Why the UN World Data Forum?

The goal of the UN World Data Forum is to bring together data and statistical experts and users from governments, civil society, the private sector, donor and philanthropic bodies, international and regional agencies, the geospatial community, the media, academia, and professional bodies in order to discuss data innovation, mobilize high-level political and financial support for data, and build a pathway to better data for sustainable development.

Almost two years since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and less than ten years left to achieve the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda, now more than ever before producing high quality data and statistics is extremely important. The UN World Data Forum in Bern is designed to bring together representatives, users, and producers, from various sectors in the field of data to support the implementation of Agenda 2030 for the Sustainable Development Goals.
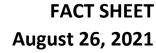
The World Through Data

In recent years, considerable progress has been made on the availability and the quality of data on the SDGs. However, big data gaps still exist in all areas that address the SDGs. A lack of data inhibits a nation's ability to provide its population with opportunities for a better life.

- As of September 2020, 82 per cent of national statistical offices (NSOs) were involved in data collection on COVID-19 and its impacts, some through innovative methods such as online and telephone-based surveys, as well as the use of administrative, credit card and scanner data. (SDG Report 2021)
- Globally, only 62 per cent of countries had a death registration system that was at least 75 per cent complete in 2015–2019; the share in sub-Saharan African countries was less than 20 per cent. (SDG Report 2021)

The data shows that the current pandemic crisis threatens to reverse the development gains of the past decade.

- At least 463 million children worldwide were unable to access remote learning during COVID-19 school closures in 2020. (SDG 4)
- The latest data shows that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to roll back global progress on reducing working poverty. (SDG 1)

- Between 720 and 811 million people in the world faced hunger in 2020, an increase of as many as 161 million from 2019. (SDG 2)

- Almost half of primary schools in LDCs lack single-sex toilets – an important factor in girls' attendance – and more than two thirds are without electricity. (SDG 10, SDG 7)

Accurate statistics on climate change drivers, impacts, vulnerability, mitigation and adaptation are of critical importance to support global environmental policies, foremost on climate change and ocean acidification abatement as well as regional and nationally relevant policies, for example carbon sequestration enhancement policies (REDD+), urban air quality improvement, *etc.* (SDG 13, SDG 15)
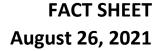
- In 2019, greenhouse gas concentrations reached new highs. Carbon dioxide levels were 148 per cent of pre-industrial levels. (SDG 13)
- Switching to a clean economy could raise $2.8 trillion through carbon price revenues and the redirection of fossil fuel subsidies to public investments. (SDG 13)

Global growth in 2019 was already the slowest since the global financial crisis of 2008/2009. The situation in developing countries, LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS is of particular concern. Figures show that, according to ILO estimates, we could lose between 5 million and 25 million jobs and see losses in labour income in the range of USD 860 billion to USD 3,4 trillion.

- 44 per cent of least developed and other low-income developing countries are at high risk of external debt distress or already in debt distress. (SDG 8)
- The pandemic has led to the loss of the equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs; about four times the number lost during the global financial crisis (2007-2009). (SDG 8)

Economic recovery is under way but for many countries, economic growth is expected to return to pre-pandemic levels only in 2022 or 2023. To support a rapid and effective response to a crisis, comprehensive and integrated data must be readily available, easy to find and able to be shared publicly, as appropriate.

- 63% of low-income and lower-middle-income countries need additional financing for data to face the challenges posed by the pandemic.

What Do We Expect from the UN World Data Forum?

Quality data is important to understand and validate trends around the world and inform policy makers at all levels in order to improve their decision making. The UN World Data Forum 2021, in Bern, is expected to have several key outcomes, such as:

- Showcasing progress made in implementing the data revolution and the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data.
- Demonstrating the value of data and how it can be utilized to improve lives of people.
- Providing contextual information that helps make sense of today's abundance of data by strengthening data and statistical literacy and promoting best practices for data in journalism.
- Drawing attention to data privacy and security challenges and identifying areas where data standards and data governance mechanisms need to be updated to remain effective.

For more information about the World Data Forum, visit: UNDataForum.org

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