
GLOBAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE MODERNISATION AND STRENGTHENING OF STATISTICAL SYSTEMS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DATA

(Draft outline – as of 18 May 2016)

Cover Note

The Global Action Plan is a work in progress.

The Global Action Plan is one of the main products of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It proposes specific strategic objectives, organized around six key strategic areas, each associated with key implementation actions.

A joint subgroup of the HLG/IAEG-SDGs was established at 4th meeting of the HLG and endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its 47th Session. The group is tasked with developing a plan to address the immediate priorities, including statistical capacity-building and a financial framework for the implementation of the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators. Furthermore, the subgroup will develop specific guidelines on what countries need to do to address the statistical challenges of the 2030 Agenda, and outline how the global statistical community can support countries.

Three phases of action with clearly defined priorities

2016-2020

2021-2025

2026- 2030

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I. Introduction

Quality and timely data are vital for enabling governments, international organisations, civil society, private sector and the general public to make informed decisions and to ensure the accountability of representative bodies. Effective planning, follow-up and review of the implementation of the newly adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will require the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of an unprecedented amount of data and statistics at local, national, regional and global levels and by multiple stakeholders.

In the document “*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*”, Member States underscored the importance of “quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data... to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure no one is left behind” (Paragraph 48).

Furthermore, Member States recognized the crucial role of “increased support for strengthening data collection and capacity building”, and committed to addressing the gap in data collection for the targets of the 2030 Agenda, so as to better inform the measurement of progress (Paragraph 57).

National statistical systems face the urgent need to adapt and develop in order to meet the widening, increasing and evolving needs of data users, including the full implementation of the 2030 [Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). [There is a wide range of statistical capacity among countries, with individual countries setting their own national priorities. Some countries are facing steeper challenges than others. Capacity-building will be particularly important in developing countries, especially African countries, the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries, the small island developing States and other countries in special situation.](#)

[Large and growing inequalities in access and ability to produce and use data and information exist.](#) In many countries, valuable data often remain unused because they are not available for the production of official statistics, are not available at the level of detail needed for decision-making, are not well documented and harmonised, are released too late to be relevant, or are not effectively communicated and disseminated. Despite remarkable efforts in recent years, in many parts of the world, national statistical systems continue to face these challenges. As a result, policy relevant, accurate and timely information about some aspects of people’s lives and the environment is not available, leaving many groups and individuals invisible and many development challenges poorly understood.

In the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, Member States noted the importance of drawing on new data sources to meet user needs. “National statistical systems have a central role in generating, disseminating and administering data. They should be supplemented with data and analysis from civil society, academia and the private sector” (para 125). The global statistical system is called to take decisive actions to transform how data and statistics are produced and disseminated to inform development policy decision, in closer partnership with stakeholders from government, academia, civil society, the private sector, and the public at large. This will entail the concerted and sustained accounting and coordination of existing efforts and the strategic identification of investment of resources in order to significantly address existing gaps in the technical and institutional capacities of national statistical systems, and thereby improve the coverage, quality and frequency of data and statistics, made available through transparent and public access.

Today, new technologies are helping produce large amounts of data both from traditional and new sources, opening unprecedented opportunities for informing and transforming societies, and for protecting the environment. Partnering with other stakeholders from the non-official statistical

community and leveraging the use of new and non-traditional data sources to satisfy the data needs for statistical production in new development areas and for timely, detailed and disaggregated data are essential to address inequalities and ensure that no one is left behind, and the most vulnerable are reached first.

At its forty-sixth session, the United Nations Statistical Commission agreed to establish a High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG), composed of Chief Statisticians from 23 national statistical offices representing other countries in their respective regions.¹ The HLG was tasked to promote national ownership of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development monitoring system and fostering statistical capacity building, partnerships and coordination. The National Statistical Offices must play the central role in its implementation at the country level. To further ensure national ownership, the Plan has been developed by the HLG and endorsed by the Statistical Commission.

II. Objective

Since 2004, when the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics² was developed, strategic planning has been recognised to be a powerful tool for guiding the development of national statistics development programs, increasing political and financial support for statistics and ensuring that countries are able to produce the data and statistics needed for monitoring and evaluating their development outcomes.

At its third meeting held in New York in January 2016, HLG members agreed to develop a proposal for a Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data (as a successor of the Busan Action Plan for Statistics from 2011)³, with the aim to outline the necessary actions to generate regular, quality and timely data to inform sustainable development at the needed level of disaggregation and covering all groups of the population, including the more vulnerable and hard to reach. The plan is also intended to fully account and coordinate existing efforts, as well as to identify new and strategic ways to efficiently mobilize resources and thereby address the recommendations of the Secretary-General's Independent Expert and Advisory Group on Data Revolution for Sustainable Development as well as the priorities identified in the "Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics"⁴.

The Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data provides a roadmap for the modernization and strengthening of statistical systems in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Plan shall address all aspects of coordination, production and use of data for sustainable development, including but not restricted to global indicators to follow up and review the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Moreover, the plan will address both short and long-term interventions, including a focus on building the infrastructure needed to support local, national, regional and global statistical requirements. Additionally, an annex provides a template for the reporting of current and planned activities by all relevant stakeholders.

The Plan emphasizes that trust between the producers and users of statistics is key for the effective functioning of the national, regional, and global statistical systems in full adherence with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Moreover, it is built on the principle of subsidiarity, which identifies national statistical systems, under the leadership of National Statistical Offices, as the necessary and appropriate leaders of this effort.

The Plan also recognizes the crucial role of cooperation between international organizations and regional organizations; in particular with respect to coordination and streamlining of their activities

¹ The Chair of the Statistical Commission is an ex-officio member of the HLG.

² <http://www.worldbank.org/en/data/statistical-capacity-building/marrakech-action-plan-for-statistics>

³ http://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/Busanactionplan_nov2011.pdf

⁴ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-4-Transformative-agenda-for-official-statistics-E.pdf>

with a view to avoid duplication of efforts. The Plan aims to strengthen coordination among all key stakeholders. The international organizations are tasked with contributing to methodological and data developments in their respective programmes of work in full consultation and coordination with the national statistical systems. They have a crucial role in capacity building exercises and in carrying out statistical capacity building efforts in their areas of work.

III. Key strategic areas and objectives

The Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data proposes specific strategic objectives, organized around six key strategic areas, each associated with key implementation actions.

Key Strategic Area 1: Coordination and strategic leadership on data for sustainable development

Strategic objective 1.1: Strengthen national statistical systems, including by increasing the coordination role of national statistical offices, and strengthen coordination among national statistical systems and between national statistical systems and regional and international organizations active in the production of data and statistics for sustainable development.

Key Actions:

- *Conduct assessments of country-needs and gaps in national statistical capacities, and assessments of available resources to potentially address these needs.*
- *Mainstream and harmonize the compilation of data for sustainable development and for SDG indicators into the regular work programmes of national statistical systems, and into existing national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS) and national and sectoral development plans and priorities.*
- *Establish and review the implementation of an effective coordination mechanism for collecting, sharing, and communicating sustainable development statistics within national statistical systems, and among national and regional and international statistical systems.*

Key Strategic Area 2: Innovation and modernization of national statistical systems

Strategic objective 2.1: Modernize governance and institutional frameworks to allow national statistical systems meet the demands and opportunities of constantly evolving data ecosystems.

Key Actions:

- *Promote the revision of statistical laws and regulatory frameworks, where necessary, consistent with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, to: (1) enhance the status, independence and coordination role of national statistics offices; (2) strengthen their access to data and thereby their ability to more efficiently respond to emerging data needs; and (3) improve transparency of, and public access to, official statistics.*
- *Update the Handbook of Statistical Organizations with the aim to provide guidance and best practices to achieve a modern, more integrated and coordinated national statistical system.*

Strategic objective 2.2: Modernize statistical standards, particularly those aimed to facilitate data integration and automation of data exchange across different stages of the statistical production process.

Key Actions:

- *Define and implement standardized structures for the exchange and integration of data and metadata on the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development and at all levels (global, regional, national and sub-national), following the SDMX and related standards.*
- *Promote interoperability of these systems to facilitate such integration.*

Strategic objective 2.3: Facilitate the application of new technologies and new data sources into mainstream statistical activities

Key Actions:

- *Identify specifications for interoperable, open source technologies to incorporate the flexibility in information systems needed to allow the strategic use of new and emerging technologies for official data collection, processing, dissemination and analysis.*
- *Identify main barriers to the use of new data sources, including big data, and coordinate efforts to incorporate them into mainstream statistical programmes through, inter alia, confidence- and trust-building measures, legal reforms, better funding and capacity building.*
- *Promote the development of integrated database systems to support the efficient and effective review and follow up of the implementation process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*

Key Strategic Area 3: Strengthening of basic statistical activities and programmes

Strategic object 3.1bis: Ensure alignment of data sources and practices with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

Strategic objective 3.1: Strengthen and expand household survey programmes, business and other economic survey programmes, population and housing census programmes, civil and vital statistics programmes and the International Comparison Programme.

Key Actions:

- *Increase harmonization and ensure country ownership of internationally sponsored household surveys programmes (such as DHS, MICS, LSMS, Child Labour Survey, WHS, CWIQ, etc.) by strengthening the existing Household Survey (HHS) Network and the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys.*
- *Increase harmonization and ensure country ownership of internationally sponsored economic surveys by creating an Economic Survey Network.*
- *Support the implementation of the 2020 Population Census Round, including as integral part of integrated social survey systems.*
- *Support developing countries in implementing CRVS programmes*

- *Support for preparation and development of integrated household and business statistics programmes, with a particular focus on enabling the compilation of disaggregated data on SDGs indicators*
- *Conduct the International Comparison Programme regularly*

Strategic objective 3.2: Improve the quality of national statistical registers and expand the use of administrative records integrating them with data from surveys and other new data sources, for the compilation of integrated social, economic and environmental statistics.

Key Actions:

- *Develop, standardize and improve the coverage of registers of persons, property and businesses for statistical purposes*
- *Establish the preconditions for greater use of administrative data and develop the necessary infrastructure and skills of statistical staff to link administrative records with statistical registers*

Strategic objective 3.3: Integrate geospatial data into statistical production programmes at all levels.

Key Actions:

- *Promote the integration of modern geospatial information management systems within mainstream statistical production programmes*

Key Strategic Area 4: Dissemination and use of sustainable development data

Strategic objective 4.1: Develop and promote innovative strategies to ensure proper dissemination and use of data for sustainable development.

Key Actions:

- *Develop effective communication and data dissemination strategies and guidelines for public and private dialogue oriented to policy-makers, legislators, the media, the general public, the economy, etc.*
- *Leverage the use of e-learning platforms to share knowledge between producers and users of statistics*
- *Develop and implement educational programmes to increase data literacy and empower institutions and individuals to use statistics effectively in their own decisions.*

Strategic objective 4.2: Develop institutional arrangements to help develop and guide the link between public and private data.

Key Strategic Area 5: Multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development data

Strategic objective 5.1: Develop and strengthen partnerships of national and international statistical systems with governments, academia, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders involved in the production and use of data for sustainable development

Key Actions:

- *Improve the transparency and access of official statistics to stakeholders.*
- *Create regular opportunities to consult with all stakeholders on the production and use of*

statistics for sustainable development by (i) organising a UN World Forum on Sustainable Development Data every second year; (ii) establishing similar venues for ongoing consultations and cooperation at regional and national levels

- *Develop the institutional arrangements, and governance schemes that are needed for public-private cooperation following the professional standards of official statistics.*
- *Develop an approach to ensure data quality to be adopted by data producers, including for new data sources*

Key Strategic Area 6: Mobilize resources and coordinate efforts for statistical capacity building

Strategic objective 6.1: Ensure that resources are available to implement the necessary programmes and actions as outlined in this global action plan (both domestic and from international cooperation)

Key Actions:

- *Provide an overview of capacity needs and consider appropriate matches between types of support and types of needs.*
- *Identify and coordinate existing resources to strategically address these needs, and identify resource gaps.*
- *Mobilize donor support towards the priorities agreed in national and regional statistical strategies.*
- *Create opportunities for participation of non-state actors in funding statistical activities through innovative financing mechanisms using means consistent with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.*
- *Promote nationally owned coordination mechanisms of capacity building initiatives*
- *Engage in communication and advocacy activities at the policy-making level to raise awareness and understanding of implementation aspects of the SDG indicator framework.*
- *Develop criteria and mechanism to set priorities for the mobilisation of resources*

Annex: Information about the current and planned actions by all relevant stakeholders

This annex presents a compendium of current and planned actions by relevant stakeholders that produce or disseminate data and statistics. It provides in the form of a matrix an easy overview of who is doing what, when, and with whom. The matrix could be ordered by the Key Strategic Area and the strategic objectives.

Example:

Action	Description of the action	Period	Lead Stakeholder	Involved Stakeholders	Key Strategic Area	Strategic objective
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