

# Call for Action for Better Data for Development - implementing the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data

## 1. Background:

Data and statistics are essential to monitor the progress countries are making in the realization of the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This essentiality is widely recognized by decision makers in their requests for new and better data from the statistical community in order to ensure that they made evidence based decisions. However, this request requires a coordinated improvement of national statistical systems as statistical capacity is not equally distributed across the world. The global statistical and data communities have, through the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data<sup>1</sup> (CTGAP), come together to define a strategic framework, including key actions, to address the statistical capacity developing needs of statistical systems. Many of the key actions will require additional funding. Countries and their national statistical systems, in particular least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and Small Island developing states, will require additional commitments and technical support for statistical capacity building and development to adequately met the increased data needs.

The importance of data is also reflected in Addis Ababa Action Agenda<sup>2</sup> that states: *‘High-quality disaggregated data is an essential input for smart and transparent decision-making, including in support of the post-2015 Agenda and its means of implementation, and can improve policy-making at all levels. A focus on quantitative and qualitative data, including open data, and statistical systems and administrations at the national and subnational level will be especially important in order to strengthen domestic capacity, transparency and accountability in the global partnership. 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’.*

The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB) was tasked by the United Nations Statistical Commission with providing strategic leadership for the implementation process relating to the Sustainable Development Goals as it concerns statistical monitoring and reporting and fostering statistical capacity-building, partnership and coordination (decision 46/101)<sup>3</sup>.

At its forty-seventh session, the Statistical Commission endorsed the proposal to establish a joint subgroup of the HLG-PCCB and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG). The joint subgroup was tasked with developing a plan to address the immediate priorities, including statistical capacity-building and a financial framework for the implementation of the global indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals. The creation of the joint subgroup emerged from discussions on the need for a more coordinated effort by both the HLG-PCCB and the IAEG to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to support national

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<sup>1</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/hlg/Cape-Town-Global-Action-Plan/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA\\_Outcome.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> See E/2015/24-E/CN.3/2015/40.

statistical systems in the implementation of the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals.

The joint subgroup subsequently discussed issues related to exploring the idea of a funding or financing mechanism for implementation of the CTGAP, including undertaking the key actions listed under each strategic objective. The joint subgroups considerations and suggestions were presented at the 49<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in the paper: 'Development of a financing/funding mechanism for statistical capacity building of national statistical systems to support evidence-based follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'

The present paper, drafted by the HLG-PCCB, builds on the ideas provided in the joint subgroup's paper and provides a concept for a framework for addressing the current capacity building needs, under the mandate provided by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

## **2. Purpose and structure of the paper – proposal for a framework**

Statistical capacity development/building can take different forms, such as training workshops, country study visits, ad-hoc missions, technical assistance missions, among other types. There are many organizations providing various aspects of capacity building. In spite of this there is still a broad need for sustainable capacity building addressing both statistics used for national decision-making and for the follow up on the 2030 Agenda. Within the overall architecture of the Cape Town Global Action Plan, this paper addresses the call for capacity building by proposing a framework that is straddling a need for better national statistics used for decision-making and for the follow-up on the 2030 Agenda. By specifying, what conditions and mechanisms should apply, the proposed framework complements other forms of statistical capacity building.

The paper has the following structure: it starts with outlining the general considerations leading to this framework and gives a short summary of the results of the joint survey. It continues with proposing preconditions for capacity building within this framework and, against the background of the joint survey, identifies areas that most urgently require statistical capacity building. In chapter 6 it proposes roles and functions for the possible stakeholders. Chapter 7 proposes different modalities of funding capacity building under this framework.

## **3. Elements of the framework for capacity building?**

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has again emphasized the crucial role that data play, nationally and globally. The ambitious goals of the Agenda require credible and detailed data in order to be able to follow up on its full ambitions utilizing rich, robust statistical evidence. The data revolution provides societies with a huge amount of data, offering broader applications of data for stronger evidence based decision-making. However, due to the complexity of data, governments often cannot take a full advantage of those possibilities without targeted support for national statistical offices and national statistical systems.

Furthermore, the central pledge of ‘leaving no one behind’ applies also to the statistical community. Here, wide variations can be observed across the community where some National Statistical Offices are able to produce timely, credible statistics, while others are lagging behind in data availability. Equitable follow up on the 2030 Agenda requires closing this gap between the divergent capacities of national statistical offices. Only when decision-makers across the world have access to the same level of statistical evidence will achievement of the goals and ambitions of the Agenda be fully actualized.

### 3.1 Joint survey

In late 2017, a survey on statistical capacity needs was jointly undertaken by PARIS 21 and the HLG-PCCB (later called joint survey). The aim of the survey was to obtain a better understanding of the current needs regarding capacity development in NSOs, ensuring that the process is demand driven while identifying the challenges, priorities and plans NSOs have in the short and medium term.

In this regards, a brief analysis of the results related to the section 2 of this survey was prepared by the Joint subgroup. The preliminary analysis of the full survey results, prepared by PARIS21 is available at <http://www.paris21.org/capacity-development-40>. With respect to immediate statistical capacity building needs within their own country, countries were asked to assess capacity building with respect to the following:

- Priorities of NSOs by identifying the top Tier I and Tier II indicators for which countries assessed themselves as needing capacity strengthening.
- Determining the most important sectoral statistics that require immediate capacity building efforts.
- Assessment of the types of data disaggregation that require the most immediate support
- Examination of the types of data sources that require immediate capacity building.

In the light of the necessity for improved statistical capacity and against the background of the identified needs for capacity building, the HLG-PCCB would like to propose the following framework for the capacity building within the mandate of the UN Statistical Commission and its HLG-PCCB.

### 3.2. Preconditions for capacity building under this framework

Statistical capacity building within this framework will emphasize the imperative balance between the improvement of national statistical systems and developing statistics for monitoring the SDGs. While the latter is an important element it cannot be produced in a sustainable manner without focusing of the former. That is why capacity development efforts should prioritize the development of efficient statistical systems that are sufficiently flexible, responsive and affordable to satisfy both the SDG monitoring needs and national information requirements.

Given the elements mentioned above, the following preconditions are proposed for capacity building under this framework:

- Capacity building will be demand driven, i.e. statistical bureaus will define what statistical areas would benefit from an improved capacity and capacity building will be requested by National Statistical Offices
- Capacity building will be aimed at National Statistical Offices

- Capacity building will be in line with national statistical plans (National Strategies, NSDS or similar)
- There will be a direct link between elements of capacity building and the strategic objectives of the CTGAP
- Capacity building will be sustainable, i.e. it will contribute to the continuous work of National Statistical Offices

### 3.3. Focus areas for capacity building under this framework

Against the background of the findings in the joint survey the following areas are identified as requiring the most immediate capacity building:

| Sectoral statistics              | Data sources         | Data disaggregation         |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Environmental statistics      | 1. Administrative    | 1. by disability status     |
| 2. Income and poverty statistics | 2. Geospatial data   | 2. by geographical location |
| 3. Agricultural statistics       | 3. Household surveys | 3. by migrant status        |

*In the joint survey, Big Data was mentioned as 2<sup>nd</sup> priority under data sources. However, the work on Big Data is still under development under the auspices of the Global Working Group on Big Data, which is why it is considered premature to include Big Data as requiring immediate capacity building at the present stage.*

It is therefore proposed that capacity building activities within this framework primarily address the nine areas mentioned above, while taking into account other possible areas identified as national priorities.

### 3.4. Roles and functions

The following features have been identified, as essential in order to conduct capacity building under this framework:

- Political commitment: ensuring political attention and commitment to the importance of statistics and data generally and for the follow-up on the CTGAP and 2030 Agenda
- Donor commitment: ensuring donor commitment to the importance of statistics and data generally and for the follow-up on the CTGAP and 2030 Agenda, and identification of donors willing to participate in this framework
- Project review:
  - o gate keeper/project vetting function, including ensuring that the projects comply with the proposed conditions
  - o matching of the projects with central or decentral funds
- Fund management: managing a central fund and fund flows between recipients and capacity providers (what are the mechanism for fund managements – what are the discussed thresholds?)
- Delivery: ensuring capacity providers for individual projects
- Cross cutting initiatives: recommendations on cross cutting capacity building initiatives, especially targeting regional or global capacity building (e.g. cross cutting issues such as legal basis, admin data, methodology).
- Database of needs:
  - o maintaining a database of countries expressing needs for capacity building relating to the CTGAP, possible capacity providers and the funds available (possibly in consultation with WB/UNDP country offices).

Allocation of the functions to individual organizations will be conducted by the HLG-PCCB together with issue partners.

### 3.5 Funds

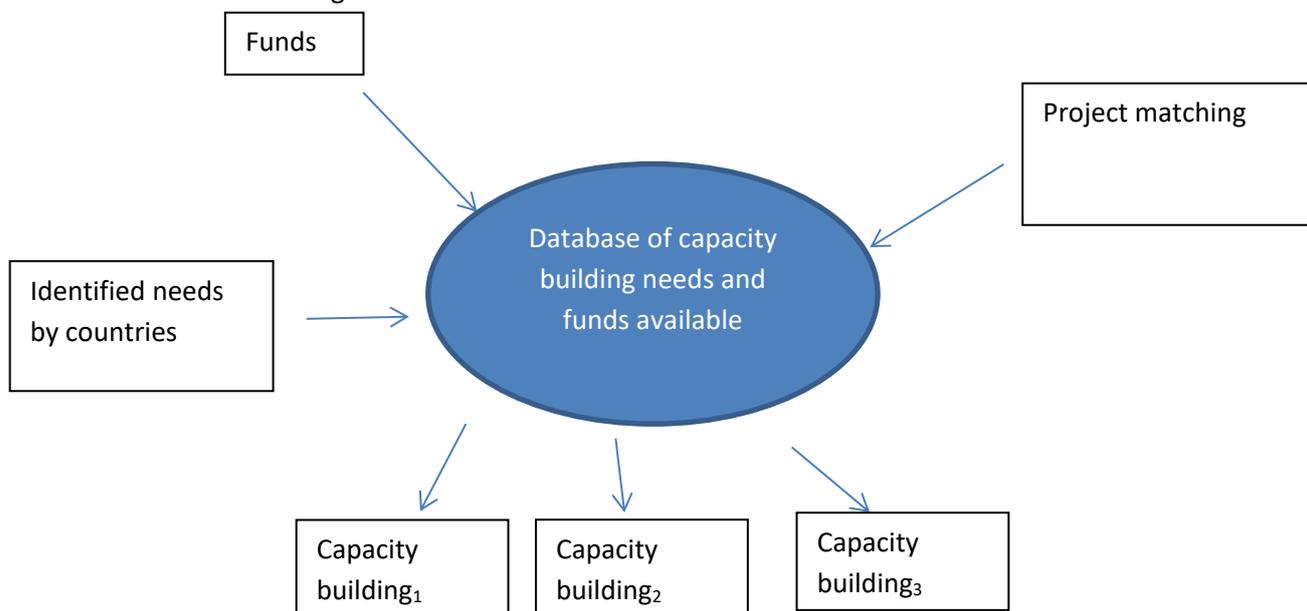
For the purpose of this framework, the following ways of funding have been identified:

- multilateral funding – establishing a fund from which resources will be distributed to the individual countries (after approval of the project) (centralized funding)
- subject-related funding – funding of specific statistical domains against the background of identified needs by specific institutions/countries (decentralized funding);
- country/region-related funding – funding earmarked for specific countries/regions and their needs (decentralized funding)
- funding in kind – for example, reserving a limited number of places at statistical training/courses for the countries in need (such as at Eurostat’s ESTP courses)

The overall ambition is to minimize the number of ‘layers’ in the funding of the projects. The aim should be that resources are being transferred as directly as possible by an agreement between a country/institution requesting capacity building and an institution providing capacity building (with fund manager transferring resources).

#### Scheme of possible fund transfers for capacity building

Multilateral funding



### 4. Follow up

The following are general criteria for assessing the implementation of the projects:

- (a) Increased and **improved** use of statistics in key areas in order to provide the basis for policy, planning, decision-making and the monitoring of social, economic and environmental development and investment decisions
- (b) Increased statistical capacity **of XXX** and capabilities to produce statistics in priority areas, and the production of such statistics
- (c) **I**ncreased statistical capacity to produce statistics for the follow up on the 2030 Agenda
- (d) **Improved** ability to sustain and develop systems and capabilities in the longer term.<sup>4</sup>

Concrete criteria for the follow up on the capacity building within this framework will comply with the standards for evaluations of statistical capacity building and will be agreed among partners participating in this framework. Further details for the follow-up and evaluation of the projects will be prepared by the partners participating in capacity building under this framework.

#### **4.1 Good practices in technical cooperation for statistics, E/CN.3/1999/19**

It is proposed that statistical capacity building within this framework builds on the guiding principles for good practices in technical cooperation for statistics as adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in the document E/CN.3/1999/19. The following criteria suggested for good practice for technical cooperation are therefore replicated from the above-mentioned document.

##### **Good practice for technical cooperation**

- a. Be demand-led, based on assessments of user requirements and relative priorities, including national, regional and international needs;
- b. Be set within a well-balanced overall strategic framework and work program for national statistical development;
- c. Be coordinated between donors and between different players in the national statistical system in a proactive way to avoid duplication of effort and encourage complementarity and synergy;
- d. Address the needs of regional groupings of countries where a common approach can be effective, while recognizing that the heterogeneity of countries means that they have many different needs and priorities, even when producing similar outputs. Regional technical cooperation programs might support cooperation between and/or within regional groupings;
- e. Be implemented according to professional standards using the most appropriate model of cooperation (that is, single or multiple donors working with single countries or regional groups, either independently or in joint ventures);

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<sup>4</sup> E/CN.3/1999/19

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

- a. The purpose of monitoring is to check on progress during implementation in order to identify any problems and adjust the project accordingly. It also assesses project progress towards the intermediate and final objectives, and provides an opportunity for dialogue.
- b. Evaluation at the end of a project should aid lesson learning and exchange of experience between projects and countries. It can consider project impact (for instance, in relation to use of statistics), outputs achieved (relevance, quality, accessibility) and/or inputs (efficiency and effectiveness), and sustainability (of systems put in place and capabilities developed).
- c. The scale of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be appropriate to the size, duration and nature of the project.
- d. Evaluations are normally best carried out by independent but knowledgeable experts.
- e. Monitoring during project implementation is normally conducted through self-assessment by project partners.

## **5. Analysis of the questionnaire (detailed)**

Only us drafting it or together with Paris 21?/inserting the text from the joint subgroup paper?