

**22nd October 2024****8:30 AM - 9:30 AM****Hausmannsgate 5, 0186, Oslo**

Dialogue on Building Trust in Statistics to Counter Disinformation in an Information Overloaded World

Purpose and Scope

This dialogue co-organized by Statistics Norway, UNDP's Global Policy Centre for Governance (GPCG), the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the Norwegian Development Cooperation Agency (NORAD) will explore the vital role of statistics in contexts increasingly challenged by high levels of mis- and disinformation. Development experts, policy makers, and stakeholders are invited to join this open dialogue to discuss how to best confront the prevalence of information pollution and sustain strong national statistical systems.

The main objective of the dialogue is to identify best practices and innovative approaches for building trust and promoting transparency, accuracy, and integrity in statistics. It will explore opportunities to accelerate and deepen investment in the capacities of national statistical systems producing and disseminating statistics.

The event is taking place during the meeting of a UN Expert Group with responsibility for the SDG Indicator framework, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the SDG indicators, which will bring together more than 50 countries, UN agencies, civil society organizations and other actors in Oslo from 21-23 October.

Context –high quality statistics and data are vital public goods.

In 2014, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. These principles serve as a bulwark against disinformation by promoting the production and dissemination of high-quality, trustworthy data. Access to such data is essential for informed decisions, effective governance, and maintaining public trust.

In a time when disinformation can spread rapidly, these principles reinforce the credibility of statistics by ensuring that they are based on transparent, impartial, and scientifically sound methods. This helps maintain public trust in statistics. The principles emphasize the importance of collecting and disseminating accurate, objective data free from political manipulation and that is respected and used by all decision makers. Furthermore, the principles promote transparency and accountability in the production of statistics, requiring that methods and sources be openly shared. This allows the public to scrutinize and verify the data, making it harder for disinformation to undermine confidence in statistics.

Today's world has dramatically changed since 2014 with the proliferation of information and data, social media and digital platforms. Policy-makers and citizens must navigate a wide range of data and statistics that is increasingly difficult to verify and to discern what is credible. Political polarization and decline in trust in institutions, weak media and data literacy presents us with a very different public sphere than only a decade ago. In this environment of information overload, and information pollution, disinformation spreads more quickly and broadly than information from credible, trustworthy sources. This can undermine the public's capacity to make informed decisions, engage in democratic processes, and support the development of inclusive, peaceful, and just societies. In numerous countries, disinformation is infiltrating public discourse, often involving targeted attacks on the quality of data and the credibility of the agencies that produce it, fostering doubt about the accuracy or importance of collecting such data.

National statistical systems are encountering unprecedented challenges in maintaining their role as a reliable source of information. These systems can play a pivotal role in ensuring the integrity of information and protecting the public from harmful disinformation but many of these systems need further investment in technical, institutional, and human capacities. Policy-makers and citizens must also be given the tools to navigate a wide range of data and statistics that is increasingly difficult to verify and to discern what is credible.

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The special side event will be guided by the following questions:

- What are the factors that build trust and confidence in statistics and contribute to their legitimacy?
- What are the challenges and solutions for strengthening the use of statistics in contexts where statistics are difficult to understand or are misused?
- How can the production and dissemination of reliable statistics be protected and promoted in different contexts?
- Are development actors supporting statistics and national statistical systems in ways that are strengthening or undermining the “data sovereignty” of countries?
- How can investment in statistics be restored in a world dominated by data and vast amounts of information?
- How can official statistics be leveraged to fact-check and debunk false claims circulating in media and social networks in real-time?

Speakers:

- **Geir Axelsen**, Director General, Statistics Norway
- **Toril Pedersen**, Head of Governance, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
- **Yongyi Min**, Sustainable Development Goal Monitoring Section, Statistics Division of UN DESA
- **Cara Williams**, Co-chair of the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators
- **Denise Kronemberger**, Co-chair of the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators

Moderator:

Arvinn Gadgil, Director, UNDP Global Policy Centre for Governance

