



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
2 December 2021

Original: English

Statistical Commission

Fifty-third session

1–4 March 2022

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Items for discussion and decision: data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Work for the review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which was prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2021/224 and past practices, provides a description of the work carried out by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in cooperation with other entities of the United Nations system, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It contains a description of: (a) the preparation of the annual report of the Secretary-General on the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals ([E/2021/58](#)); (b) the work to update the database on the global Goal indicators; and (c) the launch of the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Data Platform.

In addition, the present report contains updates on: (a) the Data for Now initiative, jointly convened by the United Nations, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, the World Bank and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network; (b) the project of the Statistics Division funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to support countries on Goal monitoring; (c) the collaborative on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes; (d) the work on the Federated Information System for the Sustainable Development Goals; (e) the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training; (f) the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians; (g) the work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys; and (h) the work on better use of citizen-generated data for public policy.

The Commission is invited to take note of the work carried out and to comment on the progress of the work and the proposed programme of work. Action to be taken by the Commission is set out in paragraph 55 of the present report.

* [E/CN.3/2022/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its decision 52/102, the Statistical Commission welcomed the work of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat carried out in collaboration and cooperation with the United Nations system to support the systematic follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national, regional and global levels and requested the Division to continue to lead the coordination with the United Nations statistical system in the preparation of the annual progress report, as mandated by the General Assembly in paragraphs 4 and 11 of its resolution 71/313. It expressed its appreciation for the capacity development activities carried out by the Division and its partners to assist Member States in making data on the Sustainable Development Goals available, strongly supported the Data for Now initiative to build capacity in countries to utilize new data sources for more timely and disaggregated data and indicators and endorsed the launch of a collaborative on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes. It welcomed the efforts to implement a Federated Information System for the Sustainable Development Goals, the efforts of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training, the launch of the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians, and the survey to monitor the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis on national statistical offices, and recognized the positive outcome of the high-level side event on the theme “The COVID-19 pandemic: how the data and statistical community stepped up to the new challenges”.

II. Sustainable Development Goals progress reports for 2021

2. In 2021, the Statistics Division produced a series of reports and publications reviewing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, including: (a) the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals” (E/2021/58); (b) *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021*;¹ (c) the “Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart 2021”;² (d) “Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2021”;³ and (e) the extended *Sustainable Development Goal Report* platform.⁴

3. In his report entitled “Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals”, the Secretary-General reviews the progress made on the 2030 Agenda amid the COVID-19 crisis, using the most recent available data and estimates.

4. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021* is presented in an interactive platform on the Statistics Division website, using appealing visual storytelling, including through infographics, to make the data on progress towards the Goals more accessible and understandable to a wider audience. It provides in-depth analysis of select indicators, both globally and across regions, supported by an array of charts and maps.

5. The Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart 2021 presents a snapshot of global and regional progress towards selected targets under the 17 Goals of the 2030 Agenda through a traffic-light dashboard. Both of the aforementioned reports and the progress chart informed the discussion at the 2021 high-level political forum on sustainable development.

¹ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021>.

² Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/progress-chart>.

³ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/gender-snapshot/2021>.

⁴ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/extended-report>.

6. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2021 was prepared jointly by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Statistics Division. The publication contains the most recent data on gender equality across all 17 Goals, focusing on how women and girls are disproportionately affected by the socioeconomic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. In addition to *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021*, an extended report platform has been set up to provide more detailed information and additional resources for each indicator, prepared by custodian agencies, that could not be included in the publication owing to space constraints.

III. Database

8. The reports are accompanied by a comprehensive statistical annex⁵ and the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database.⁶ The Database contains the data on the global indicators used in the above-mentioned reports and includes both country-level data and regional and global aggregates. As at 2 November 2021, it included data for 213 of the 231 unique indicators and more than 1.8 million data records. An accompanying metadata repository⁷ provides the metadata for the indicators. Access to the country-level data and the metadata ensures full transparency with regard to the data and methodologies used for global reporting.

9. The Database and metadata repository are maintained by the Statistics Division and contain data and metadata provided by international agencies and entities in accordance with their mandates; they are referred to as custodian agencies. For each value of the indicator, the custodian agency is also requested to indicate whether the national data were adjusted, estimated, modelled or the result of global monitoring.⁸ For example, national data may be adjusted for international comparability or, where data are missing, estimated. Since 2019, a more frequent database update cycle has been implemented in order to provide users with access to more timely data. In addition to an update in July, new data and data updates are provided in March, October and December.

A. Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Data Platform

10. In September 2021, the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Data Platform was launched. The platform includes a new, user-friendly interface to the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database, where Goal indicator data can be searched and downloaded more easily. Country profiles can be accessed more

⁵ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2021/secretary-general-sdg-report-2021--Statistical-Annex.pdf>.

⁶ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unsdg>.

⁷ Available at <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata>.

⁸ The nature of the data is determined as follows: (a) country data: produced and disseminated by the country (including data adjusted by the country to meet international standards); (b) adjusted country data: produced and provided by the country, but adjusted by the international agency for international comparability to comply with internationally agreed standards, definitions and classifications; (c) estimated: estimated on the basis of national data, such as surveys or administrative records, or other sources but on the same variable being estimated, produced by the international agency when country data for a year or years are not available, when multiple sources exist or when there are data quality issues; (d) modelled: modelled by the agency on the basis of other covariates when there is a complete lack of data on the variable being estimated; and (e) global monitoring data: produced on a regular basis by the designated agency for global monitoring, based on country data. There is no corresponding figure at the country level.

easily, and trends for individual countries across the Goals are shown. The new Goal analytics allow the interactive analysis of data availability in order to review global and regional trends for individual indicators and compare trends for countries and areas and for different indicators. The Platform includes a menu of advanced access options and convenient links to authoritative Goal indicator information and important additional resources. A beta version of a new metadata database interface provides, for the first time, metadata of the global Goal indicators in machine-readable format, thereby greatly facilitating the use and reuse of the metadata, including the translation thereof.⁹ The Statistics Division is working with custodian agencies to improve coverage.

B. Work on metadata

11. The Working Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange for Sustainable Development Goal Indicators of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators has further updated the global data structure definition – originally released in 2019 – to reflect the revision of the global indicator framework and new data availability, and has agreed to align the data structure definition updates with the database update cycle.¹⁰ The global data structure definition is adopted by countries and international agencies that are implementing the data exchange standard for the reporting and/or dissemination of Goal data and metadata. The Statistics Division maintains the database and makes the data available through a Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) application programming interface,¹¹ in addition to the previously provided application programming interface.¹²

12. The draft metadata structure definition for the Goals approved by the Working Group was released at the beginning of 2020. It is based on metadata concepts used for the reporting of metadata for the global Goal indicators and harmonized with internationally used metadata concepts. Subsequently, the Statistics Division developed a metadata template and authoring tool in support of metadata exchange, which was successfully tested during a pilot. In 2021, the Division converted all existing global metadata sets into the new harmonized metadata template and provided them to the custodian agencies for review. These efforts allowed the launch of the above-mentioned new metadata database, but further efforts and resources are required to operationalize automated metadata exchange.

13. The reports, Data Platform and metadata repository are hosted on the Goal indicators website,¹³ which is maintained by the Statistics Division. The website also contains information on the work and activities of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for

⁹ The Sustainable Development Goal Metadata Translation Project, which is supported by the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), collaborated with the Statistics Division to develop methods to convert Goal global metadata into machine-readable format. It now can use the Division's metadata database to provide timely source (English-language) metadata for periodic translation updates to tier 1 and 2 indicators. See <https://worldbank.github.io/sdg-metadata>. Through ongoing collaborations with the Federal Service for State Statistics of the Russian Federation (ROSSTAT), Statistics Canada, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Inter-American Development Bank, metadata for global Goal indicators are available in French, Russian and Spanish.

¹⁰ The latest available data structure definition is available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/sdmx-working-group>.

¹¹ Available at <https://data.un.org/SdmxBrowser/start>.

¹² Available at <https://unstats.un.org/SDGAPI/swagger>.

¹³ See <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs>.

Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as on the Goal monitoring and reporting toolkit for United Nations country teams.

IV. Work programme of the inter-agency working group on the global Sustainable Development Goals review

14. More than 50 international agencies and organizations contributed data and analysis to the progress reports and to the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database and metadata repository. In order to provide a working mechanism for the United Nations system to prepare the report, as mandated in the 2030 Agenda, the Statistics Division has been convening meetings and teleconferences with the agencies that provide data and analysis for the preparation of the annual progress reports and the regular updating of the database. The group met on 19 November 2021.

15. The inter-agency working group:

(a) Reviews and discusses plans for the production of the annual progress report of the Secretary-General and the complementary, user-friendly annual report;

(b) Agrees on the structure, scope and coverage of the annual reports and related contributions by the relevant organizations;

(c) Contributes to the regular updating of the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database, including by providing updates and refinements to the metadata, as needed;

(d) Exchanges information and updates on capacity development activities relating to statistics and indicators for the 2030 Agenda;

(e) Reports annually to the Statistical Commission as part of the present report.

V. Development cooperation and technical assistance activities of the Statistics Division on Sustainable Development Goal indicators

16. The Statistics Division and the nine other entities of the Secretariat continued their close collaboration in the area of statistical capacity development. The joint \$10 million United Nations Development Account programme on statistics and data had been granted a one-year extension by the Development Account Steering Committee, with additional funding of \$1.5 million until the end of 2020. Since the governance and coordination mechanisms in place for this innovative programme had allowed for a quick and effective programmatic response to the COVID-19 pandemic, another exceptional extension until April 2021, at no additional cost, was granted for the conclusion of the remaining activities.

17. Through the programme, 105 target countries, including 19 least developed countries, received support. Countries benefited from 603 specific activities conducted in the form of country advisory missions, national training seminars, guideline development, e-learning courses and stocktaking events at the regional or interregional levels to promote exchanges among countries regarding challenges, good practices and lessons learned. Furthermore, these activities included approaches to the establishment and systematic measuring of national Goal indicators, the discussion of methodologies for the measurement of individual Goal indicators, the

application of new or unconventional data sources, and the use of administrative data and geospatial data and systems. A large number of training courses were developed to support countries, with many of the courses now available as online tools that countries can access freely. Several classifications, manuals and guidelines were also produced and refined, and many were translated into other official United Nations languages. Some of these methodological documents target regional harmonization and cooperation in the field of measuring Goal indicators, and all are freely available and accessible to countries.

18. The Statistics Division continued to implement the project funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to make the Goal indicators available to the broadest possible audience and to strengthen the capacity of countries in compiling and using the indicators that cover 20 countries in Africa and Asia. The project was originally scheduled to end in July 2021, but just before that deadline, an agreement was reached to extend the project until July 2022 to allow time to finalize ongoing activities, as well as to add new components to the work. Some additional funding was also provided to help support activities during this extension. The project has continued to perform very well, with strong commitment from the participating countries, and received an A+ rating from the donor in their annual review.

19. The main project objectives are the effective monitoring of the Goals and improved evidence-based policymaking. Improved capacity of the project countries, increased availability of Goal indicators at the national and international levels and improved coordination of national statistical systems for Goal indicators are key elements for achieving the objectives. National Goal data and metadata platforms, the establishment of which is a key component of the project, will have been set up in at least 18 project countries by the end of 2021, with strong support from partners. Several of the platforms have been actively used by decision makers, and some featured in the voluntary national reviews of project countries.

20. There has been similarly significant progress on metadata, and at least 14 countries have made their national metadata available. The Statistics Division also conducted several activities on data modelling and data exchange, using the SDMX standard. As a result, national Goal indicators from at least 17 project countries were made available on the Division's prototype data exchange website, through which comparisons can be made between national and global indicators.

21. A total of 15 countries have now developed and implemented user engagement strategies, another key project activity. The Statistics Division provided training and guidance on setting up COVID-19 data hubs to support the national statistical offices in taking an active role in responding to the pandemic. In 2021, a data visualization toolkit was developed that contains a set of Sustainable Development Goal and COVID-19-related icons, along with templates for a range of outputs, including reports, infographics, social media and flyers. It is freely available from the project webpage.¹⁴

22. Overall, the level of activities under the project continued to be high in 2021 despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. Detailed information about the work can be found on the country pages developed by the Statistics Division.¹⁵

23. In the future, the project will include three additional streams of work. The first stream will be to develop general guidance materials from which all countries can benefit, including short learning videos, practical guidance materials and e-learning

¹⁴ See <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/meetings/UNSD-FCDO-webinar-SDG-and-COVID-19-Data-Visualization>.

¹⁵ See <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/UNSD-FCDO>.

courses. The second will be to support some participating countries in better integrating geospatial information into statistics production, in particular through closer engagement with national geospatial and mapping authorities. The third will be geared towards the use of innovative data sources, methods and tools to increase the availability of Goal indicators, to a large extent following the Data for Now approach explained in section VI. More information about the work can be found in the background document on this project.¹⁶

24. The Statistics Division also produced an electronic handbook on Goal indicators, a resource and a reference for countries on the compilation of indicators.¹⁷

25. A comprehensive overview of the Statistics Division's activities on technical capacity-building, including those related to the implementation of the Goal indicators, was provided in the previous report of the Secretary-General on statistical capacity development (E/CN.3/2021/24). In addition, in its report, the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/CN.3/2021/4) provided information about the work on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data and the United Nations World Data Forum held in 2021. In its report (E/CN.3/2021/2), the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators provided information about its work to implement the global indicator framework, such as methodological work on the indicators, and efforts by its four working groups: the Working Group on Interlinkages; the Working Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange for Sustainable Development Goal Indicators; the Working Group on Geospatial Information and the Working Group on Measurement of Development Support.

VI. Data for Now initiative

26. The Data for Now initiative¹⁸ supports countries in the use of innovative sources, technologies and methods for the streamlined production and dissemination of better, more timely and disaggregated data on key areas related to specific Sustainable Development Goals. This initiative is co-led by the Statistics Division, the World Bank, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, in close coordination with members of the national statistical systems in participating countries and partners from across the United Nations system, the private sector, academia, civil society and the development community at large. The initiative emphasizes country ownership, sustainability and scalability as the key principles guiding the design and execution of activities. The activities are aimed at integrating new methods and sources into existing national statistical systems and are explicitly intended to avoid creating parallel data production processes at the country level.

27. Over the past year, Data for Now activities have focused on the priorities identified by the national statistical offices in an initial group of eight participating countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.¹⁹ The activities involve securing high-level support and government buy-in, engaging with key providers and users of data across the national statistical system, and communicating and disseminating results through the main channels of the national statistical office in each participating

¹⁶ The background document is entitled "Update on the Statistics Division/FCDO project on monitoring the SDGs".

¹⁷ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/wiki/display/SDGeHandbook/Home>.

¹⁸ The Data for Now initiative was launched by the Deputy Secretary-General on the margins of the General Assembly in September 2019. See <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/data-for-now>.

¹⁹ Bangladesh, Colombia, Ghana, Mongolia, Nepal, Paraguay, Rwanda and Senegal.

country. Reflecting both the ongoing pandemic and the desire to support other countries in the regions with similar challenges, the capacity development activities of the core partners of the Data for Now initiative are aimed at maximizing the use of online and remote delivery modes.

28. Under the Data for Now initiative, the Statistics Division, with funding support from the Government of Italy, has carried out activities in Colombia and Senegal. In Colombia, the work has focused on poverty, education and Goal 16 indicators, while the work in Senegal relates to food security, urban housing, climate change and disaster risk, as well as COVID-19. The Division has also supported work in Bangladesh with a focus on poverty indicators under the United Nations peace and development trust fund through an interdivisional project of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on evidence-based, coherent and well-financed strategies to implement the 2030 Agenda.

29. In the coming year, it is expected that the core partners will be able to increase the level of activity and engage with more countries under the Data for Now umbrella. Learning materials will also be made publicly available for all countries to benefit from and use, as appropriate. More information about the initiative and projects can be found on the Data for Now webpages and in the background document for the present report.²⁰

VII. Strengthening capacity for the use of administrative data for statistical purposes

30. A collaborative on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes was initiated in May 2020 as a response to the urgent need for more timely and disaggregated data to inform the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as to respond to the pandemic and its socioeconomic effects. The collaborative is co-convened by the Statistics Division and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and has members from over 25 countries and 25 regional and international agencies.

31. The collaborative discussed key areas of focus and agreed to take a cross-cutting approach. In order to help ensure that the work does not overlap with other, more thematically focused work, an inventory of resources was created that provides a variety of materials, including recommendations, guidelines, courses, tools and practical case studies from countries. The collaborative is also organizing webinars on selected topics. The inventory and the webinars can be found on the homepage of the collaborative.²¹ In 2021, several additional materials were added to the inventory. A new approach to the exchange of experiences has also been established through expert clinics, which cover a specific topic and invite between four and six different countries and partners to formally present their experiences with and approaches to the topic, before moving on to an informal conversation. The formal part is recorded and subsequently made publicly available on the web pages of the collaborative. Four expert clinics were held in 2021. The background document on the work of the collaborative provides more details on the progress made and materials developed.²²

32. In 2021, a project under the thirteenth tranche of the Development Account on administrative data for disaggregated Sustainable Development Goal indicators in

²⁰ The background document is entitled: “Data for Now initiative: use of innovative methods, tools and data sources for more accurate, timely and granular Sustainable Development Goal data”.

²¹ See <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/admin-data/>.

²² The background document is entitled “The collaborative on administrative data for statistics: practical experience exchange and tool developments”.

Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America was initiated that is closely linked to the work of the collaborative. The work is led by the Statistics Division and carried out in close collaboration with regional commissions and resident coordinator offices. The project provides support to Bhutan, Cameroon, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Namibia, Sri Lanka and the United Republic of Tanzania, in their work to increase the use of administrative data for statistics production and will run until June 2024. For each country, two to three thematic areas have been chosen to ensure a specific scope, but with an overall focus on the processes for the successful engagement with and use of data from administrative data owners. The project benefits from the exchange of experiences through the collaborative and is also expected to provide learning opportunities and materials that benefit the collaborative over time.

VIII. Federated Information System for the Sustainable Development Goals

33. The research exercise of the Federated Information System for the Sustainable Development Goals, led by the Statistics Division, in partnership with Esri and with the support of the Statistical Commission and the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, is aimed at improving the integration, accessibility and usability of official statistics, geospatial information and other sources of data, including from outside the official statistical system, to support decision makers at the local, national, regional and global levels in achieving the 2030 Agenda. At its fiftieth session, in March 2019, the Statistical Commission welcomed the progress in the implementation of the Federated Information System for the Sustainable Development Goals and stressed the need to mobilize resources and provide the necessary technical support to all countries wishing to join the System. The Goal data hub is now fully incorporated into the recently launched Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Data Platform, and its federated architecture and geospatial data dissemination and visualization capabilities have established an important model that is being considered in the modernization efforts of the United Nations data platform.

34. However, despite initial investments and support to countries, there are still significant gaps in the development of capacities at the country level to achieve the common vision. In this context, the need to focus on the development of baseline technical and skills capacities is stressed in the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap, developed by the Working Group on Geospatial Information of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.

IX. Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training

35. The Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training, established to address the data demands of the 2030 Agenda and the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, has continued its work to foster training in key areas of official statistics. There are currently 25 members from international agencies, regional training institutes and national statistical offices that provide training beyond their own borders. The Network is managed by a board consisting of the Network's Chair, the three task team leaders and the secretariat. In addition, a stakeholder advisory group provides input and guidance on the direction and focus of work.

36. At the fourth annual meeting, held remotely on the margins of the fifty-second session of the Statistical Commission, Mitali Sen of the United States Bureau of the Census was confirmed as the new Chair. The Network further decided to continue the

work of the task teams, as agreed in 2019, that addresses the following topics in statistical training: (a) specific demands from national statistical offices to meet data needs for the Goals; (b) an e-learning community of practice and an online gateway for training courses; and (c) statistical literacy in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The task teams have made good progress in their work. In addition, the Network agreed to emphasize outreach and communication around its work.

37. In 2021, the task team on addressing specific demands from national statistical offices worked on two areas in which there is both a need and strong demand but supply is limited: (a) training related to the coordination of the national statistical system; and (b) sustainable statistical training programmes at the national level. Assessment reports were provided that suggested steps for increased engagement and collaboration.

38. The task team on an e-learning community of practice and an online gateway has continued to work on improvements to the “UN SDG: Learn” landing page for courses on statistics.²³ The landing page gives an overview of available e-learning and face-to-face courses and provides links to courses offered by the various agencies. In 2021, microlearning pages in the form of briefer learning materials were also added to the statistics pages of the “UN SDG: Learn” website. The task team also agreed to provide guidance on course evaluations, best practices for course evaluation overall and the development of practical guidance for the evaluation of statistical courses.

39. The task team on statistical literacy discussed various approaches for improving literacy among user groups, worked on the establishment of an inventory of statistical literacy materials and began populating it, and developed an e-learning course on statistical literacy, with five modules available on the “UN SDG: Learn” website.

40. The Stakeholder Advisory Group met in June 2021 and provided input and feedback. Information about the current membership, outputs and plans of the Network can be found on the Network’s homepage.²⁴

41. The Network organized a number of webinars, prepared its first newsletter and increased its presence on social media, aiming to reach more users with the materials developed. The background document on the work of the Network²⁵ provides more details on the progress made and materials developed.

X. Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians

42. The Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians, launched by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on 20 October 2020, has continued to facilitate the professional online social community seeking to help national Governments to build resilient and sustainable national data and information systems for the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. During the past year, the Network has helped to improve the coordination within and among national statistical systems, United Nations country teams, and international and regional organizations.

43. The Network also connects existing networks, initiatives and intergovernmental bodies by providing a single and unique meeting place. As at 3 November 2021, there were about 2,200 members, including statisticians, data scientists and experts, geospatial information experts, data management and results reporting officers and

²³ Available at <https://www.unsdglearn.org/statistics>.

²⁴ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/GIST>.

²⁵ The background document is entitled “Coordinating statistical training for increased accessibility and sustainability: the work of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training (GIST)”.

economists from national statistical offices and systems, United Nations country teams, and international and regional organizations. The Network membership has also been expanded to include academia, non-governmental organizations and the private sector since September 2021 so as to create a more inclusive and diverse online professional social platform for better collaboration and discussion. Over the past year, more than 19 Global Network webinars were hosted, with a total of 2,000 participants. In addition, over 1,800 messages were posted in multiple online groups, where members collaborated with relevant peers and shared knowledge on different thematic topics. Twelve topic-specific groups have been created and are maintained by international agencies and organizations. The main topics covered are household surveys, administrative data, machine learning for official statistics, nowcasting and forecasting methodologies, environment statistics, tourism statistics, transport statistics, economic statistics, and population and house census.

44. The Statistics Division has launched a landing page for the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians.²⁶ The landing page gives an overview of the Network and its membership and provides links to past and upcoming Global Network webinars, in which experts around the world are invited to present on different topics, including data collection, dissemination and innovation. The webinars are demand-driven, with the aim of supporting colleagues in the national statistical system and United Nations resident coordinator offices.

XI. Work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys

45. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys continued to support countries during the past year in three areas of work: coordination, methodological development, and advocacy and communication.

46. With the objective of promoting a comprehensive and efficient national household survey programme, the Working Group carried out an exercise with five countries (Canada, Costa Rica, Ghana, Ireland and Samoa) and one subregional statistical office (the Statistics of Development Division of the Pacific Community) to document good practices and challenges in building a coordinated and efficient household survey programme at the national and regional levels.²⁷ The study offers great insights on good practices and challenges on survey coordination and could lead to further discussions and work on household survey coordination.

47. During the past year, the Working Group has also worked in the following methodological areas:

- **Sampling to leave no one behind.** A set of guidance notes on sampling for household surveys to help countries to produce more disaggregated survey data for vulnerable population groups, covering the concept and definition, challenges in sampling the population group, and strategies to improve the coverage. The note also offers guidance on sampling to measure intersectionality.
- **Small area estimation for the Sustainable Development Goals.** Training materials produced in collaboration with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and other partners, including the

²⁶ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/capacity-development/global-network-of-data-officers-and-statisticians>.

²⁷ Reports on this work will be made available at <https://unstats.un.org/iswghs>.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Population Fund (see [E/CN.3/2022/2](#)).

- **Counted and Visible toolkit.** Finalized by UN-Women in collaboration with the Working Group, the toolkit offers a collection of good practices and lessons learned from 15 countries on better utilizing existing household survey data to produce disaggregated gender statistics for gender-responsive policies.²⁸

48. The Working Group continues to support countries in overcoming the challenges posed by COVID-19 for national household survey programmes.

- **COVID-19 impact survey web portal.**²⁹ Established in June 2020, the portal continues to be updated regularly. It now consists of information on more than 500 surveys to support the coordination of the COVID-19 impact surveys within countries.
- **Guidance note on assessing and minimizing the COVID-19 impact on survey quality.** In order to maintain survey continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries adapted their household survey operations by changing the survey mode and questionnaire design and offering remote training courses. Although the swift adaptation has demonstrated the resilience of national statistical offices, concerns have been raised about survey data quality and comparability. The guidance note provides a set of tools for countries to use in assessing and minimizing the impact of the pandemic on survey quality.
- **The collection and use of adult mortality data through population censuses and household surveys.** Under the Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 Mortality Assessment³⁰ created by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the World Health Organization, a working group was established to provide recommendations to national statistical offices on the use of censuses and surveys to obtain time-sensitive and reliable information on COVID-19 mortality at the country level.³¹ The Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys contributed, in collaboration with the Statistics Division and the Population Division, to a stocktaking exercise on the use by countries of censuses and surveys for adult mortality data. The results of the exercise are presented as a background document. A set of recommendations on the improved collection of adult mortality data through censuses and surveys in the context of COVID-19 will be produced for submission to the Commission at its fifty-fourth session.
- **Positioning household surveys for the next decade.** The Working Group finalized a paper³² covering a discussion of the future of household surveys and priority areas for countries to build a household survey system that is efficient, cost-effective and resilient to shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

49. In the area of advocacy and communication, the Working Group organized or contributed to various events, including the 2021 World Statistics Congress of the

²⁸ The Toolkit also provides practical statistical computing exercises using Stata, R and SPSS, and is available in English, French and Spanish. See <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/counted-and-visible-toolkit>.

²⁹ Available at <https://unstats.un.org/iswghs/task-forces/covid-19-and-household-surveys/COVID-19-impact-surveys/>.

³⁰ Established as an advisory body to the World Health Organization, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Member States to obtain accurate estimates of the number of deaths attributable to the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic. See www.un.org/development/desa/pd/events/TAG.

³¹ The concept note for the Working Group is available at www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undesapd_2021_tag_wg_2_concept_note.pdf.

³² Available as a background document entitled “Positioning Household Surveys for the Next Decade”.

International Statistical Institute, the third United Nations World Data Forum, in 2021, the conference on big data for small area estimation, and other technical meetings. The Working Group organized webinars, in collaboration with partners, covering topics on innovative survey data collection methods, data integration and COVID-19 responses. In addition, it is actively engaging with partners from academia, civil society and national statistical offices through its various task forces.

50. The Working Group has also established a network of survey focal points in national statistical offices to: (a) facilitate the communication of the Group with countries on recent developments in survey methodologies, national practices and meetings; and (b) seek guidance on recent developments and initiatives on household surveys in countries and on capacity-building needs.

XII. Better use of citizen-generated data for public policy

51. Citizen-generated data, such as community-driven data and citizen science data, are increasingly being utilized both for filling gaps in data on the Sustainable Development Goals and for encouraging the participation of citizens, civil societies and community-based organizations in producing data for public policy more broadly. The process of producing citizen-generated data, in which citizens are usually significant drivers and participants, is an excellent channel for data collectors and governments to use in engaging and connecting with their stakeholders, namely, citizens and communities. In many cases, citizen-generated data help to identify the vulnerability of marginalized and disadvantaged population groups. The engagement of citizens also helps to improve the transparency and accountability of governments.

52. Citizen-generated data, when properly collected and utilized, can help to enhance relevance, reduce respondent burden, increase efficiency and produce more timely and disaggregated statistics. The official statistical community increasingly recognizes the value of citizen-generated data. However, concerns over the lack of quality standards have created barriers to their extensive use.

53. As a first step to help overcome this barrier, a quality assurance toolkit was produced by the Statistics Division for producers of citizen-generated data. The toolkit provides a framework for planning and documenting the process of data collection, processing, analysis and dissemination. When properly prepared, the documentation helps producers of citizen-generated data to better communicate the quality of the collected data to the official statistical community, thus increasing the likelihood of the data being used to inform policy actions. The toolkit is being tested in Costa Rica and Nepal for further improvement.

54. Future work will include the development of: (a) a toolkit for national statistical offices to use in incorporating citizen-generated data into official statistics; and (b) methods for using household survey data to benchmark citizen-generated data and correcting the potential biases.

XIII. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission

55. **The Commission is invited:**

(a) **To take note of the work carried out by the Statistics Division in cooperation with the United Nations system and its proposed programme of work, and to comment on the progress of work;**

(b) **To express its views on the Data for Now initiative;**

- (c) **To express its views on the work of the collaborative on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes;**
 - (d) **To express its views on the continuation of the implementation of the Federated Information System for the Sustainable Development Goals;**
 - (e) **To express its views on the progress of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training;**
 - (f) **To express its views on the progress of the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians;**
 - (g) **To express its views on the work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys;**
 - (h) **To express its views on the work on better use of citizen-generated data for public policy.**
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