

UNSD-FCDO PROJECT ON SDG MONITORING

Newsletter December 2021



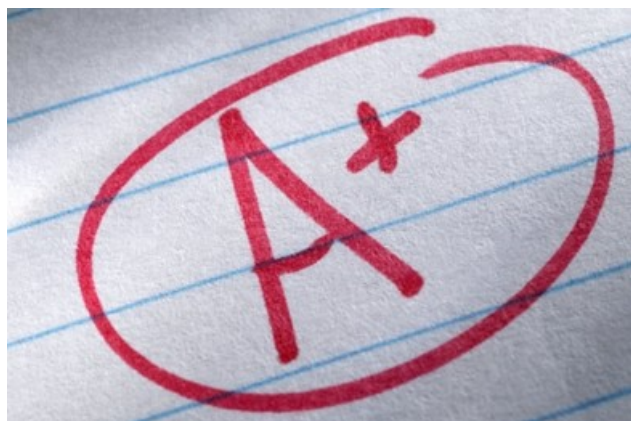
The project extension until July 2022 allows countries much needed extra time to wrap up national activities and serves as a transition to including geospatial and innovative approaches in the capacity development work around SDG monitoring.

Highlights:

- Annual review by FCDO awards the project an A+ rating
- Project extended one year, with pivot towards piloting use of innovative data sources and methods
- Countries present experiences at the hybrid 2021 United Nations World Data Forum
- UNSD launches the SDG and COVID-19 data visualization toolkit
- Countries work to ensure sustainability of SDG monitoring beyond project end



Project awarded A+ rating in latest annual review



The latest annual review of the project was completed at the end of September 2021, with the project surpassing its previous achievement, scoring an 'A+' rating overall. Thanks to the continued hard work and engagement of the project countries, FCDO concluded that the project was exceeding expectations across a wide range of areas.

Despite the continued challenges of the pandemic over the last year, the UNSD-FCDO project countries have continued to demonstrate a strong level of ownership of the processes and requirements for monitoring the 2030 Agenda.

Seventeen of the countries now have their national data platforms online, of which fifteen have been fully launched (including in Lao PDR and Mozambique this summer) and two are in testing. These platforms are being used extensively, both as the primary source of information on SDG indicators for Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and also for other national SDG reports, where these exist. (See [page 4](#) for more on the VNRs, and [page 7](#) for more on the platform launch in Lao PDR).

The importance of publishing metadata alongside the data on these platforms is well recognized by project countries, and many participated in metadata refresher trainings over the course of this year, ensuring National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and other national statistical system (NSS) members were familiar with the latest version of the metadata authoring tool template (see [page 8](#) for more). As a consequence, an increasing number have been able to share their metadata in SDMX format, along with their data, allowing them to use the SDG Lab to compare their national data and metadata with that from the custodian agencies (see [page 9](#)).

At the time of the previous annual review, user engagement was highlighted as an area of particular challenge in the context of the pandemic. However, the project has continued to help countries adapt their user engagement plans to take account of the new circumstances, including through developing and delivering new training materials on topics such as online engagement and working with the media. As a result, achievements are now exceeding expectations, with 15 countries having implemented their user engagement strategies at the time of this review, while even more have conducted activities this autumn (see [page 5](#)).

The project has also successfully continued to provide support to COVID-19 data responses, addressing the individual needs of countries. One major priority identified was ensuring user-friendly dissemination. In response, UNSD has developed and provided training in a new toolkit containing icons and templates that can be used by countries to produce infographics, flyers, reports and graphics to make their COVID-19 and SDG related data more accessible and engaging (see [page 5](#)). In addition, the project has provided support on topics including the use of administrative data, COVID-19 impact surveys, and development of data hubs.

A one-year extension to the project was officially confirmed in June 2021, meaning that the project will now finish in July 2022. This extension provides an important opportunity for countries to complete activities that have been delayed due to the pandemic, and for UNSD to work with them to help ensure the sustainability of the outcomes (see [page 7](#)). It will also allow for the creation of new resources, including e-learning courses and microlearning videos, based on the training materials that have been developed by the project. These will be usable both by project countries as refresher materials, as well as by non-project countries who are keen to develop their SDG monitoring and COVID-19 data responses.

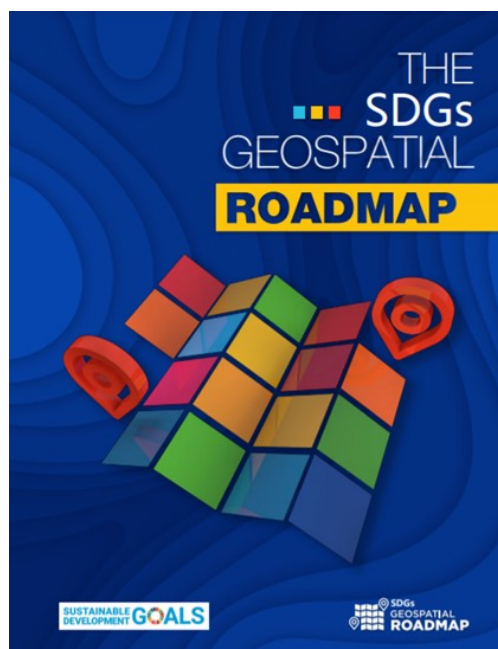
However, the primary focus of the extension will be on piloting new approaches and activities with a small number of countries, with the aim of expanding and building upon these activities with a wider group in future. The article on the next page provides some information on what's happening and what's to come.



New activities planned for project extension

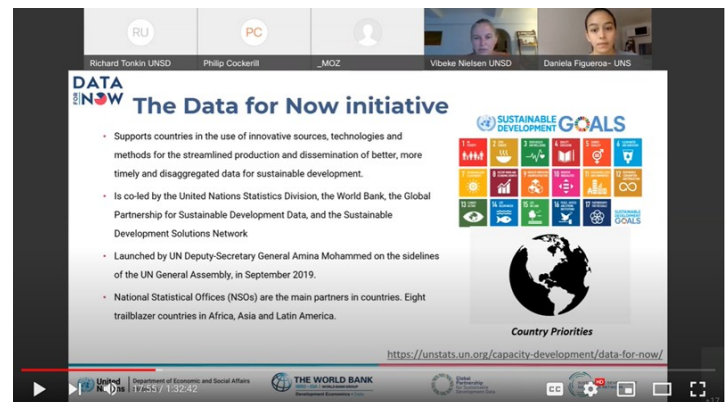
The project extension provides an opportunity to pilot work in two linked priority areas: increasing the use of geospatial information for the SDGs through greater collaboration between NSOs and national mapping agencies; and increasing the availability of inclusive SDG data.

In delivering on the first of these priorities, the project is working with a small set of pilot countries to inform the future development of the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap. This roadmap builds on the recommendations of the IAEG-SDG's Working Group on Geospatial Information (WGGI) through delivering clear, actionable guidance that seeks to forge and strengthen links between statistical and geospatial experts working on the SDGs in order to address data gaps and increase the use of geospatial information in statistical production and dissemination. These activities will be carried out in collaboration with the secretariat and other members of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) and will include support for working towards implementation of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF) and Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF). Activities under this objective have started in Kyrgyzstan, supporting collaboration between the National Statistical Committee and the state land management institute, "Kyrgyzgiprozem".



The SDGs Geospatial Roadmap

The second of these priorities will support pilot countries in using new and innovative sources, methods and technologies to increase the availability, timeliness and granularity of SDG data, guided by the approach of the [Data for Now initiative](#). Three of the key principles of this approach are that i) the process is country-led, including the prioritization of goals and indicators to focus on, with the NSO taking a lead coordinating role, ii) the prioritization of additional indicators to be worked on is made in close collaboration with national policy and decision makers to respond to their most urgent needs for data, and iii) emphasis is placed on the use of innovative data sources, methods and technologies.



Webinar on Data For Now, September 2021

To initiate this work, a webinar was held for all UNSD-FCDO project countries in late September 2021 to introduce the initiative and share some experiences from two of the initial trailblazer countries, Colombia and Senegal, highlighting the range of activities that have been undertaken. The webinar also introduced a short questionnaire for project countries to complete, focused on their policy priorities, the data needs associated with them, and their initial assessments of their capacity development requirements to meet those needs through increasing the availability of inclusive data. There was an extremely positive response to this questionnaire from project countries, and the responses are being used to inform planning for the pilot activities over the remainder of the project. Data For Now activities have already started in Bangladesh (see [page 6](#)), with follow-up work taking place in a number of other countries soon.



Hybrid 2021 HLPF sees VNR presentations by two project countries – Lao PDR and Zimbabwe

The 2021 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development was successfully carried out as a hybrid session from 6 to 15 July. Discussions focused on achieving a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and advancing the SDGs while leaving no one behind. Delegates conducted in-depth reviews of nine SDGs (1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17) and their interlinkages.

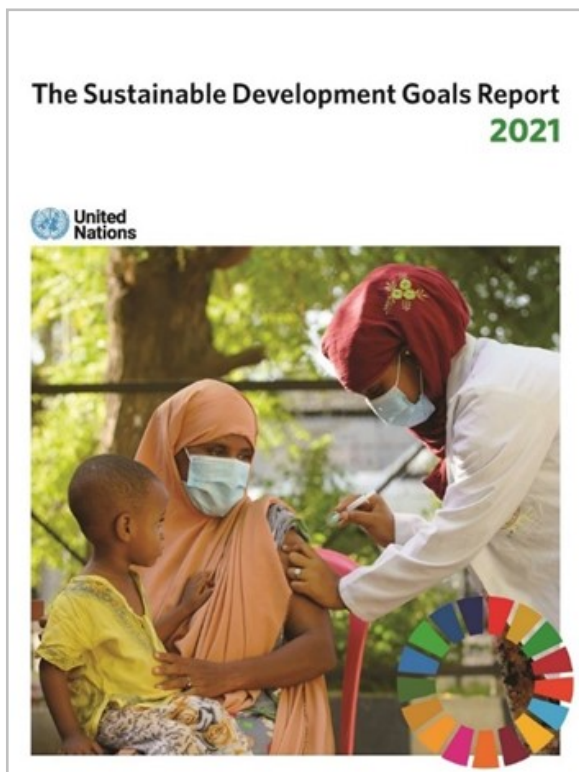
Two project countries, [Lao PDR](#) and [Zimbabwe](#), were among the 42 countries to present their VNRs, sharing their progress and challenges in the implementation of the SDGs, the impact of the COVID-19 on their situation, and their policies and actions. It was Lao PDR's and Zimbabwe's second VNR presentations and this time they were accompanied by and grounded in robust data platforms for national SDG reporting developed with the support of the project. Zimbabwe also participated in a VNR lab in the margins of the forum, organized by UNSD, which looked at "How data is guiding sustainable recovery

from COVID-19 for achieving the SDGs". Mr. Godfrey Matsinde from ZIMSTAT shared his country's experience in planning and preparing an evidence-based and data-driven VNR in the time of COVID-19.



VNRs of Lao PDR and Zimbabwe

This year's SDG Report focused on COVID-19 challenges and highlighted stories of resilience



SDG Report 2021

The [Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021](#), prepared by UNSD in collaboration with more than 50 international and regional organizations, was launched virtually on 6 July. As in previous years, it reviews progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, using the latest available data and estimates to track global achievement of the 17 Goals with in-depth analysis of selected indicators for each Goal. The report highlights the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on the SDGs and points out areas that require urgent and coordinated action.

This year, the report features country stories, highlighting successes, particularly in the face of challenges brought on by the pandemic. Ghana's COVID-19 data hub and Kyrgyzstan's successful user engagement around its national reporting platform are featured in the report as examples of resilience and achievement.



Redeveloped user engagement training helps support country achievements

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented some significant challenges to implementing user engagement strategies, with many of the mechanisms traditionally used for engaging with users of SDG data not feasible in the current situation. For this reason, the project has continued to provide tailored support to countries to adjust their user engagement strategies as necessary and reengage with users of SDG data.

As part of this support, the project brought in a communications specialist, Ms. Brigitte Perrin, to assist countries in developing and implementing their plans for COVID-friendly engagement. Ms. Perrin developed new learning materials on topics including online user engagement, infographics, the use of social media, and writing press releases. These, along with refresher sessions adapted from the face-to-face workshops, were delivered in short training sessions to project countries in line with their specified needs to help them implement their user engagement strategies. Additionally, full multi-day remote workshops on user engagement, incorporating these new materials, have been held in Tanzania and Bangladesh, each involving a wide range of producers as well as users from government, civil society and beyond.



Learning materials on online user engagement

This support has helped see an increase in user-engagement activities in many project countries across this year, with the user engagement strategies that had generally been developed pre-COVID revised as necessary and implemented in Burundi, Ethiopia, Jordan, Ghana, Liberia, Lao PDR, Mozambique, Nepal, Viet Nam and Tajikistan through a wide range of different activities over the last year. These activities have included workshops and events with ministries and parliamentarians, launch events for SDG platforms, the introduction of press conferences to accompany statistical releases, the development of collaborations with universities and many more.

Bringing data to life with the SDG and COVID-19 data visualization toolkit

With many countries launching their SDG data and metadata platforms and presenting their VNRs, there has been a growing need to develop and deliver engaging data visualizations across a range of outputs and media. In response, UNSD developed an SDG and COVID-19 data visualization toolkit containing a set of SDG and COVID-19 related icons, along with templates for a range of outputs, including reports, infographics, social media and flyers. The toolkit was launched at a series of workshops in August, which introduced the toolkit and provided guidance on how to best make use of the included icons and templates. It also shared best practices for designing graphics, introduced some of the other available tools and resources, and provided examples of how to utilize the toolkit for SDG and COVID-19 related reporting and other thematic outputs. Guest speakers working in visual communications and social media presented key considerations for effectively engaging with users through

various media. Three of the project countries – Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Kyrgyzstan – also shared their experiences in successfully producing data visualizations. The toolkit can be found at: <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/UNSD-FCDO/sdgs-data-visualization-toolkit>



SDG and COVID-19 data visualization toolkit icons



Project countries showcase achievements and discuss challenges of national ownership to SDG monitoring at the ISI World Statistics Congress



Since the adoption of Agenda 2030 more than five years ago, as Governments have taken ownership of it and aligned it with their own goals and development plans, national statistical systems have been actively involved, facing significant challenges in supporting the large data requirements of Agenda 2030, especially in the face of COVID-19. However, results have begun to materialize. Three project countries shared their achievements during the 63rd ISI World Statistics Congress, held virtually from 11-16 July 2021. As part of a session on national

ownership of SDG monitoring, Ms. Aberash Tariku of CSA Ethiopia, Ms. Phetsamone Sone of Lao Statistics Bureau and Ms. Monica Magaua of INE Mozambique showcased their national statistical offices' role in establishing a national set of SDG indicators, their collaboration with other data producers, and the development and launch of national data platforms to better present data availability and disseminate metadata.

Bangladesh steps up SDG reporting and forges ahead on Data For Now



Bangladesh Data For Now workshop

Bangladesh was one of the final countries to receive funds to support UNSD-FCDO project implementation, with an agreement put in place in December 2020. However, since then, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) has been able to implement a wide range of activities. These have included activities focused on developing mechanisms to streamline the flow of data within the national statistical system, reducing processing time and reporting burden, and thereby facilitating the reporting of national data through [Bangladesh's SDG Tracker](#) and other means. BBS has also coordinated across NSS partners to produce metadata in the latest metadata authoring tool template for over 99 indicators, with more to come. These will soon be available on the well-established SDG Tracker, which contains all of Bangladesh's SDG data, including 83 indicators with at least one disaggregation.

All of the activities have had widespread involvement from the NSS in Bangladesh, with over 20 different ministries and agencies participating in each session. BBS

has also gone beyond central government in stepping up its engagement activities around SDG data, including organizing a series of data literacy workshops, focused on supporting officials in different districts in better engaging with the available data in order to facilitate effective decision-making.

Bangladesh is also the first UNSD-FCDO country to be supported in [Data For Now](#) activities as part of the project. The government identified increasing the availability of timely, geographically disaggregated data on poverty as a key need. The project is therefore helping BBS and partners explore the use of earth observation and other geospatial information to produce estimates which can supplement the 5-yearly survey-based ones. An initial training workshop on topics including the use of geospatial data and small area estimation has been held with the support of national and international experts, and a follow-up workshop to support the production of initial experimental estimates is planned for December.



Lao PDR fast-tracks development of SDG data platform and successfully launches it ahead of VNR presentation at HLPF

In preparation for the presentation of its second VNR at this year's HLPF, Lao PDR launched its national reporting platform, based on OpenSDG, during its annual Statistics Day event on 29 June 2021. The launch was the culmination of several months of dedicated work on the part of the Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) with technical assistance from UNSD and the UK Office of National Statistics (ONS). LSB focused their second VNR, as well as their national reporting platform, on nine priority goals: SDGs 1-5, 8, 13, 17 and their additional national Goal 18 - Lives Safe from Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). A roadmap was developed to compile the available data and associated metadata across the NSS, model the data for populating the platform and for electronic data sharing



Lao PDR platform launch event

via SDMX, set up the OpenSDG platform and localize it, including translating the interface and content into the Lao language. With the help of consultants, UNSD staff conducted numerous trainings and hands-on workshops with LSB in April, May and June to support LSB in following the roadmap and to prepare for the launch. The launch was a hybrid event, with an in-person presentation and stakeholders joining remotely. It was really an impressive achievement by the LSB team and a great step forward in making national SDG data and metadata accessible to a wide audience, both within the country and globally. The Lao PDR national reporting platform can be accessed here: <https://www.lsb.gov.la/sdg>



Lao PDR national SDG reporting platform

Ensuring the sustainability of SDG data platforms

Almost all the project countries have now launched their SDG data and metadata platforms, but in order for these platforms to continue to be useful, they need to be kept current and updated with the latest available data. This requires NSOs to establish 'business as usual' mechanisms for ensuring these updates happen. There are already some excellent examples of how this is happening in countries.

In Bangladesh, BBS is integrating a reporting calendar into their SDG Tracker platform, which gives the frequency and reporting month for each indicator from every agency. In addition, BBS holds working-level meetings with the SDG data providers every two months, while the National Data Coordination Committee supports activity at senior levels.

In Rwanda, to ensure the platform is kept up to date, SDG data collection and dissemination has been aligned with the statistical yearbook process. An internal quality assurance process has been developed by NISR and a staff manual on uploading and updating the platform has been prepared. In Ethiopia, CSA has organized a dedicated team of experts and indicator focal persons to collect and update the data on the portal regularly. This team is composed of statisticians and IT experts both from CSA and across the NSS.

Between now and the end of the project, UNSD will support NSOs and their NSS colleagues in developing plans for ensuring this sustainability, working closely with national and regional partners as necessary and facilitating the sharing of best practices across countries.



Metadata template and authoring tool updates

The Metadata Authoring Tool Template for collecting and disseminating SDG metadata has been adjusted and enhanced, with the latest version (3.4) released in May 2021. The current template allows countries to compile national metadata for all indicators included in national SDG frameworks. It also allows countries that have developed their own custom DSDs to use these with the Authoring Tool by importing their DSD. Countries which have not yet developed their own custom DSDs can still

use the template and align it with their DSD once it is developed. Additionally, the template now supports the selection of any language from the ISO 639-1 list using the two-letter code to indicate the language of the metadata. Finally, each metadata file can be attached to more than one series, thereby reducing duplication of work and multiple files with the same metadata. The latest version of the template is accessible through the following [online GitHub repository](#).

Ongoing work on metadata compilation

Countries continued to work on developing and compiling their national SDG metadata with technical assistance from the project. Two international consultants – one covering Asia (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal and Viet Nam) and the other focusing on Africa and Western Asia (Jordan, Liberia, Palestine, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe) provided specific support on an as-needed basis to countries to answer any questions about the template, coordinate metadata compilation and deliver additional training workshops on metadata. Countries (Lao PDR and Zimbabwe) also hired national consultants

to support in-country metadata compilation. The consultancies were very successful in assisting countries with completing national metadata templates for a core set of SDG indicators, which then allowed the metadata to be disseminated via SDMX. Additionally, a general guide for countries to use in compiling national metadata for the SDGs was developed. Targeted remote workshops were held with Cambodia, Lao PDR, Liberia, Mozambique, Palestine, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Nepal, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

Rwanda and Lao PDR featured in UN World Data Forum session

The United Nations World Data Forum 2021 was held in a hybrid format in Bern, Switzerland. More than 7,700 users and producers of data and statistics came together either in-person or on the virtual platform from more than 180 countries to spur data innovation, nurture partnerships, and mobilize high-level political support and a financial commitment to build a pathway to better data for sustainable development. The session '[Monitoring the SDGs for everyone: making data widely accessible and engaging stakeholders](#)' during the Forum showcased some of the many achievements of the UNSD-FCDO project countries in relation to user engagement, metadata standardization and the development of data visualization platforms. The session, chaired by FCDO, also highlighted how countries have continued to implement national SDG monitoring during the COVID-19 pandemic, showing a strong, ongoing commitment to providing data and metadata on the SDGs despite the significant challenges.

The session featured presentations from the NSOs of Rwanda and Lao PDR, going into more detail on the achievements in those countries around engagement and dissemination, before highlighting some of the resources being made available by the project to support SDG monitoring.



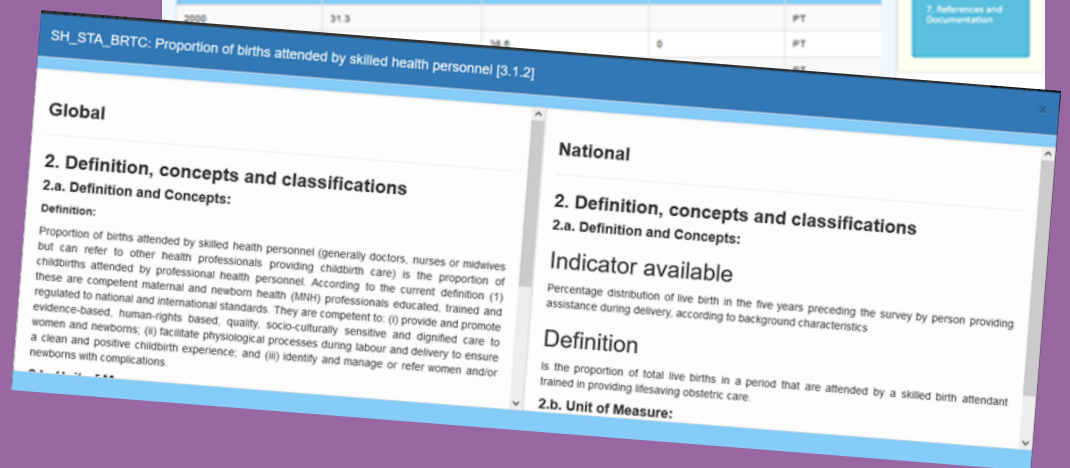
Lao PDR presentation at UN WDF session



SDG Lab update

Work has been ongoing to publish more nationally reported data and metadata into the SDG Lab to be visualized and compared with global data.

As of the end of October 2021, 13 non-project countries had submitted data via SDMX to the SDG Lab in the last year, along with 17 project countries. From the 17 project countries, 10 had also submitted SDMX metadata to the SDG Lab for a core set of indicators, allowing them to both compare their national data with the global data which would provide justification for any differences comparing the national and global metadata for those indicators. Countries like Rwanda are now further utilizing this platform to discuss these differences with the RCO's at the country level for further collaboration in highlighting the country data to support policy at the national level.



Screenshots of SDG Lab data & metadata comparison for SH_STA_BRTC: Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel [3.1.2] for Rwanda

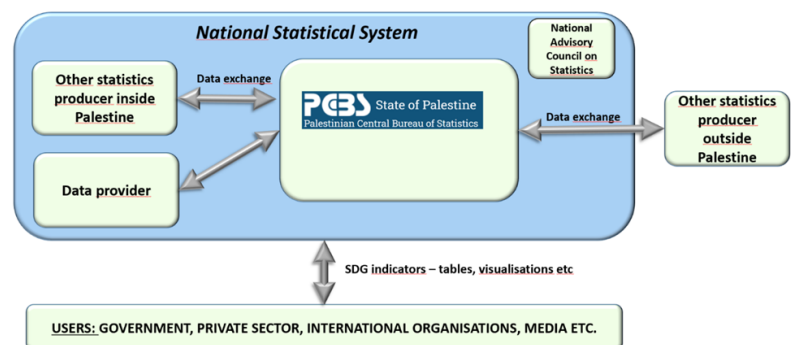
Development of handbook about the production of SDG indicators in Palestine

The UNSD-FCDO project supported, through a consultancy, the development of a handbook to guide the collection, processing and dissemination of administrative data for statistical purposes in Palestine. The draft handbook addresses:

- Who is doing what and when, aiming at an optimal division of labor in the National Statistical System. This objective is especially important for indicators where the production is shared among two or more organizations.
- A common calendar to ensure time aspects regarding the release of data flows and indicators.
- Standards for the forms/templates for data exchange

→ Common methodology including the data collection methods and validation with data providers

The draft handbook could be useful for other project countries which are looking into harnessing administrative data for the production of SDG indicators.



UNSD conducts several workshops on data modelling and SDMX for SDG

A series of virtual workshops were organized and carried out with project countries to assist them in modeling and converting their data to SDMX for dissemination. The basics of data modeling, the SDMX Information Model and the global SDG Data Structure Definition (DSD) were presented along with an introduction to tools that can be used in SDG data reporting and customizing the global DSD for national use. Hands-on exercises during the workshops enabled the participants to familiarize themselves with the data modeling process and the use of SDMX tools for SDG reporting.



Viet Nam workshop

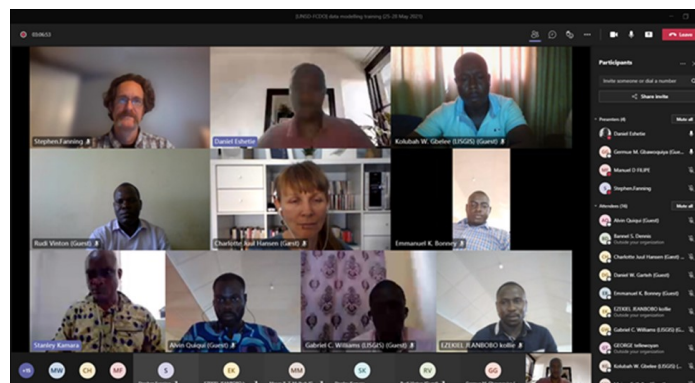
from the and almost all the line ministries producing data for SDG indicators in Bangladesh, with over 70 participants each day. Following on from the training, BBS and a2i, who built SDG Tracker, will continue to discuss how the outputs from the data modelling can best be integrated, including exploring the feasibility of full SDMX integration for data inputs and outputs.



Lao PDR workshop

A virtual workshop was held with the Lao Statistics Bureau from 5 - 8 April. The team was trained in customization of the global DSD in order to capture data at the sub-national level, incorporate Lao's Goal 18 and allow additional disaggregation currently not available at the global level. A similar workshop was held with the General Statistics Office of Viet Nam from 18 - 22 April. Participants brought together data for Viet Nam from the ASEAN data platform with data for Viet Nam's national SDG indicators (VSDGIs).

The workshop with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) was held from 3-6 May and involved participants



Liberia workshop

Lastly, a workshop was held with the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) from 26 May - 1 June 2021, with statistics and IT experts from LISGIS and line ministries participating. LISGIS will use the skills learned in this workshop as they further develop and use Liberia's Open Data Platform, increasing the number of available indicators and expanding the availability of disaggregated datasets on the SDGs.

Project website

For general project information, please visit

<https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/unsd-fcdo>

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