

CONCEPT NOTE

Capacity Development for Relevant, Resilient, and Agile National Statistical Systems: Are We on the Right Track?

Friday Seminar on Emerging Issues

Friday, 28 February 2025 | 10:00 am – 6:00 pm | Conference Room 4

Overview

Anchored in the principles of trust, transparency, and accuracy, official statistics form the backbone of evidence-based policymaking and the monitoring of sustainable development outcomes. However, as demands for relevant, high-quality, timely, and granular data grow, National Statistical Systems (NSS) must remain responsive to user needs, global development priorities, and fast-evolving technological and institutional landscapes. These challenges are particularly pressing for developing countries, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Targeted support for National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and other stakeholders within NSS is often required to build the resilience and capacities needed for effective statistical production that meets growing demands for data on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other global, regional, and national development policies.

Moreover, NSOs in these contexts must prepare to implement the 2025 System of National Accounts and carry out the 2030 round of housing and population censuses. These significant undertakings will further test the institutional, human, financial, and technical capacities of NSS to collectively address these challenges under the leadership of NSOs in a time of digital transformation. Supporting and strengthening NSOs in developing countries and other vulnerable contexts is therefore crucial to advancing sustainable development at the national, regional, and global levels.

The Friday Seminar titled "Capacity Development for Relevant, Resilient, and Agile National Statistical Systems: Are We on the Right Track?" examines how capacity development initiatives must adapt to enable NSOs and other stakeholders within NSS to adapt effectively to evolving challenges. Participants will explore ways to strengthen the ability of NSS to deliver official statistics that meet user needs while fostering inclusive growth and sustainable development amidst rapid changes in the data ecosystem. The event will underscore the collective responsibility of all stakeholders—beneficiary countries, donors, multilateral and bilateral implementing partners, users, and other data practitioners—in supporting NSOs. Discussions will focus on identifying the roles of these stakeholders in ensuring that capacity development efforts are demand-driven, well-coordinated, and responsive to existing gaps and challenges while also addressing the importance of sustainable financing and mutual accountability mechanisms to support long-term progress.

Seminar Aims and Expected Outcomes

Objectives

- Identify challenges facing the NSS, particularly the NSOs as the leading producers of official statistics, in a rapidly changing data environment and in addressing increasingly complex policy and user demands.
- Explore innovative approaches, good practices, and opportunities to meet these challenges, including more effective and efficient capacity development efforts and initiatives.
- Catalyze collective action, partnerships, and momentum for capacity development to strengthen NSOs in their role as coordinators of the NSS and ensure better collaboration with other producers of official statistics.
- Enhance the UN Statistical Commission's role in guiding and promoting global capacity development efforts that benefit NSS as a whole.

Expected Outcomes:

- Clearer understanding of the capacity challenges and opportunities for NSOs and the broader NSS, particularly in developing countries.
- Initial review and preliminary assessment of the effectiveness of current capacity development efforts and initiatives to strengthen NSS.
- Identification of specific capacity gaps in NSOs and other producers of official statistics within NSS, especially in developing countries.
- Deeper understanding of the risks and opportunities of technologies and digital transformation in improving coordination and statistical production across NSS.
- Greater awareness and engagement by the Statistical Commission in advancing global capacity development efforts to enhance NSS under the coordination of NSOs.

Sessions

Opening Session: Setting the Stage

The seminar will open with keynote speeches from high-level speakers, setting the stage for the day's discussions. These addresses will underscore the strategic importance of official statistics and the pivotal role of NSOs in coordinating NSS to meet complex policy and user demands. Speakers will examine the challenges NSOs face in a rapidly evolving data landscape, explore opportunities to leverage innovation and technological advancements to foster inclusiveness and ensure no one is left behind and emphasize the need for capacity development that is demand-driven, sustainable, effective, and efficient. They will highlight the importance of sustained financing, coordinated interventions, proactive learning, and knowledge sharing—including through South-South cooperation—while reinforcing mutual accountability mechanisms. Additionally, they will showcase how digital transformation can enhance the design, delivery, and impact assessment of capacity development initiatives. This opening will provide a comprehensive overview of the seminar's objectives and session themes.

Session 1: Fostering Sustainability and Institutional Resilience

This session will explore how to ensure capacity development is demand-driven, well-coordinated, and sustainable, fostering institutional resilience and delivering long-term results.

It will focus on responsibilities, mutual accountability mechanisms, and strategies to ensure impactful and efficient capacity development efforts. Key topics include:

- Ensuring capacity development efforts respond to emerging data and statistics needs and align with National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and broader user requirements.
- Enhancing the coordination role of NSOs within NSS and ensuring capacity development activities and donor support strategies align with national priorities within the broader data ecosystem,
- Assessing the long-term impact of capacity-building activities, with a focus on fostering institutional resilience by addressing strategic and institutional challenges.
- Monitoring financial commitments and disbursements for capacity development in data and statistics and evaluating project results based on cost-effectiveness and long-term benefits.

Session 2: Innovative Modalities for Capacity Development

This session will focus on new and innovative approaches to capacity development that reflect the evolving demands on NSOs and stakeholders within the NSS. Priority areas to address include:

- Advancing regional and subregional programs that provide context-specific support and leverage local expertise.
- Promoting South-South and triangular cooperation to facilitate knowledge sharing and strengthen collective expertise.
- Establishing strategic partnerships across sectors to foster innovation and expand capacity-building efforts.
- Leveraging technologies and digital transformation to better meet policy and user demands, enhance capacity, and improve efficiency.
- Ensuring a balance between innovation and fundamental principles such as trust, accuracy, and confidentiality in producing and disseminating official statistics.

Session 3: Mobilizing Sustainable Financing

This session will explore strategies for securing adequate and predictable funding for NSOs and strengthening stakeholder coordination. Key topics include:

- Leveraging domestic and external resources to sustain statistical development.
- Embedding sustainability in financing strategies to ensure long-term support for core statistical functions.
- Fostering inter-agency collaboration and forging partnerships with public and private data holders to optimize resource use and create synergies.
- Establishing national governance frameworks in collaboration with NSOs to promote coherent and integrated fund allocation for capacity development across the NSS.

- Aligning efforts with the Medellín Framework for Action on Data for Sustainable Development and linking financing strategies with broader development goals, including the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development.

Concluding Session: Key Takeaways and Next Steps

The concluding session will bring together key insights and recommendations from the seminar, focusing on concrete measures to strengthen NSS and, more specifically, NSOs as coordinators and leading producers of official statistics while aligning their work with broader sustainable development objectives. Participants will also discuss how the UN Statistical Commission can guide and support global capacity development efforts and identify practical next steps to sustain momentum. Key discussion points may include:

- Highlighting lessons learned and critical challenges and opportunities identified during the seminar sessions.
- Outlining practical measures to strengthen capacity development efforts, enhance institutional resilience, and align NSS activities with sustainable development goals.
- Exploring how the Commission can provide leadership, foster collaboration, and support global capacity development initiatives.
- Identifying next steps, including partnerships and initiatives, to implement the seminar's recommendations effectively and inform a report to be presented at the 57th session of the UN Statistical Commission in 2026.

DRAFT PROGRAMME

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Opening Session: Setting the Stage [10:00 – 10:45]

Chair: Stefan Schweinfest, *Director, UNSD*

Speakers: Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, *Deputy Executive Director, UN-Women*
Diana Castillo-Trejo, *Director General, Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB)*
Paula McLeod, *Head of Profession for Statistics, FCDO, United Kingdom*

Session 1 : Fostering Sustainability and Institutional Resilience [11:00 – 12:00]

Moderator: Gabriel Gamez, *Chief Statistical Capacity Management Section, UNSD*

Panelists: Lamyae Benhlila, *Head of Unit, Ministry of Urban Planning and Housing, Morocco*
Beatriz Piedad Urdinola Contreras, *Director of the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Colombia*
Johannes Jutting, *Executive Head, PARIS21*

Session 2 : Innovative Modalities for Capacity Development [12:00 – 13:00]

Moderator: Leesha Delatie-Budair, *Director General (Acting) of the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN)*

Panelists: Mohammad Hassan, *Executive Director, National Statistics & Data Sector at the Federal Competitiveness & Statistics Authority, United Arab Emirates*
Bert Kroese, *Chief Statistician, Data Officer, and Director of the Statistics Department, IMF*
Xiaojun Grace Wang, *Trust Fund Director, United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)*

Session 3: Mobilizing Sustainable Financing [15:00 – 16:00]

Moderator: Prof. Samuel Kobina Annim, *Government Statistician, Ghana Statistical Service*

Panelists: Miosotis Rivas Pena, *Director General, National Statistics Office of the Dominican Republic (ONE)*

Toril-Iren Pedersen, *Assistant Director, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)*

Orria Goni, *SDG Financing and South-South Cooperation Advisor, UNDP*

Concluding Session : Key Takeaways and Next Steps [16:30 – 18:00]

Moderator: Ola Awad, *President of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)*

Panelists: Benjamin Rothen, *Ambassador, Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO)*

Rachael Joanne Beaven, *Director, Statistics Division at UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)*

Haishan Fu, *Chief Statistician of the World Bank*

Batdavaa Batmunkh, *Chairman, National Statistics Office of Mongolia*

Conclusions: Stefan Schweinfest, *Director, UNSD*