

Proposals for the Expert Group on Wellbeing Measurement



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Background

The UN's "Our Common Agenda":

- makes explicit reference to the needs to take collective actions to meet the challenges of our time
- mobilizes stakeholders to identify a complement or complements to GDP that will measure inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity
- Challenges member states to identify and agree on pathways for national and global accounting systems to include additional measurements

The Network:

- has been working towards bringing together the *Our Common Agenda* with recommendations of the Friends of the Chair Group on economic statistics
- Achieving this by better networking and establishing user-centred partnerships; by challenging the system through use cases in co-production and co-investment; and by better documenting the international conceptual and practical guidance on methodological standards and collective scaling of the capacity building and training

Our Journey



The Network's Recommendation

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2024 UNSC
Report

- *‘There is a strong and active interest in this agenda from a varied set of bodies and agencies, and that it is not possible for a single group to address all the varied and complex issues and relationships in this space alone. [We] recommend the formation of a multi-disciplinary expert group (like the ISWGNA). This would be comprised of experts from the social and demographic statistics, national accounts, environmental-economic accounting, environment statistics and geospatial communities, academia and, where appropriate, the private sector, to explore how to take forward the various recommendations.’*
- The Expert Group in 2024/25 would develop and submit to UNSC the FISW, aligned to the work of the Friends of the Chair on Social and Demographic Statistics, and the SNA 2025.
- There is a need to give the Friends of the Chair on Social and Demographic Statistics time to mature its work programme in line with its timetables before delivering a final statement on the preferred direction of travel on a coherent SPSS type framework for the subdomains of socio-demographic statistics and wellbeing and their inter-relationship with the economy and the environment. The FOC Group has invited Network members to engage in the articulation of this direction of travel.
- In relation to the FISW, the Expert Group would:
 - i) Accommodate diverse communities and methods and synthesize a consensus opinion on the contents of the FISW, whilst recognizing the imperative of a streamlined set of metrics which best meet user need.
 - ii) Commission, review and propose to the United Nations Statistical Commission a draft text of the FISW for consultation and testing.
 - iii) Commission appropriate pilot compilation of statistics and data, from a diverse range of countries to fully explore suitability and feasibility. Pilot exercises which demonstrate the capacity of NSIs with limited resources to deliver should be prioritized.
 - iv) Develop a communications strategy to aide uptake and appropriate usage of the data made available. User and producer interest is vital to secure access to well-informed resources with the required skills and knowledge to make this proposal a reality.

Methods

Bringing together the dominant frameworks



- The Brundtland Review dimensions: well-being can be considered in the **here and now**, but this might be achieved at the expense of those **elsewhere**, or in the **future**
- ‘Valuing What Counts’ recognizes that in the here and now there are issues of **inclusion and inequality**, including gaps in provision, and of **sustainability and resilience**. This perspective for analysing inequalities—beyond income, averages, and the current moment—aims to bring to light the complex and evolving nature of disparities is also reflected in UNDP’s Human Development Report 2019, titled "Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in human development in the 21st century" and the work on National Transfer Accounts (NTA) led by DESA Population Division.
- The National Accounts and System of Environmental-Economic Accounts provide useful frameworks for considering the measurement of **flows**, of **stocks** and of the **distribution** of these between different sections of society.
- The statistical landscape reflects three pillars: **environmental**, **social and demographic**, and **economic**.

Alongside the add complexity of multiple lenses

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Expert Group
for Wellbeing
Measurement

Previous efforts to present unified well-being guidance have struggled with straddling the different lenses researchers have used.

- **The absolute or relative outcomes lens** – humans are naturally competitive, and it is well recognised that perspectives of well-being can be as dependent on relative positioning vis-à-vis a peer group as absolute measures. How and whether to reflect this is a core question for consideration
- **The person-centric or wider perspective lens** – should people be at the heart of a well-being measure and its definition, or should it cover a wider canvas, of which humanity is an essential part, but just one part? Different societies (and groups within society) may perceive the answer to this question in markedly different ways, but the question of whether what is good for humanity is also good for the environment is a vital one.
- **The objective v subjective lens** – what role should subjective measures of well-being take in the measurement system vis-à-vis objective measures of economic, environmental, or social drivers of wellbeing?
- **The outcome v the drivers lens** – is what matters the outcome or the conditions which deliver these outcomes? Which provides greater policy traction?
- **The provision v gaps lens** – is what matters what we have or what we do not? Data on unavailability or services or lack of opportunities is as important as data on what is available

A unified conceptual framework



	Subjective measures of wellbeing	Objective measures of key drivers of wellbeing (Beyond Income)	Objective measures of the degree of Inclusion and Inequality (Beyond Average)	Objective measures of the degree of sustainability and resilience (Beyond Today)
The 'Here and Now' lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Subjective measures of individual wellbeing •Business sentiment 	Flow measures of key drivers from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Social, •Environmental •Economic statistics 	Social, economic and environmental flow distributional -measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Social flow measures •Economic flow measures •Environmental flow measures
The 'Elsewhere' lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cross-border subjective measures •Regional subjective measures 	Social, economic and environmental flow cross-border objective measures	Social, economic and environmental cross-border flow distributional measures	Social, economic and environmental cross-border flow measures
The 'In the Future' lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Social capital stock measures 	Social, economic and environmental stock objective measures	Social, economic and environmental stock distributional measures	Social, economic and environmental stock distributional measures
Potential key data-frames	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Social statistics</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Social and Demographic Statistics</i> •SNA •SEEA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Social and Demographic Statistics</i> •SNA •SEEA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Social and Demographic Statistics</i> •SNA •SEEA

* Need to consider composite indices to prevent dashboards become overwhelmingly big.

Model of Working

Objectives of the Expert Group

The Expert Group on Wellbeing Measurement is proposed to have the following objectives:

- To develop the Framework for Inclusive and Sustainable Wellbeing (FISW), meeting user needs and reflecting producer constraints.
- To ensure the FISW has a clear conceptual framework which robustly presents data in a methodological fashion such that trade-offs and the wider impacts of policy decisions become visible.
- To ensure the FISW presents a clear hierarchy and structure to aide user navigation: not all data can or will be prioritized for the headline dashboard.
- To provide a model headline dashboard for a ‘state of the nation’ perspective to inform decision-makers and the public of the state of wellbeing for their community, and the impact their community has on others.
- To support the Friends of the Chair group on Social and Demographic Statistics with their development of a comprehensive framework for social and demographic statistics (which may develop into a Statistical System); specifically through a) providing access and insights from the economic statistics pillar, where there is overlap in the topics covered, and b) providing clarity on the demands for coherent social and demographic data, in terms of definitions and measures, from the FISW.

It is not the role of the Network to provide post-production support unless members commission a further set of implementation sprints based on implementing the FISW.

Methods of the Expert Group

The Expert Group is proposed to work to:

- Understand and identify the user community and their needs, alongside insights from academia and other voices including the private sector.
- Understand and take account of the needs of producers and compilers, and the constraints they face.
- Undertake out-reach to proactively explain how the FISW helps deliver against user need
- Produce an output framework with a focus on communication and impact of statistics, rather than their production.
- Formalize terminology, including the definition of wellbeing, and hierarchies to support framework and definitions in collaboration with the varied expert communities who own the main statistical Standards.

Principles of the Expert Group

The Expert Group is proposed to:

- Make best use of the core strengths of the Network – if a traditional model was desired a traditional body (IO / Agency) would have been asked to deliver it. We are looking to establish the Group as:
 - Agile and nimble
 - Gives an equal voice to all Network members
 - Virtual meetings in the main.
 - Minimise bureaucracy
 - Volunteer-driven
- Explore how well these working patterns deliver for something like an Expert Group, and support the Network to report back to UNSC on this.

Working Model of the new Expert Group

The UN Network is assessing the feasibility of testing a new model for operating this Expert Group based on the following principles :

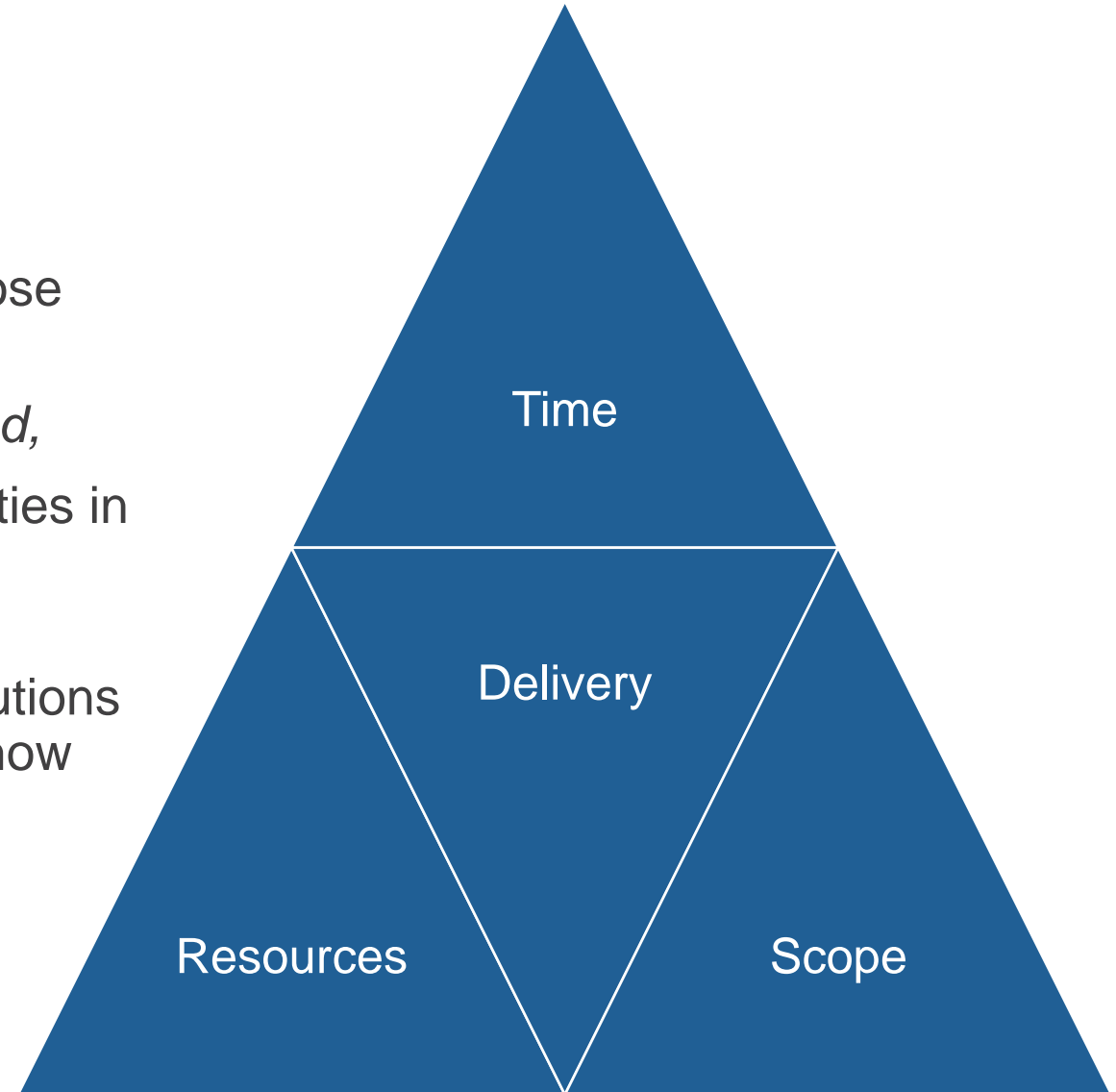
- Expert Group sessions will be open to all Network members, drawing on the wide spread of experience and knowledge within the Network. The Expert Group will also be open to other experts who the Bureau consider can make a positive contribution.
- The Expert Group will be chaired by two co-chairs (one each from the Global South and North) representing the diverse nature of the Network.
- A bureau will be appointed by the Network bureau to undertake logistics and lead drafting outputs from the sessions.
- Virtual Expert Group session will be held to empower attendance. The Expert Group will explore the potential to dual-run sessions to make timetabling more convenient for more countries, recognizing the secretariat constraints the Expert Group will face.
- The Expert Group will report back to the 56th UN Statistical Commission in 2025 on the success / lessons learnt from this working model through the wider UN Network report.

Timeline

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The timeline will be a careful balancing act:

- We wish to continue to work at pace to not lose impetus *but*
- We have limited UN secretariat resource, *and*,
- We do not wish to overwhelm Network activities in other topics (we do not wish the Network to become single-focussed)
- Timeline will be dependent on a) the contributions Network members are able to make and b) how ambitious a scope the EG agrees.



Initial timeline proposal

- **April/May** – paper submitted to Network Bureau by Bureau members who worked on the Beyond GDP sprints.
- **Late May** – Consultation on proposal with Network members
- **June** – Network bureau appoints chairs and bureau for Expert Group. This group develops proposed schedule of virtual meetings.
- **September** – Presentation in UNDP side-event on measurement at UN Summit for the Future.
- **September** – Initial meeting of the EGWM to agree ToRs and proposed schedule of meetings with Network member attendees.
- **October** – Short report included in Network report to UNSC on all activities
- **October onwards** – Meetings as agreed at September's initial meeting

Next Steps

- 1) Network agreement to the proposed model
- 2) Invitation issued to Network members to express interest in appointment to Bureau.
- 3) Appointment of Chairs and Bureau by Network Bureau
- 4) Invitation issued to all Network members and identified experts to join September launch meeting
- 5) Drafting of Terms of Reference and initial papers by Chairs and Bureau

Expert Group will formally commence activity in September 2024.

If you are interested in participating please contact nes@un.org