Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2019

Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development

United Nations

This report is a joint product of the members of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development (a full list of members can be found on page x). The Financing for Sustainable Development Office of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs serves as the coordinator and substantive editor of the Financing for Sustainable Development report.

The online annex of the Task Force (http://developmentfinance.un.org) comprehensively monitors progress in implementation of the Financing for Development outcomes, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and relevant means of implementation targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. It provides the complete evidence base for the Task Force's annual report on progress in the seven action areas of the Addis Agenda (chapters III.A–III.G). The report is by necessity more concise and selective and should thus be read in conjunction with the online annex.

The online annex also covers several key cross-cutting initiatives that build on the synergies of the Sustainable Development Goals:

- Delivering social protection and essential public services
- Ending hunger and malnutrition
- Closing the infrastructure gap
- Promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization
- Generating full and productive employment for all
- Protecting ecosystems
- Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies
- Gender equality
- Investing in children and youth
- Addressing the diverse needs and challenges faced by countries in special situations
- Global partnership

Inquiries about the Task Force or its report and online annex can be sent to:

Financing for Sustainable Development Office
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
2 United Nations Plaza (DC2- 2170)
New York, N.Y. 10017
United States of America
+1-212-963-6518

developmentfinance@un.org

http://developmentfinance.un.org

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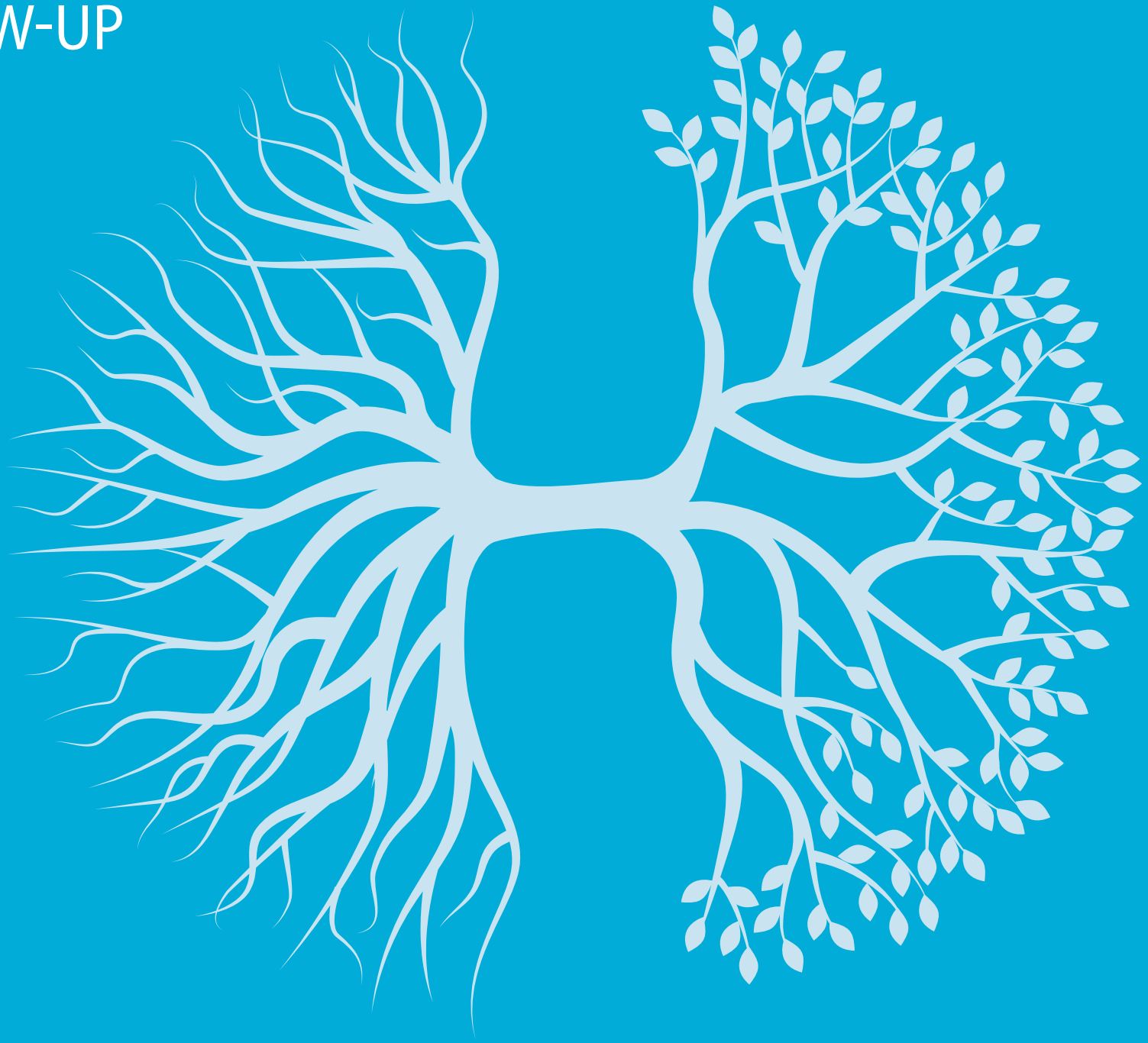
DATA, MONITORING AND FOLLOW-UP



Chapter IV

Data, monitoring and follow-up

1. Key messages and recommendations

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the commitment to leave no one behind requires the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of an unprecedented amount of data, including disaggregated data, for effective policy design and for monitoring and evaluation of progress. *To capture data on all population groups, including the most vulnerable, Governments should further strengthen traditional data sources, such as surveys and administrative records, while also embracing new sources of data and continuing to strengthen gender data.*

The signatories of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda agreed to provide international cooperation, including through technical and financial support, to further strengthen the capacity of national statistical offices and national statistical systems. Given the increased need for disaggregated data, as well as the opportunities and challenges stemming from non-traditional data sources, *providers should step up their support for developing countries' statistical systems through increased capacity-building. A doubling of funds will be needed to operationalize the six priority areas of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data.*

National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) provide an overall vision for the development of national statistical systems and addressing issues related to the integration and use of data from different sources, as well as statistical capacity development. *To ensure alignment with national priorities, statistical strategies should be closely linked to national sustainable development strategies and incorporated into integrated financing frameworks.*

Big data presents an opportunity to complement traditional sources of statistical information to assess progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as to improve targeting of policy interventions; but it also presents new risks and challenges. *The international community should work to develop technical standards that adequately address data access, privacy and data security concerns, while continuing to follow existing statistical quality standards.*

Continuing efforts are under way to improve the collection and dissemination of data on the financial sector and on financial vulnerabilities. As part of the second phase of the Group of Twenty (G20) Data Gaps Initiative (DGI), progress was achieved regarding the monitoring of shadow banking, reporting of data on global systemically important banks, and improved coverage, timeliness and periodicity of sectoral accounts. *It will be important to secure adequate resources to support the necessary infrastructure for data access and sharing, and to ensure future maintenance of newly created DGI datasets.*

2. Big data for the Sustainable Development Goals

2.1 The role of big data in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Big data is emerging as an important factor that can contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in a variety of ways (figure 1). It creates opportunities to offer and provide services that can dramatically add to the productivity of work and well-being of people. Big data can support applications in the retail sectors by improving targeted marketing and inventory management, as well as in the banking and insurance industries through improved risk assessment tools, and in many other sectors. Geospatial information management is assisting in the provision of transportation services and is essential for the development of self-driving cars.

As discussed in this report, big data can also improve the enforcement of tax collection; promote financial inclusion through financial technology applications; and help monitor and incentivize the adherence to environmental, social and governance standards in capital markets.

Big data can also help improve the monitoring of SDG implementation. When properly utilized and integrated into larger data and statistical systems, big data can help improve the timeliness, coverage and granularity of data to assess progress at a disaggregated level, which is especially relevant for the commitment to leave no one behind.

In addition, big data can support SDG implementation by strengthening evidence-based policymaking and improve response times by providing timely and disaggregated information. By expanding statistical coverage of vulnerable or marginalized groups, big data can help develop targeted policies to ensure that, indeed, no one is left behind.

The generation and use of big data also poses a number of important challenges. From a statistical point of view, challenges include adherence to statistical quality criteria, such as representativeness, validity, accuracy, consistency of measurement and sustainability of the data source. Efforts are needed to transform big data into accurate, coherent and comparable statistics, including integration with and cross-validation from established statistical sources such as survey data. Developing countries face particular challenges in this context, as they often lack the necessary infrastructure, statistical capacities or the technological skills to benefit from innovative sources of data.

Big data also poses challenges in terms of privacy, data security, ownership, access and inequality, including the potential amplification of existing biases through algorithms. In recent years, these issues have received increased attention amid the exponential growth of the generation and use of personal data and the increased market power of a few large private technology companies, in addition to several prominent cases of data security breaches.

To realize the opportunities of big data for sustainable development while mitigating the associated risks, countries have begun to develop national digital strategies and adjust legislation and regulatory standards. Due to the cross-border nature of the generation and use of big data, the international community can facilitate global norms and standard-setting in legal, technical, privacy, geospatial and statistical realms,[1] as well as regarding the measurement and effective taxation of gains from the use of data (see chapter III.A).

Progress in the establishment of global standards has been achieved in the area of geospatial information, with the adoption of the five guiding principles of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework in 2016[2] and an Integrated Geospatial Information Framework in 2018.[3] Work is also ongoing on standards for open data and data interoperability. However, global consensus has remained elusive on the governance of big data, including in the areas of privacy and data security, as well as on digital taxation. The European Union agreed in 2018 on legislation to safeguard the processing and movement of its citizens' personal data—the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)—although there is currently no agreement at the global level. Efforts have been launched by different actors to work towards an international consensus on the use of data, including as part of a broader effort by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to develop common standards for the use of artificial intelligence. More recently, data governance has been identified as one of the main themes for the Japanese Presidency of the G20, to be discussed at the Leaders' Summit in June 2019 in Osaka. However, the global implications of these issues warrant wider and inclusive discussions.

2.2 Big data for Sustainable Development Goals initiatives

A number of multilateral initiatives have been established over the past decade to support countries in the use of big data for sustainable development. The United Nations Global Pulse works to promote awareness of the opportunities big data presents for sustainable development and humanitarian action. It implements data innovation programmes to provide the United Nations and development partners with access to the data, tools and expertise required to discover new uses of big data for development. Global Pulse also contributes to the development of regulatory frameworks and technical standards to address data sharing and privacy protection challenges.[4]

The United Nations Global Working Group (GWG) on Big Data for Official Statistics was established by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2014.[5] Over the last four years, it has actively engaged to make big data, corresponding services and innovative applications accessible, and to harness their use in research and capacity-building for statistical production processes. The group has active task teams on the use of satellite imagery data, mobile phone data, social media data and scanner data. For example, the GWG task team on mobile phone data is developing methodologies that can facilitate the monitoring of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, relevant for the monitoring of SDG targets 8.8 and 10.7. In conjunction with this, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs supports countries in improving their capacity in the collection and dissemination of migrant statistics; for example, it is assisting the statistical office in Georgia in using new data sources and technologies by partnering with the national mobile network regulator.

The GWG is also developing catalogues and libraries for data, metadata, methods, partners and learning on a United Nations Global Platform.[6] It hosts a global catalogue of big data projects relevant to the production of official statistics and SDG indicators, and other types of statistics.[7] The GWG also established a Privacy Preserv-

Figure 1
Big data and the SDGs

How data science and analytics can contribute to sustainable development

1 NO POVERTY
Spending patterns on mobile phone services can provide proxy indicators of income levels

2 ZERO HUNGER
Crowd sourcing or tracking of food prices listed online can help monitor food security in near real-time

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
Mapping the movement of mobile phone users can help predict the spread of infectious diseases

4 QUALITY EDUCATION
Citizen reporting can reveal reasons for student drop-out rates

5 GENDER EQUALITY
Analysis of financial transactions can reveal the spending patterns and different impacts of economic shocks on men and women

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
Sensors connected to water pumps can track access to clean water

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
Smart metering allows utility companies to increase or restrict the flow of electricity, gas or water to reduce waste and ensure adequate supply at peak periods

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
Patterns in global postal traffic can provide indicators such as economic growth, remittances, trade and GDP

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
Data from GPS devices can be used for traffic control and to improve public transport

10 REDUCED INEQUALITY
Speech-to-text analytics on local radio content can reveal discrimination concerns and support policy response

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
Satellite remote sensing can track encroachment on public land or spaces such as parks and forests

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
Online search patterns or e-commerce transactions can reveal the pace of transition to energy efficient products

13 CLIMATE ACTION
Combining satellite imagery, crowd-sourced witness accounts and open data can help track deforestation

14 LIFE BELOW WATER
Maritime vessel tracking data can reveal illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing activities

15 LIFE ON LAND
Social media monitoring can support disaster management with real-time information on victim location, effects and strength of forest fires or haze

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
Sentiment analysis of social media can reveal public opinion on effective governance, public service delivery or human rights

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
Partnerships to enable the combining of statistics, mobile and internet data can provide a better and real time understanding of today's hyper-connected world

Source: United Nations Global Pulse.

ing Techniques task team in 2018 to develop and propose principles, policies and open standards for encryption of data on the platform, to reduce the risks associated with handling proprietary and sensitive information, and assure data privacy and confidentiality.

The United Nations World Data Forum (UNWDF) brings together different data communities of producers and users, to collaborate on and launch innovative data solutions and share experiences for data innovation, advocacy and technology transfer. The second UNWDF, held in Dubai in October 2018, launched the Data Interoperability Guide, which identifies steps to help countries and development partners integrate data from multiple sources for better monitoring and policymaking to achieve the 2030 Agenda.[8]

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Statistics Department started to investigate the potential and challenges of big data for macroeconomic and financial statistics in 2016, laying the groundwork for a structured discussion within and outside the IMF.[9] In 2018, the IMF launched a pilot project to support Indonesian authorities in using scanner data to develop high-frequency indicators of private consumption and consumer prices.

The World Bank has stepped up efforts to use big data for applications in development operations. As of 2017, over 60 big data projects were under implementation, using measurements from satellite, mobile phone and social media sources.[10] For example, in Malaysia and several other countries, the World Bank is piloting a method to use news and social media to construct forecasts and leading indicators of growth and labour market conditions.[11] The World Bank also launched a Data Collaboratives initiative to access and use private sector data towards reaching development goals.

Many other pilot projects are being conducted to demonstrate the effectiveness and advantages of integrating new data sources into the production of official statistics. Most progress has been made in the use of satellite data for agriculture and environment indicators. For example, satellite data are used to measure changes in water-related ecosystems over time. The United Nations Environment Programme and the European Commission Joint Research Centre developed the Global Surface Water Explorer application, which provides free and open access to national, basin and sub-basin aggregated data on water extent.[12] Statistics Canada has successfully estimated crop yields using satellite data, and shared its satellite data and calculation methods with several African countries. Similarly, the national statistical office of Colombia runs pilot projects to estimate the yield of cereal crops, using the results of satellite image processing.[13] Gradually, crop yield surveys could be replaced by yield estimates based on satellite data. The European Commission Joint Research Centre developed the Global Human Settlement Layer, which provides free and open access to detailed built-up and population statistics and the rural/urban divide.[14]

To move beyond the pilot stage and scale up some of these applications, both technical and political challenges will have to be addressed. Multilateral efforts could help agree on a set of common standards at the global level.

3. Progress in strengthening data and statistical systems

Traditional data sources and statistics remain critical, as they continue to provide much-needed reliable information for policy-making and monitoring of SDG achievement, across a multitude of indicators compiled from traditional and new data sources. Progress has been made in the further development of SDG indicators, as well as in gender statistics and financial statistics, but there are still gaps in the production and usage of data. Additional funding is needed to further strengthen statistical systems and capacities.

3.1 Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals indicator framework, the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, and other initiatives

Throughout 2018, the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) continued its work for the implementation of the global indicator framework for the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It reviewed and agreed on the methodology of 25 indicators,[15] making them available for global monitoring; developed criteria on data flows; discussed data disaggregation; and organized work on interlinkages, statistical data and metadata exchange and geospatial information. It also started the preparations for the first comprehensive review of the global indicator framework in 2020.

The Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data was launched in 2017 and welcomed by the General Assembly in its resolution on the work of the United Nations Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[16] It provides the framework for discussion, planning, implementation and evaluation of statistical capacity-building for the 2030 Agenda. It was born out of the realization that effective planning, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda requires the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of an unprecedented amount of data and statistics at the local, national, regional and global levels, by multiple stakeholders. To effectively use more disaggregated data for policy formulation, it is important to link national strategies for the development of statistics to national development plans.

Initiatives are also being implemented at the regional level. For example, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is supporting countries through the Every Policy is Connected initiative, a tool for facilitating a dialogue between

policymakers and data producers. Two key outcomes of this initiative are a national sustainable development indicator set and recommendations for policymakers. The tool enhances user-producer dialogues, sustainable user-producer partnerships, and efficient budget allocations for the integration of inclusive policies and data.

The Praia Group on Governance Statistics aims to contribute to the development of international standards on governance statistics (supporting the development of indicators for the targets of SDG 16). Work is currently ongoing on a handbook towards this aim, to be released in early 2020.

Box 1

Capacity-building for education statistics

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) engages with national statistical systems to provide statistical capacity development support, including on the definition of a National Strategy for the Development of Education Statistics to improve national education data.

In this context, UIS has been in discussions to engage in a collaboration with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) regarding the linkage between National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and sectoral statistical strategies. This has been the basis for the development of a new project carried out to design and implement SDG 4 pilot monitoring initiatives in low and lower-middle income countries within the UNESCO Capacity Development for Education (CapED) Programme.[a] The first component of the pilot initiative, which reviewed national plans and policies in light of SDG 4 commitments, was completed in 2017. The second component, which is ongoing, focuses on strengthening national capacities to improve monitoring of progress towards SDG 4.

Source: The description of CapED was adapted from: Montoya, Silvia, and Jordan Naidoo, "Moving Up a Gear: The CapED Initiative" (UNESCO Institute for Statistics Blog, 2 August).

a The eleven countries supported by the UIS as part of CapED are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal and Senegal. Bangladesh was initially not among the ten pilot countries for CapED but joined later. All eleven countries are also partner countries of the Global Partnership for Education.

3.2 Funding for statistical systems and capacities

The strengthening of statistical systems and capacities remains a challenge in many countries, as well as the financing for these efforts. The 2018 Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS), produced by PARIS21, noted that countries received $623 million of support from multilateral and bilateral donors for all areas of statistics in 2016. This represents a small increase over the previous year, but remains below peak commitments earlier in the decade (figure 2) and well below the amounts required to implement the Cape Town Global Action Plan.

A recent study on financing challenges for developing statistical systems estimates the annual funding gap for operationalizing the six priority areas of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data to be between $100 million (low ambition scenario) and $700 million (high ambition scenario). To close this gap, the study calls for doubling the current share of official development assistance (ODA) allocated to statistics, from 0.33 per cent to 0.7 per cent of total ODA from all donors. Some of the identified challenges include poor awareness of the importance of statistics by donors and recipients, the need for long-term sustainability of financing for statistics, insufficient alignment of programming with country systems and strategies, and insufficient emphasis on statistical system capacity-building.[17] It is often difficult for both donors and policymakers to justify spending on statistical systems over more pressing needs, such as health and social needs. Yet, strengthened data is needed to make informed decisions in terms of spending allocation in all of these other areas, such as through integrated financing frameworks.

To address this financing gap, the 2018 Dubai Declaration of the United Nations World Data Forum called for the establishment of an innovative funding mechanism—open to all stakeholders under United Nations membership oversight—that would be able to respond in a fast and efficient manner to the priorities of national data and statistical systems. Such a facility could initially use small grants catalytically, and then bring programmes to scale through additional sums from donors—including from private philanthropies—and domestic government resources. The facility could learn from experiences with similar structures in other areas, such as global health. For example, one lesson from the health field was that the mechanism went beyond financing and became a global hub for knowledge sharing on implementing national health policies.

3.3 Gender statistics

While existing gender statistics are still far from satisfactory, some progress has been achieved in terms of evidence on the status of women compared to men. Concepts have been improved and data collection methods innovated, resulting in fewer data gaps on critical gender concerns.[18] Nonetheless, gaps still exist in terms of data availability,[19] quality, comparability and timeliness of gender data, mainly due to a lack of national capacity in producing and using gender statistics, insufficient coordination among data producers at the country level and a lack of financial resources.[20]

UN Women's Making Every Woman and Girl Count programme seeks to transform the creation, use and dissemination of gender statistics. It currently supports countries by (i) promoting a supportive policy environment to prioritize gender data and effective monitoring of the SDGs; (ii) improving the regular production of gender statistics, through technical capacity-building for national statistical systems and financial support for improved data collection; and (iii) improving access to data to inform policy advocacy.

Other positive developments include ongoing work on environment and gender, including a new framework on disaster statistics and its intersection with gender, and the updated international classification of status in employment, adopted by the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2018. It covers all forms of work, paid and unpaid, and additional details about types of employment, including those dominated by women. Emerging statistical issues, such as measuring gender identity and sexual orientation and the nexus between gender and migration, are building momentum within the statistical community.[21]

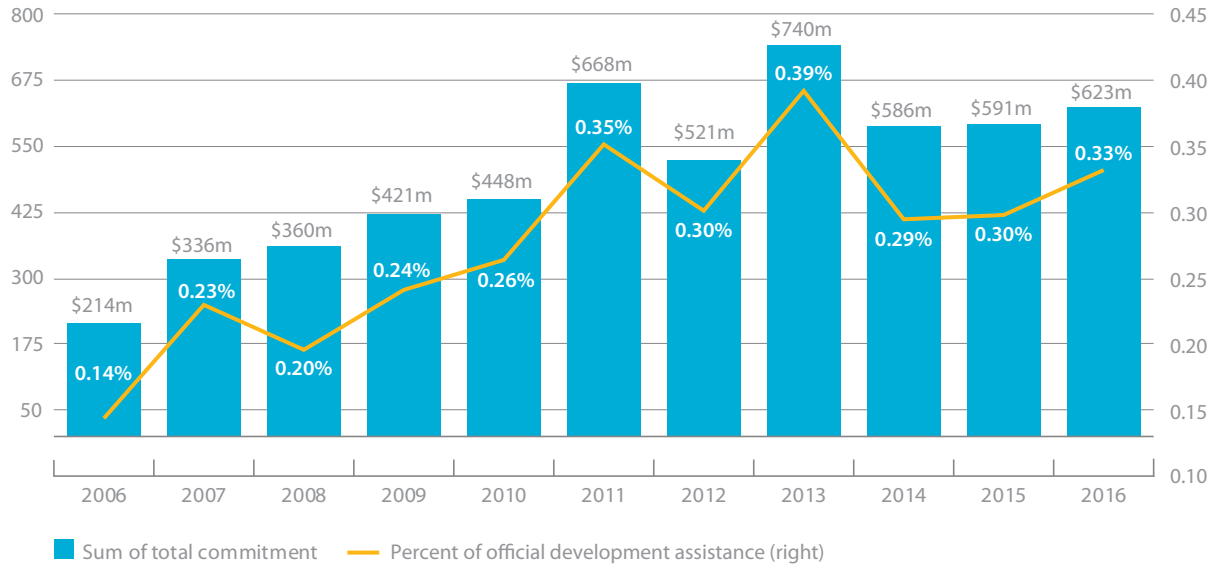
3.4 Monitoring the financial sector

The second phase of the G20 Data Gaps Initiative (DGI) was launched in 2015, with the main objective of implementing the regular collection and dissemination of reliable and timely financial sector statistics for policy use. While maintaining continuity with the recommendations from the first phase, the second phase also sets more specific objectives for the compilation and dissemination of minimum common datasets in three areas: (i) monitoring risk in the financial sector; (ii) vulnerabilities, interconnections and spillovers; and (iii) data sharing and communication of official statistics. The IMF and the secretariat of the Financial Stability Board, in close cooperation with the Inter-Agency Group on Economic and Financial Statistics and participating economies, monitor and report progress on an annual basis. Completion is envisaged for 2021.[22]

During 2018, important progress was achieved in the implementation of the DGI recommendations, including in the monitoring of shadow banking, reporting of data on global systemically important banks, and improved coverage, timeliness, and periodicity of sectoral accounts. Nonetheless, challenges persist as adequate financial, skill and information technology resources must be mobilized to ensure appropriate infrastructure for data access and data sharing, and the proper maintenance of new datasets, among others. To facilitate further progress, the work programme for 2019 includes three thematic workshops, on commercial property price indices (as part of the International Conference on Real Estate Statistics), sectoral accounts, and government finance and debt statistics.[23]

The DGI has important synergies with other global initiatives, such as public debt transparency, the implementation of the Legal Entity Identifier system (see chapter III.F), and big data for policymaking. Accurate and comprehensive debt data and strengthened transparency are important for sound borrowing and lending practices.[24] There are several initiatives to improve debt data, including the IMF Data for Decision Fund and the World Bank initiative on collecting domestic debt data on an instrument-by-instrument basis, and the Debt Data Quality Assessment Methodology, a joint initiative by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Commonwealth Secretariat (see chapter III.E).

Figure 2
Aid to statistics: commitments, 2006–2016
(Millions of United States dollars and percentage of ODA)



Source: PARIS21, "Partner report on support to statistics" (Paris, 2018).

Endnotes

1 See for example the recommendations of the Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, as laid out in its report "A World that counts – mobilising the data revolution for sustainable development" in 2014.
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3 United Nations, *What happens where: a new integrated geospatial information framework* (New York, 2018).
4 See the website of United Nations Global Pulse. Available at https://www.unglobalpulse.org.
5 United Nations Global Pulse is among the members of the United Nations Global Working Group (GWG) on Big Data for Official Statistics. For more information on GWG, see the website of the UN Global Working Group on Big Data. Available at https://unstats.un.org/bigdata.
6 United Nations, document E/CN.3/2018/8.
7 See the website of the Big Data Project Inventory. Available at https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/inventory.
8 Data Interoperability Guide. Available at https://unstats.un.org/wiki/display/InteropGuide/home.
9 The findings were publicized in a staff discussion note which identified data quality concerns, difficulties in accessing data, and new required skills and technologies as challenges. See Cornelia Hammer and others, "Big Data: Potential, Challenges and Statistical Implications", IMF Staff Discussion Notes SDN/17/06 (Washington, D.C., International Monetary Fund, 2017).
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15 See Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators by the IAEG-SDGs. Available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification.
16 United Nations, document A/RES/71/313.
17 PARIS21, "Financing challenges for developing statistical systems: A review of financing options", PARIS21 Discussion paper No. 14 (Paris, 2019).
18 Recent efforts to address these challenges include the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) project by the United Nations Statistics Division and UN Women, the STEM and gender Advancement (SAGA) project by UNESCO-UIS and more recently Data2X, Equal Measures 2030, UN Women's Making Every Woman and Girl Count flagship programme initiative, the World Bank LSMS survey methods programme, and the Women's Work and Employment partnership (Data2X, ILO, FAO, and World Bank).
19 According to a 2017 assessment, data were available for global monitoring for only half of the approximately 80 global Sustainable Development Goals indicators identified as potentially useful for gender analysis, with data disaggregated by sex available for fewer than a quarter of them. See United Nations, document E/CN.3/2017/11.
20 A 2012 survey on national gender statistics programmes conducted by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and United Nations regional commissions, revealed that out of 126 countries that replied, only 13 per cent had a "dedicated gender statistics budget".
21 See the webpage of the 7th Global Forum on Gender Statistics. Available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/meetings/2018/tokyo-globalforum-genderstat.
22 Economies participating in the second phase of the Data Gaps Initiative (DGI) are the G20 economies and five non-G20 FSB member economies (Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Singapore, Spain and Switzerland). Member agencies of the Inter-Agency Group (IAG) on Economic and Financial Statistics are the Bank for International Settlements, European Central Bank, Eurostat, International Monetary Fund (Chair), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations and the World Bank. The Financial Stability Board (FSB) participates in the IAG meetings.
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