



DECEMBER 2023 | ISSUE 4

GLOBAL NETWORK OF INSTITUTIONS FOR STATISTICAL TRAINING (GIST)

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

by **Elena Proden, GIST Chair**

We are pleased to share this fourth issue of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training (GIST) newsletter with key highlights for the second half 2023. From training needs of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) to their engagement with data users to promote the statistical literacy of societies, GIST has been continuing its work on facilitating knowledge exchange between countries and leveraging the joint expertise of its partners to develop good practices and guidance.

2023 has been an exciting year as GIST has piloted its Statistical Training needs Assessment Tool (STAT) with interested countries. Five countries have used the new STAT tool, and two have taken it a step further, thinking about how to use the findings from the training needs assessment questionnaires to inform their training priorities and develop a longer-term approach. Highlights from this work have been proposed for a side event during the 55th session of the UN Statistical Commission to allow other NSOs to learn about sustainable statistical training approaches.



Photo by IISD-ENB, Diego Noguera

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...MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Other guidance materials on good practice in certification and running online learning events were presented during two September GIST webinars. A new webinar series – GROW – has been launched by GIST to promote knowledge sharing on statistical literacy with the involvement of the International Statistical Literacy Project (ISLP). The first webinar was an opportunity to encourage the GIST inventory of statistical literacy initiatives to populate it further and raise awareness among NSOs who would like to develop similar initiatives.

A new language group was established in 2023, with a co-lead – Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistic (AITRS) – identified. The group defined its overall objectives as facilitating the matchmaking between partners who provide learning resources and those willing to translate and make them available in other languages, as well as helping define the modus operandi and good practice to facilitate such cooperation.

Finally, GIST has been active in international fora, more specifically, by organizing a session during the ISI World Statistics Congress in Ottawa in July 2023. In addition, GIST was invited to present specifically to the International Statistical Literacy Project members in an open meeting to help foster new synergies between GIST and the International Association for Statistical Education (IASE).

It is expected that GIST's Stakeholder Advisory Group will meet in January 2024 to provide further feedback to the GIST Board, which has been meeting regularly to review progress on implementing the GIST work plan. The results will be discussed more thoroughly during the annual GIST meeting in February 2024. This meeting will also be an occasion to review the working groups' objectives and composition to ensure the continued relevance of the Network's activities.

In my capacity as the GIST Chair, I hope you will enjoy reading this newsletter and find the information presented inspiring and directly useful!

INTERVIEW WITH GIST TASK TEAM 3

In this issue we continue to present you to task teams of GIST. This time, we talked to Pedro Campos - the lead of Task Team 3, which focuses on Statistical literacy.

Pedro comes from Portugal where he is working as an Assistant Professor at the University of Porto teaching statistics and information systems. He is also working in the Department of Methodology and Information Systems in Statistics Portugal. He is a member of the Research Unit LIAAD-INESC (Laboratory of Artificial Intelligence and Decision Support). Pedro was one of the pioneers in organizing an ISLP statistical literacy competition for the first time in Portugal in 2006.



- How does your experience relate to the mission of GIST and the Task Team 3?

Pedro: I have been interested in Statistical Literacy and capacity building for over 20 years. As a statistics teacher in higher education, I realized that the task of promoting literacy, even at this level of education, is not an easy one. Also, working in a statistics institute, we feel that the average citizen lacks critical thinking skills regarding concepts involving numbers. One day, we were approached by a school from a semi-urban area, asking us to write in a language that would be more accessible and understandable to the educational communities. That's how ALEA was born, a project I've been involved with since 1999 (www.alea.pt) in Statistics Portugal.

- What goals do you have for Task Team 3?

Pedro: For now, it's important to know what we can do and with what resources. I think Statistical institutes (NSO) are the natural ambassadors for promoting statistical literacy in each country since there is one in every country, and they are the pillars of democracies. We rely on them to reach citizens. And to develop or adapt resources, books, web pages and websites aimed at young people. It's crucial to create guidance notes for NSO to develop these materials since we live in a world of data deluge. And we need to build a network, spread the word, and communicate! We are starting a series of webinars entitled GROW. I think there is no end to the task of promoting statistical literacy. There is always something to do in Task Team 3, not only for students but also for journalists, decision-makers and citizens in general.

- What are the most urgent training needs of the national statistical systems? How should they be tackled?

Pedro: Although it might be strange to say, one of the most urgent training needs of NSOs is... Statistics. We need training and updates in Statistical Science, including fundamental statistics, topics of sampling theory, SQL database tools, script languages such as R and Python, and more advanced techniques such as those related to machine learning. We need to engage specialists, official statisticians, and academics and involve them in training. In Statistics Portugal, we're starting a program of Capacity in Data Science, and some training programs are given outside, in academia, while others are taught internally.

- You have been working in the national statistical system and lecturing at the university for many years. How do you think NSOs, academic institutions and international organizations could improve the collaborative effort to boost general statistical literacy?

Pedro: These institutions have always worked together. However, gaps between developing and developed countries are widening, so institutional concerns are growing. NSOs are fulfilling their tasks in producing official statistics to meet the needs of the countries, but, the excess of information makes it necessary to educate citizens to be critical users of data and to protect them from fake news. Collaborative initiatives such as Paris 21, EMOS (European Master in Official Statistics - a Eurostat initiative that puts together Official Statistics producers and academia), or the African Data Initiative, among many others, are good practices that show that we can do good things together.

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I THINK THERE IS NO END TO THE TASK OF PROMOTING STATISTICAL LITERACY.

- PEDRO CAMPOS

- As an active International Statistical Literacy Program (ISLP) member, how do you see linkages between ISLP and GIST, and how do they complement each other?

Pedro: GIST and ISLP have common goals. ISLP was first established in the early 90s as a project of numeracy. Its main goal is to promote statistical literacy worldwide in different stages of life. GIST is a network of training institutions interested in disseminating their resources to everyone everywhere. What is interesting about these institutions is that they operate from the bottom up. In other words, the work is based on volunteers who do their best to achieve the goals.

I see a strong potential for linkages between ISLP and GIST. One first link is the Inventory of Resources for Statistical Literacy, which aims to collect a list of materials (courses, webpages, etc) that are important for promoting statistical literacy.

- What motivates you in your role as a GIST member?

Pedro: GIST has a strong institutional background, and most GIST members have important roles in their offices and academia. I think the potential to achieve good results is great! The possibility of joining efforts and creating an even stronger community may be one of my main motivations as GIST member.

STATISTICAL LITERACY IN FOCUS

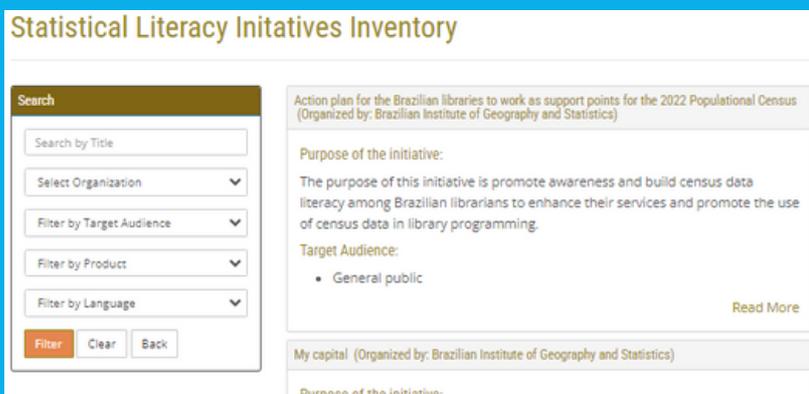
We are surrounded by Data and quantitative information about the condition of society, and the broader world surrounds us more than ever before. Interestingly, recent trends in public discussions indicate a shift towards a post-factual environment that appears comfortable with disregarding or distorting empirical evidence. This is why it is becoming increasingly important to support the development of statistical literacy, a construct with parallel descriptions of numeracy, adult literacy, quantitative and critical literacy and data literacy.

Training in statistics plays a crucial role in enhancing the statistical capabilities of countries. National Statistical Offices, Academia and regional organizations play a vital role in this domain. The Task Team on Statistical Literacy of GIST is creating several initiatives involving these and other

partners. One is the Statistical Literacy Inventory, which compiles various initiatives categorized by dimensions such as author organization, target audience, product, and language.

We have started hosting regular webinars on Statistical Literacy, starting in December 2023. We will also plan to create guidance notes for National Statistical Offices (NSO) on Statistical Literacy, as they are ambassadors of this cause, offering ideas for conducting an initial diagnostic, identifying key partners for initiatives, and recommending practices based on successful initiatives from other NSOs.

Promoting statistical literacy is essential in a data-driven world, enabling individuals to make informed decisions, critically engage with information, and contribute to evidence-based discussions.



**EXPLORE THE INVENTORY
[HERE](#)**

A NEW GIST GROUP ON TRANSLATION

A new GIST group on translation co-led by the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS) was established in response to the ongoing challenge highlighted by various GIST members, namely that most training materials are currently available in English only.

Many GIST members showed eagerness to contribute to informal translations of materials and an overall discussion of approaches for translating materials. Primary languages, as defined by GIST members who are willing to contribute to translation, are Arabic, French, Spanish and possibly Portuguese. Other languages may be added at a later stage.

The group on translation met three times in 2023. The scope of the group's work has two main components: actual translation of materials and a more strategic discussion on how to approach translation when translating materials of other organizations.



A relatively low-hanging fruit for translation is to translate GIST documents. Morocco and the US have already initiated this work, with others offering to verify additional translations. For all these translations the group suggests to highlight that while they are not official translations, that native language speakers have verified them.

Translation of e-learning courses is a more complex task. It requires further discussion and assessment since most courses and materials are part of learning systems and, thus, more complicated to access and process. The translation group is exchanging what may be suitable modalities. The group also discusses the use of initial automated translation through tools such as Google Translate and DeepL.

If you want to learn more or become engaged yourself, don't hesitate to contact the GIST secretariat.



**ARABIC, FRENCH, SPANISH AND POSSIBLY PORTUGUESE - ARE THE
PRIMARY LANGUAGES FOR GIST AT THIS STAGE**

TAKING THE STATISTICAL TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOL (STAT) FURTHER

The STAT aims to provide NSOs with a tool to identify the current level of staff skills and training needs. The tool has been piloted in several countries and is approaching the end of the development phase. The time has come for NSOs that need to assess their current capacity and future priorities to benefit from STAT fully. Besides assessing skill levels and staff training needs, STAT also looks into planning for training and putting capacity development measures in place. The straightforward actions to take is to start by giving training in-house, focusing on prioritized topics, preferably using existing staff members as trainers. Using own staff as trainers makes it possible to adapt the training to fit the organization's needs, time training for when it is needed and has proven to be cost-effective.

Developing a training strategy can be useful to enhance commitment to training in a NSO. A strategy can show how to improve knowledge sharing and develop a learning culture. It can also be used to guide individual development plans or learning pathways. The strategy can guide core questions related to training and what kind of trainings are to be prioritized.

Building competence based on the needs identified is a challenge. We look forward to working with the GIST Stakeholder Advisory Group and other GIST members to use the STAT to develop both the skills of individuals and the capacity of NSOs. If you represent an NSO planning to assess the need for training in your organization, please contact us.

PILOTING STAT: MISSION TO COLOMBIA

The Government of Colombia's National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE, its acronym in Spanish) has participated actively in piloting STAT both by translating the tool into Spanish and by completing the three surveys where 247 staff filled in the questionnaire on their skill level and training needs, 57 managers filled in the questionnaire on the institutional needs of DANE, and 15 employees of the NSS identified their skills level and training needs.

GIST and DANE organized a 3-day workshop on 14-16 November 2023 to work with the results of the surveys to prioritize among the many identified training needs and start the drafting of a 3-year training plan for DANE.

The workshop also promoted the use of in-house trainers to benefit from internal knowledge and build a culture of learning where staff actively participate both as trainers and learners. It was also discussed how individual learning paths for different staff categories can help streamline staff knowledge and strategically support the implementation of relevant training for staff. Finally, panel discussions with staff and NSS members provided concrete input to updating the three questionnaires that will be used in an updated version of STAT in early 2024. DANE will spend the coming months finalizing the 3-year training plan and present it to GIST in January 2024.



PILOTING STAT IN GHANA



Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) is working actively to enhance the skills and capacity among staff to meet the challenges of both today and tomorrow. Hence, GSS applied the STAT to initiate a process of identifying needs for capacity building. From 27 to 30 November 2023, several staff members of GSS met to discuss the results from the needs assessment survey conducted using STAT. Both managers, senior staff and new staff participated including technical staff producing statistics, IT, HR, finance and administration. Representatives from the trade union also took part in the work.

The survey results were used as a point of entry for prioritizing capacity-building needs in a training plan. The plan is suggested to last for three years. Further, a training strategy was discussed and drafted. Experiences were shared on the development of learning paths and individual development plans.

GSS aim to strengthen a culture for knowledge sharing in the organization, strengthening staff capacity, and as far as possible, benefiting from using internal trainers and e-learning. The GIST mission was aligned with a scoping mission on training needs from Statistics Norway.



EXAMPLE RESULTS IN POWER BI FROM THE STAT SURVEY

GIST'S WEBINARS ON MANAGEMENT ASPECTS OF CAPACITY BUILDING

GIST Task Team 2 on Online gateway and e-learning community of practice organized two webinars focused on approaches and recommendations for effective online training and certification of courses from 27-28 September 2023. The webinars provided an excellent opportunity for practitioners to discuss these two highly relevant issues with those engaged in national, regional, and international capacity development activities.

The first webinar explored some of the good practices of delivering online training and providing feedback and possible paths for improving these practices using learners' analytics. Panelists from national statistical systems and international organizations shared their experiences in utilizing modern techniques to enhance the pedagogical value of their training courses. They highlighted the difficulty of addressing the diversity of profiles that attend online courses and how to retain attention and minimize attrition. The importance of digital footprints left by learners on the Learning Management System (LMS) was also emphasized, as these data reveal learner's preferences and may be used to identify personas and define individual learning paths.

This process, which is not frequently implemented, could be enhanced using modern data analytics tools and AI.

In the second webinar, participants discussed issues around the certification of courses. Panel members shared details on the types of credentials offered and the certification processes/ practices employed by their respective statistical training institutes. During the webinar, panelists and participants appreciated the opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other about good practices in certification. Participants were enlightened on the main elements of a certificate, innovations such as using digital badges and how certification can enhance the value of training courses conducted by national statistical systems.

The webinar recordings, presentations, and background papers can be found [here](#).



UN SDG:LEARN BLOG SERIES ON DATA & STATISTICS

In the third UN SDG:Learn Blog Series, the spotlight is placed on the pivotal role of data and statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and statistical training. This comprehensive exploration brings together a group of experts, each offering unique perspectives on the critical importance of data in addressing global challenges and strengthening statistical capacities across countries. In the overview cards on this page you can read more about their contributions.

Additional blogs are in development and will be published in 2024.

I can say that an e-learning strategy is a powerful tool for advancing education and training in the digital age.

Read more in

HCP's experience in developing and implementing an e-learning strategy

by Mr. Samir Issara, Director of Human Resources and General Affairs, High Commission for Planning of Morocco (HCP)

UN SDG:Learn

NSOs are challenged to work with new non-traditional data. Satellite imagery is promising for the calculus of SDG indicators.

Read more in

Capacity-building on Big Data – using satellite images to calculate the SDG indicator 11.7.1

by Dr. Bianca Walsh, Technical Assistant to the Director of the National School of Statistical Sciences (ENCE), IBGE

UN SDG:Learn

Making sure that staff has adequate skills is crucial and should be a priority of those institutions working with the production of official statistics.

Read more in

Identifying, prioritizing and meeting training needs to produce official statistics

by Ms. Charlotte Juul Hansen, Consultant, UN Statistics Division in collaboration with the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training (GIST)

UN SDG:Learn

EXPLORE THE UN SDG:LEARN BLOG SERIES [HERE](#)



FOR STATISTICS LEARNING MATERIALS, GO [HERE](#)



The 55th session of the UN Statistical Commission is not far away. A number of virtual side-events will be held in the weeks leading up to the actual convening in New York in the last week of February 2024.

This includes GISTs annual meeting which will be held mid-February and at least one open GIST event to launch the STAT tool.

You can also learn more about GISTs work by reading the background document on GISTs work which will be made available under agenda item 3c in late January 2024.

Please keep checking in on the pages of the UN Statistical Commission [here](#) for more information in the coming months.

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