

# UNSD-FCDO PROJECT ON SDG MONITORING

Newsletter October 2020



The project has changed name to **UNSD-FCDO project on SDG monitoring**.

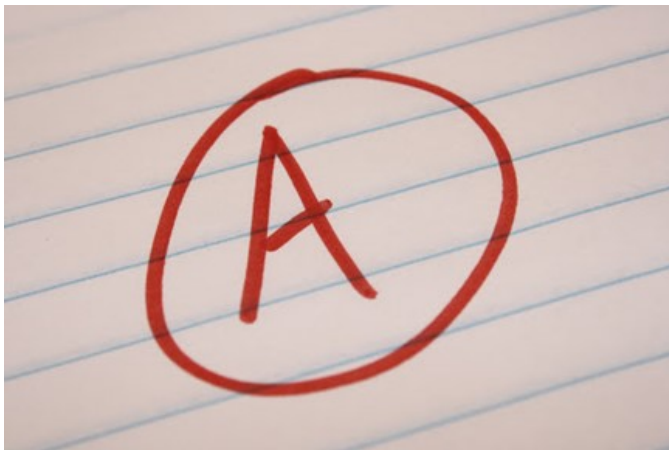
This is because of the merger of the Department for International Development (DFID) with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the establishment of the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) as of 2<sup>nd</sup> September this year.

## Highlights:

- **Project receives an A rating in Annual Review by FCDO**
- **Eight countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews at the High-Level Political Forum, many with strong data elements**
- **New SDG Lab developments allow comparison between national and global metadata for each indicator.**
- **Wide range of online training workshops and webinars held**



## Strong project progress despite COVID-19 challenges



The third annual review of the project was completed at the end of September 2020, with the project scoring an 'A' rating overall. Thanks to the ongoing support and engagement from the project countries, FCDO concluded that progress in implementing the project has continued to be strong, despite a very challenging context with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the last year, countries have made considerable progress towards dissemination of SDG data. 12 countries have now launched **national data platforms**, after facing considerable challenges due to the discontinuation of the DevInfo platform. A number of these national data platforms were integral to the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR's) presented at the virtual 2020 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

**National metadata** are of vital importance for understanding SDG indicators, and the project has made considerable progress in this domain. In-person or remote workshops were conducted for 8 countries during the reporting period, and the metadata e-learning course was updated. Eight countries have now also published their national data, some according to the newly agreed SDG Metadata Structure Definition (MSD).

Progress was made to deliver towards **COVID-19** as countries prioritize these activities as part of their national response. The project conducted webinars on a

range of topics related to COVID-19, and support has been provided set up COVID-19 data hubs. This is reflected in a new project output indicator, with 5 project countries having received training as of September and discussions ongoing with others.

Multiple **user engagement** workshops were also held over the last year, which resulted in 15 project countries having developed user engagement strategies. These workshops have brought together a wide range of stakeholders, with an average of 20 different institutions participating in each, of which an average of 6 were outside the NSS. At the international level, there have also been multiple user engagement events, alongside increased coordination with development partners and stakeholders such as the African Development Bank, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the Office for National Statistics of the UK (ONS).

These achievements would not have been possible without the ongoing and increasing levels of **commitment to SDG monitoring** and the project from each of the project countries. Most countries have established an SDG governance structure with the NSO, in most cases, having an established coordinating role in compiling and reporting on SDG data. This in part is reflected in most countries having integrated the SDG requirements into their National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) or equivalent documents.

The objectives of the UNSD-FCDO project have, perhaps, never been more important. The availability of timely, quality, accessible, disaggregated SDG data with clear metadata, is vital for both targeting immediate policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis, but also ensuring that, in the words of the UN Secretary General, the world is able to 'build back better'.



## Eight project countries presented their VNRs

The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) took place from 7-16th July this year. For the first time, it was conducted entirely remotely, due to COVID-19.

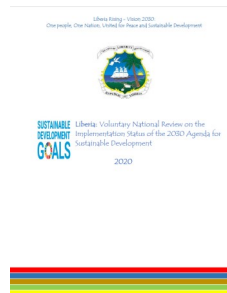
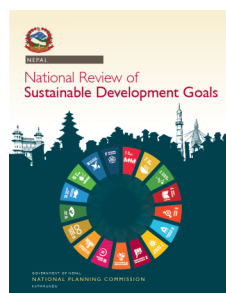
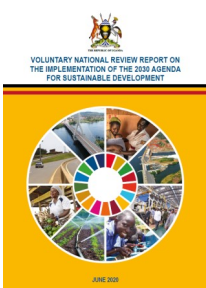
Despite the challenges that many countries have been facing because of the pandemic, eight of the UNSD-FCDO project countries prepared their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and presented them at the HLPF. They were: Bangladesh, Burundi, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Mozambique, Nepal, Uganda and Zambia.

Many of the VNRs had strong data and monitoring

chapters, and the NSOs were actively involved in the process in a number of them. This is also reflected through the VNR labs that some of them contributed to.



Front pages of the eight VNRs that were presented at the HLPF in July 2020. All can be found [here](#).



## Two project related VNR labs

### VNR lab 8: Bridging the policy-statistics gap: Evidence-based VNRs in the time of COVID-19 Pandemic

On 9th July, UNSD organized VNR lab 8, which brought together national statisticians and policy makers from, Liberia, Kyrgyzstan, Uganda and Austria. They presented experiences from work on the preparation of the VNR on the data side and shared experiences around the challenges that the COVID-19 crisis has brought in terms of data collection and in providing timely and quality information on the impact of SDG achievements. This was complemented by a presentation of the Global SDG report. The lab had around 100 participants and feedback was very positive.

### VNR lab 14: National experience of the VNR process: Mozambique

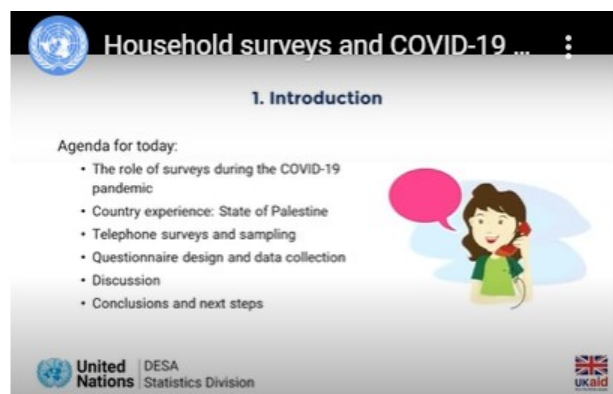
On 14 July, the Government of Mozambique, together with the DESA Office for Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development and UNSD, hosted a VNR Lab focused on data for national implementation of the SDGs and the VNR process in Mozambique. In this lab, the statistics office of Mozambique, INE, had a prominent role. At the lab, the process of designing the national SDG Indicator Framework was discussed, including the coordinating role of the NSO with regard to the compilation of data for global and national SDG indicators and the work to disseminate the indicators via a national reporting platform. The VNR lab also included interventions from stakeholders highlighting their involvement in the process of preparing the VNR report. A lively discussion was generated, focusing on the themes of monitoring progress toward the achievement of the SDGs and the engagement and participation of civil society.



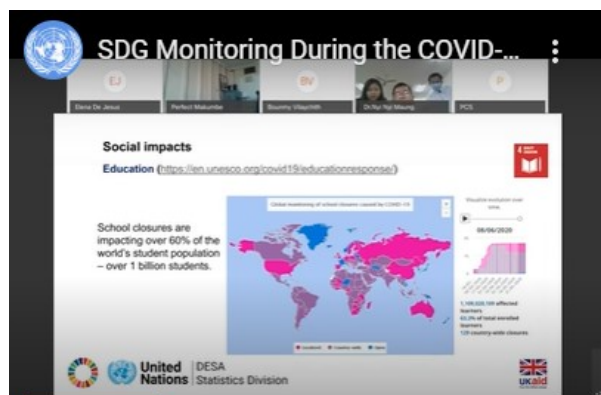
## Webinars of the project

### Survey data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic

On 19 May 2020, UNSD organized a webinar focused on the challenges and opportunities relating to survey data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic, sharing guidance and emerging best practices. The webinar aimed to be a two-way conversation between UNSD and project countries, providing an opportunity for countries to share their plans and experiences. Presentations covered country plans and experiences, telephone surveys, sampling, questionnaire design and data collection considerations. It also included a presentation from Palestine highlighting how they have been responding to COVID-19, including their COVID-19 related surveys to measure the impacts of the pandemic on people's lives.



The webinar can be found [here](#)



### SDG Monitoring During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold of the world's attention and its impacts on economy and society started to become apparent, it became clear that achievement of

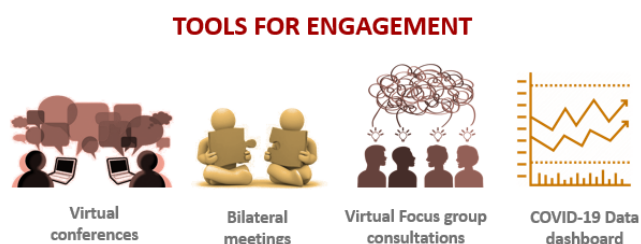
many SDGs and our ability to monitor progress towards them would be more challenging. However, despite the immediate challenges of the pandemic, it is important to retain the longer-term focus on the 2030 Agenda. To begin a discussion of how the pandemic could affect the achievement of the SDGs, UNSD organized a webinar which served to refocus attention on the SDGs, to update countries on refinements to the global SDG indicator framework, and to discuss how the project better could support project countries in their SDG monitoring work. It was also an opportunity for countries to share experiences of monitoring the effects of the pandemic on the SDGs and on the preparation of the VNRs. Uganda and Myanmar presented their experiences.

The webinar can be found [here](#)

### User engagement during the COVID-19 Pandemic

There is substantial interest in data that can help better inform decision-making around the COVID-19 pandemic. NSOs, have an important role to play in making timely and reliable information about the impact of COVID-19 available to the public. The fourth webinar of the project therefore provided an overview of various issues the statistics community are discussing linked to user engagement, and made a case for being actively engaged, including in providing data on COVID-19 related topics. The webinar also provided an overview of potential tools

available for engaging with different users, along with a more in-depth presentation on COVID-19 datahubs.



The webinar can be found [here](#)



## World data forum session

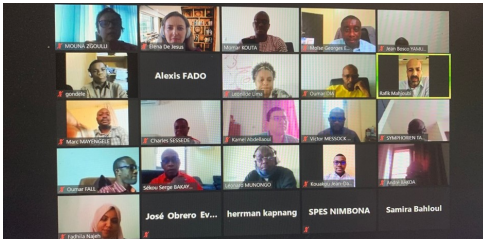
One of the live sessions at the World Data Forum (WDF) was dedicated to 'New approaches of NSOs in reaching out to a broader audience'. The session had a close link to the project as it focused on the work that four of the NSOs in project countries, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kyrgyzstan and State of Palestine, have done to reach out more widely with their official statistics. This included consultations with stakeholders and adaptation based on identified needs such as adjusted data collection (particularly related to COVID-19), establishment of new and more user-friendly tools, interactive engagement through plays, games and similar. The session also invited the audience to provide suggestions for additional ways of interacting with users and to vote on the inputs provided. Those with the most popular ideas were invited to briefly present them at the end.



*Organizing a theatre play, as presented by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, was among the more popular user engagement activities among the audience. The audience proposal that received most likes was to produce short video clips. The recording of the session can be found [here](#)*

## Webinars jointly organized with partners

### Africa Information Highway Live Exchange session on SDG indicator dissemination



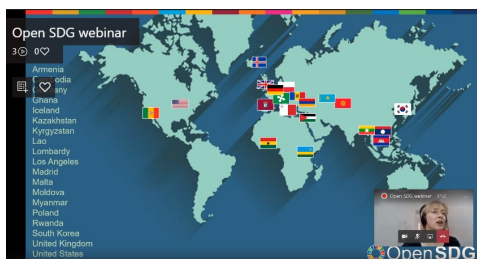
The Africa Information Highway Live Exchange series is a monthly webinar hosted by the African

Development Bank (AfDB) to allow partners and regional member countries to exchange ideas on various topics related to data management and dissemination using the AfDB's Open Data Platform (ODP).

The third session, held on 30 September, focused on SDG Monitoring for francophone Africa, was jointly organized with UNSD as a key partner supporting SDG indicator dissemination via ODP. AfDB provided a demo of the ODP SDG front-end implemented across the continent to facilitate the dissemination of SDG indicators. UNSD presented general guidance on SDG monitoring, data exchange and metadata, and highlighted the achievements of the project countries in the region.

Burundi and Benin shared their experiences through an interactive panel discussion. Challenges related to the coordination of the national statistical system, management of data flows, and dissemination of data were identified and discussed in breakout groups, contributing to a compilation of proposed solutions.

### Webinar on Open SDG jointly with ONS and CODE



OpenSDG is now used by more than 15 countries, some of which are closely linked to the UNSD-FCDO project. To facilitate

experience sharing and help build a community, ONS, UNSD and Centre for Open Date Enterprise (CODE) held the first OpenSDG webinar on 17th June 2020.

The webinar presented an overview of latest updates to OpenSDG and a specification on how to request new features and raise issues. In the second half, Kyrgyzstan presented its experience working with OpenSDG and the adjustments that have been made to features based on their request. UNSD also presented the metadata template and the SDMX Metadata Structure Definition (MSD).

The webinar had participants from the majority of countries and regions who use OpenSDG and there was a good exchange on various topics in the Q&A sessions. Future, more detailed, webinars are in the planning.



## Metadata workshops switch to remote delivery



Due to the travel and assembly restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person SDG metadata workshops facilitated by UNSD were suspended from the second half of March 2020. However, the in-person training was redeveloped to be delivered remotely, allowing online metadata trainings to be carried out in July for Nepal and Tanzania, with Bangladesh participating in the training in September. These remote trainings have been delivered in partnership with SIAP. Shorter training sessions have also been carried out to refresh metadata skills in Burundi and Mozambique.

The new remote training is based around four two-hour sessions, with exercises and activities for the participants to complete between each one. Before joining the interactive online sessions, participants are asked to complete the UNSD Metadata e-Learning online, allowing the basic principles and concepts to be covered quickly, meaning more time can be devoted to

working with the countries' own metadata and answering any specific questions. The sessions themselves are a mix of presentations, quizzes to refresh and consolidate knowledge, and hands-on exercises.

A key focus of the training is on the compilation of national metadata using the new SDG Metadata Authoring Tool Template introduced on page 7 of this newsletter. During the second session of the recent trainings, there was an in-depth walkthrough of the template, where the whole group worked together to complete the template for one indicator. Following this, participants were invited to break out into small groups to compile metadata themselves for indicators they are working on or familiar with. Each group then presented back both on the completed template and their experiences of compiling the metadata in the following session.

In addition to staff from the NSOs of Bangladesh, Nepal and Tanzania, the trainings also included other entities from across the national statistical systems, reflecting that those responsible for producing the data for each indicator are generally also best placed to compile the accompanying metadata. However, logistical constraints meant it wasn't always possible to include all relevant NSS partners. For this reason, in-country follow-up sessions, led by the NSOs themselves, are planned in order to sensitize NSS partners to the importance of national metadata and support them in its compilation. As the process of producing the metadata continues, UNSD is also running follow-up sessions with countries to provide further support and address any issues that may have arisen.

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### Virtual micro-seminars on SDG metadata and the metadata template for Mozambique

At the request of the National Institute of Statistics of Mozambique (INE), UNSD conducted three micro-seminars on SDG metadata. The seminars, which coincided with national activities organized by INE to compile SDG metadata, focused on the importance of national metadata for the SDGs and provided an

introduction to the Metadata Authoring Tool Template to INE staff and representatives of all ministries involved in the production of SDG indicators. Participants raised questions and requested clarifications that contributed to the further enhancement of the Metadata Authoring Tool Template in a good example of collaborative development within the project and building on country experiences to advance the work of SDG monitoring.



# New metadata template and Metadata Structure Definition

In the Spring of 2020, the SDMX-SDGs Working Group approved the initial version of a Metadata Authoring Tool Template to be used for collecting and disseminating SDG metadata. The template is based on the draft SDMX Metadata Structure Definition (MSD), which includes concepts agreed to be most relevant for SDG metadata, and can be used to automatically generate SDMX from the metadata entered into the Word document. A pilot of the template began in the Summer of 2020 and is ongoing. UNSD continues to make adjustments and enhancements to the template throughout the pilot. Among other enhancements, the current template (version 3.2) allows countries to collect and disseminate national metadata for all SDG indicators included in national SDG frameworks, accommodating those national indicators that do not have a corresponding series in the global SDG

framework. 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 started to compile their SDG metadata but 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.

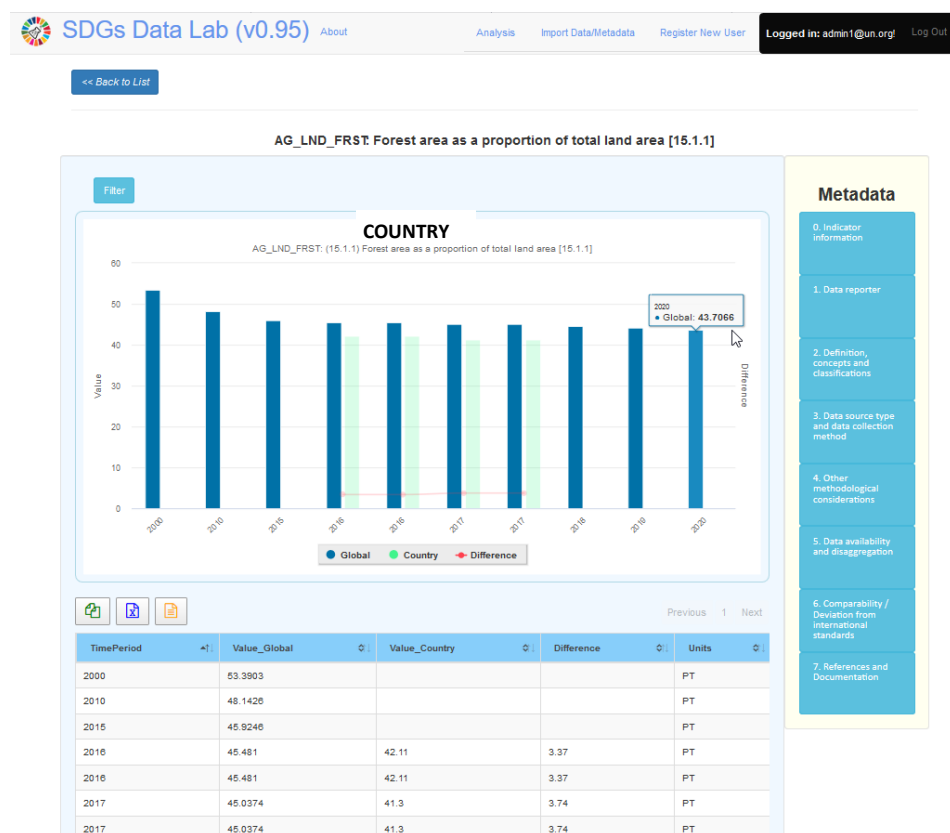
Since the template is designed to be lean, with minimal instructions included in the body of the document, UNSD has developed a [separate guidance document](#) providing instructions and clarifications for national reporting. The latest version of the template can always be found in the [online repository](#).

## Data and metadata exchange

UNSD-FCDO project countries have been at the forefront automated data exchange of the SDG indicators. 13 project countries have now established SDG data exchange with the SDG Lab. The SDG Lab compiles national data and metadata shared by countries together with global data and metadata produced by custodian agencies to facilitate a comparison of the two sets and explain any discrepancies between national and international data.

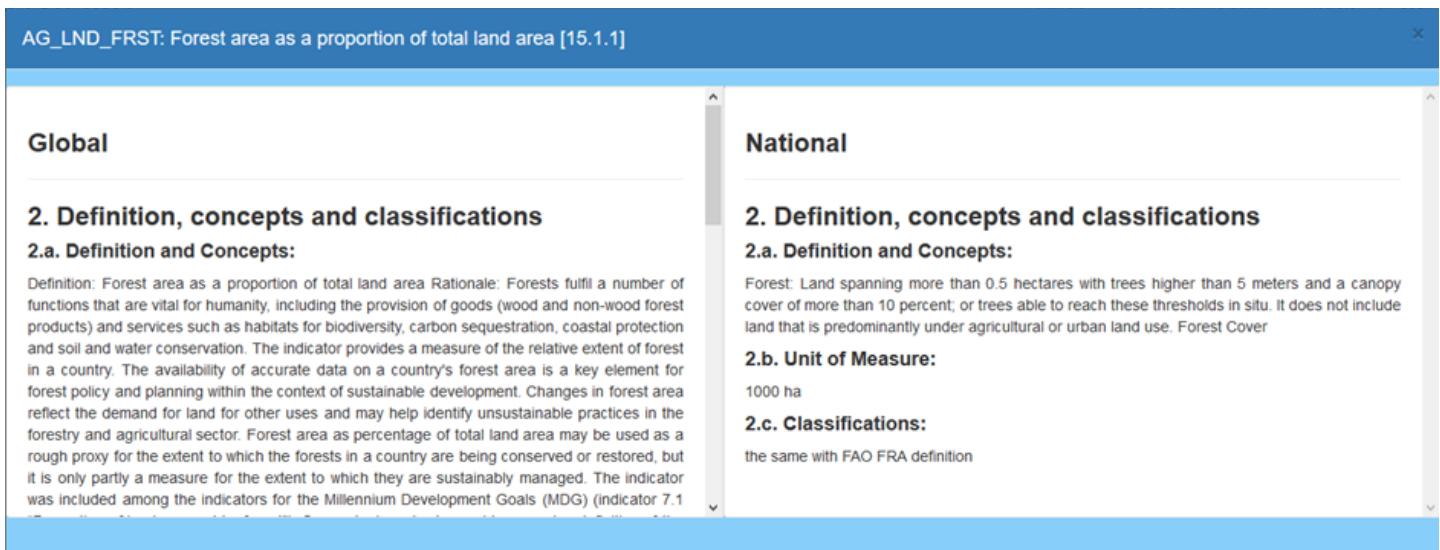
The entire global dataset is available through [UNSD's SDG Application Programming Interface \(API\)](#).

Following the 2019 release of the first Data Structure Definition for SDGs indicators and subsequent updates in light of new data availability and revision of the global indicator framework, the Working Group on SDMX for SDG Indicators



The screenshot shows an example of data discrepancies for indicator 15.1.1 (forest area as a proportion of total land area).





The screenshot above provides an example of an indicator of the side-by-side comparison of metadata offered by the lab to support the understanding of these differences.

has focused on metadata exchange in 2020. The draft Metadata Structure Definition (MSD) for SDGs was released early in the year, and UNSD has continuously worked on the metadata template and authoring tool in support of metadata exchange. The countries are now able to share their metadata with SDG Lab. To do this, metadata generated from the authoring tool in the SDMX format is uploaded onto the SDG Lab and validated before being linked to the corresponding data. As global and national datasets are matched thanks to the common data model provided by SDMX, the lab is able to offer a side-by-side visual comparison of the global and national metadata for any given indicator to provide explanation for differences between the global and national data.

A groundbreaking pilot metadata exchange is now underway, with 3 countries' metadata already available at the SDG Lab.

Additionally, the World Bank has submitted metadata to UNSD in the SDMX format. This included metadata for 5 indicators, all of which was uploaded to the SDG Lab.

Following completion of the pilot metadata exchange and further development of the template and platform, production metadata exchange will be established in 2020. An SDMX API for metadata is also available as of October 2020.

The SDG Lab is currently not publicly available, but countries and agencies that provide information can request a user profile to access it.

## National metadata on ODP

National metadata can now be uploaded on the Open Data Portal of the AfDB. The system has initially been tested out with Burundi, but will be extended to other countries moving forward.

With this new feature, users will more easily be able to understand how the different national SDG data are defined, have been collected and compiled, who is responsible etc. Burundi has already uploaded a number of indicators and metadata to its platform: <https://burundi.opendataforafrica.org/addin/sdg#>

0.a Objectif	Objectif 3. Permettre à tous de vivre en bonne santé et promouvoir le bien-être de tous à tout âge
0.b Cible	3.1 D'ici à 2030, faire passer le taux mondial de mortalité maternelle au-dessous de 70 pour 100 000 naissances vivantes
0.c Indicateurs priorités dans le rapport National ODD	3.1.1. Ratio de mortalité maternelle
0.c Indicateurs proposés pour faire le suivi	3.1.1. Ratio de mortalité maternelle
0.d Séries	
0.e Dernière mise à jour des métadonnées	2020
1.a Organisme/Ministère source des données	ISTEEBU





# Remote data modelling and data platform workshops

## The National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda successfully converted data to SDMX standards

In June 2020, the United Nations Statistics Division conducted a 3-day workshop on Data Modelling for members of the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) following the Global SDGs Data Structure Definition (DSD). The team was trained in customization of the global DSD in order to capture data at the sub-national level and allow additional disaggregation currently not available at the global level. The staff were able to map Rwanda's available national SDG indicators to a customized national SDG DSD and convert them into

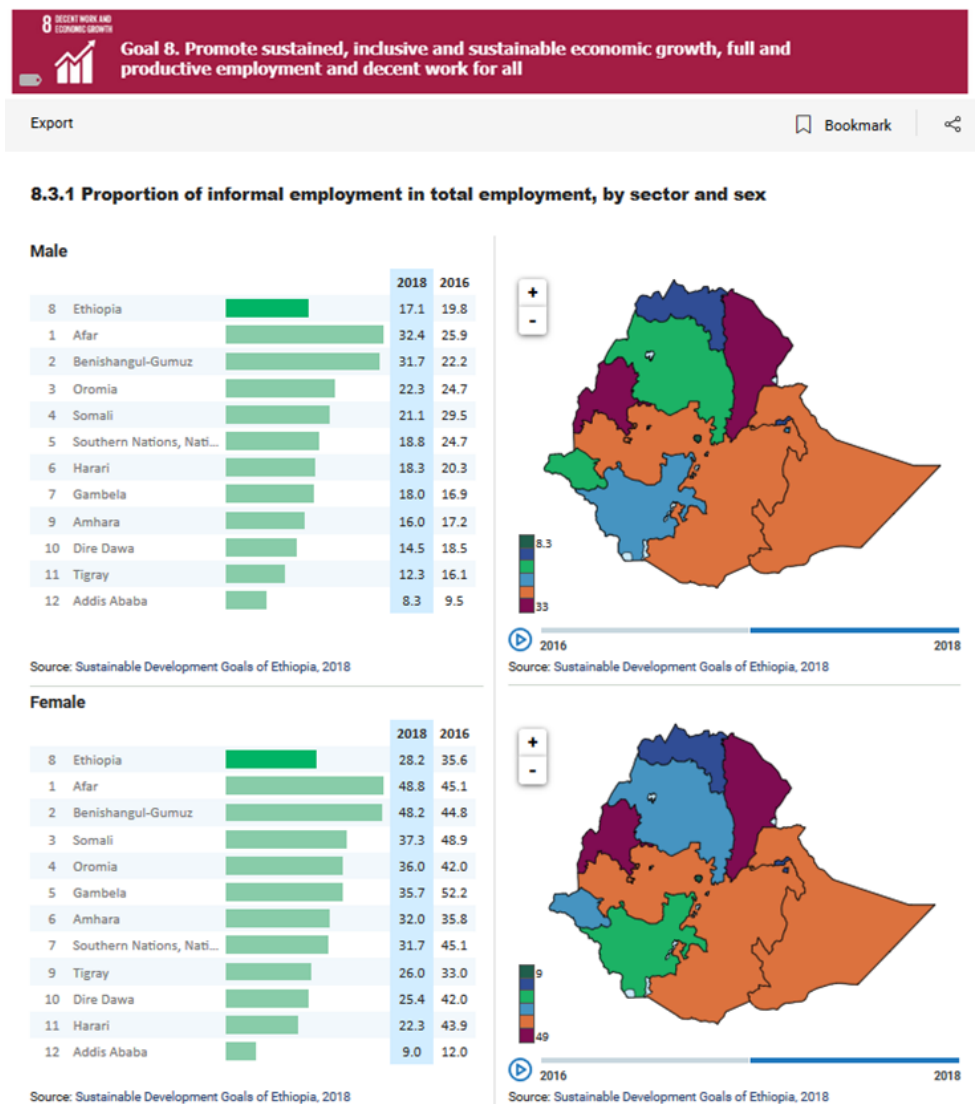
the SDMX format. As a result, NISR staff successfully published the SDMX dataset to the SDG Lab (for more information on the SDG Lab, see previous pages).

NISR, in partnership with the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) has also set up a SDG data dissemination portal. The platform is currently available [here](#). NISR is currently using the prepared SDMX dataset as they upgrade the current Open SDG version to the latest release with support from ONS. The project staff have been conducting follow-up trainings and meeting in preparation to the data migration of OpenSDG.

## Data modelling refresher and set up of the Open Data Portal in Ethiopia

After the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA) adopted AfDB's Open Data Platform as their SDG dissemination platform, the project, in collaboration with AfDB organized a series of webinars for CSA staff. The initial webinars focused on building on the experience from the physical data modelling and SDMX workshop organized in June 2019 to get the available SDG indicators ready in the SDMX format based on a nationally customized DSD for the SDG dataset.

AfDB then used these datasets in SDMX to initialize the SDG dashboard for Ethiopia. AfDB organized seven one-hour webinars that focused on capacity building of selected staff members of CSA who will be working on the platform on data preparation, data publishing, data visualization and data management. This mini webinar series will be completed in mid-November, with five sessions completed successfully thus far.



Screenshot of the ODP platform for Ethiopia: <https://ethiopia.opendataforafrica.org/>



## Federating national data to the global system



### Workshop on the Federated Information System for the SDGs in Ghana, 6- 10 July 2020

UNSD, in partnership with Esri, conducted a workshop for GIS and statistical experts from the Ghana Statistical Service and other members of the national statistical system on the implementation of the Federated Information System for the SDGs initiative (FIS4SDGs). In the workshop, UNSD presented the main objectives and vision of the FIS4SDGs initiative and introduced the main characteristics of its federated governance model to manage SDG data flows across different producers and

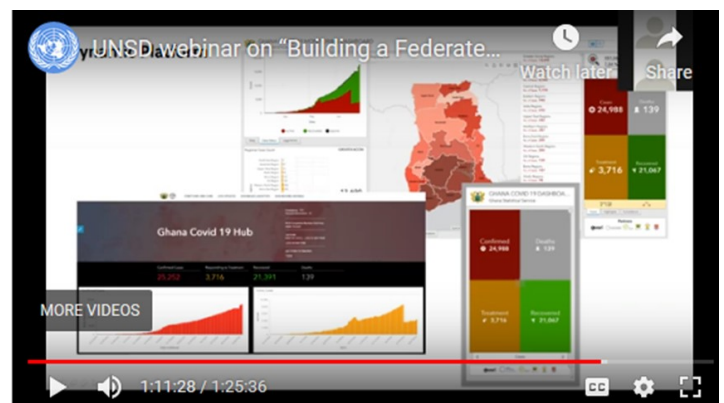
users of data. Participants discussed the steps of the FIS4SDGs implementation roadmap and keys success factors, as well as opportunities to enhance the integration of statistical and geospatial data through Global 3 and National Data Hubs and Open Data Sites, Story Maps, and Operations Dashboards. The workshop concluded with a discussion on the way forward and the identification of next steps in order to build the necessary technical and institutional capacities for Ghana to join the FIS4SDGs initiative.

### Building a federated network of National Data Hubs for Sustainable Development

The project, in collaboration with other UNSD colleagues, organized a webinar on “Building a federated network of National Data Hubs for Sustainable Development” at the international Esri User Conference and participated at the Sustainable World Expo on 14 July 2020. See link [here](#).

The webinar showcased how national Open SDG data hubs are making authoritative data increasingly available to all kinds of users in machine-readable, geo-spatially enabled formats, so they can be utilized effectively by policy makers and the general public, to test hypotheses, make predictions, and build interactive dashboards, maps and visualizations.

This webinar showcased the project’s work on COVID 19 data hubs developed by the UN using the Esri technology and showcased country experiences of Ireland, Chile and Ghana on helping make data on the spread of the virus and its economic and social impacts readily available.



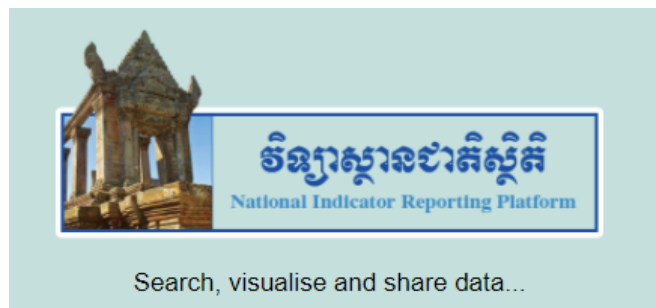
Webinar available [here](#)



## Cambodia's data warehouse now in the cloud

In March 2018, the Cambodia National Institute of Statistics (NIS) launched an initiative to migrate CamInfo, its DevInfo-based national dissemination database, to the .Stat Suite, with assistance from UNICEF, OECD, PARIS21, and UNSD. The .Stat Suite is developed by the Statistical Information System Collaboration Community (SIS-CC), led by OECD, which comprises 14 members, including the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority of the United Arab Emirates, Australian Bureau of Statistics, UNICEF, International Labor Organization (ILO), and other government offices and international agencies. The platform realizes best practices in the development of statistical information systems, including reliance on standards such as GSBPM and SDMX, and is continuously improved and enhanced by the community in a collaborative fashion. CamInfo was successfully migrated to the .Stat Suite and, in 2019, the new data warehouse CamStat was officially launched by the Government of Cambodia as its official data dissemination portal.

In 2020, Cambodia NIS, OECD, UNSD and the UN Global Working Group on Big Data for official statistics (GWG) joined forces to move CamStat to the cloud-based United Nations Global Platform (UNGP). Experts from ONS/UK, Statistics Netherlands, ABS and UNSD, as well as ESCAP and UNICEF, provided valuable in-kind contributions to migrate CamStat from a test environment at OECD to a production-ready environment at UNGP. This work has now been completed, with 57 datasets migrated to the new home. [CamStat](#) now runs in a cloud environment at UNGP, giving it a high level of availability and reliability, while support is provided by UNSD and other members of the UN GWG Community.



## .Stat at the United Nations Global Platform

The [United Nations Global Platform](#) (UNGP) is a collaborative environment of the community of official statistics which provides friction-free access to cloud-based services, several Big Data sources, methods services and developers services. UNGP is maintained and further developed by the experts of the [UN Global Working Group \(GWG\) on Big Data for official statistics](#) and is jointly managed with the [Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data](#). Projects and training activities using UNGP are initiated and driven by the GWG task teams and by the Regional Hubs

of UNGP in Brazil, China, Rwanda and the UAE.

Following the successful release of CamStat, made possible with support from and utilizing synergies and cooperation between the SIS-CC and UN GWG Communities, the .Stat Suite on the UN Global Platform can be made available to other countries, depending on availability of resources. The system allows countries to establish a cloud-based data warehouse in support of statistical dissemination and reporting, and facilitate the automation of the production chain using SDMX and other global statistical standards.

### Tajikistan develops national SDG indicator framework

Despite the impact of the COVID pandemic, Tajikistan's Agency on Statistics started implementation of the project in the early half of 2020. One of the first priorities set out in the project's national implementation plan for 2020 was the development of a national SDG indicator framework. Extensive consultations on the national framework had been taking place with line ministries and custodian agencies. Despite the obstacles thrown up by the pandemic, a first draft of the national SDG indicator framework has now been prepared.



## Useful tools linked to COVID-19

UNSD has established a **COVID-19 response page** that provides a space for the global statistical community to share guidance, actions, tools and best practices to ensure the operational continuity of data programs by National Statistical Offices, and to address issues of open and timely access to critical data needed. See the link to the page below.

UNSD has also established a **COVID-19 datahub** that provides access to the software and tools, provided by Esri, that allow countries to join the federated network of COVID-19 data hubs, as outlined above. It uses web GIS technologies for sharing available data resources and web services in an open and interoperable environment. The page also presents COVID-19 data from other actors who are also using the ArcGIS tool, among others WHO and Johns Hopkins University and interested national statistical offices.



Link: <https://covid-19-response.unstatshub.org/>



Link: <https://covid-19-data.unstatshub.org/>

## Training materials

Staff may at present have limited possibilities to do their job as usual, for instance due to disruptions in field work. Many are therefore interested in learning new skills. As has been mentioned in earlier newsletters, there are various trainings available in statistics. The project has made available all its training materials on the UNSD-FCDO project's website [here](#).

Another useful tool is the [statistics landing page of UN SDG:learn](#), a hub for statistical training courses which includes over 50 courses, mainly e-learning. The page is the result of the collaborative efforts of the Global Network of Institutes for Statistical Training (GIST). More info on the [GISTs homepage](#).



One of the courses that is available on UN SDG:learn is a course on statistical literacy. Available [here](#)

## Project website

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

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



UN Statistics Division

