UNITED NATIONS
United Nations Statistical Commission
Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics
Annual meeting

11 November 2020, 07:00 EST
Agenda item (5) – Task Teams: Mobile Phone Data

UN GWG Task Team on Mobile Phone Data – 2019-2020

Background

Use of mobile phones, including smart phones, in both developed and developing countries, and in urban and rural areas has been increasing in the past decades. There is a need for detailed statistics for policy and other purposes, including data to monitor the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The increasing data needs also give a challenge to the national statistical offices and generates demand to seek for new data sources, like using mobile phone data. The Task Team on Mobile Phone Data was established to answer for this call in 2015. The Task Team is composed of more than 50 members representing national statistical offices, line ministries, national regulators, academia and the private sector.

Using mobile phone data the task team is currently developing methodologies that can be used to get complementary information and provide quality checks for the indicators included in the SDG monitoring framework, including indicators on the monitoring of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people (Target 10.7), indicators related to tourism as an enabler of economic growth and creator of jobs (Target 8.9), as well as indicators that will show access and use of ICTs by individuals (Target 17.8 and Target 9.c). Further, based on the methodologies, the task team will develop capacity development courses, including e-learning courses, and will conduct regional workshops and trainings, awareness raising events and projects that could illustrate how countries could benefit from the use of mobile phone data.

The Task Team is chaired by ITU and meets regularly via teleconference.

Achievements:

- The Task Team delivered in 2017 a Handbook on the use of mobile phone data for official statistics describing applications, data sources and methods, and deals with access to mobile phone data through partnership models with mobile network operators. The handbook is available at
  https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/taskteams/mobilephone/MPD%20Handbook%2020191004.pdf

- Task Team conducted workshops in Colombia (2017), Rwanda (2019) and Indonesia (2019)

- Task Team held an International meeting on measuring human mobility in Georgia (2019)

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a paper was drafted outlining the guiding principles on the use of mobile phone data for mobility indicators for COVID-19 policy purposes.

Current projects and events:

- In 2019 the Task Team decided to establish 6 subgroups to work on developing guidelines and methodologies on the use of mobile phone data on specific areas namely: disaster and displacement statistics, dynamic population mapping, information society statistics, migration statistics, tourism statistics, transportation and commuting statistics.

- The subgroups conduct regular meetings in 2020 via teleconference to discuss the progress of the preparation of the handbooks. The Wiki is used to share information between members during the drafting process of the respective subgroups. The final draft of the subgroups Handbook is expected to be ready by the end of 2020 or early 2021.

- Members of the Task Team participated actively at international virtual events (6th International Conference on the Use of Big Data, Mobile Tartu Conference, Asia Pacific Statistics Week 2020) and will organize a session during the ITU AI for Good Global Summit 2020.

Plans for 2021

- Each sub-group to finalize the handbooks and develop training materials, including e-learning courses.

- Conduct training workshops to support regional capacity development on the use of mobile phone data in the national statistical offices (Indonesia, Oman).

- Collaborate with the regional hubs particularly in delivering training courses in the given region.

- Members of the Task Team are to participate at international events (7th International Conference on the Use of Big Data, World Data Forum).