



South Africa, Cape Town
15 - 18 January 2017

United Nations
**WORLD
DATA
FORUM**

Vol. 4
19 January 2017

DATA *Voices*

UN WORLD DATA FORUM WRAPS UP



The inaugural United Nations World Data Forum concluded today with the launch of a global plan for better data to improve people's lives, and new ideas and solutions to boost the collaboration, resources and policies needed to put it into action. The Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, which will be adopted by countries at the UN Statistical Commission when it meets in March of this year, was prepared with inputs from the global statistical community and data experts from a wide range of stakeholders.

"The UN World Data Forum is the perfect place to launch the Action Plan and get all the major players behind it," said UN Under-Secretary-General Wu Hongbo. "To implement the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and build a better future for people everywhere, it is essential to have accurate, reliable, timely and disaggregated data."

The Plan, which sets out a global vision and "to do" list for better data, calls for a commitment by governments, policy leaders and the international community to undertake key actions in six strategic areas, including: innovation and modernisation of national statistical systems; dissemination of data on sustainable development; building partnerships; and mobilizing resources.

"We cannot achieve what we cannot measure," said Pali Lehohla, South Africa's Statistician-General and head of Statistics South Africa. The Global Action Plan calls for policy leaders to achieve a global pact that recognizes that data are essential to the full implementation of Agenda 2030, that statistical systems need to be strengthened and better funded and that data producers – from civil society to private sector and academia – need to work together to fully address the needs of the sustainable development agenda.

In addition to urging the strengthening of existing statistical mechanisms, the Global Action Plan calls for the application of new technologies and new data sources into mainstream statistical activities, and integration of geo-spatial data. It also calls for data on all groups of the population to be expanded so that no one is left behind, a key principle of the 2030 Agenda.

It was announced today that the United Arab Emirates will host the next UN World Data Forum in Dubai, in late 2018 or early 2019. "We are looking forward to working with the colleagues from the United Arab Emirates to organise together an open and inclusive 2nd World Data Forum," said Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the UN Statistics Division.

"This will be a unique opportunity to strengthen data and statistical systems for development not only at the national, but also at the regional and global level."

THE SOUTH AFRICA I KNOW, THE HOME I UNDERSTAND

www.statssa.gov.za

BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING

Using call details records to understand human mobility

The aim of this panel discussion was to look at the implications of changes in the data landscape and the rise of algorithmic analysis for the measurement, monitoring and promotion of societal development, including the following questions:

The session considered the latest advances and limitations in data analytics and visualisation to understand human mobility, including commuting, migration.

Cell phones act as sensors of our behaviour and movements. Location data from these can be used to track mobility patterns. The data can be used to infer home, work and other places using geographical data – from personal experience, Google Maps has done this quite successfully.

Migration information is part of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) mandate. A movement is underway to integrate traditional sources of data (census, surveys, administrative data) with big data, such as that generated by cell phone call records. Various areas of big data have been piloted, and call record data has proved useful in tracking people who have been misplaced due to natural disasters.

However, this data comes with risks. As not everyone has a cell phone, the sample is biased. A large area of work has been devoted to reducing sample bias in these datasets. There are also privacy issues – do we really want some nameless, faceless entity to know where we are at all times?

There are still a lot of gaps in terms of using Big data and this aspect is still at a potential level. Priorities on projects should be aligned and systems and frameworks in terms of dealing with ethical issues, data gaps and confidentiality should be discussed and consensus should be reached.

Many people nowadays have cellphones – in fact, according to the ITU, the United Nations specialised agency for information and communication technologies, there were 7,2 billion mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions in 2015, with the United Nations Population Division estimating the world population at 7,3 billion for the same year.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE DEMAND-DRIVEN

While speakers at the session on “North-South and South-South Approaches for Capacity Development” called for increased collaboration between statistical offices to ensure capacity development in the Sustainable Development era, most speakers have emphasised the need for capacity development initiatives to be driven from within statistical offices requesting the assistance rather than by donor organisation or development partners. Needs assessments should be conducted to ensure that the capacity development provided addresses skills needs with receiver countries.



Governments have been called upon to commit resources for statistical capacity development within their national statistical offices and other statistical institutes. “There is a need for political will and commitment at cabinet level to provide funding for capacity development”.

Some speakers have alluded to governments committing to plans and goals at an international level, but failing to supply resources that would allow the implementation of such commitments.

Collaboration, awareness creation and communication on the Sustainable Development Agenda between statistical offices and all national statistical system stakeholders, including governments, are crucial to ensure that governments understand the capacity needs of statistical offices and are able to fund these needs.

“Working together with governments to ensure that there is consistency between the national priorities and capacity priorities of national statistical offices

will lead to increased capacity building,” says Dr Ola Awad-Shakhshir, President of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

The session called for increased partnership between United Nations agencies, donors and national statistical offices (NSOs) on capacity development initiatives that are identified by NSOs, based each office’s national priorities and capacity assessments. There is a need to harmonise capacity development initiatives among all stakeholders in capacity building to avoid duplication and wastage of resources.

The North-South and South-South Approaches to Capacity Development session sought to discuss statistical capacity development in the Global South (developing and underdeveloped countries) and the Global North (developed countries). Remarks from the session suggest that countries in the Global South are more likely to need capacity development aid from donor organisations, UN agencies and their governments than their counterparts in the developed and industrialised Global North.

DATA PRODUCTION: THREE FUTURE TRENDS

The crystal ball may always be murky, but this didn't stop five experts at the morning plenary session from sharing their views on the future of data production. At the beginning of the session, Dr. Andrew Tatem jokingly commented that, as a student, his medical and engineering friends thought that taking geography meant that he was good at colouring in, staying within the lines on maps.

Data integration

But as a geographer Dr Tatem, director of WorldPop Project, has made a career of merging unrelated datasets into a tapestry of new insight. One of his more significant projects involved using cell phone data on the movements of sim cards, together with census data, to estimate the extent of malaria entering Zanzibar.

Partnership is important for successful data integration. Philip Thigo from the Kenyan Office of the Deputy President echoed the importance of finding new ways of partnering with different data producers.

The private sector

Partnership was also key during the recent Zika virus outbreak in Brazil. UNICEF joined with Facebook to analyse millions of conversations about the virus on the social media platform. The results were insightful, according to Molly Jackman from Facebook. The data showed that many people were concerned about other mosquito-borne diseases.

This information prompted UNICEF to launch an information campaign on how to prevent mosquito-borne diseases in general. An earlier non-data driven UNICEF campaign reached only 60 000 people. With the help of Facebook, the online campaign reached 4 million people within hours.

Big data is a growing trend in its own right, but incredibly large datasets – such those produced by Facebook – are increasingly falling into the domain of the private sector. In stark contrast to this trend, however, is software. Mark Ryland from Amazon argued that software is becoming more accessible to the person in the street due to the open source software revolution.

Interactivity

With increased exposure to software, users are becoming more empowered. They are increasingly wanting more dynamic and interactive content from statistical agencies, according to Emanuele Baldacci, CIO and Director of Methodology at Eurostat.

We cannot clearly read the crystal ball, but creativity is required to navigate the big data trends of the future. In the words of session chair, Haishan Fu, who who responded to Dr Tatem's work: "I'm glad you didn't stay within the confines of the map".







DATAVoices

Delegates at the historic United Nations World Data Forum, being hosted in South Africa at Cape Town's CTICC, share their view of this innovative union of young and old.



WANDA GUMA
CEO and Editor in Chief,
Ishishini Lam
CHAD

How did you hear about the 1st World Data Forum?

I receive the United Nations NGO Branch newsletter and came across the website.

What have you learnt from being here?

Data is important in NGO management, to draw attention to specific issues that need to be addressed. We can design better solutions for these issues. Unfortunately, my country is not really represented here. I could not find much data about Chad at the exhibition. It feels like we were among the “missing millions”, those who are left behind in the data revolution.

I am going to advocate for Chad to host international events related to statistics and data in order to help speed access to the modern data tools being enjoyed by other countries. I won MTN award for highest usage of the UNWDF app.

Have you heard about the International Population Conference (IPC) taking place in South Africa, Cape Town?

Yes, I heard about the IPC at this conference. I hope to attend this conference as the topics of discussion are very relevant to our readers.



See You @ IPC 2017
Cape Town

As a non-statistician, covering conferences that deal with data and statistics is sometimes difficult. There are times when I have found myself sitting in a session and struggling to understand what the presenter was trying to communicate.

This forum was different. In every session I attended, I clearly understood the key message the presenter was trying to put across. The quality presentations were of exceptionally high quality, and some of my colleagues had the pleasure of attending interactive sessions looking at exceptionally creative ways to present data.

The forum has highlighted the importance of disaggregated data to ensure that no-one is left behind. The other critical area is finding creative ways to communicate data and statistics to ordinary citizens so that they can use this information to improve their own lives.

Thanks to the following people who contributed to the newsletter: Kevin Parry, Madimetja Mashishi, Sieraag de Klerk, Albert de Gouveia, Mbongiseni Mndebele and the United Nations Communications Team.

See you in Dubai 2019.

The EDITOR: Tracy Daniels

The **NUMBERS** Journey in Building a **STATISTICAL** and **DATA** Literate **WORLD!**

Knowledge through Collaboration = POWER!

You Count, I Count... The WORLD Counts!



“Statistics is a conduit of TRUST. It is the most publicly transacted currency and therefore has to imbue trust”.

Population is not simply a problem of numbers. The growth in Africa’s population in the last decade has not been accompanied by the necessary structural transformation nor has it translated into equitable human development and improved livelihoods. Nearly 50 per cent of Africans still live in poverty even though countries are becoming richer. We are confronted with a global, an African and a South African contemporary population crisis insofar as the population situation in many African countries continues to contribute to or detract from their chances of realising the goals of development, not only for the current generation but also for future generations. Conversely, we still ask the question, how does development affect population growth?

Dr Pali Lehohla
Statistician-General of South Africa and Head of Statistics South Africa

SOUTH AFRICA LOOKS FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU AGAIN





What you need to know about the World Data Forum

1. **The First UNWDF was hosted on the African continent, in sunny Cape Town, South Africa in 2017**

2. **The 2019 UNWDF will be hosted in Dubai.**

3. **Social platforms**

Keep the conversation going: use #UNDataForum to share your experience of the first ever United Nations World Data Forum

- *Follow @UNDataForum and @StatsSA for regular updates*
- *The presentations will be available on SlideShare www.slideshare.net/StatsSA*
- *Videos are be available on the UN DESA Youtube*

4. **The first UNWDF taught statisticians and data enthusiasts how to party!**

Photographic evidence (visualisation) available on the Stats SA flickr account: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/124502081@N02/with/32334613946/>

If you have any comments on the newsletter please contact the editorial team:

Editor: Tracy Daniels
Corporate Communication
Statistics South Africa
tracyd@statssa.gov.za



The World DATA conversation
continues in Dubai 2019.

Join us at the
2nd United Nation World Data Forum.

*“This will be a unique opportunity to
strengthen data and statistical
systems for development
not only at the national,
but also at regional
and global level.”*

*Stefan Schweinfest, Director,
United Nations Statistics Division*



Dubai 2019

