



# Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2022

Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development

## *Bridging the Finance Divide*



United Nations

Report of the Inter-agency Task Force  
on Financing for Development

# Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2022



This report is a joint product of the members of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development. 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>) provides additional data and analysis on 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.

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# Data, monitoring and follow-up

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## Chapter IV



# Data, monitoring and follow-up

## 1. Key messages and recommendations

**The COVID-19 crisis has emphasized the value of robust and timely data, providing a stark reminder of the prevailing divide in statistical capacity between developed and developing countries.** The pandemic caused a sudden spike in demand for timely and accurate data on population, health and the economy across the globe, but many national data systems, particularly in poorer countries, were not prepared to address unexpected data needs and withstand shocks. This highlighted the global data inequalities that prevailed before the pandemic, with least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS) having less data capacity and scoring much lower than developed countries against statistical performance indicators.

**Despite the importance of data and statistics for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as for policymaking, data and statistical systems have long been underfunded, while costs and demands have risen.** Current donor commitments and support for data and statistics are a fraction of actual needs. The financing landscape has also become more diffuse, fragmented and complex. In response, three new, global instruments—the Global Data Facility (GDF), the Bern Network Clearing House for Development Data, and the Complex Risk Analytics Fund (CRAF'd)—were launched in 2021 to strengthen coordination and mobilize finance for data and statistics. It is critical that these initiatives benefit from broad participation and are adequately resourced.

### The international community should:

- Increase the share of official development assistance (ODA) for data and statistics, especially to strengthen the national statistical systems of LDCs and SIDS, as well as support the development of national data strategies;
- Enhance coordination and greater integration of efforts, including through the new global funds and instruments (GDF, Bern Network Clearing House and CRAF'd); and

- Ensure that country ownership and development effectiveness principles are at the centre of increased efforts and investments.

### A national data strategy in the context of an integrated national financing framework (INFF) can help to implement an integrated data system to realize the full value of data for achieving national sustainable development strategies.

The data ecosystem, if properly harnessed, can foster sustainable development by: (i) helping Governments and international organizations with evidence-based policymaking, (ii) enabling individuals, civil society and academia to hold policymakers accountable, and (iii) transforming the private sector through data-driven innovations and accountability. Better data and information also helps to make markets more efficient. Improving data accessibility and interoperability can foster an integrated system, while better data literacy can enhance participation in the system. However, an integrated national data system that goes beyond official statistics to encompass the data produced, exchanged and used by all participants requires appropriate infrastructure policies, laws and regulations, economic policies and institutions, as well as a rights-based perspective to effectively and safely govern data and mitigate the risk of misuse. Governments need a national data strategy to implement an integrated national data system that considers these requirements. This can be done in the context of an INFF, which can help to ensure that there is sufficient funding for the national data strategy as well as benefit from an integrated data system.

### Governments should:

- Develop a national data strategy in accordance with their level of data maturity, which outlines responsibilities and institutional arrangements to enhance effective data use throughout government, the private sector and civil society, including through improved data access and data integration initiatives to improve data literacy;

- Establish data stewards to promote issues of data access, interoperability and governance; and
- Prioritize domestic resources for data and statistics and clearly convey priorities for external support to implement the data strategy—an INFF can help.

**Progress continues to be made on improving data frameworks, measurements and collection despite some challenges.** There are only a few remaining gaps in the global SDG indicator framework where global reporting has not yet started. Monitoring of gender-specific SDG indicators has improved but more remains to be done, while the United Nations Statistical Commission has adopted a new indicator for SDG Target 17.3 to “mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources”, underpinned by an initial framework for the measurement of South-South cooperation. However, significant data gaps remain in terms of SDG reporting. On monitoring the economic and financial sector, a new international cooperation initiative to succeed the Data Gaps Initiative (DGI) is under development.

**The pandemic and climate crises have revived discussions on measures of sustainable development beyond gross domestic product (GDP).** The upcoming update of the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA), the international standard for measuring GDP, will consider issues of well-being and sustainability, as well as the nexus of SNA and the System of Environmental Economic Accounts (SEEA) that measures the contribution of the environment to the economy and the impact of the economy on the environment. To complement GDP as a criterion for access to concessional finance (see chapter III.C), development of a multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) is under way.

#### All stakeholders should:

- Work together to close the SDG data gaps, including advancing gender statistics and measuring the new indicator on development support;
- Support the implementation of the SEEA, update of the SNA and development of an MVI as well as the use of measures that extend beyond GDP; and
- Call on the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development to map the use and effectiveness of GDP metrics in the analysis of sustainable development and climate change, including for allocation of finance.

This chapter discusses the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on statistical systems and highlights the importance of harnessing the data ecosystem to improve data accessibility and innovation. It also assesses global data inequalities and the need to strengthen national systems. Finally, it provides an update on data frameworks, measurements and collection.

## 2. The impact of COVID-19

**The COVID-19 crisis has widened data gaps and deepened challenges.** Nearly two years into the pandemic, the impact on national statistical offices (NSOs) is better understood. Many national data systems were not built to withstand shocks and address unexpected data demands, particularly in poorer countries. The fourth round of the United Nations-World Bank survey on the impact of COVID-19 (see box IV.1) highlighted large disparities in statistical capacities across countries, with NSOs in two thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries lacking sufficient

resources to meet the demands for pandemic-related data.<sup>1</sup> Two thirds of countries in Africa were forced to postpone their censuses due to delays, interruptions and diversion of funds.<sup>2</sup> NSOs also reported that they were less optimistic in May 2021 than they were in October 2020.<sup>3</sup>

#### Data-driven analytics proved critical for the pandemic response.

The COVID-19 crisis expedited the adoption of innovative approaches to respond to increased data needs for tracking the impact of the pandemic and for designing and implementing policies. Many NSOs were quick to adopt alternative data sources and modes of data collection to meet pressing data demands, turning to telephone or web surveys instead of face-to-face interviews or by increasing the use of alternative data sources such as administrative and geospatial data. Initiatives by development partners also helped with the COVID-19 response (see box IV.1). For example, the World Health Organization (WHO) leveraged digital solutions and technology partners to establish the World Health Data Hub, which will provide easy access to view and download health data using powerful visualization to better understand trends, patterns and connections. Also, UN Women and partners developed models to forecast the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on extreme poverty by sex and age, demonstrating the pandemic’s differential and disproportionate impact on women.<sup>4</sup>

## 3. Accessibility and innovation

#### The data ecosystem, if properly harnessed, can foster sustainable development through multiple pathways.

First, Governments use data to design policies and understand their impact, which can help to achieve sustainable development.<sup>5</sup> Without strong data systems, the potential for data is unrealized. International organizations can help developing countries to strengthen national statistical systems (see section 4) and are also important collectors and disseminators of data. Together, Governments and international organizations play a central role in the data ecosystem (figure IV.1). Second, making data widely available enables individuals, civil society and academia to hold Governments and international organizations accountable for policy choices. They are also a source of data. For example, civil society and academia can create data by collecting surveys or crowdsourcing information from individuals. Third, data generated by the private sector has the potential to spur development. Use of data in the production process is transforming sectors, such as payments systems (see chapter III.G), while innovations, such as big data and machine-learning algorithms, are creating significant economic value by enhancing data-driven decision-making and reducing transaction costs. Better data and information improves market efficiency, lowering the costs of borrowing (see chapter II). Finally, data reuse, sharing and repurposing is key to realizing its value. This can occur between actors within each of the pathways (two-way arrows in figure IV.1). However, the use, reuse and repurposing of data simultaneously poses considerable risks, which can manifest through any of these pathways (figure IV.1). For example, Governments can abuse citizens’ data for political ends. Individuals and organized groups can inflict considerable harm through cybercrime, for instance on the dark net. Heavy market concentration in data-driven platform businesses (e-commerce, search engines, social media) can also abuse consumers’ data, while algorithms and machine learning can widen inequality through embedded discriminatory assumptions.<sup>6</sup> These risks must be managed to avoid an adverse impact on development. The High-Level Group on Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for

## Box IV.1

### Selected initiatives to support the COVID-19 response

Several initiatives have been established to support the COVID-19 response, including:

- **Monitoring the State of Statistical Operations Under COVID-19 Surveys:** The United Nations Statistics Division and the World Bank's Development Data Group, in coordination with the five United Nations Regional Commissions, launched a global online survey to understand and monitor the effects of the pandemic on NSOs, completing four rounds of the survey;<sup>a</sup>
- **COVID-19 Household Impact Survey:** The World Bank undertook high-frequency mobile phone surveys of households to assess the impact of COVID-19;
- **COVID-19 Business Impact Survey:** At the onset of the pandemic, the International Trade Centre launched a global online survey to assess the economic impact of the pandemic on businesses.
- **COVID-19 Impact on Manufacturing Firms:** The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) implemented online firm-level surveys on the impact of the pandemic on manufacturing firms;<sup>b</sup>
- **COVID-19 Global Education Observatory/Education Response portals:** UNESCO<sup>c</sup> provides data and information on school closures, drawing on surveys conducted jointly with the World Bank, UNICEF<sup>d</sup> and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The portals provide country dashboards, statistical resources and guidance on assessing the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector;
- **World Health Data Hub:** The Hub will transform data ingestion from multiple sources, provide a secure environment for country

- consultation, leverage the latest in predictive analytics and data visualization and support WHO and partners' commitment to help countries build data capacity;
- **Global Census Tracker Dashboard:** provides real-time data on censuses, including the impact of COVID-19;
- **COVID-19 Population Vulnerability Dashboard:** provides information on populations at risk to target preparedness and response;
- **Development Data Partnership:** a new consortium founded by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Inter-American Development Bank to facilitate collaboration between private sector data partners (including Google, Facebook, LinkedIn and Mapbox) and development partners to enable access to and use of private sector data and analytics for public goods. It supports more than 200 projects across 13 SDGs, many of which helped with the COVID-19 response. One project, for example, examined the economic impact of COVID-19 in India through daily electricity consumption and night-time light intensity. Another project traced the successive waves of the COVID-19 outbreak in Viet Nam using Facebook mobility data.

**Source:** UN/DESA.

**a** See Haishan, Fu, and Stefan Schweinfest. 2020. "COVID-19 Widens Gulf of Global Data Inequality, While National Statistical Offices Step up to Meet New Data Demands". World Bank Blogs. 5 June 2020; Calogero, Carletto, and Francesca Perucci, 2020. "Coping with the Pandemic Crisis: What Do National Statistical Offices Need the Most?" World Bank Blogs. 17 August 2020; UN/DESA and World Bank. 2020. "Monitoring the State of Statistical Operations under the COVID-19 Pandemic"; UN/DESA and World Bank. 2021. "One Year Into the Pandemic: Monitoring the State of Statistical Operations Under COVID-19". NSO Survey, June 2021.

**b** See UNIDO. 2021. *Industrial Development Report 2022: The Future of Industrialization in a Post-Pandemic World*. Vienna.

**c** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

**d** United Nations Children's Fund.

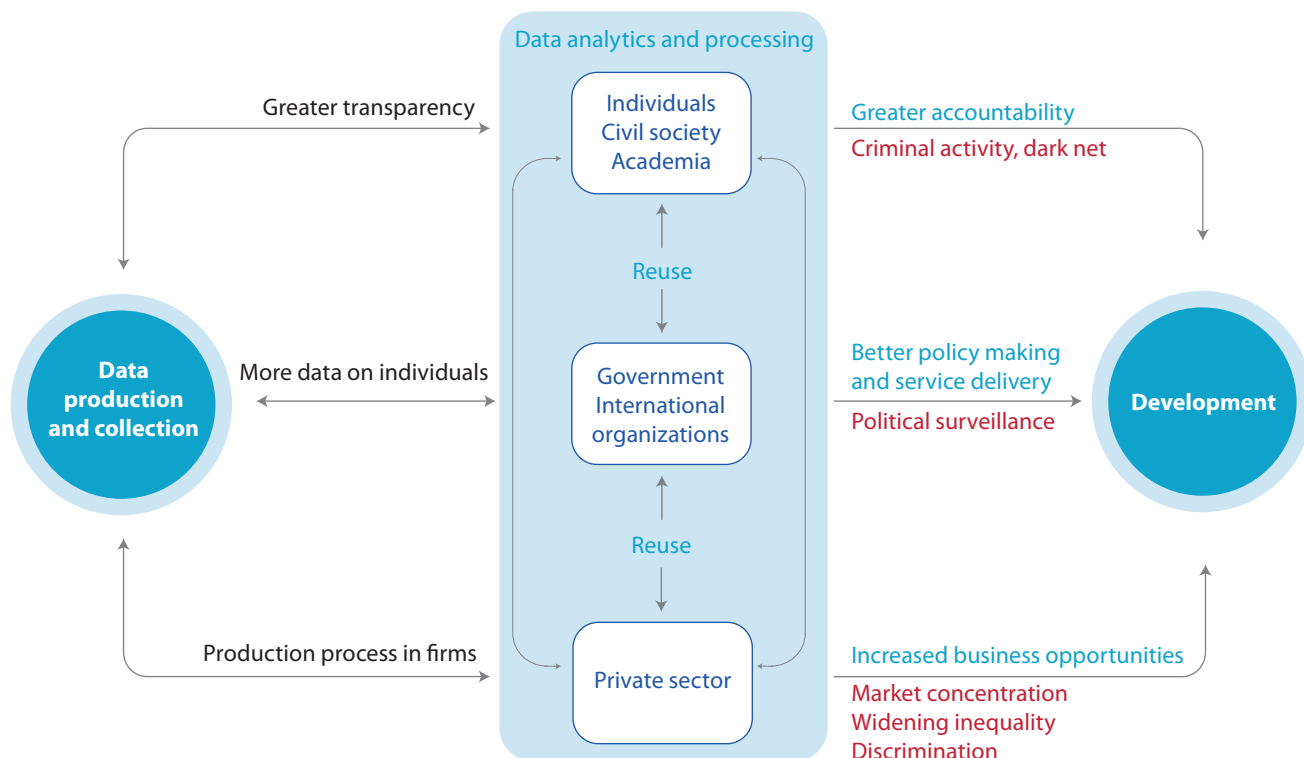
the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCC) highlighted the importance of all actors working together in the data ecosystem in the Bern Data Compact for the Decade of Action on the SDGs presented at the United Nations World Data Forum in October 2021.<sup>7</sup>

**Improving the accessibility and interoperability of data can increase its impact on development.** National data platforms or portals are a critical part of the infrastructure of official statistics to connect users and producers. However, many LDCs either lack or have poorly designed data portals. For example, one third of the countries eligible for funds from the World Bank's International Development Association do not have a data portal for official statistics.<sup>8</sup> For low-income countries (LICs) that do, only 38 per cent make data available in machine-readable formats.<sup>9</sup> When data is not machine readable, users cannot easily access and work with the data. There are, however, some initiatives looking to support countries in this area.<sup>10</sup> Fragmentation of data systems can also affect accessibility and inhibit the interoperability of data. For example, administrative data is too often siloed in different government systems and cannot be integrated and combined with other data, prohibiting its effective use for statistical purposes, monitoring and policy design.<sup>11</sup> Adhering to key principles developed in the context of SDG reporting and dissemination

platforms by the Statistical Commission can enhance data portals: having clear institutional arrangements and management; ensuring portals are fit for purpose; mobilizing internal and external resources for sustainability; and enhancing interoperability and statistical standards.<sup>12</sup> Interoperability, the ability to exchange data across many platforms, also allows for innovative uses of data as it becomes accessible to a more diverse set of users. However, phasing out legacy technical and operational systems is a significant challenge, especially in capacity-constrained countries. For these countries, prioritizing basic functions such as metadata availability over more advanced features, such as standardized interfaces or globally linked data, would be more practical.<sup>13</sup>

**Promoting open data can help to drive sustainable development.** Making official statistics and data openly available and easily accessible to the public can support sustainable development in many areas, such as improving service delivery, spurring innovation, increasing aid transparency, monitoring government budgets, uncovering gender inequalities and improving targeting policy interventions.<sup>14</sup> The value of open data has also been demonstrated in its use for the COVID-19 crisis response (see box IV.1).<sup>15</sup> However, LDCs struggle the most with making data open and need increased financial resources and capacity building to collect, publish and disseminate data more frequently.<sup>16</sup>

Figure IV.1  
Data for sustainable development ecosystem



Source: World Bank. 2021. *World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

**Innovations in repurposing and combining public intent and private intent data can inform and advance policy goals.** Private intent data—often labelled within the “big data” category due to its wide reach and scope from growing rates of mobile phone and social media usage—can overcome gaps in public intent data due to its unique features: it is always on, as the daily use of new technologies entails constant data collection; it can zoom in on individuals and locations; and it can potentially reveal less biased information about people, such as through Internet searches compared to surveys or polls.<sup>17</sup> Repurposing private intent data and combining it with public intent data can help to tackle crises and development issues. For example, many countries used mobile phone data for COVID-19 contact tracing. Mobile call detail records and remote sensing data are used to map poverty. Commercial trawlers’ automatic identification systems can be combined with satellite optical and radar imagery to detect illegal fishing activity, while country-specific searches of news articles have been used to construct a news flow index of corruption.<sup>18</sup>

**The limitations in using private intent data for development should be recognized.** Private intent data is often a by-product of the use of digital technologies so results are skewed towards those who can afford smart phones, which is the relatively wealthier share of the population, particularly in LDCs with low mobile phone and Internet penetration (see chapter III.G). At the same time, the expansion of data, with many actors collecting vast amounts of “big data”—often with limited oversight—comes with risks; for example, in contexts where there

is a lack of transparency in the data-generating process and algorithms are used to process private intent data.<sup>19</sup> Often this data is also not readily accessible or available in a format that allows its public use, and it does not have to comply with statistical standards. Moreover, there is a lack of internationally accepted standards for data use, regarding, for example, licensing, privacy and security, that increases the costs of data access and sharing. Many developing countries have limited government capacity (e.g., infrastructure and skills) to use private data and do not have the necessary data governance policies and procedures in place. Fostering data partnerships, such as the Development Data Partnership (see box IV.1), can help to enhance capacity.

**Better data literacy improves policymaking and decision-making by business and strengthens efforts to hold Governments and the private sector accountable.** Data literacy should be understood in a broad sense: understanding basic statistical and numerical concepts; understanding how to analyse, interpret and communicate data using digital tools; understanding data in decision-making; and understanding data rights and data governance. Data literacy is a prerequisite for people’s participation in the national data system.<sup>20</sup> Lack of both data literacy and demand for data, limits its effective use for public policy.<sup>21</sup> Data literacy should be promoted at all levels: investments by Governments and their development partners in strengthening the data literacy of policymakers and legislators; improving data literacy in civil society; and equipping businesses and workers with skills to use data.<sup>22</sup>



### Concrete steps for building an integrated national data system are required to realize the full value of data for development.

An integrated data system is built on an approach that is whole-of-government, multi-stakeholder and international (figure IV.2).<sup>23</sup> The scope of such a system goes beyond official statistics to encompass the data produced, exchanged and used by participants from the public and private sectors as well as civil society. It is built on the pillars of infrastructure policies, laws and regulations, and the economic policies and institutions required to effectively govern data. Building these pillars is not easy as they need to be anchored in a solid foundation of human capital, trust, funding, incentives and data demand. Trust plays a critical role in facilitating the integration of participants and their data.

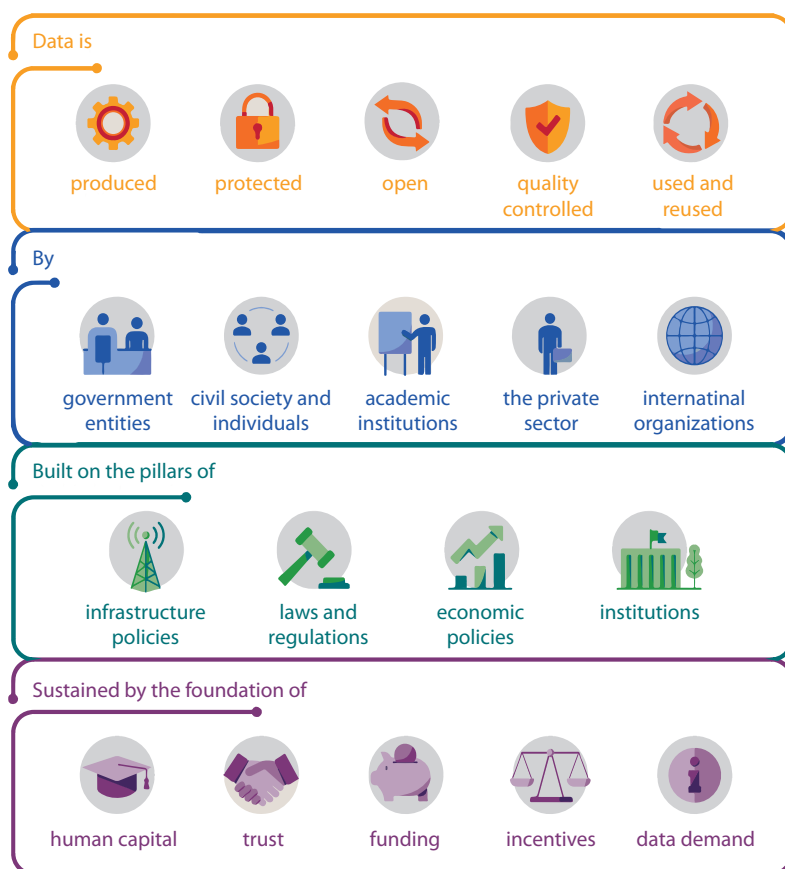
**Governments need a data strategy to implement an integrated national data system.** The steps required to implement an integrated national data system depend on a country's data maturity, as what works in one context may not work in another. At low levels of data maturity, countries should prioritize establishing the basics of a national data system (e.g., robust data protection, strengthening technical capacity) before seeking to initiate data flows (e.g., prioritizing open data), while those at advanced levels of data maturity should seek to optimize their systems (e.g., empowering NSOs). The data strategy should clearly outline responsibilities and institutional arrangements to enhance integration while

safeguarding the rights of individuals.<sup>24</sup> For example, some countries have established or are considering the establishment of data stewards to tackle issues of data access, interoperability, governance and the lack of expertise and resources for data management.<sup>25</sup> INFFs can help to ensure that there is sufficient funding for a national data strategy and will, in turn, benefit from an integrated data system as data is a key input for planning, policy, monitoring and evaluation as captured in national sustainable development strategies.

## 4. Strengthening national statistical systems

**Global data inequalities continue to persist.** According to the World Bank's Statistical Performance Indicators (SPI) index (see box IV.2),<sup>26</sup> the national statistical systems of developing countries improved prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, led by increased capacity in data services (figure IV.3). Despite progress, however, developing countries, particularly SIDS and LDCs, score much lower than developed countries overall, with SPI scores particularly weak on data sources and infrastructure. A successful statistical system is one which draws on all types of data sources relevant to the indicators that are produced, but many developing countries have

Figure IV.2  
Integrated national data system



Source: World Bank. 2021. *World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

not gone beyond the typical censuses and surveys to include administrative and geospatial data, or data generated by private firms and citizens (see section 3). Even with improved levels of investment, many developing countries lack basic functioning civil registration and vital statistics systems. There are also weaknesses in both hard (legislation, governance, standards) and soft (skills, partnerships) infrastructure, with significant financing gaps.

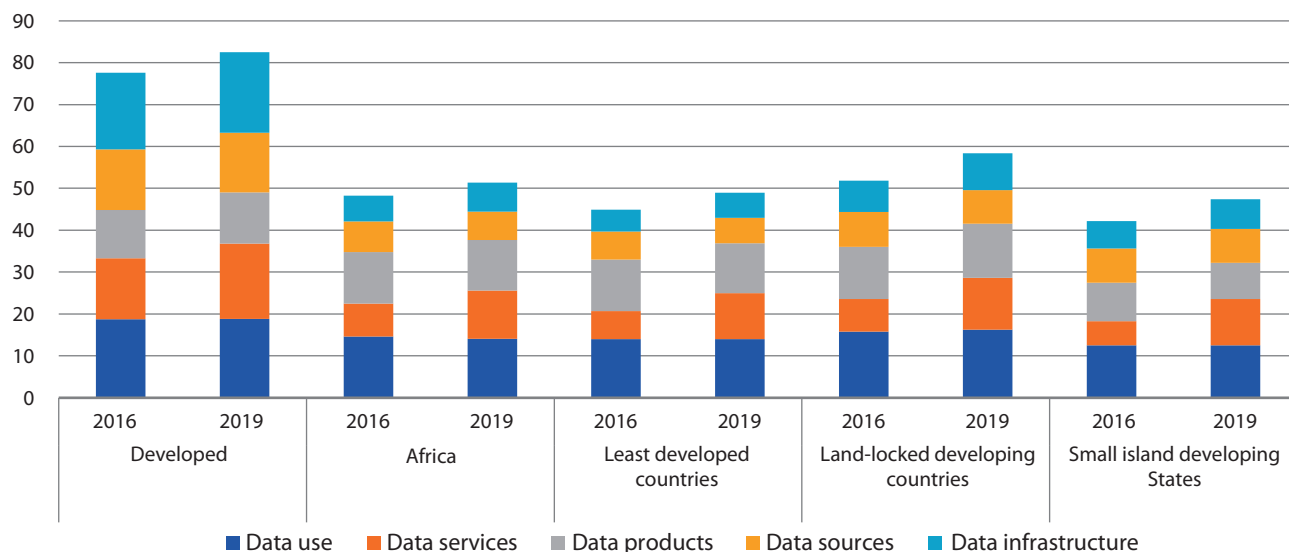
**Data and statistics programmes have long been underfunded, while costs are rising, exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis.** Global donor commitments to data and statistics have remained more or less stagnant since 2015 (figure IV.4), with ODA disbursements of \$551 million in 2019, accounting for 0.3 per cent of the total.<sup>27</sup> This pales in comparison to the estimated \$1.3 billion needed annually to implement the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data agreed in 2017.<sup>28</sup> A survey on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan also highlighted that over half of sub-Saharan African countries have experienced a decrease in funding from donors since the pandemic.<sup>29</sup> National Governments also fall short in meeting the costs for data and statistics, estimated to require \$4.3 billion worth of domestic investment annually.<sup>30</sup> The pandemic has worsened the situation. The number of countries that reported availability of government funding for national statistical plans fell sharply in 2020 compared to 2019, particularly for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, as of May 2021, four in 10 NSOs reported that data collection costs had increased since the beginning of the pandemic.<sup>32</sup>

**The financing landscape for data and statistics has become more diffuse, fragmented and complex.** Many development partners are supporting statistical capacity development, including bilateral donors, international financial institutions, United Nations agencies, private foundations and civil society organizations. They provide different types of support and target different actors within the national data ecosystem

(see section 3). This diversity raises challenges around coordination and coherence, especially for countries with low capacity to absorb different types of support and where domestic demand for data and statistics may be low,<sup>33</sup> such as in LDCs and SIDS (see chapter III.C). COVID-19 has further exposed these coordination issues. The past decade has also witnessed a shift away from providing core support to national statistical systems.<sup>34</sup> OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors increasingly invest in sectoral data and statistics rather than in general statistical capacity (figure IV.5). They also opt for project-type interventions over joint-funding mechanisms<sup>35</sup> even though four out of five DAC members believe that more systematic coordination is needed between donors and NSOs in partner countries.<sup>36</sup> Support to projects that feature data and statistics as a partial component has also increased, from 17 per cent in 2012 to 49 per cent in 2020.<sup>37</sup>

**Three key global instruments have been developed to strengthen coordination and mobilize finance for data and statistics in line with the Cape Town Global Action Plan: the World Bank’s GDF, the Bern Network Clearing House for Development Data and the CRAF’d.** In August 2021, the World Bank launched the GDF to mobilize and coordinate donor support for data and statistics at all levels.<sup>38</sup> The Facility is designed to catalyse additional financing, including International Development Association and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development loans, and enable long-term support by leveraging domestic investments in data and statistics. The GDF will be informed by country demand as well as key inputs, including the SPI. The GDF is complemented by the Bern Network Clearing House for Development Data, a new, multi-stakeholder initiative designed to help increase transparency and the efficiency of international financial support for data activities (see box IV.3). Also complementing the GDF, in October 2021, the United Nations launched the CRAF’d, a multilateral financing instrument to support a strong data ecosystem and expand shared capabilities to better anticipate, prevent

Figure IV.3  
Overall Statistical Performance Indicators scores by country group, 2016, 2019  
(Index average)



Source: World Bank Statistical Performance Indicators.

## Box IV.2 Statistical Performance Indicators

In March 2021, the World Bank launched the SPI to measure the capacity and maturity of national statistical systems and better reflect the changing global data landscape.<sup>a</sup> The SPI builds on and replaces its predecessor, the World Bank's Statistical Capacity Index (SCI),<sup>b</sup> which had been in place since 2004.

The SPI framework assesses five pillars of statistical performance: use of data, the quality of services, the coverage of topics, the sources of information, and the infrastructure and availability of resources. Underpinning these five pillars are 22 dimensions and 51 indicators, which were selected based on their relevance and data availability, after consultations with a range of country partners and global experts.<sup>c</sup>

PILLARS	DIMENSIONS				
Data Use (User Types)	Legislature	Executive	Civil Society	Academia	International Bodies
Data Services (Service Types)	Quality of Data Releases	Richness & Openness of Online Access		Effectiveness of Advisory & Analytical Services Related to Statistics	Availability & Use of Data Services
Data Products (Topics)	Social (SDG 1-6)	Economic (SDG 7-12)	Environmental (SDG 13-15)		Institution (SDG 16-17)
Data Sources	Statistical Office (Censuses & Surveys)		Administrative Data	Geospatial Data	Private Sector Data/Citizen Generated Data
Data Infrastructure	Legislation & Governance	Standards & Methods	Skills	Partnership	Finance (Domestically & From Donors)

The SPI framework aims to help countries build better statistical systems and supports the creation of data ecosystems that can develop and adapt to the requirements of Governments and citizens so that better data can support better decisions. The SPI benefits from large-scale data collection efforts by organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, Open Data Watch, PARIS21, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), WHO, UNESCO, International Household Survey Network, and the United Nations, among others.

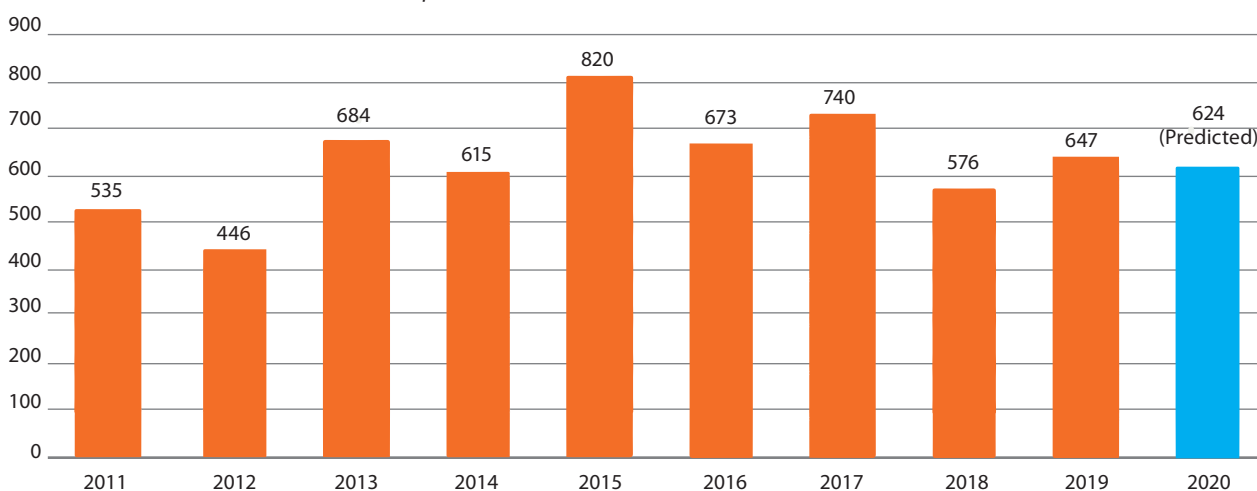
**Source:** World Bank and UN/DESA.

<sup>a</sup> Haishan, Fu et al. 2021. "The Statistical Performance Indicators: A New Tool to Measure the Performance of National Statistical Systems". World Bank Blogs. 31 March 2021.

<sup>b</sup> See World Bank. 2021. "Data on Statistical Capacity".

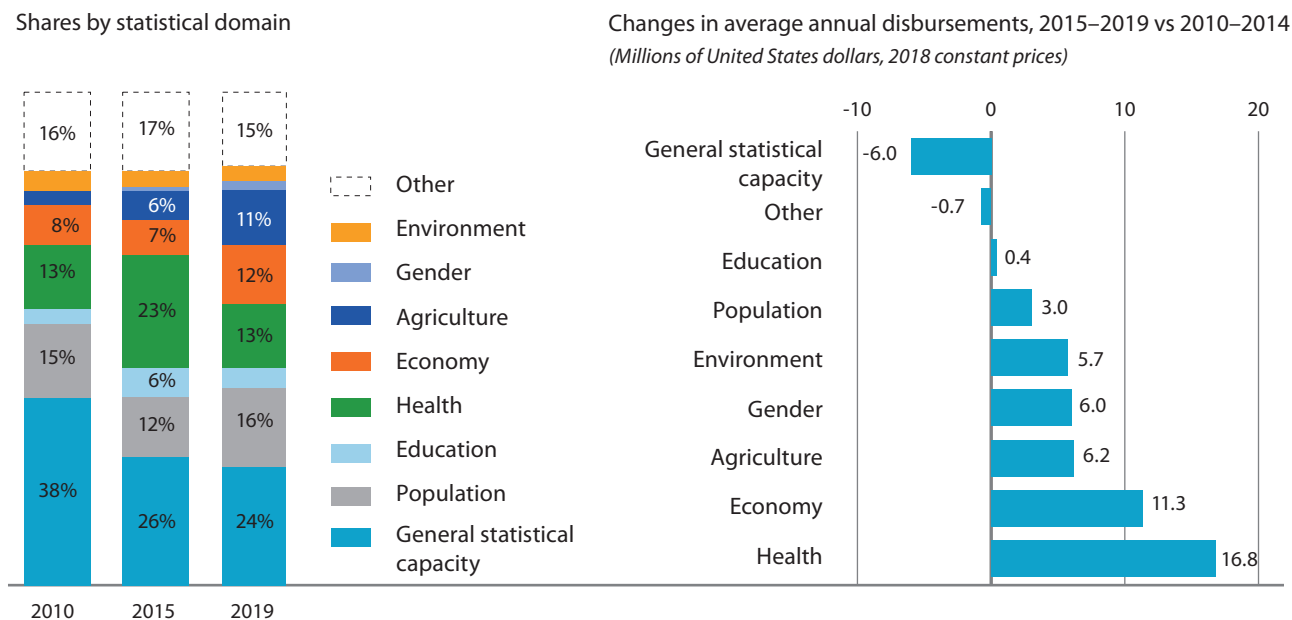
<sup>c</sup> World Bank. 2021. "Statistical Performance Indicators (SPI)".

Figure IV.4  
**Global donor commitments to data and statistics, 2011–2020**  
(Millions of United States dollars, 2019 constant prices)



**Source:** PARIS21. 2021. "The Partner Report on Support to Statistics". Paris.

Figure IV.5  
**Official development assistance by DAC members for data and statistics by sector**



Source: OECD. 2021. *Data for Development Profiles: Official Development Assistance for Data and Statistical Systems*.

and respond to complex risks in conflict- and crisis-affected settings.<sup>39</sup> CRAF'd is targeting \$15 million to \$25 million in annual investments to unlock data for anticipatory humanitarian action. Both the World Bank and United Nations have pledged that support from these instruments will be coordinated closely with existing efforts and have committed to ensuring transparency in the monitoring of results.

**Box IV.3**  
**Bern Network Clearing House for Financing Development Data**

In the lead up to the United Nations World Data Forum 2021, a multi-stakeholder community of data and statistics-focused development practitioners, technical experts and advocates formed the Bern Network on Financing Data for Development. The Network has explored key challenges in financing for data and statistics, including: (i) the fragmented and patchwork nature of support to data and statistics; (ii) the squeeze on external and domestic budgets overall; and (iii) the lack of information-sharing and matching mechanisms between donors and countries. The Network developed a Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data to help inform efforts to overcome these challenges. The online platform provides information to match the supply of and demand for financing for data and to facilitate coordination among donors and partner countries. It also aims to create a community of practice to leverage existing knowledge and facilitate monitoring of investment results. In this way, the Clearinghouse complements the GDF by helping to inform the allocation of effective resources.

Source: UN/DESA.

**Country ownership and development effectiveness principles should be at the centre of increased efforts and investments in data and statistics; INFFs can help.** The Addis Ababa Action Agenda highlights several development cooperation principles (see chapter III.C) that should guide increased efforts to support data and statistics. Country ownership is one of these key principles and lessons from strengthening national statistical systems indicate that it is crucial to ensuring sustainable results.<sup>40</sup> Country-led support can help to manage the different incentives of donors, including as a user. Budget support and a whole-of-government programmatic approach, including joint funding mechanisms, can help to support country ownership and strengthen general statistical capacity building. Country priorities can also be reflected in regional or subregional programmes, which partners can help to support. INFFs can help Governments to align development cooperation with country priorities in data and statistics.

## 5. Data frameworks, measurements and collection

### 5.1 Progress on the global indicator framework for the SDGs

**The global indicator framework for the SDGs continues to be strengthened, but gaps remain.** The global SDG indicator framework provides a comprehensive framework of indicators and statistical data to monitor progress, inform policy and ensure the accountability of all stakeholders.<sup>41</sup> In March 2020, the Statistical Commission agreed to both major changes and minor refinements recommended by the Inter-Agency and

Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) in their 2020 comprehensive review. Many of these changes have since been implemented, significantly improving the indicator framework. As of 2 November 2021, the global SDG indicator database includes data for 213 of the 231 unique indicators and more than 1.8 million data records. Plans are in place to fill the remaining gaps at the level of aggregate and global reporting, such as for SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). However, this progress should not camouflage the huge gaps in national reporting and in disaggregated data, including by sex.

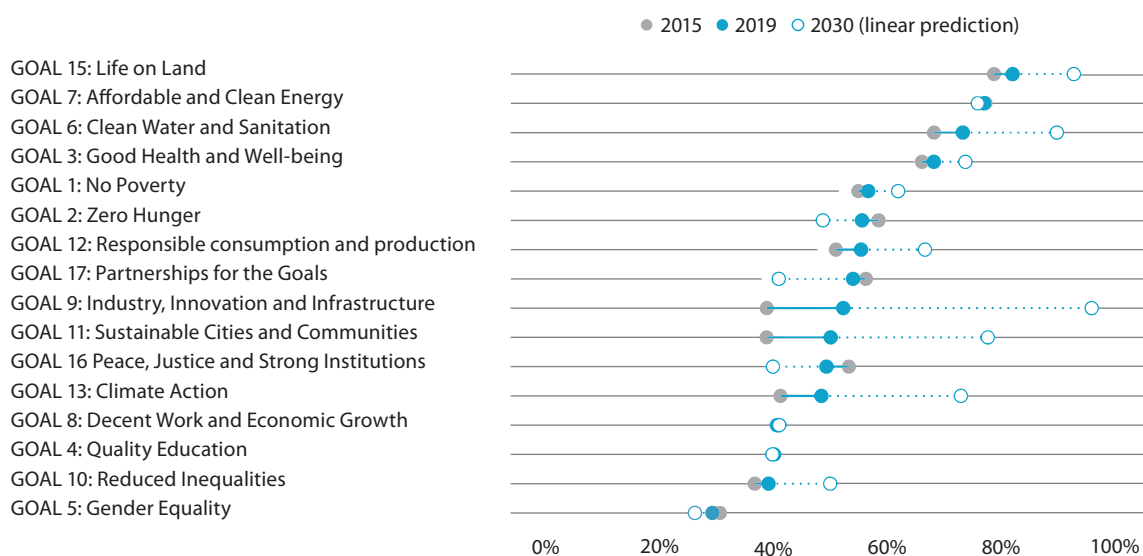
**Despite progress in SDG reporting, there are significant data gaps, with national collection programmes and production of core statistics lagging.** Most countries' statistical systems struggle to provide data on SDG indicators—on average, countries reported one or more data points on only 55 per cent of the SDG indicators for the years 2015 to 2019; 22 countries reported less than 25 per cent, with no country reporting data on more than 90 per cent of the indicators.<sup>42</sup> Even with progress made in many areas, the pace is insufficient to reach universal reporting by 2030 (figure IV.6). Population censuses, which should be conducted every 10 years and are a critical source of disaggregated data for monitoring the SDGs, are outdated in many LICs. In 2018, only 70 per cent of LICs had conducted a population census since 2009, compared to more than 90 per cent of middle-income countries.<sup>43</sup> LICs are also lagging in the production of economic statistics. Estimates of GDP are important for many SDG indicators (about 10 per cent use GDP as their denominator) yet less than half of all developing countries produce monthly data on industrial production, a key input for GDP estimation.<sup>44</sup>

**Monitoring of gender-specific SDG indicators has improved.** All 18 indicators of SDG 5 on gender equality can be measured,<sup>45</sup> with UN

Women continuing to strengthen methodological work for SDG 5.1.1 (whether legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination based on sex), 5.5.1b (women's representation in local governments) and 5.c.1 (gender-responsive budgeting). In addition, 19 out of 51 gender-specific SDG indicators can be reliably monitored at the global level, an increase of six since 2016.<sup>46</sup> For example, 55 per cent of data needed to measure violence against women is available, up from 45 per cent in 2019, and 41 per cent of data needed to measure women's unpaid care work is available, compared to 31 per cent in 2019. Established methodologies exist for the other 32 indicators (an increase of nine since 2016) but country coverage is insufficient to allow for global monitoring. However, an analysis of SDG 5 data availability indicates that only 48 per cent of the required data to monitor SDG 5 is available. More efforts are needed to close this gap, including greater support for monitoring and reporting from a gender perspective, as well as on groups and subgroups facing intersecting forms of inequality.<sup>47</sup>

**The Statistical Commission adopted a new indicator for SDG Target 17.3, which aims to “mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources”.** The IAEG-SDGs Working Group on Measurement of Development Support, consisting of 21 countries and several observers, developed a new SDG 17.3 indicator, a replacement indicator, which comprises gross receipts by developing countries of: a) official sustainable development grants; b) official concessional sustainable development loans; c) official non-concessional sustainable development loans; d) foreign direct investment; e) mobilized private finance on an experimental basis (subject to review in the 2025 review of SDG indicators);<sup>48</sup> and f) private grants (see also discussion in chapter III.C.). These indicators are not meant to be aggregated and will

Figure IV.6  
**Share of SDG indicators with data reported, 2015, 2019, 2030 (linear prediction)**  
(Country mean)



**Source:** Kitzmueller, Lucas, Brian Stacy, and Daniel Gerszon Mahler. 2021. “Are We There yet? Many Countries Don’t Report Progress on All SDGs According to the World Bank’s New Statistical Performance Indicators”. World Bank Blogs. 10 August 2021.

**Note:** Values included are either country reported, country adjusted, estimated, or are included as global monitoring data. Values that were produced by an international organization through modelling are excluded. Goal 14 is not included as there are no reports by land-locked developing countries. The predictions are based on linear models estimated by ordinary least squares on all data points from 2015 to 2019.

be reported separately, consistent with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to distinguish flows of different nature and concessionality that have different impacts on development. The indicator is underpinned by an initial conceptual framework on South-South cooperation developed by a subgroup on South-South cooperation that will allow reporting by countries that practise this form of cooperation. As part of its indicator proposal, the Working Group developed criteria and an approach that will be used to identify flows that can be considered as supporting sustainable development. It follows the recipient perspective, and all proposed data represents new financing flows to developing countries. The new indicator 17.3.1 will also help with monitoring progress towards the Addis Agenda in the annual *Financing for Sustainable Development* reports.

## 5.2 Monitoring the economic and financial sector

**The second phase of the Group of Twenty (G20) Data Gaps Initiative is completed.** Accurate and timely data enhances the ability of policymakers and market participants to develop effective responses to address economic and financial stability risks, especially during times of crisis.<sup>49</sup> Hence, the aim of the G20 DGI was to address data gaps in the financial sector that were exposed by the 2008 world financial and economic crisis. The second phase of the Initiative (DGI-2) commenced in 2015 and focused on: (i) monitoring risk in the financial sector; (ii) vulnerabilities, interconnections and spillovers; and (iii) data-sharing and communication of official statistics. Under DGI-2, conceptual frameworks were developed and improvements made in the coverage, timeliness or periodicity of data in several areas, including financial soundness indicators, non-bank financial intermediation, derivatives data and securities statistics.<sup>50</sup> Information and data gaps also remain in other areas of the Addis Agenda; for example, there is insufficient information-sharing of tax information (see chapter III.A), a lack of full debt transparency (see chapter III.E), as well as a need for more comparable reporting on the sustainability of private finance (see chapter III.B). Addressing the many data gaps would help to provide a more complete picture of the economic and financial system to support policymaking and make markets more efficient (see chapter II).

**Advancements made under the DGI have helped with the COVID-19 response, even as the Initiative is affected by the pandemic.**<sup>51</sup>

Progress made under the DGI has proven valuable in the COVID-19 response, as policymakers are able to access key information to assess developments and risks in financial and nonfinancial sectors, as well as to analyse interconnectedness and cross-border spillovers. However, COVID-19 has also posed significant challenges in advancing some areas, including: securities financing transactions data, institutional sectoral accounts, household distributional information, data on general government debt and commercial property price indices. Expectations are that some DGI-2 recommendations may not have been completed by end 2021, although participating economies are likely to continue to advance work in these areas.

**A new international cooperation initiative on data gaps is under development.** Following a request by the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in April 2021, the IMF, in close cooperation with the Inter-Agency Group on Economic and Financial Statistics (IAG) and the Financial Stability Board (FSB), prepared a concept note on a possible new initiative, building on the work of the DGI. It identified four main statistical and data priorities: (i) climate change; (ii) household distributional information; (iii) financial technology and financial inclusion data;

and (iv) access to private sources of data and administrative data, and data-sharing. The IMF, IAG and FSB are currently developing a detailed workplan for the proposed initiative.

**Further improvements were made on debt transparency data, helping the assessment and management of external debt risks (see chapter III.E).** International Debt Statistics 2022 provided more detailed and disaggregated data on external debt for the 2020 dataset.<sup>52</sup> The data now breaks down each borrowing country's external debt stock into the amounts owed to each official and private creditor, the currency composition and the financial terms of the loans extended. In addition, for countries that were eligible for the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), the dataset includes the debt service deferred in 2020 by each bilateral creditor and the projected monthly debt-service payments. The borrower classification also presents the central bank as a separate borrower entity and increasingly reflects external borrowing by state-owned enterprises.

**Assessing debt transparency for LICs is made difficult by inconsistent methodologies, lack of timely data and incomplete coverage.** Despite the progress described above, there are significant gaps in external debt data for LICs due to poorly resourced debt management offices with limited reach, as well as an opaque reporting system (see chapter III.E). There are also considerable data gaps on domestic debt. A World Bank survey of 70 countries reported that 50 per cent relied mainly on their national statistics frameworks rather than on international standards in compiling and producing domestic debt statistics.<sup>53</sup>

**Increasing the quality of data on the private sector's contribution to the SDGs is critical to enabling Governments to monitor national progress towards the Goals.** Companies have a significant impact (positive and negative) on society and the environment, for example, through carbon emissions and labour practices. Large companies increasingly communicate about this impact at the request of regulators, investors and consumers. In 2020, 92 per cent of S&P 500 companies published a sustainability report compared to only 20 per cent in 2011.<sup>54</sup> However, there is a need to improve the quality of the information provided and chapter III.B presents concrete actions that Governments can take to address this issue. It is also important to better link corporate sustainability disclosure to the SDGs. To this end, the Global Investors for Sustainable Development (GISD) Alliance put forward in 2021 recommendations on SDG-related disclosure.<sup>55</sup> For example, these investors recognize the need for companies not only to report on their current impact but also to establish targets for improvement. Progress is already visible in this area with an increasing number of sustainability reports that align targets to the SDGs (21 per cent in 2021 vs. 15 per cent in 2019).<sup>56</sup> The GISD Alliance has also spearheaded the development of sector-specific metrics that could increase transparency on the SDG impact of companies in eight industries.<sup>57</sup> Standard-setters should consider how these sector/industry-specific metrics could be integrated into existing and future reporting frameworks.

## 5.3 Gender statistics

**COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of timely disaggregated gender data to guide policy responses.** Previous public health emergencies, such as outbreaks of Ebola in West Africa and Zika in Latin America, highlighted the vulnerability of women and girls to these

outbreaks.<sup>58</sup> Women, for example, are more vulnerable to infections as frontline healthcare workers and face higher risks of domestic violence and sexual assault. COVID-19 has brought these issues into sharper focus, but acute data gaps make it difficult to gauge the gendered impact of the pandemic. *Women Count*,<sup>59</sup> the strategy championed by UN Women to create a wholesale shift in how gender statistics are used, created, shared and accessed, is helping to address these gaps. The *Women Count Data Hub*<sup>60</sup> shares the latest data, technical tools and resources to improve gender-responsive COVID-19 efforts, including: a COVID-19 and gender monitor,<sup>61</sup> which is a dashboard of indicators to inform policy; the latest analysis and research;<sup>62</sup> rapid gender assessments;<sup>63</sup> data-collection guidance tools; and tips for integrating gender perspectives into data and analytical work.<sup>64</sup> Rapid gender assessments have been particularly useful, influencing government policy, programmes and pandemic responses across all regions.<sup>65</sup> Since April 2020, UN Women has conducted more than 70 rapid gender assessments—58 on the socioeconomic impact<sup>66</sup> and 13 on violence against women<sup>67</sup>—in collaboration with NSOs, national women’s machineries, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and private sector organizations.<sup>68</sup>

**Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, progress has been made on enhancing the enabling environment for gender-responsive statistical systems.** More countries are prioritizing gender in national planning and policies. Thirteen countries have integrated gender statistics into their national sustainable development strategies, while 16 countries have created institutional mechanisms and/or strengthened the coordination of statistics (an increase of 15 since 2008).<sup>69</sup> In addition, regional efforts have been made to improve coordination. For example, gender is mainstreamed in the work of the Committee on Statistics for Asia and the Pacific, while the Statistical Commission for Africa adopted a minimum set of gender indicators tailored to the region to serve as a guide for the development of national frameworks.<sup>70</sup> Yet, despite initiatives to support countries’ gender data collection,<sup>71</sup> countries and international donors are not providing the levels of investments needed in gender data.<sup>72</sup>

**Mainstreaming gender perspectives into trade statistics can support inclusive trade policies.** In developing countries, women make up 33 per cent of the workforce of exporting firms, compared to 24 per cent in non-exporting firms.<sup>73</sup> Economy-wide gender inequalities in employment and wages also exist in trading firms and trade-intensive industries. For example, a study in Finland found that the gender pay gap tends to be larger in multinational enterprises than in domestically owned businesses.<sup>74</sup> Another study in Georgia found that women-owned trading businesses employ more women and have a lower gender wage gap, compared to men-headed trading businesses.<sup>75</sup> Gender-disaggregated data can support more inclusive trade policies. For example, Chile relies on regularly collected data about the participation of women-led companies in exports to inform trade policymakers and negotiate chapters on gender in free trade agreements.<sup>76</sup> However, gender-disaggregated data in trade is not collected systematically and existing economic data primarily focuses on gender equality in employment. Linking trade data with business statistics and gender-disaggregated labour force and earnings data can help. UNCTAD is working with the United Nations Regional Commissions in Africa and Europe, as well as other partners, to develop methodologies, statistics and indicators relevant for trade policymakers and to test them in pilot countries. The International Trade Centre also has a tool to assess the

level of women’s economic empowerment and resources to support policy improvements.<sup>77</sup>

## 5.4 Measures of sustainable development

**The COVID-19 and climate crises have reinvigorated efforts to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development beyond GDP.** Member States of the United Nations agreed in the Addis Agenda to “develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that go beyond per capita income”, and in SDG Target 17.19 “to build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement GDP”. Gross domestic product, the total monetary value of all goods and services produced by a country within a given period, is a longstanding measure of economic prosperity, with GDP per capita often used to broadly measure average living standards or economic well-being in different countries. However, there are long-standing concerns over the limitations and inadequacy of GDP, particularly as it does not encompass dimensions of well-being, distribution, economic sustainability (such as increasing indebtedness) and environmental sustainability. In a 2009 landmark report, the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission) concluded that GDP was not a measure of well-being and called for more attention to indicators of income, consumption and wealth that are also included in the SNA and urged reform of the measurement system. The report noted that neither private nor public accounting systems were able to provide an early warning signal of the 2008 world financial and economic crisis, and amongst other issues, that GDP does not measure environmental costs, distribution or inequality, and non-market activities.<sup>78</sup> For example, neither the impact of COVID-19 on the care and informal economy or environmental damage from the climate crisis are adequately captured by GDP. Although several metrics have since been constructed and used (see box IV.4), GDP continues to be used as the main proxy for progress. In response, the United Nations Secretary-General in “Our Common Agenda” has called for new measures to complement GDP.<sup>79</sup>

**The measurement of environmental sustainability is progressing through the SEEA.** In 2012, the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted the SEEA, which brings together economic and environmental information into a common framework to measure the contribution of the environment to the economy and the impact of the economy on the environment (see box IV.5). The SEEA follows a similar accounting structure to the SNA to facilitate the integration of environmental and economic statistics.<sup>80</sup> The SEEA Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EA), adopted in March 2021 by the Statistical Commission, has been applied to a wide range of areas. For example, in Uganda, species accounts have demonstrated the economic importance of the indigenous shea tree.<sup>81</sup> Around 89 countries are implementing the SEEA, of which 62 countries are publishing at least one account on a regular basis and 11 on an ad-hoc basis, while 16 have compiled but not yet published; 34 countries are implementing the SEEA EA.<sup>82</sup>

**The 2008 SNA is being updated to consider issues of well-being and sustainability.** Following the endorsement by the Statistical Commission in 2021, work is under way to update the 2008 SNA, which is to be completed by 2025.<sup>83</sup> One of the priority areas is to address issues of well-being and sustainability, with the aim of defining a broader framework of accounts for better monitoring and analysis.<sup>84</sup> The intention is

to have additional extended accounts which will feed into the broader SNA framework rather than redefining the current set of macroeconomic indicators. Extended accounts to be considered are those accounts that already have extensive guidance and which various countries are compiling, including: distribution of household income, consumption saving and wealth; unpaid household service work; education and human capital; health and social conditions; and environmental-economic accounts. On the latter, guidance is planned on the nexus of SNA and SEEA EA.

**The United Nations high-level panel is due to finalize an MVI by end 2022.** SIDS have long maintained that their unique vulnerabilities were not adequately captured by income per capita and have been calling for: the consideration of vulnerability as a criterion for access to concessional finance (see chapter III.C); and the development of an

MVI, including its potential use for debt restructuring (see chapter III.E). Following a series of consultations in 2021 and recommendations by the Secretary-General,<sup>85</sup> the United Nations General Assembly agreed to set up a high-level panel of experts to finalize the MVI by December 2022.<sup>86</sup> Development of the MVI will be guided by the following principles: (i) multidimensionality—indicators to represent all three dimensions of sustainability; (ii) universality—index to capture the vulnerabilities of all developing States; (iii) exogeneity—index to distinguish between exogenous and inherited factors to ensure compatibility with current performance-based allocation models; (iv) availability—index to employ available, recognized, comparable and reliable data, including necessary approximations and imputations; (v) readability—index to be clear and easily understood, avoiding redundancy.<sup>87</sup>

#### Box IV.4

#### A selection of efforts to advance broader measures of progress

A range of academics, civil society and Governments have undertaken efforts to construct and use broader measures of progress:

When	Who	What
1995	Non-profit organizations and universities	<i>Genuine Progress Indicator</i> : measured by 26 indicators across economic, environmental and social categories. <sup>a</sup>
2006	World Bank	<i>Wealth of Nations Report</i> : measures a nation's wealth by capturing renewable and non-renewable natural capital, produced capital, human capital and net foreign assets. <sup>b</sup>
2007	European Commission, OECD, Club of Rome, European Parliament, World Wildlife Fund, European Commission	<i>Beyond GDP Initiative</i> : aims to i) complement GDP with environmental and social indicators; ii) provide near real-time information for decision-making; iii) ensure more accurate reporting on distribution and inequalities; iv) develop a European sustainable development scoreboard; and v) extend national accounts to environmental and social issues. <sup>c</sup>
2008	Bhutan	<i>Gross National Happiness Index</i> : based on four pillars of sustainable and equitable socioeconomic development; environmental conservation; preservation and promotion of culture; and good governance. <sup>d</sup> The Government has used the index to guide policy, including on the COVID-19 response. <sup>e</sup>
2010	United Kingdom	<i>National Well-being Measures</i> : produced by the Office for National Statistics, measures are organized into 10 areas – personal well-being, our relationships, health, where we live, what we do, personal finance, economy, education and skills, governance, and environment. <sup>f</sup>
2010	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	<i>Human Development Index</i> : summary measure of average achievement in three dimensions: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living. <sup>g</sup>
2011	OECD	<i>Better Life Index</i> : based on 11 areas – housing, income, jobs, community, education, environment, governance, health, life satisfaction, safety, and work-life balance. <sup>h</sup>
2012	Sustainable Development Solutions Network	<i>World Happiness Report</i> : based on life evaluations from the Gallup World Poll. <sup>i</sup>
2014	Social Progress Imperative	<i>Social Progress Index</i> : based on three dimensions – basic human needs, foundations of wellbeing, and opportunity. <sup>j</sup>
2017	World Bank	<i>Human Capital Index</i> : measures the human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by age 18, given the risks of poor health and poor education that prevail in the country where the child lives. <sup>k</sup>
2019	New Zealand	<i>Living Standards Framework</i> : developed by the Treasury, the Framework includes three levels – individual and collective wellbeing, institutions and governance, and wealth of the country. The Government uses the framework to guide its Wellbeing Budget. <sup>l</sup>

Source: UN/DESA.

<sup>a</sup> Cobb, Clifford, Ted Halstead, and Jonathan Rowe. 1995. *The Genuine Progress Indicator: Summary of Data and Methodology*. Redefining Progress.

<sup>b</sup> World Bank. 2021. *The Changing Wealth of Nations 2021: Managing Assets for the Future*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

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<sup>d</sup> Ura, Karma, et al. 2012. "A Short Guide to Gross National Happiness Index". The Centre for Bhutan Studies.

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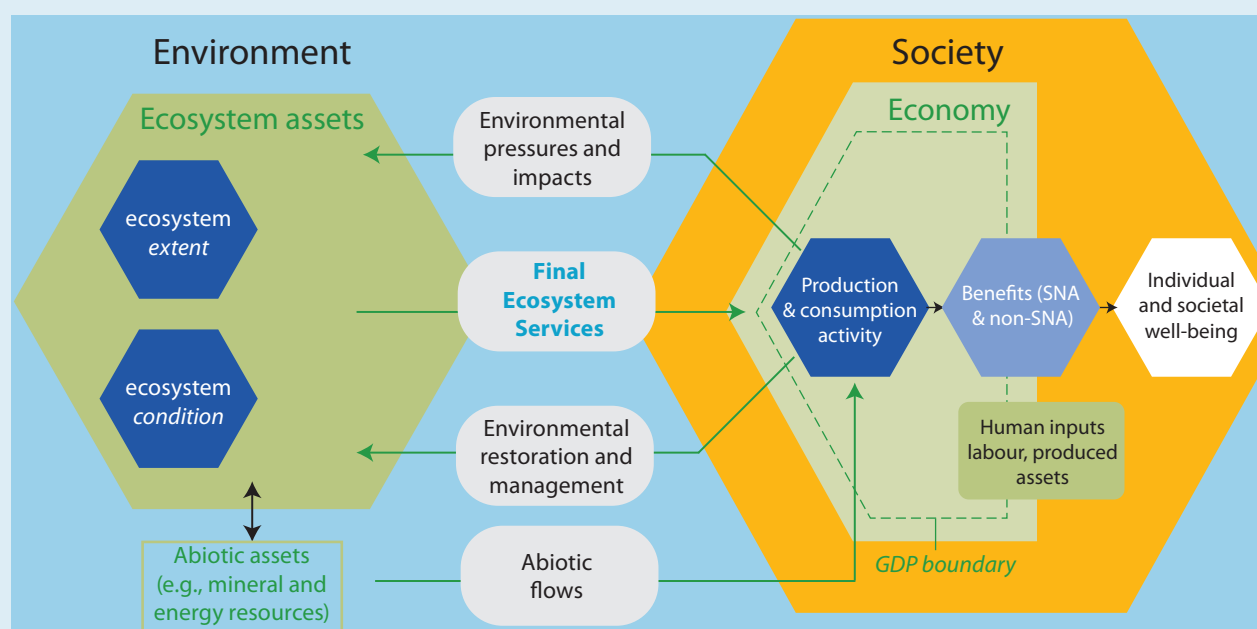


## Box IV.5

## Understanding the System of Environmental Economic Accounts

The SEEA provides a common framework for organizing and presenting statistics on the environment and its relationship with the economy. The SEEA fills an important gap in official statistics. Mainline economic indicators like GDP provide important information about the state of the economy but omit the crucial role of nature. For example, if a country cut down all its forests in a single year, this would increase GDP in the short term due to increased timber production but it would be catastrophic for the country's natural wealth, destroying the forest sector's long-term viability and leading to irreversible environmental damage and massive long-term social costs. By integrating environmental assets and services with data on economic and other human activity, the SEEA expands the perspective and puts nature on an equal footing in decisions about economic development.

The SEEA Central Framework (SEEA CF) was adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission as the first international standard for environmental economic accounting in 2012. It takes the viewpoint of the economy and examines how natural resources like fish, timber and water are used in production and consumption, along with the resulting pollution in the form of waste, water and air emissions. The SEEA EA complements the Central Framework by taking the perspective of ecosystems and their contribution to human well-being in the form of identifiable ecosystem services. Together, they provide a comprehensive view of the environment-economy nexus and make nature's invisible contributions to society visible.



**Source:** United Nations. 2021. "An Introduction to Ecosystem Accounting: Key Concepts and Policy Applications".

**Note:** SNA—System of National Accounts.

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