

UNSD-DFID PROJECT ON SDG MONITORING

Newsletter October 2019



USER ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS:

Cambodia, Ethiopia,
Jordan, Lao PDR,
Liberia, Myanmar,
Rwanda, Uganda,
Zambia, Zimbabwe

DATA MODELLING

Burundi, Cambodia,
Ethiopia, Jordan,
Kyrgyzstan, Lao, Palestine,
Uganda, Zambia,
Zimbabwe

Highlights

- E-learning course on metadata compilation for national SDG indicators now available.
- 13 project countries met in Amman to exchange experiences on user engagement.
- Four project countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews at the HLPF.



Good project implementation progress

The second annual review of the project was completed at the end of June this year. With the great support from partner countries, the project managed to mainly catch up on the earlier back-log according to the project goal hierarchy. These efforts earned the project an A rating.

The project delivered above expectations in many areas. Almost all countries now have SDG capacity gap assessments in place while the target was only twelve countries. More than half of the countries are in the process of developing user engagement strategies around statistics and SDG indicators (target ten countries). The response of NSOs to conduct workshops which includes other members of the National Statistical System as well as various users has been very positive. In all countries that have conducted metadata and user engagement workshops so far, there have been participants from more than ten different ministries and agencies (which was the target). The feedback has been very positive and contributed to increased cross collaboration and understanding. In the user engagement workshops the NSOs have also invited many different user groups which has led to interesting discussions and feedback.

However, in a few areas there were delays mainly due to external factors. The slower than anticipated finalization of the SDG framework at the global level and therefore, delay in the publication of the SDMX Data Structure Definition (DSD) for the SDGs, has had a strong impact. The discontinuation of Devinfo as a data publishing platform has also required much attention and development of a strategy for how to support countries through other means of developing their national SDG platforms. Both the data modelling and establishment of SDG reporting platforms are key project outputs. Despite the delays, we managed to map national SDG data to the global DSD in partnership with project countries and partners in seven out of eight targeted countries (Cambodia, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Palestine, Uganda and Zambia). Ten countries were the target for dissemination of SDG reporting platform. As of June 2019, six countries had published their platforms and four additional ones had test versions running.

The project would not be on track without the strong commitment to and ownership of the SDG process by the project countries. Many have now established national indicator frameworks and strategies, and incorporated the SDGs in their national development plans. Data and statistics have also received a more prominent role in this process over time. The SDGs are also included in many National Strategies of Development of Statistics, which helps ensure that the SDGs become a natural part of the statistics work in countries. Partners in the project advisory group and outside of it have also been key as many of them have important tools, expertise and funds, which have helped the project progress more efficiently and with higher quality.



Mission to Kyrgyzstan.



Mission to Cambodia.



VNR Presentations by countries

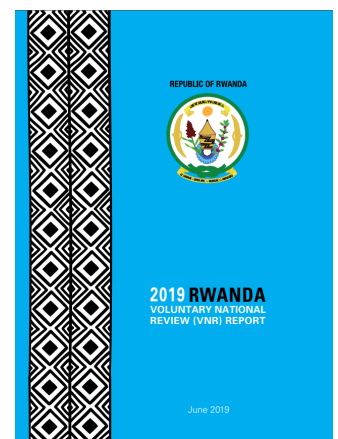
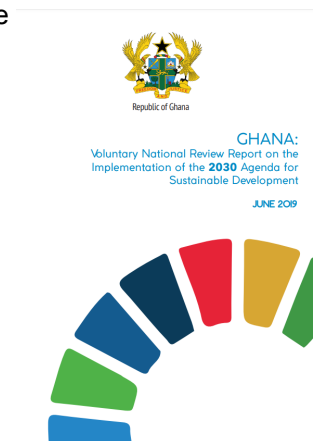
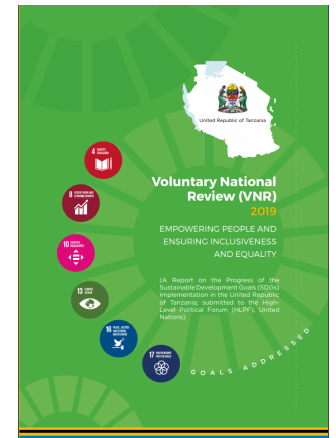
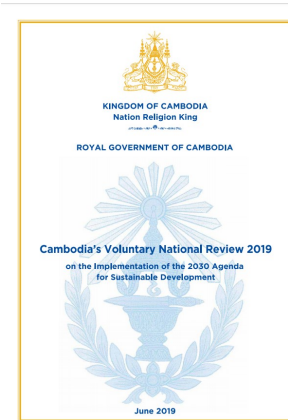
During the 2019 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July, four project countries, Cambodia, Ghana, Rwanda and Tanzania presented their voluntary national reviews (VNRs), sharing their experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In addition to presentations made by the country delegations at the Forum, the countries also submitted their VNR reports for publishing on the UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019#vnrs>).

Cambodia, through a highly consultative VNR process, has reviewed all of its nationalized SDGs, with a particular focus on the priority areas of Education, Decent Work and Growth, Reduced Inequalities, Climate Action, Peace and Institutions, and SDG Partnerships. Cambodia highlighted the threat posed by climate change to overall progress on many goals. Climate change mitigation and adaptation are key priorities, along with continued public management reform and systems strengthening, including data systems and M&E.

Ghana highlighted its communication strategy to increase public awareness of the SDGs, in partnership with the media and civil society organizations. The country also underscored its National Data for Sustainable Development Roadmap with three priority objectives: filling data gaps; encouraging data use; and strengthening the entire data ecosystem. Ghana is exploring better use of administrative data, as well as new sources of data and has launched its national SDGs reporting platform, making available disaggregated data. The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) has played a very active role in the VNR preparations and helped ensure that data and metadata were available for and included in the VNR report.

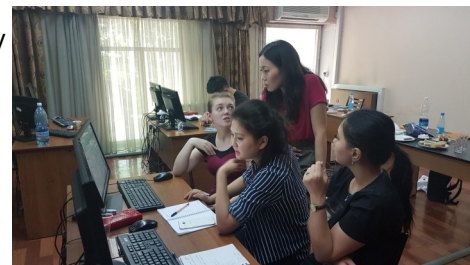
Rwanda presented successes with innovative approaches to inclusive development through home-grown solutions such as Imihigo (performance contracts) and Umuganda (communities come together to perform activities of public interest). Innovations like the Rwanda Governance Scorecard and the Citizen Report Card have further enhanced citizens' participation and demand for accountability. The National Strategy for the Development of Statistics and the Data Revolution have been adopted to strengthen statistical capacity in monitoring SDGs. Rwanda is also hosting the SDGs Center for Africa.

In its VNR Tanzania focused on 5 goals: 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17. While good progress has been made in a number of areas such as education, much work remains to be done to meet the ambitions targets of the 2030 Agenda. Tanzania also identified a number of data related challenges including: absence of baseline data and/or limited routine data for some SDG indicators hinders progress monitoring (SDG 8, 13 and 16); inadequate harmonization of data reporting formats cross Local Government Authorities; and, inadequate financial and technical resources.



Kyrgyzstan is preparing for the Voluntary National Review in 2020

Kyrgyzstan will present its first Voluntary National Review next year and the National Statistical Committee (NSC) has already started preparations. One key goal is to have a national SDG reporting platform published in adequate time before the report. The country has chosen OpenSDG as their front end platform and in May this year, UNSD and the Office of National Statistics (ONS) of the UK carried out a joint workshop in Bishkek. First, UNSD provided a three day training in data modeling and SDMX. This was followed by a three day training and set-up of the OpenSDG platform for Kyrgyzstan by ONS. During this intense week, 38 indicators were uploaded to the platform along with metadata where available. More indicators and metadata are currently being prepared by the NSC. At the same time ONS is working with partners on improving the Russian translation and changing some of the OpenSDG set-up to better fit the requirements of the NSC. If everything goes according to plan, the platform will be officially launched at the end of the year.



Mission to Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan's existing SDG framework consists of over 500 indicators including global, national, and those marked "additional". The NSC is working to determine which of these indicators are actually going to be monitored and uploaded to the portal. This will also be linked to the final approval of the set of national SDG indicators. NSC has data available for many of them, so it is expected to have a comprehensive SDG platform, including key disaggregations.

Lao Statistics Day Forum

The Lao Statistics Bureau held its annual National Statistics Forum 27-28 June 2019, with the participation of UNSD, which was conducting a user engagement workshop in Vientiane earlier that week. The timing was opportune since the Forum is a primary existing mechanism for engagement between producers and users of statistics. The Forum brought together many diverse participants to reflect on the evolution of the national statistical system and lessons learned, promote statistical products, discuss coordination and integration with international frameworks and SDGs, and review needs associated with the collection, production and dissemination of official statistics.

The event included participants from the Government's senior leadership (seven Vice Ministers attended), central planning and line ministries, subnational and provincial governments, the United Nations, the World Bank, and development partners. It was a useful opportunity for producers and users to discuss the status of SDG monitoring in Lao PDR, including progress, gaps and challenges.



Lao Statistics Day Forum.



Lao Statistics Day Forum.



Board of the Directors of ZIMSTAT endorses user engagement strategy

User engagement is one of the main pillars of the project. As one of the initial steps, countries have been working towards formalizing their strategies to engage with various user groups. Zimbabwe was the first project country to organize a national workshop on user engagement in April 2019. The 4-day workshop was attended by over 40 participants from ZIMSTAT, various line ministries, development partners, and academia. Participants worked in small groups to draft various sections of the user engagement strategy for Zimbabwe, which builds upon other relevant documents such as the national strategy for the development of statistics. The consultative process resulted in a draft that incorporated inputs from various user groups.

Following the successful conclusion of the workshop, ZIMSTAT staff revised and updated the strategy to consider inputs from senior management. As a final formal step, the strategy has been endorsed by the Board of Directors of ZIMSTAT. The implementation of the strategy has also started. A draft action plan is now in place and ZIMSTAT has engaged with users in a number of events.

Project countries come together to share experiences on user engagement

As part of the project, 13 countries and a few international partners came together in an international workshop in Amman, Jordan to discuss issues around and share experiences on developing and implementing user engagement strategies for SDGs and the National Statistical System more broadly. Throughout the workshop panels were organized where countries discussed topics such as: process and institutional mechanism for developing and implementing a user engagement strategy; differences and similarities between user engagement and communication; and, the role SDG data and metadata platforms in engaging users. Participants also worked through several hands-on exercises on linking policies and indicators, and how to produce relevant products to meet the needs of different user groups. The interactions amongst participants during the formal workshop sessions as well as through the informal discussions provided an opportunity to further exchange best practices between countries. For example, Palestine presented its experience in conducting user satisfaction surveys, a topic that was of great interest to participants. Similarly, Zambia presented its work in putting together an action plan for implementing the user engagement strategy. The action plan was a good template for other countries to use as a starting point.

Main outcomes:

- User engagement should be a core function of the National Statistical System and it should be building upon/complimentary to the national strategy for the development of statistics
- Human and financial resources should be made available to have dedicated staff to work on user engagement; and this should be reflected in the user engagement strategies that countries develop.
- Besides policy makers/analysts in government institutions, other important user groups include the media, academia and general public.



ZIMSTAT | P.O. Box CY342, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe Telephone No. +263 4 706681-8 / +263 4 7039711 / E-mail: dg@zimstat.co.zw

Front cover of Zimbabwe user engagement strategy



International workshop on user engagement.



International workshop on user engagement .



- Different statistical products must be produced to meet the needs of different user groups; these products must be disseminated through relevant dissemination channels and in accessible formats to ensure ease of consumption by users.

Where do we go from here:

- Participating countries committed to developing, finalizing and adopting user engagement strategies; countries also committed to drafting relevant action plans that translate the strategies into activities that support user engagement.
- The need to develop training for NSO on how to produce user relevant products was identified as a priority; statistical literacy training for other user groups was also deemed important.
- The experiences of the project countries in drafting and implementing user engagement strategy can be leveraged by other countries interested in working this area.

Metadata as important tool to explain differences in data

The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) has taken an active role in collecting and compiling SDG metadata in Ghana and made them easily available on their SDG reporting platform. This has already given results in terms of transparency and ease of explaining differences between apparently equivalent indicators. The GSS SDG Coordinator, Mr Omar Seidu, mentioned at several events he participated in at the High Level Political Forum in New York, that this had already been a useful tool in conversations with policy makers and politicians. He highlighted two examples.

The first example was on access to sanitation (indicator 6.1.1.). Here he had received a call from the responsible ministry asking for an explanation as to why the numbers GSS had published on access to sanitation were so much lower than the ones published by the ministry. Using the metadata, he could explain that the international definition of adequate sanitation is more strict than the national one. While it is common and widely accepted in Ghana to share a toilet facility between several families in a community, this is not specified as adequate according to the international SDG definition. He further explained that it could be perfectly fine for Ghana to aim at reaching full coverage according to their standards while the international indicator of achievement stayed low.

Another example was the indicator on access to electricity (SDG indicator 7.1.1). Again, differences in definition between national indicators and the global SDG indicator led to confusion. The Ghanaian way of counting access is that all households which belong to a village or town where access has been provided, automatically have access. The global definition is again more strict; individual household access is required. The global SDG indicator therefore shows a substantially lower number than the national indicator. Both examples show that having the national and global SDG metadata easily available on the national SDG reporting platform makes it easier to explain the approaches taken and it increases transparency.

GSS has used several approaches to collect and disseminate good quality metadata. A key element has been to interact actively with other producers of SDG indicators in Ghana and train them in how to compile metadata correctly. As part of this, UNSD conducted a workshop on metadata for GSS and other members of the National Statistical System in December 2018. GSS partially used this as a training of trainers workshop and has afterwards repeated key elements of the training. This has been part of their strategy to follow up actively with all the partners to ensure that all metadata were available for the Voluntary National Review, which Ghana presented in New York in July.



Workshop in Ghana.



E-learning on metadata course is now available

UNSD has finalized an e-learning course on metadata for the SDGs. The self-paced course is comprised of 6 modules; it provides an overview of the SDGs, the importance of metadata and how to compile metadata. The course is free of charge and takes about 3 hours in total to complete. Colleagues in national statistical systems working on metadata and those interested in the topics are encouraged to take the course which is available at <https://elearning-cms.unstats.un.org/>

Platform Development in Cambodia

In March 2018, OECD, UNICEF, PARIS21, and UNSD joined forces to pilot the replacement of CamInfo, Cambodia's DevInfo database. Objectives of this joint initiative included migrating the data out of CamInfo and cleaning the data; structuring the data following the SDMX standard; importing the data into the .Stat platform; and establishing data exchange between Cambodia's new platform and the global SDG database.

Many issues had to be resolved in the course of this exercise, which required a significant effort from all involved. The size and complexity of the CamInfo dataset, which was not limited to the SDGs but covered all areas of statistics – for a total of almost 200,000 observations – presented a challenge to data modeling while the necessary cleanup greatly complicated the effort. The .Stat suite had never been tested before in an environment similar to Cambodia's, and the SDG data exchange itself was only being piloted in 2018. Four missions had to be carried out in order to overcome these challenges and help Cambodia establish a new data dissemination platform and set up SDG data exchange.

Thanks to the effort of Cambodia National Institute of Statistics, the international agencies, and active support of the UN Country Team, these challenges were overcome by May 2019, when the new CamStat portal went live. The full set of Cambodia's statistical data was made available at the portal and downloadable in SDMX, with the SDG dataset structured in accordance with the global Data Structure Definition, and SDG data exchange established. The UNFPA Country Office further contributed to the effort by supporting the improvement of data exchange between agencies of Cambodia's National Statistical System. As a result, the Government of Cambodia designated CamStat as Cambodia's official National Indicator Reporting Platform. UNICEF, OECD, PARIS21, with support of the UN Country Team and donor community, continue to support the NIS with capacity building, work to ensure sustainability of the platform, and are looking into the establishment of an SDG portal for Cambodia that will automatically consume and visualize SDG data from CamStat. The CamStat platform is available at <http://camstat.nis.gov.kh/>.



Mission to Cambodia.

A screenshot of a slide from an e-learning course. The slide is titled "Module navigation" and includes the text: "Please select your module! Each module takes 20-30 minutes to complete. Modules can be completed in multiple sessions." Below this text are six colored buttons representing the modules: Module 1: Introduction to SDG Monitoring (green), Module 2: Introduction to SDG Metadata (dark green), Module 3: Introduction to SDG metadata template (yellow), Module 4: Common Terminology (orange), Module 5: Drafting Guidance (light blue), and Module 6: Voluntary National Reviews (dark blue). In the top right corner, there is a logo for "SDGS MONITORING" and a note: "By clicking on the SDGs logo you will return to this navigation." The logo is a circular icon with the colors of the SDG wheel.

Slide from the e-learning course



Data modelling workshop held in partnership with AfDB

From 8th – 12th April 2019, UNSD and the African Development Bank (AfDB) held a joint workshop on Advanced Data Sharing and Exchange. The workshop was hosted by AfDB in Abidjan and was attended by 14 participants from National Statistical offices of 7 African countries namely: Burundi, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The topics covered included: SDMX fundamentals, Data modeling and Advanced SDMX tools. The participants managed to map their available SDG datasets on the Open Data Platform to the SDG Data Structure Definition.

Additionally, countries presented their experiences on data dissemination and sharing, including SDGs indicator data. Certain countries had made considerable progress. For example, Tunisia has already developed an API using SDMX-RI for the dissemination of their SDG data in SDMX format. This workshop will help establish SDMX data exchange with AfDB and establish an SDMX API for SDG indicators at ODP.

Open data workshop in Bangladesh

UNSD in collaboration with Open Data Watch organized a three day workshop on SDG Open data and Interoperability standards in Dhaka, Bangladesh from April 28 - 30, 2019, the first of its kind in UNSD-DFID project countries. The workshop was attended by 31 participants from Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Various divisions from Ministry of Planning including Statistics and Informatics, General Economics, Local Government Divisions, Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, Access to Information (a2i) Programme, Directorate General of Health Services and Bangladesh Bank.

The topics covered included introduction to open data, measuring and licensing open data, introduction to data interoperability, review of the key areas of the practitioners guide to interoperability and data portal best practices. It provided participants clear guidance on the requirements of implementing open data principles and interoperability standards to the ongoing work of producing official statistics and disseminating it to citizens in the hope of wider data availability and use.



Workshop in Bangladesh

Project website

For general project information, please visit <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-building/unsd-dfid>

Project coordinator

Ms. Vibeke Oestreich Nielsen

Inter-Regional Adviser, vibeke.nielsen@un.org

General project email

unsd-dfid@un.org

This project is implemented by the UN Statistics Division and funded with UK aid from the British people.

