

# A World That Counts at 10





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*A World That Counts - Mobilising the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development* was published by The United Nations Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development (IEAG) in November 2014. It was a big bang moment for sustainable development, leading to the establishment of the UN World Data Forum, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, and data sharing initiatives such as the Global Data Platform and the Data Commons for the SDGs.

While there is still much to be done, in the 10 years since *A World That Counts*, millions of people have benefited from better data.

## 1. Better lives

Better data alone can't change the trajectory of climate, conflict, and the worrying lack of progress on many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but where governments and their partners are committed to change, better data is an essential ingredient to make that happen. Millions of people around the world are already seeing the benefits.

**Six million people** in Paraguay are benefiting from a new water information system, which brings together all relevant agencies across the Government of Paraguay, the private sector, and civil society partners to monitor and protect essential water supplies. This project, led by the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, has particularly benefited the **140,000** strong indigenous population, by galvanizing new investments that improve water access in remote areas.

*"Now, I can say with forcefulness: I get up at seven in the morning and I have water. I do not have to get up at one, two, or three in the morning, or spend the whole night waiting for water."*

Rocío Ibarra  
**Community Peguaho Kokuere,  
Itá, Paraguay**

New guidelines on inclusive data have been implemented in **39 government agencies** in Colombia, improving data and decision-making for Colombia's **53 million people**, including 27 million women, between two and four million people who live with disabilities, and the LGBTQI community.

Rwanda has recently developed its fourth National Development Strategy, with support from Paris21, which is currently awaiting approval at the Cabinet level. The National Strategy for the Development of Statistics is a key vehicle for statistics offices to set priorities and align with other parts of the national data and statistics system. Its endorsement by the highest level of decision-making in the country ensures not only high-level political recognition but also ensures that the Government allocates the budget for the strategy and increases data demand for better policy decisions.

Over the years, **the budget for data and statistics has increased**. At the end of 2022, the National Institute of Statistics Rwanda reported its program of work was close to fully funded.

*"Over the years, NISR has worked to align data collection to the national strategy for transformation, this has increased national political support for data and statistics and ensured stable funding."*

**NISR Management**

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The Government of Zanzibar, since joining the Inclusive Data Charter (IDC), has adopted a data-driven approach to tackling violence against women and girls, releasing monthly statistics and involving the community, the police, the media, and the UN in raising awareness of rights, designing solutions, and improving the lives of more than **950,000 women and girls** in Zanzibar.

*"Timely, accurate data is critical to addressing gender-based violence in Zanzibar because we need to understand the scale of the issue, and exactly who is most affected, where, and for what reasons."*

Salum Kassim Ali,  
**Chief Government Statistician, Zanzibar**

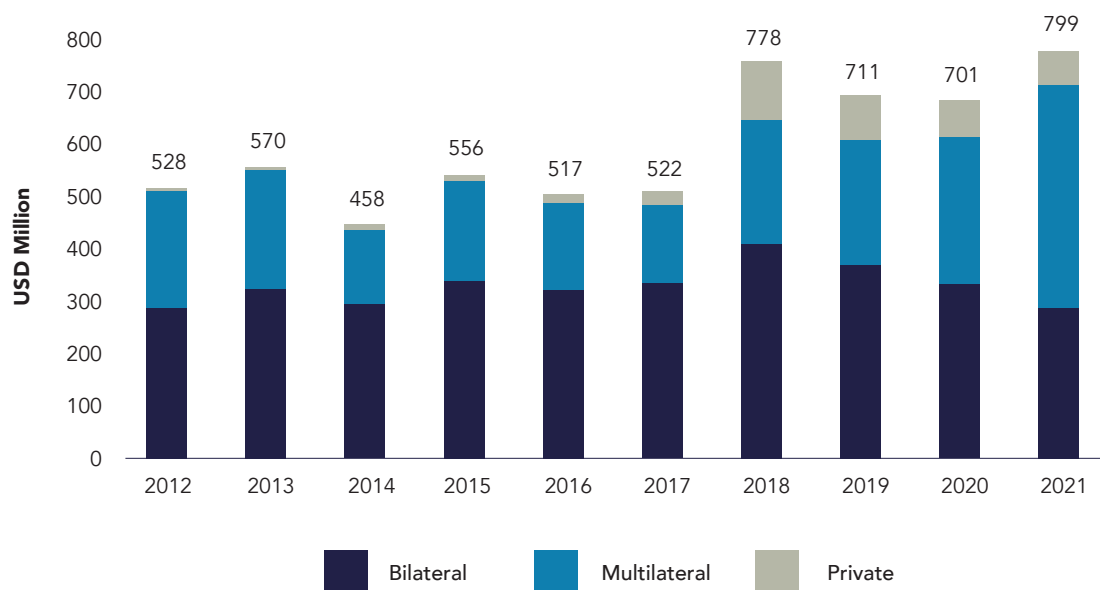
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Millions of people have benefited from data projects and programs since 2014, enabled through collaboration and coordination across the development data community.

## 2. Funding for critical development data

Lack of funding remains the primary constraint to improving data systems worldwide, reflecting a lack of political priority for data. However, thanks to the advocacy of our community and the efforts of many funding agencies themselves, funding for data has increased since 2015, reaching a high of nearly **\$800 million** in 2021.

**Figure 1: Funding for data and statistics by types of donors**



Source: PARIS21 (2023), The PARIS21 Partner Report on Support to Statistics 2023: A Changing Landscape of Financing for Development and Gender Data.

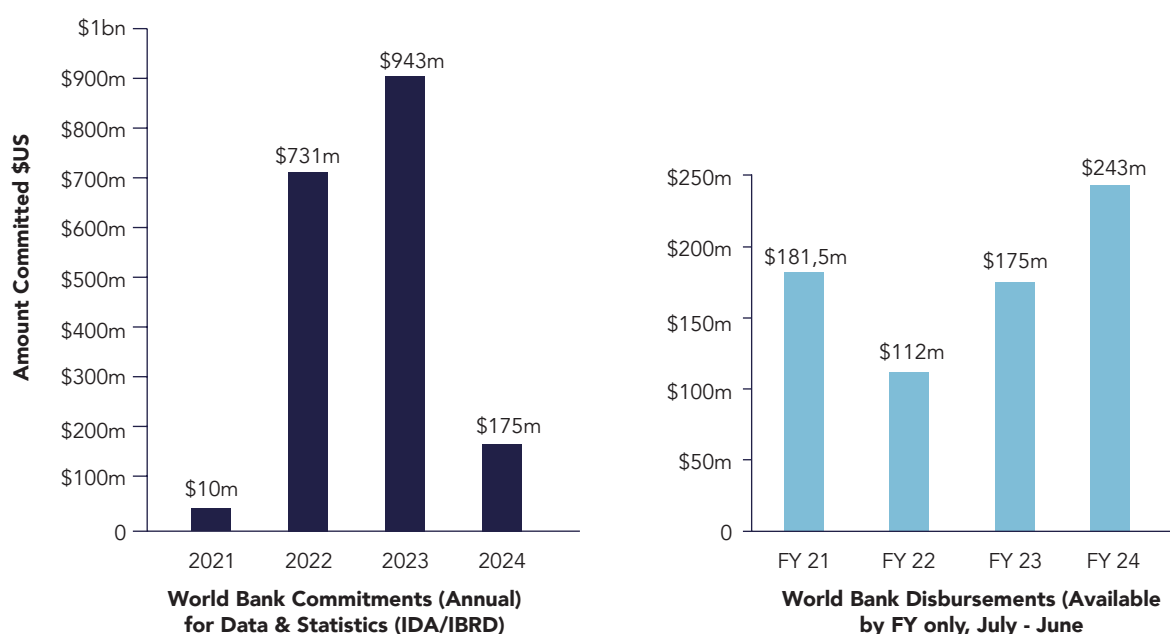
Many funders have contributed to this critical effort, including the Gates Foundation and Wellcome Trust which have invested heavily in specific sectors like gender, health, and agriculture, companies that have supported capacity building initiatives, and the bilateral and multilateral donors who provide the bulk of the funding for systems.

Initiatives like the Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data have made tracking and coordinating funding easier. By providing users with a comprehensive understanding of both the supply of funding from donors and the demand from countries—including their domestic resource mobilization efforts—the Clearinghouse empowers stakeholders to make informed investments. Additionally, it is actively working to improve the research methodologies behind tracking and measuring fund flows, particularly in the context of official development assistance.



In 2019, five years after the publication of *A World That Counts*, the World Bank's shareholders made an explicit commitment to support data systems in 30 countries through World Bank International Development Association (IDA) lending. This was followed by increases under IDA20 in funding committed, reflecting greater demand from borrowing countries, in the number of countries supported, including increasing committed support to at least 60 countries, and in money disbursed to support data systems through IDA and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) loans. In 2021, multilateral donors were the largest single source of funding for data for the first time.

**Figure 2: World Bank commitments and disbursements since 2021**



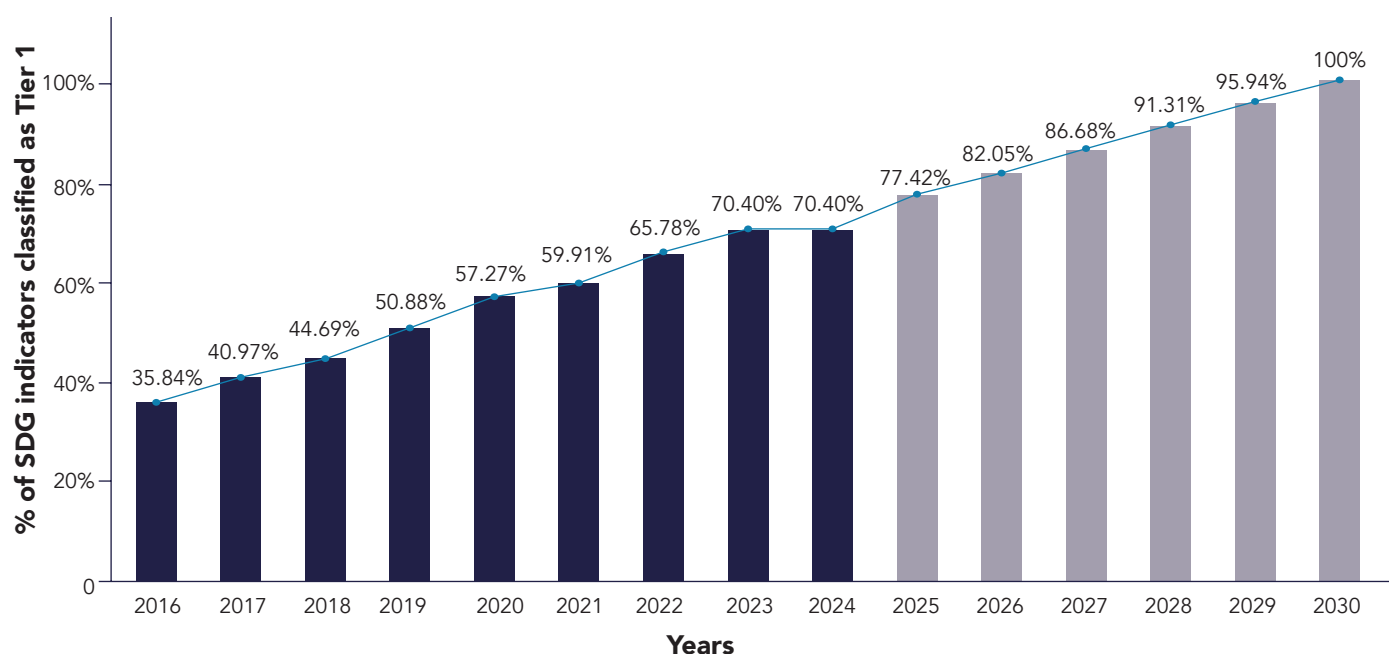
Source: World Bank data

Since 2021, a total of **\$1.8 billion** has been committed and a total of **\$700 million** disbursed by the World Bank to support data systems to make lives better. However, the amounts committed still fall short of what is needed. The recently adopted Global Digital Compact commits all UN Member States to increase funding for data systems. There remains significant room to scale up World Bank financing for development data to many more low- and middle-income countries if the political demand is there.

### 3. More and better quality data

At the launch of the SDGs in 2015, only one-third of indicators were 'Tier 1', the gold standard for measuring SDG progress. By 2024 more than two-thirds of indicators fell into this category. If current progress is maintained, there should be a complete set of indicators for the SDGs by 2030, meeting the commitment made in the Global Digital Compact to increase the availability of SDG data.

**Figure 3: Percentage of SDG indicators classified as Tier 1, by year**  
(2025-2030 numbers are projected)



Source: UNDESA, calculations from UN SDG database

The last decade has also seen huge progress in producing and analyzing data on key topics for sustainable development and opening up data systems to civil society and the private sector.

The increased openness, accessibility, and effective use of data have played a crucial role in achieving better data impact, through transparency and better decision-making. Significant progress has been made in the last 10 years by countries in opening up official statistics. According to the Open Data Watch, the median score of [data openness](#) among 165 countries increased from 38 in 2016 to 57 in 2022, but there is still further to go.



## The future of data for development

Since 2014, millions of people have benefited from the improved policies and programs that come from the greater availability and use of more timely and inclusive data. This change has been driven by increased political support, more funding, and the hard work, expertise, and collaboration of statisticians, data scientists, geospatial experts, and many others.

*"The Power of Data has opened up a remarkable opportunity for us to rethink and reshape our collaborative approach with the World Bank and development partners, the Government of Ghana, and other actors. This initiative is pivotal in our efforts to strengthen Ghana's data systems and the use of data to inform policy and decision-making."*

Charles Abani,  
**UN Resident Coordinator, Ghana**

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To accelerate this progress as we head towards 2030, collaboration will need to be scaled up. The community is mobilizing, with the [Power of Data](#) initiative leveraging the convening power of the UN and resources mobilized by the World Bank, in collaboration with national governments and partners, to transform data systems at scale. Meanwhile, the [Commit To Data](#) campaign demonstrates the breadth of global projects and programs lined up to accelerate SDG progress through data.

By continuing to work together, to harness the potential of data as a powerful tool for development, we can ensure that, by 2030, there is a legacy of billions more people for whom strong, sustained, and inclusive data systems have improved their lives.

This report is the work of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, Open Data Watch, Paris21, The United Nations Statistics Division, and the World Bank.

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