urgently provide technical and financial support to national statistical offices most in need. This includes working through existing mechanisms, including multi-stakeholder networks such as the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, which. The full range of data producers and users, including governments, companies, civil society groups, international organizations, academic institutions, foundations, statistics agencies and data communities need to be engaged to fill critical data gaps and ensure data is accessible and usable.

Source: DESA SDG database, DCO visualization

Data timeliness: the most recent year available (weighted average of the median country by indicator), by Goal



HOW?

Countries are the centre and starting point for all monitoring via their national statistical system. They produce data that are at the basis of compilation of international data series as well as data to inform SDG indicators used at the national level. Not all countries have the capacity to produce the necessary data to compile all indicators in the current SDG global framework. Also, not all global SDG indicators are prioritized in every country. At the same time, national statistical systems and national statistical offices have the responsibility to report on indicators that address national priorities as identified in their national SDG frameworks. This poses enormous challenges especially when resources dedicated to data and statistics are limited. The SDG global indicators often represent only a subset of the full suite of indicators monitored in a country and used for multiple purposes including in some cases to inform their national volunteer reviews to the HLPP.

Custodian agencies are responsible for compiling and verifying country data and metadata, and for submitting the data, along with regional and global aggregates, to the DESA Statistics Division. These agencies sometimes publish the country data in their own databases and use it for thematic reporting. The country data need to be internationally comparable and to this end, the agencies are also responsible for supporting countries with the implementation of international standards and the use of recommended methodologies for the production of the indicators in their respective areas. A central responsibility of the custodian agencies is to strengthen national monitoring and reporting capacity. When country data are missing, collected using a different methodology or inconsistently reported by different sources, agencies make estimates or adjust the data in consultation with the specific countries. All final data which is submitted to DESA is then validated and approved by countries.

At the global-level, the Statistical Commission the highest body of the global statistical system bringing together the Chief Statisticians from member states from around the world. It is the highest decision-making body for international statistical activities, responsible for setting of statistical standards and the development of concepts and methods, including their implementation at the national and international level. The Statistical Commission oversees the work of the United Nations Statistics Division. The UN-GGIM is the highest body of the global geospatial information system, responsible for geospatial data and data management.

Several inter-agency mechanisms on data to support statistical processes, including Committee of Chief Statisticians of the UN system, the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, the UN Geospatial Network as well as a number of in secretariat working groups. Unlike the other groups, the UNSDG Data and Reporting network is not a technical forum but rather exists to connect the work at the global level to RCOs/UNCTs. Each of these groups plays a role in implementing overarching strategies such as the Secretary-General Strategy on data and the UN Data and Innovation roadmap.

Regional Collaborative Platforms are the main internal system-wide coordination platform for sustainable development at the regional level. They bring together the leadership or regional entities for accountability and clarity to system-wide goals, activities and results in the regions to amplify support to countries by UNCTs. As part of the regional reform, regional processes are established to "consolidate capacities on data and statistics".



**UNCT Clinics
(A & B in parallel)**

**RCO Brainstorming with
Chief Statisticians**

**10 June
8am**

Slide 5

**15 June
8am**

1A

1B

**16 June
8am**

2A

2B

**17 June
8am**

3A

3B

**Way forward with
Resident Coordinators**

**24 June
8am**

Slide 12

1A	SDG data disaggregations	Slide 6
1B	Data dissemination and use	7
2A	Geospatial data for SDGs	8
2B	Capacity Development of the NSS	9
3A	Non-conventional data and SDG gaps	10
3B	Strategic partnerships and SDG data	11





UNSDG members access via
SharePoint programme [here](#)

0 – 20 mins

Setting the stage

- Brian Williams**, DCO Policy and Programming Chief a.i.: *Opening and moderation*
- Stefan Schweinfest**, Director UN Statistics Division: *2030 Agenda and SDG data reporting & coming to a collective framing*

20 – 50

RCO presentations on good practice, challenges & support requirements

- Costa Rica
- Cambodia
- North Macedonia

50 – 115

Panel reactions and Q&A

- Stefan Schweinfest**, Director UN Statistics Division
- Mark Hereward**, UNICEF Associate Director Data and Analytics and UNSDG Network on Data and reporting
- Rolando Ocampo**, ECLAC Statistics Director and UNSDG Network on Data and reporting
- Angela Me**, UNODC Statistics Chief and Committee of the Chief Statisticians
- Other **Chief Statisticians** of the UN system

115 – 120

Closing

- Brian Williams**, DCO Policy and Programming Chief a.i.



CLINIC: SDG data disaggregations



15 June 8am (EST)



UNSDG members access via SharePoint programme [here](#)

1A

PRESENTATIONS POSTED TO UNSDG KNOWLEDGE PORTAL [HERE](#)

In order to leave no one behind, much SDG data needs to be disaggregated by various dimensions (Target 17.18 calls to increase the availability of “high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity [and] migratory status”). Data disaggregation can be important way to help enable inclusiveness for specific population subgroups. Disaggregated data can inform on the extent of possible inequality and discrimination, and support a Human Rights Based Approach to Data, and forms part of States’ human rights obligations.

Moderator	Mark Hereward	UNICEF
Presenter	Grace Steffan	OHCHR
Experts	Francesca Perucci	DESA
	Papa Seck	UN-Women
	Dorian Navarro	FAO
	Arman Bibarbakhi Nia	ESCAP
	Xavier Mancero	ECLAC
	Elisa Mosler Vidal	IOM
	Rafael Diez de Medina	ILO
	Ahmad Hosseinpoor	WHO
	Witness Chirinda	UNFPA
	Wrap up	Babatunde Abidoye
Support	Frederik Matthys	DCO
	Florence Basty	DCO
	Antonio Cisneros De Alencar	DCO
	Janine Chase	DCO
	Bianca Jinete (Zoom host)	DCO

- Are SDG priorities and disaggregated data guiding UN action, including in leaving no one behind and addressing inequalities and discrimination?
- How do different local/national/regional/global SDG reporting platforms fit together?
- Where are the SDG data availability gaps and how does the UN support in filling them?
- How can we better support National Statistical Systems to develop disaggregated datasets?

0-10 mins Opening and Joint presentation

10-25 UNCT Nepal presentation

25-50 Breakout rooms

50-85 Interactive dialogue

85-90 Wrap up



Clinic-specific breakout room question:

How do we make better use of SDG progress assessments in CCAs and Cooperation frameworks?

General questions for all clinics:

- What are your questions for the experts?
- What are the good practices that you can share from your UNCT?
- What kinds of challenges have you experienced in making progress?
- What are your support needs from HQ and regional level?



CLINIC: Data dissemination and use



15 June 8am (EST)



Zoom recording
Passcode: 5351uf@4

1B

PRESENTATIONS POSTED TO UNSDG KNOWLEDGE PORTAL [HERE](#)

Addressing SDG data gaps is only one part of the equation. How the data is disseminated, and more importantly used, across pillars, is critical to sustainable development. Insights from data dissemination and use inform national priorities and help determine the most effective paths for action on national issues, and is therefore a critical step for effective UN support.

Moderator	Shaيدا Badiee	Open Data Watch
Presenter	Gemma Van Halderen	ESCAP
Experts	Luis Morales	DESA
	Rolando Ocampo	ECLAC
	Serge Kapto	UNDP
	Marc Titus Cebrenos	OHCHR
	Steven Kapsos	ILO
	Neha Sinha	IOM
	Philippe Boucher	WHO
	Yanhong Zhang	UNICEF
	Enrico Bisogno	UNODC
	Lorant Czarán/Sainan Zhang	UNFPA
	Kersten Jauer	EOSG
Wrap up	Seid Yakob	FAO
Support	Katarina Kuai	DCO
	Janine Chase	DCO
	Neelam Patel	DCO
	Kirit Patel (Zoom host)	DCO

- How do we make better use of SDG progress assessments in CCAs and Cooperation Frameworks?
- How can we make sense of the plethora of tools and platforms?
- How do we ensure the new opportunities of the data revolution translate to 2030 Agenda achievement?
- How should the UN engage local partners on data dissemination and use?

0-10 mins Opening and Joint presentation

10-25 UNCT Palestine presentation

25-50 Breakout rooms

50-85 Interactive dialogue

85-90 Wrap up



Clinic-specific breakout room question:

What are the key aspects of a coherent data dissemination policy that enables producers of SDG data to "supply the right data to the right audience in the right format"?

General questions for all clinics:

- What are your questions for the experts?
- What are the good practices that you can share from your UNCT?
- What kinds of challenges have you experienced in making progress?
- What are your support needs from HQ and regional level?



CLINIC: Geospatial data for SDGs

Approximately 20% of the SDG indicators can be interpreted and measured either through direct use of geospatial data itself or through integration with statistical data. Thus, obtaining reliable geospatial data has become a crucial task for member states to prepare their national reports or for UN organisations to undertake global reporting and increasingly make use of the diversity and reliability of geospatial technologies and expansion of open source, high resolution data.

Moderator	Guido Pizzini	iMMAP
Presenter	Mark Iliffe	DESA
Experts	Chris Earney	Global Pulse
	Rolando Ocampo	ECLAC
	Toby Wicks	UNICEF
	Ravishankar Santhana	WHO
	Giancarlo Pini	WFP
	Irmgard Zeiler	UNODC
	Victor Ohuruogu	GPSDD
	Lorenzo DeSimone	FAO
	Lorant Czarán	UNFPA
	Wrap up	David Megginson
Support	Frederik Matthys	DCO
	Kat Kuai	DCO
	Anwar Mahfoudh	DCO
	Kirit Patel (Zoom host)	DCO



16 June 8am (EST)



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- Why is this useful for countries?
- Which data sources should be used?
- How can the UN support the national statistical system with geospatial data?
- What are the risks, if any, with geospatial data?

0-10 mins	Opening and Joint presentation
10-25	UNCT Moldova & Malawi presentation
25-50	Breakout rooms
50-85	Interactive dialogue
85-90	Wrap up



Clinic-specific breakout room question:

What are the main gaps in access to data, technology and skills preventing the integration of modern geospatial information capabilities within mainstream statistical production programmes?

General questions for all clinics:

What are your questions for the experts?
 What are the good practices that you can share from your UNCT?
 What kinds of challenges have you experienced in making progress?
 What are your support needs from HQ and regional level?



CLINIC: Capacity Development of the NSS

National Statistical Systems (NSS) in developing countries are often under-resourced and under-staffed, and traditional support to statistical capacity building is often not fit for purpose. While political support to have and use more and better data is essential to realising the full potential of data for development, more effective and better coordinated support will enable country leadership, co-operation, data literacy, and innovation.

Moderator	Kieran Walsh	ILO
Presenter	Rikke Hansen & Xavier Mancero	ESCAP/ECLAC
Experts	Mark Hereward	UNICEF
	Tarek Abou Chabake	UNCHR
	Pietro Gennari	FAO
	Elisa Mosler Vidal	IOM
	Enrico Bisogno	UNODC
	Oliver Chinganya	ECA
	Rachel Snow	UNFPA
Wrap up	Vibeke Oestreich Nielsen	DESA
Support	Jorg Schimmel	DCO
	Neelam Patel	DCO
	Bianca Jinete (Zoom host)	DCO



16 June 8am (EST)



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- What does coordinated capacity building look like? Are there limits to capacity development activities? What then? How can we be more innovative?
- What could the lasting impacts of capacity building moving online be? How do we make capacity building activities more sustainable?
- What are data capacity building approaches that have been effective in the past?
- Which capacity building activities would suit more resource-constrained contexts? How can existing data be leveraged? How can NSOs and others easily access relevant tools and materials?

0-10 mins	Opening and Joint presentation
10-25	UNCT Bangladesh presentation
25-50	Breakout rooms
50-85	Interactive dialogue
85-90	Wrap up



Clinic-specific breakout room question:

How can we ensure national ownership of statistical capacity development projects and empower countries to make their own informed choices regarding sources, technology and methods for data production?

General questions for all clinics:

- What are your questions for the experts?
- What are the good practices that you can share from your UNCT?
- What kinds of challenges have you experienced in making progress?
- What are your support needs from HQ and regional level?



CLINIC: Non-conventional data and SDG gaps

Critical data for global, regional and national development policymaking is still lacking. Many governments still do not have access to adequate data on their entire populations. Big data can shed light on disparities in society that were previously hidden. Much of the big data with the most potential to be used for public good is collected by the private sector, and as such, sustainable public-private partnerships are needed, with clear frameworks in place to clarify roles and expectations on all sides.

Moderator	Chris Earney	Global Pulse
Presenter	Ronald Jansen	DESA
Experts	Toby Wicks	UNICEF
	Pauline Stockins / Alvaro Fuentes	ECLAC
	Grace Steffan	OHCHR
	Edgardo Greising	ILO
	Carola Fabi	FAO
	Amit Prasad	WHO
	Steve Mac Feely	UNCTAD
	Sainan Zhang	UNFPA
Wrap up	Jean-Martin Bauer	WFP
Support	Katarina Kuai	DCO
	Anwar Mahfoudh	DCO
	Kirit Patel (Zoom host)	DCO



17 June 8am (EST)



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- What are the best sources for big data?
- How can the UN facilitate public-private partnerships?
- How do we simultaneously promote use of big data and other non-conventional data sources while mitigating the risks they pose, including on human rights, data protection and privacy?
- How do we make use of big data sustainable through the national statistical system?

0-10 mins	Opening and Joint presentation
10-25	UNCT Trinidad and Tobago presentation
25-50	Breakout rooms
50-85	Interactive dialogue
85-90	Wrap up



Clinic-specific breakout room question:

What measures are most effective for mainstreaming innovative and non-traditional data sources in regular statistical production (e.g. confidence and trust-building measures, legal reforms, better funding and capacity building.)

General questions for all clinics:

- What are your questions for the experts?
- What are the good practices that you can share from your UNCT?
- What kinds of challenges have you experienced in making progress?
- What are your support needs from HQ and regional level?



CLINIC: Strategic partnerships and SDG data

Partnerships are now understood to be a pre-requisite to systemic changes, responsible data sharing and innovation. Bringing together the private sector, civil society, youth, researchers, and governments remains critical. Such collaboration, including through networks such as the Global Partnership, can help foster new relationships across national, sectoral, and institutional borders, and more than ever will be even more critical as global institutions struggle to overcome the barriers to change.

Moderator	Victor Ohuruogu	GPSDD
Presenter	Luis Morales	DESA
Experts	Rolando Ocampo	ECLAC
	Craig Burgess	WHO
	Jean-Martin Bauer	WFP
	Enrico Bisogno	UNODC
	Rahul Sengupta	UNDRR
Wrap up	Yanhong Zhang	UNICEF
	Chikezie Anyanwu	DCO
	Angus Rennie	DCO
Support	Mao Kawada	DCO
	Neelam Patel (Zoom host)	DCO



17 June 8am (EST)



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PRESENTATIONS POSTED TO UNSDG KNOWLEDGE PORTAL [HERE](#)

- How can partnerships across government, the private sector, civil society, and academia be used for better decision-making
- How do we transparently scale-up of public-private cooperation to exploit the contribution to be made by a wide range of data, including earth observation and geospatial information, while ensuring national ownership in supporting and tracking progress?
- What makes a good partnership for SDG data?
- What should UNCTs be wary of when forming data partnerships?

0-10 mins	Opening and Joint presentation
10-25	UNCT Cabo Verde presentation
25-50	Breakout rooms
50-85	Interactive dialogue
85-90	Wrap up



Clinic-specific breakout room question:

What type of data collaborations have you seen in your home country? What are lessons learned?

General questions for all clinics:

What are your questions for the experts?
 What are the good practices that you can share from your UNCT?
 What kinds of challenges have you experienced in making progress?
 What are your support needs from HQ and regional level?





Rosemary Kalapurakal, Deputy Director, Development Coordination Office



Readout of the RCO and UNCT discussions and potential way forward

Claire Melamad, Chief Executive Officer, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data



The SG Strategy on Data

Ayaka Suzuki, Director of the Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit in the EOSG



Bridging the gap between country and HQ

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary, ESCAP



Connecting the UNSDG Network on Data & Reporting to the country-level

Alicia Barcena, Executive Secretary, ECLAC



Committee of Chief Statisticians Perspective

Angela Me, Chief of Statistics, UNODC & Committee of Chief Statisticians



Path forward

Stefan Schweinfest, Director, DESA Statistics Division



Q&A with **Resident Coordinators** and **UNCT members**



What's the format?

5 mins	Joint agency presentation from HQ
15	UNCT presentation
25	Breakout rooms
40	Q&A with panel of experts
5	Wrap up

The moderator will announce the start and end time of the breakout depending on the preceding presentations. DCO will pause the recording for the breakouts section.

Given this is a global webinar, some clinics may have more breakout rooms than facilitators, and so random allocation for the breakout rooms will be used. Experience has taught us that a lot of time can be lost building pre-determined breakout rooms and placing facilitators. For this reason, this guide was developed to help breakouts be self-organizing.

What do we do in the breakouts?

Check the programme of the clinic where you will find the specific questions that the organizing agencies have asked you consider in the breakout. Every breakout can also discuss and record good practices, challenges, & support needs on the topic of discussion. Come prepared to discuss these elements.

How do we record what was discussed?

There are several free tools that could be used. The simplest of which is a [google doc](#), and simply takes one participant to put a link to the shared document in the breakout chat. Other possible free tools include [Notion](#) or [NoteJoy](#) (NB: some require sign-up in advance). Does your entity have a corporate subscription to [Mentimeter](#), [Qualtrics](#), [Pigeon Hole](#) or other tool? If so, feel free to come prepared to use it and share your screen with colleagues. Take a screenshot of the final document or share the link in the plenary chat.

How do we report back? Who facilitates?

Nominate a rapporteur and notetaker (if needed) at the start of the discussion. It's a team effort! Self-organize your group. After a quick round of introductions (country and agency), one or more colleagues can take on the facilitation role. The UN agency experts may choose to hop between breakout rooms to and provide inputs or answer questions on requests.

Any other good practices?

- Turn your camera on
- Keep your microphone un-muted and have fluid discussions
- Be informal
- Keep your interventions to 1-2 minutes
- Consider a period (e.g. 5 mins) of silent reflection, collaborating and sharing initial responses in the shared doc or tool
- Be frank yet friendly
- Be open-minded and give inputs without an entity-hat (RCO or agency)

