

A publication of the International Institute for Sustainable Development

Saturday, 9 October 2021 - Online at: enb.iisd.org/un-world-data-forum-2021

**Summary of the Third World Data Forum:
3-6 October 2021**

“Data is power: it is key to policy development and planning,” underscored Amina J. Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General, emphasizing the need to level the playing field and enable citizens to use data for advocacy. With this statement, Mohammed summed up the objectives of the UN World Data Forum to identify innovative ways to foster the development of data capacity, address monitoring needs for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the sustainable development agenda more generally, and use data to work for a safer and more just world for all.

While governments and other stakeholders have long recognized that “what gets measured, gets managed,” the COVID-19 pandemic brought about a new reckoning for the importance of timely data and the potential of leveraging alternative data sources, such as mobility data, to inform decision making. Throughout the sessions of the third World Data Forum, speakers reiterated the need to place people at the center of data collection and dissemination, urging for innovative approaches to ensure marginalized communities are made visible, and that data collected is brought back to providers to help localize solutions. The event spurred a wave of multi-stakeholder collaborations that participants will seek to build on and employ in other policy areas.

The Forum’s outcome document, the [Bern Data Compact for the Decade of Action on the SDGs](#), announced during the closing session on Wednesday, 6 October 2021, expresses participants’ commitments to strengthen partnerships and leverage data solutions to produce inclusive data. It appeals to the international community, as well as to national governments and all communities, to work together to ensure investment in the national data ecosystem to enable high-quality, timely, open, reliable, and disaggregated data for evidence-based decision making where every individual is represented. The Compact recognizes and invites civil society, the private sector, the geospatial community, academic and professional associations, the media, the general public, the donor and philanthropic community, and the UN System to cooperate to bring more data together.

To accelerate action to implement the Cape Town Global Action Plan, adopted at the first UN World Data Forum in South Africa in 2017, the Compact calls for commitment and action on



Delegates gather for the opening ceremony of the third UN World Data Forum in Bern, Switzerland.

the road to the fourth UN World Data Forum, including by, *inter alia*: developing data capacity; establishing data partnerships; cultivating efforts to leave no one behind and build trust; and increasing investments.

In This Issue

A Brief History of the UN World Data Forum	2
Report of the Third UN World Data Forum	3
Opening Session	3
New Approaches to Capacity Development for Better Data	3
Innovations and Synergies Across Data Ecosystems	4
Leaving No One Behind	6
Understanding the World Through Data	8
Building Trust in Data and Statistics	10
How Far Have We Come?	12
High-level Plenary: Data for Accountability to the People	13
Closing Session	14
Upcoming Meetings	14
Glossary	14

The third UN World Data Forum consisted of a combination of high-level plenary sessions and parallel breakout events focusing on specific thematic clusters. Over 50 sessions were organized during the Forum under six themes, namely:

- new approaches to capacity development for better data;
- innovations and synergies across data ecosystems;
- leaving no one behind;
- understanding the world through data;
- building trust in data and statistics; and
- How far have we come?

Representatives from national statistical offices (NSOs), international organizations, and civil society organizations (CSOs), along with data scientists from the private sector and academia, met to discuss practical solutions and hands-on experiences and contribute to delivering better data for evidence-based policymaking towards achieving the SDGs. In addition, several initiatives, including the Global Data Facility, the Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data, and the Complex Risk Analytics Fund, were announced during the Forum.

In closing the meeting, Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the UN Statistics Division (UNSD), urged the data community to “stick together.” Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General, UN DESA, lauded the Forum’s advancement of cutting-edge data solutions and partnerships.

The third UN World Data Forum convened from 3-6 October 2021 in Bern, Switzerland. It was convened in a hybrid format with close to 7,000 participants registering through the virtual meeting platform and more than 700 participants convening in person. It was hosted by the Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland with support from the Statistics Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), under the guidance of the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A Brief History of the UN World Data Forum

Following a recommendation from the UN Secretary-General’s Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, contained in the 2014 report, “A World That Counts: Mobilizing the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development,” the UNSC decided to convene a series of UN World Data Forums. The UN World Data Forum on Sustainable Development Data was envisaged as a platform for intensifying cooperation between representatives of government, intergovernmental organizations and civil society, and various professional groups, such as NSOs, information technology and geospatial information managers, and data scientists, among others. UN World Data Forums consist of a combination of high-level plenary sessions and parallel breakout events clustered around specific themes.

First UN World Data Forum: This Forum, which took place from 15-18 January 2017, in Cape Town, South Africa, agreed on the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development

Data. The Action Plan sets out a framework for member countries to assess, build, and strengthen NSO capacity, and is divided into six strategic areas:

- coordination and strategic leadership on data for sustainable development;
- innovation and modernization of national statistical systems;
- strengthening of basic statistical activities and programmes, with a particular focus on addressing the monitoring needs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- dissemination and use of sustainable development data;
- multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development data; and
- mobilization of resources and coordination of efforts for statistical capacity building.

This Plan was adopted by the UNSC in March 2017.

Second UN World Data Forum: This Forum, which convened from 22-24 October 2018, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, adopted the Dubai Declaration on “Supporting the Implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data.” Through the Declaration, Forum participants resolved to ensure that quality, relevant, timely, open, and disaggregated data “by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts” are made available and accessible to all users. In addition, the Dubai Declaration called for establishing an innovative funding mechanism that would be responsive to the priorities of national data and statistical systems, with the goal of mobilizing funds, and activating partnerships and funding opportunities, to strengthen the capacity of national data and statistical systems.

Virtual UN World Data Forum: The third World Data Forum was expected to take place in October 2020, in Bern, Switzerland. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a reduced virtual event took place from 19-21 October. The virtual Forum resulted in a Declaration on the “Global Data Community’s Response to COVID-19,” which appeals to the whole data community to come together to support the response to COVID-19 and accelerate action on the SDGs. It resolves to ensure trust in data



Alain Berset, Federal Councillor and Head, Federal Department of Home Affairs, Switzerland

and data privacy and increase investments in data to respond more effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic and future disasters. It also renewed the call made in the Dubai Declaration for an innovative funding mechanism to help implement the Cape Town Global Action Plan.

Report of the Third UN World Data Forum

Opening Session

The third UN World Data Forum opened on Sunday, 3 October. Co-Moderator Claire Doole, Doole Communications, welcomed participants and stressed the essential need to invest in data to track progress on the SDGs and continue to “put data into the hands of citizens.” Co-Moderator Arthur Honegger, independent journalist, reflected on the Forum’s role in identifying opportunities to help societies understand and build trust in data and statistics, exploring innovations and synergies, and helping achieve the SDGs.

Alain Berset, Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs, SWITZERLAND, highlighted the need to create an “information basis for political engagement,” acknowledging the pandemic threatens 50 years of progress in development. He reiterated the importance of reliable data “to understand the world and act accordingly,” as climate change, migration, geopolitical uncertainties, and growing inequalities make the world more volatile.

In a video message, António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, called for responsible investment in data, noting people must be empowered and protected. Acknowledging the Forum’s important political space, he looked forward to the launch of new financing instruments and spaces like the [UN Peace and Security Data Hub](#).

In a pre-recorded video message, Brad Smith, President, Microsoft, explained that “no matter what the problem may be, data can play an indispensable role in solving it.” He outlined key actions needed, including: ensuring trust in data by protecting data security and privacy; advancing open data; and expanding opportunities for capacity building for people.

Alicia Maldonado, UN Youth Delegate, Peru, urged participants to assume responsibility for the voices not present, calling for decolonizing data collection and data disaggregation to bring visibility to marginalized communities so policies do not leave them behind.

Nicolas Kurek, UN Youth Representative, Switzerland, urged participants to address “information bubbles” on social media and challenged participants to answer overarching questions, such as: what is data, what does it mean, and how can a non-specialist access accurate data?

A panel of experts discussed whether and how data should drive societies. Panelists said a key challenge is to ensure data represents all people and reflects issues that affect their lives. On the impact of data on policy making, Vincent Hendricks, University of Copenhagen, highlighted the “delicate balance” between truth that is rooted in data and narratives that sell. David Bresch, ETH Zurich and MeteoSwiss, said it takes time to convert data into decision making, noting statisticians

are beginning to pay more attention to narratives. Ola Awad, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, said data literacy needs to be developed in partnership with stakeholders.

Susan Wilding, CIVICUS-World Alliance for Citizen Participation, noted the role of civil society goes beyond ensuring accountability, including developing narratives that support transformative change. Panelists underlined the need for partnerships that can build trust in data, particularly in light of social media’s threat to data privacy and spread of misinformation.

Bern’s Mayor Alec von Graffenried outlined how his city aims to create a culture of participation, recently adopting a new strategy on sustainability. He noted 70% of the city’s Parliament seats are occupied by women.

New Approaches to Capacity Development for Better Data

High-level Panel: Have We Been Going About Capacity Development the Wrong Way? During a plenary session on Monday, 4 October, Aliimuamua Malaefono Tauā-Faasalaina, Samoa Bureau of Statistics, welcomed donor support for data collection, but underscored the need for investments in long-term capacity building, especially for data analysis. She emphasized surveys should not merely collect information relevant for the global community, but should be meaningfully tailored to local needs.

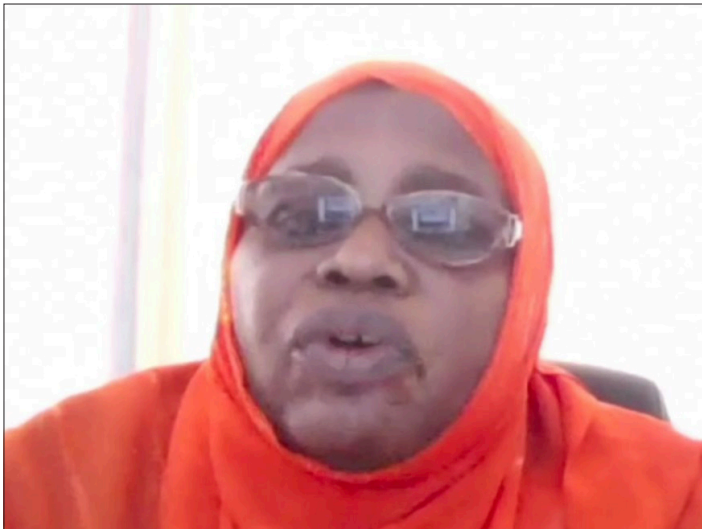
Bård Vegar Solhjell, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), said data is the infrastructure of the 21st century. He pointed to Norway’s work in the context of the [Digital Public Goods Alliance](#), which aims to foster open-source solutions to advance sustainable development.

Njide Ndili, PharmAccess Foundation, pointed to the widespread use of mobile phones in Africa and called for leapfrogging solutions in the health care sector. She highlighted that private sector actors are currently better equipped for data analysis, noting the need to build local, regional, and national government level capacity.

Charles Lebon Mberi Kimpolo, Global Network Secretariat of the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences – Next Einstein Initiative, emphasized putting youth at the center of socio-



Alec von Graffenried, Mayor of Bern, Switzerland



Mayasa Mwinyi, Office of Chief Government Statistician, Zanzibar

economic development in Africa and leveraging expertise of the African diaspora to enhance capacity building on the continent. He underscored the need to train statisticians in data science. Tauā-Faasalaina pointed to the need to engage all stakeholders in analysis, especially those who will be communicating and using data. Solhjell referenced the use of a “knowledge bank” to support analysis, building both technical capacity and an “ecosystem of resources” to inform policy. On data literacy, Kimpolo encouraged participants to shift thinking from consumers to producers of data.

Responding to questions, panelists debated the role of the private sector in sustainable development. Ndili underscored the need to build regulators’ capacity to ensure public interest is at the heart of policy development and avoid cooptation by big industry actors. Solhjell emphasized the public sector should be in the driver’s seat, but private sector investment is crucial to achieve the SDGs. Kimpolo called for differentiating between global and local private sector actors. Panelists also addressed, among others: incorporating data literacy training in school curricula; improving coordination between government agencies; and developing principles for data sharing.

Uncovering Opportunity in Unusual Places: How Countries Are Helping Each Other Leverage Administrative Data for the SDGs: Mayasa Mwinyi, Office of the Chief Government Statistician, Zanzibar, TANZANIA, pointed to her country’s three-year action plan to improve statistics on gender, migration, and crime. As a key challenge, she highlighted lack of interoperability between various kinds of administrative data.

Floribel Méndez Fonseca, National Institute of Statistics and Censuses, COSTA RICA, underscored the importance of real-time data and highlighted her country’s plan to explore the use of non-traditional data sources for purchasing power analyses, among others. She emphasized developing formal partnership agreements with information providers as a step forward.

Emmanuel Nortey Botchway, Births and Deaths Registry, GHANA, highlighted a national legal reform that made it compulsory for health facilities to forward birth and death notifications to the national registry, and pointed to fruitful cooperation with police forces, ambulance services, and prison

facilities. As next steps, he emphasized intensifying mobile registration exercises and improving data collection at the district level.

Iván Ojeda, Director, National Statistics Institute, PARAGUAY, highlighted work on an inventory of administrative registries with the aim of fostering cooperation between agencies. Vibeke Oestreich Nielsen, UNSD, delineated activities of the [Collaborative on the Use of Administrative Data for Statistics](#), including running “expert clinics” for countries to share experiences.

Fredy Rodríguez, Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional (Cepei), COLOMBIA, highlighted the importance of different forms of cooperation, be it North/South, South/South, or between different national agencies.

Where to Start First? – Identifying the Leverage Points of Effective Capacity Development: Sasha Ramirez-Hughes, Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), said in the post-COVID-19 world, capacity building must enable navigating the data revolution, building partnerships, and addressing cross-cutting issues. Mercy Kanyuka, National Statistical Office, MALAWI, suggested focusing on individual management and leadership skills to engage stakeholders, and mobilizing resources and financial management skills across national statistical systems.

Stefaan Verhulst, Governance Laboratory (GovLab), New York University, proposed promoting skills to steward data sets in the public interest, scoping data initiatives on questions that matter, and providing dedicated stewardship training. Umar Serajuddin, World Bank, presented the Statistical Performance Index, noting it includes indicators designed to serve as incentives for investment.

Julia Schmidt, PARIS21, emphasized the importance of, among others: private sector data, quality of legal frameworks and institutions, and data soft skills. Mitch Blaser, Millennium Challenge Corporation, said capacity drives transparency and accountability, highlighting resilient data systems supported by diverse funding sources.

Johannes Jütting, PARIS21, summarized: COVID-19 is an opportunity to reinvent capacity development; skills are needed to navigate changing data landscapes, including stewardship, use, and statistical performance; and leverage points, including incentives for better data, legal frameworks, and skills, are needed.

Innovations and Synergies Across Data Ecosystems

High-level Panel: How to Innovate Timely Data for COVID-19 and the SDGs: On Monday, 4 October, in a plenary session, Albert van Jaarsveld, Director General, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), underscored the value of citizen science, including for: supplementing official statistics and data; enhancing education; building trust; and contributing to the “democratization of science.” Rebecca Moore, Director, Google Earth, noted innovation in mapping technology that produces actionable and timely data. She highlighted



Mahadia Tunga, Tanzania Data Lab (dLab)

Google's [Plus Codes](#) as a way to leave no one behind by providing digital addresses to the two billion people worldwide that lack a physical address.

Mago Yusuf Murangwa, Director General, National Institute of Statistics, RWANDA, recognized the potential of using real-time data to address concrete challenges. He highlighted the need to invest in human resources and institutions, both in terms of skills training and ensuring reliable infrastructure.

Daniel Asare-Kyei, CEO, Esoko Limited, shared how his company's Community Management Platform designed for market data has been used to "get data into the hands of the smallholder farmers" across Africa during the pandemic. He noted private sector actors and non-governmental organizations have significant data to contribute, but data contributors and recipients need to be better linked.

During the discussions, panelists reflected on how to adapt to constantly changing data ecosystems and leverage new opportunities. They also addressed the role of theories and models, with Moore highlighting the importance of transparency and independent assessment of new models and Asare-Kyei underscoring model reliance on quality data. Other points included: improving the use of real-time data; providing funding for citizen science; opening government data; and using data for social security predictions.

Partnership for Sustainable Development: The Global South Story: Karen Bett, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, said civil society in the Global South is collecting robust data. She emphasized that partnerships require time and space for learning and should be aligned with NSOs. Philipp Schönrock, Cepei, underlined the importance of building trust, developing capacity, and using data, noting the Global South has capacity but only "half a voice" in data discussions.

Mahadia Tunga, Data Lab Tanzania (dLab), said more data can be used if local people and key partners who use the data are involved. Rajiv Ranjan, PARIS21, encouraged assessing funding distribution and making data collection more demand driven.

Yudhanjaya Wijeratne, LIRNEasia, said social media data can be useful to understand underserved people, but it must be carefully selected. He highlighted the Global South must own raw data rather than receive processed data sets from the North.

Participants discussed, among other issues: recognizing the Global South's data capacity and the need to move beyond the North-South dichotomy; the need to better value data scientists to prevent capacity drain; and the importance of trust-based partnerships, indigenous participation, and deliberately balancing power relationships.

Digital Data for Gender Equality: The Next Generation:

Bapu Vaitla, Data2X, shared insights into big data research on gendered threats to physical safety and underscored women and girls must be central to data governance to avoid past failures in technology development. Gloria Akoto-Bamfo, Ghana Statistical Service, presented a mobile-based application for citizen-generated data on gender-based violence, highlighting greater incidence reporting compared to official police statistics.

Jihad Zahir, Cadi Ayyad University, presented her "NajatBot," a Facebook messenger bot that connects Moroccan victims of gender-based violence to legal and psychological services. She noted chatbots are accessible and transversal tools, which can be easily optimized and produce data that can be further leveraged for policy purposes.

Andrew Young, GovLab, New York University, pointed to his organization's "100 Questions Initiative" on gender. He highlighted notions of data reuse and stewardship that should be addressed in a context-specific manner. Paul Ko, LinkedIn, shared insights into gender-based differences in hiring practices and professional self-promotion, pointing to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and cutting-edge technology sectors.

Rosita Najmi, PayPal, shared insights into PayPal's collaborative work with CSOs and academia to address human trafficking, illegal arms trade, and hate movements, noting the potential to leverage financial technology (fintech) data to address criminal activity.

Discussions pertained to, among others: cultural stigma on gender-based violence and lack of trust in institutional follow-up; funding cycles impeding durable partnerships; and building the foundations for rapid response measures.

Integrating Citizen Science into the Official SDG Monitoring Mechanisms and Introducing the Global Citizen Science Partnership: Albert van Jaarsveld, Director General, IIASA, explained that 76 SDG indicators can be assisted by citizen science, noting it requires support from international organizations and funding for community leaders. Jillian Campbell, UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), shared that several biodiversity-related indicators already draw on citizen science and that the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will entail outcome indicators, which could also benefit from citizen science.

Rachel Bowers, GHANA Statistical Service, outlined a citizen science project to monitor plastic litter on beaches based on an international protocol, suggesting governments can support developing harmonized methodologies and indicator localization,

where necessary. Kwame Fredua, GHANA Environmental Protection Agency, underscored that open platforms build stakeholder ownership, and citizen science can support indicators of development.

Steve MacFeely, World Health Organization (WHO), stressed data accreditation should allow for integrating citizen science, or any form of non-traditional data, while respecting fundamental principles. Dilek Fraisl, IIASA, introduced the [Global Citizen Science Partnership](#), a network of networks to promote citizen science.

Responding to questions, panelists reiterated the value of connecting all types of data and stressed that citizen science is cost effective.

Private Sector Innovation in a Post-Pandemic World: Integrating Non-commercial Data Resources to Support Pandemic Response and Sustainable Development: Laura McGorman, Facebook, delineated applications of mobility data, such as: supporting disaster response, forecasting flu transmission, and analyzing travel time to health care facilities. Rosita Najmi, PayPal, called for learning from the humanitarian community and reflecting on “data preparedness.” She called for defining clear roles, responsibilities, and deadlines to support momentum in collaborative work.

Andrew Means, Salesforce, highlighted his organization’s focus on support for data-based impact management, centering on capacity building for data collection and analysis. He pointed to the development of the Vaccine Cloud, which helps countries plan vaccine distribution and can be used beyond COVID-19.

Nate Williams, LinkedIn, noted how LinkedIn’s data can complement governments’ occupational statistics by allowing cross-country comparison, breakdown by location, industry, or function, and real-time insights. He highlighted collaboration on the World Economic Forum’s [Global Gender Gap Report](#).

Kareem Elbayar, Connecting Business Initiative, underscored the immense and increasing data needs in the humanitarian sector, noting persistent gaps on, among others, the condition of roads and other critical infrastructure, and calling for creative approaches to integrate different types of data.

Holly Krambeck, Founder, Development Data Partnership, delineated the function of the Partnership which aims to facilitate the efficient and responsible use of third-party data for sustainable development. She noted 200 projects are already ongoing, contributing to 13 SDGs.

How to Adhere to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics When Compiling Data During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Ronald Jansen, Assistant Director, UNSD, outlined a set of guiding principles to ensure public trust and adhere to the fundamental principles of statistics: necessity and proportionality; professional independence; privacy; commitment to equality; international comparability; and privacy. Siim Esko, Positium, shared that in Estonia, obtaining data from three mobile phone operators created challenges for data consistency but also offered opportunities for triangulation, and that the release of a public dashboard increased trust.

Ayumi Arai, University of Tokyo, spoke on experience from The Gambia, noting existing partnerships helped overcome challenges in data development and that aggregating data sets is essential to maintain trust. Recalling that, in Ghana, mobile phone data has been used since 2018 to develop migration statistics, Wole Ademola Adewole, Flowminder Foundation, reported that despite administrative and legal challenges, mobile phone data was successfully used to monitor the effectiveness of COVID-19 restrictions and support vaccination campaigns.

Janssen announced the winner of the [Automated Information System Data Hackathon](#), a project established by employees of the Finnish manufacturing company Wärtsilä that enables real-time tracking of emissions from shipping worldwide.

Leaving No One Behind

High-level Panel: Leaving No One Behind, The Need to Measure Equity: During this plenary session on Monday, 4 October, Moderator Claire Doole underscored the importance of closing data gaps to ensure no one is left behind. Alison Bryant, AARP, noted significant data gaps on the realities of older age groups. She called for attention to intersectionality, pointing to race and ethnicity-related disparities in longevity and to gender inequity.

José Viera, CEO, World Blind Union, underscored that insufficient and unreliable data impedes robust assessment of the condition of persons with disabilities. He called for including persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in data collection. Julio Santaella, National Institute of Statistics and Geography, MEXICO, pointed to trade-offs between timelines and precision in terms of data provision.

Nayana Das, IMPACT Initiatives, shared challenges of surveying displaced people, and underscored working through local partners as a fruitful approach. Ruth Levine, CEO, IDinsight, underscored the relevance of gender-sensitive surveyor training.

On the need for sensitivity in data collection, Santaella referenced gender violence and shared practices to build trust, while Das underscored partnerships for appropriate guidance.



Claire Doole, Doole Communications

Levine added data confidentiality and identification of the destination of data. Viera noted that in many countries, persons with disabilities are not yet a priority, challenging the ability to design policy or community inclusion initiatives. Bryant pointed to user-centered design approaches and the overarching principle of empathy.

On lack of political will, Viera suggested data collection as a pre-condition for inclusion of marginalized groups. On involving local communities, several panelists stressed the need to deliver results to high-level stakeholders and to empower citizens who contributed. Responding to a statement on barriers to full participation, Viera recognized the power to share first-hand experiences of exclusion as a step to further inclusion.

On critical steps to ensure no one is left behind, Das underscored collaboration and coordination. Levine called for financial supporters of data collection to be informed by the needs of excluded communities. Santaella pointed to increasing capacities of NSOs. Bryant identified the need for inclusion and accessibility. Viera called for centralizing the voice of disabled persons.

Partnering to Deliver Data for Invisible Groups to Ensure No One Is Left Behind: Practical Lessons to Build Inclusive Data Systems that Give Voice to Communities: Betty Amongi Akena, Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, UGANDA, reported that COVID-19 containment measures has led to rising unemployment, putting people at risk of poverty. She highlighted a cash grant programme to support vulnerable households during lockdowns and the provision of below-market loans for small businesses.

Annie Namala, Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, said state-level data often overlooks marginalized communities leading to misallocations of government funding, citing Indian GDP figures that fail to consider changes in the informal sector. She emphasized the potential of community-generated data to promote inclusion and support disaggregated assessments.

Javier Carranza Tresoldi, Founder, GeoCensos, shared insights from crowdsourced cartographic data collection, such as on “maras,” which are territories controlled by gangs. He highlighted communities’ interest in engaging in mapping exercises and noted such approaches can increase openness towards government-led census surveys. Helen Leticia Namirembe Nviiri, UGANDA Bureau of Statistics, presented collaborative work to improve the accuracy of birth and death data, and to enhance gender, disability, and migration statistics. She noted the potential to use administrative data to identify territorial inequalities in access to health care services.

Discussions pertained to, among others: partnering with local organizations to reach people speaking marginalized languages; and using general surveys as screening tools to target specific demographics, such as people with disabilities.

Making the Most Vulnerable Visible: Data Gaps and Official Statistics on Forced Displacement: Björn Gillsäter, Head, Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement, shared that

the 82 million people globally who are forcibly displaced are largely invisible statistically. Natalia Baal, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), outlined how the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced People (IDP) Statistics is working to fill the gap for a statistical framework and standards for forcibly displaced peoples. Sharmarke Farah, Director General, National Bureau of Statistics, SOMALIA, highlighted efforts to address data gaps and improve IDP statistics, aiming to bring humanitarian data closer to decision makers.

Olena Shevtsova, State Statistics Service, UKRAINE, reviewed the value of including and engaging stakeholders in the process of implementing international recommendations on IDPs. Lucas Gómez, Advisor to the President of COLOMBIA for the Colombia-Venezuela Border, presented on success in protecting the human rights of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia through improved data management. Haishan Fu, World Bank, reiterated the need to address the challenges facing forcibly displaced people, outlining efforts to improve data production and develop new international standards.

Panelists responded to questions on the impact of COVID-19 on data collection, as well as on the role of CSOs in the production of data on refugees and IDPs.

Innovative Responses to Data Collection About and By Persons with Disabilities in the Time of COVID-19: José Viera, CEO, World Blind Union, pointed to the [Disability Data Advocacy Toolkit](#) launched in 2020. He shared insights from a survey on the impacts of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities, highlighting lack of inclusion in emergency response systems and access to medical support.

Laisa Vereti, Pacific Disability Forum, emphasized the importance of not merely collecting data but building on gained insights, citing the development of disability allowances in several Pacific countries as a recent success. Neda Jafar, UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, delineated her organization’s work, including on developing stand-alone surveys of people with disabilities to gain specific insights on, among others, their education and health care needs.



José Viera, CEO, World Blind Union



Javier Carranza Tresoldi, Founder, GeoCensos

Anderson Gitonga, CEO, United Disabled Persons of Kenya, spoke about convening focus groups with women with disabilities and using WhatsApp groups to gather information and lobby for dedicated policy interventions, including pushing for prioritizing persons with disabilities in vaccine rollouts.

Jennifer Madans, Washington Group on Disability Statistics, underscored the need to go beyond disaggregated data towards considering intersectionality, for example of disability and gender. She cautioned that phone- and internet-based surveys might reinforce biases, overlooking persons with hearing difficulties or vision impairment.

The Legacy of COVID-19: Mobilizing Gender Data to Deliver Better Science: Moderator Diva Dhar, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, prefaced this virtual session saying that while “COVID-19 is gender blind, it is not gender neutral.” Sarah Hawkes, Co-Founder and Co-Director, Global Health 50/50, explained that sex-aggregated data affects research and the development of guidelines and policy. She highlighted that national government data related to COVID-19 failed to account for non-binary individuals and very low policy responses to data, which overlooked gender 90% of the time.

Anita Raj, University of California San Diego Center on Gender Equity and Health, showcased Evidence-based Measures of Empowerment for Research on Gender Equity (EMERGE), noting the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on women in terms of mental and physical health and increases in violence against women.

Amy Herring, Global Health Institute, Duke University, asserted data collection, by default, should include sex and gender as a standard, increasing the long-term value of data collected. Papa Seck, UN Women, explained that cases of violence against women increased during the pandemic. He emphasized the need to explore the innovative methods needed to collect such data and ensure it is used to inform policies.

Abhishek Singh, International Institute for Population Sciences, and Damazo Kadengye, African Population and Health Research Center, responded to the panelists’ presentations, with

Kadengye asking how to engage and advocate for open data at the country and regional levels. Linda Laura Sabbadini, Italian National Institute of Statistics, reiterated the fundamental need for quality gender data. Ilaria Capua, University of Florida, called for policies that require disaggregated data by sex and gender.

Integrating Geospatial Data from All Parties for COVID-19 Response, Recovery, and Resilience for Informed Decision-making: Participants discussed the [Guide on Geospatial Data Integration in Official Statistics](#), a joint product of PARIS21 and Statistics Sweden. François Fonteneau, PARIS21, explained that integrating statistical and geospatial data creates more detailed data maps, which enable more effective data use.

Martin Brady, Australian Bureau of Statistics, presented the Guide’s Global Statistical Geospatial Framework, explaining that the next step is to gather feedback for developing national and regional adaptations and best practices.

Javier Carranza, GeoCensos, summarized the Guide’s key steps, noting a strong interest to develop and share case studies to support its use. Amélie Gagnon, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), provided examples in education, including on the impact of travel time on education outcomes in Jamaica and natural risk assessment for deciding on the siting of new schools in Indonesia. Prachi Srivastava, Western University, Canada, shared a platform visualizing the impact of COVID-19 on low-income and marginalized community infection rates in the province of Ontario.

Javier Teran, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), presented the [COVID-19 Data Explorer](#), a platform combining and visualizing multiple data sources to support humanitarian interventions. Rosemary Okello-Orlale, Strathmore Business School, highlighted the potential of combined data to make vulnerable women visible in national data sets.

Understanding the World Through Data

High-level Panel: Making It Add Up – Counting on Data and Statistics During Pandemics and Other Disasters:

On Tuesday, 5 October, in a plenary session, Manja Kargbo, Freetown City Council, Sierra Leone, said we must acknowledge that social distancing and lockdowns are not enforceable in all contexts. She explained this led her city to identify more locally suited approaches, such as restructuring markets to cluster products and streamline visitor flows. Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director, Twaweza East Africa, said his organization conducted phone-based polls to assess how communities are responding to the pandemic, noting how this helped governments tailor their crisis communication.

Carol Coy, Director General, Statistical Institute of JAMAICA, underscored unprecedented data needs and the challenge to adapt data collection methods where face-to-face approaches were not possible. Neal Myrick, Global Head, Tableau Foundation, noted the lack of disaggregated data is a missed opportunity, as it is key to tailoring risk messaging to individuals.

Oliver Morgan, WHO, pointed to heightened public expectations for timely data and challenges to navigate geopolitical tensions and deal with diverse national reporting standards. He said information overload and the increased publication of scientific research before peer-review, at times, has led to confusion.

On building trust, Kargbo said fake news can be overcome by embedding community structures to exchange data. He highlighted the importance of data collectors understanding community nuances. Morgan said embracing different data sources helps move out of “information bubbles” and data must be kept simple for social media communication. Eyakuze suggested “making uncertainty our ally,” and sharing innovative approaches, such as satire, to help connect people to the data. Myrick underscored that the power in data lies in using it to tell stories. Coy reflected on the need to hire communication specialists to help disseminate data effectively.

Responding to questions, panelists explored how to center data communication on people, highlighting innovative ways such as engaging “infomediaries,” including influencers and healthcare workers, who can help translate data insights to different audiences. Eyakuze described a television programme that used data to confirm or contradict what people know and think about COVID-19. Kargbo shared a successful intervention of placing informative jingles in public transportation to raise awareness.

Re-strategizing Labor Market Data Collection, Analysis and Dissemination in Times of Crisis: Noraliza Mohamad Ali, Department of Statistics, MALAYSIA, noted the need for increased communication on labor market statistics during the COVID-19 crisis, including through innovative means, such as livestreams on Facebook.

Daniel Sim, Ministry of Manpower, Singapore, shared insights on Singapore’s response to the pandemic. He pointed to ramping up data collection efforts and releasing unemployment rates on a monthly instead of a quarterly basis. Sahar Darusman, Social Security Organisation, MALAYSIA, explained how combining social security data related to indicators such as registered unemployed people, self-employed workers, and occupational accidents, among others, can contribute to providing a comprehensive picture of the labor market.



Manja Kargbo, Freetown City Council, Sierra Leone

Farina Adam Khong, Central Bank of MALAYSIA, noted many workers remain outside the labor force because of the COVID-19 pandemic. She highlighted women remain more affected than men and cited a trend towards workers with a graduate education taking lower-skilled jobs. Kieran Walsh, International Labour Organization, underscored many countries had to adapt their data collection methods during the pandemic, shifting to telephone or internet-based surveys. He underscored the relevance of granular data to capture working hour losses.

Ensuring the Future of Sustainable Water Data for Citizens, Scientists and Policymakers: Tommaso Abrate, World Meteorological Organization, explained that data collection and integration is crucial to accelerate progress on SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) and other water-related goals. Steffen Fritz, IIASA, shared how citizen science provides data and opportunities for awareness raising that collectively reduce risks and strengthen the social adaptive capacity.

Sheela Patel, Founding Director, Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres, called for flowing data to communities and scaling up good solutions, highlighting data gaps on the impacts of water scarcity and bad quality water on women’s lives. Sera Young, Northwestern University, presented the [Water Insecurity Experiences \(WISE\) Scales](#) used to quantify the human experience of water insecurity. She said sustainable water data should be interesting, compelling, usable, and easy to collect, and promote action.

Nilay Dogulu, International Association of Hydrological Sciences, underscored the contribution of early career hydrologists to address oppression issues and improve data practices. Daniel Kull, World Bank, discussed the efficiency of sharing data with end-users to spur economic growth. He suggested ending the practice of selling data in exchange for selling services built off data and making data open. Jillian Campbell, CBD, highlighted the call to ensure water data is sustainable, with a push to communicate locally.

Monitoring the SDGs for Everyone: Making Data Widely Accessible and Engaging Stakeholders: Francesca Perucci, UNSD, highlighted achievements from a joint project between UNSD and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office that supported capacity building in 20 countries to disseminate SDG data through online national data platforms. She pointed to: increased availability of data on indicators; improved accessibility by all users and institutional coordination; and established data hubs to provide response to the COVID-19 crisis. Jean Luc Kabera, National Institute of Statistics of RWANDA, spoke on increasing user engagement, noting it fosters overall data literacy and ownership and enables direct feedback from users to help reveal data gaps.

Phetsamone Sone, Deputy Head, Lao Statistics Bureau, recognized the Lao SDG Platform is a “work in progress” that needs to be flexible and simple to effectively compile and disseminate data and metadata, while interlinking with existing databases. Vibeke Oestreich Nielsen, UNSD, emphasized the



Samira Asma, WHO

effectiveness of available tools, such as an SDG and COVID-19 visualization toolkit and e-learning courses providing national metadata compilation guidance.

Panelists shared views on innovative and creative ways to increase user engagement, including consulting citizens on the platforms and considering citizen science opportunities.

Committing to Strong Data Governance for Health in Times of COVID-19: Ilona Kickbusch, independent moderator, moderated the session, referencing the forthcoming Lancet report, [Growing up in a digital world: Governing health futures in 2030](#), to be launched on 25 October 2021. Antoine Geissbühler, University of Geneva, explored challenges for FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable) data, including respecting privacy protection balanced with reuse for the public good. On the use of artificial intelligence, Geissbühler lauded the potential to build the capacity of healthcare professions and patients, calling for principles of benevolence to ensure algorithms avoid dangerous biases.

Christian Frutiger, Ambassador, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, referred to the [World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives](#), identifying data fragmentation as an important area for improvement requiring international coordination. Samira Asma, WHO, called for a new form of “data solidarity,” and emphasized the urgency of making data a global public good with strong governance and integration with the digital revolution.

Sang-Il Kim, Federal Office of Public Health, SWITZERLAND, exposed how the absence of good data governance during COVID-19 left even a rich country like Switzerland unprepared. Boukary Ouedraogo, Ministry of Health, BURKINA FASO, shared similar challenges in addressing data fragmentation, highlighting the need to simplify tools to improve data usage.

Claudia Juech, Patrick J. McGovern Foundation, explored the necessary guiding principles of inclusivity, responsivity, and resilience to support the establishment of data partnerships to deliver high quality, accessible, and equitable healthcare. Njide

Ndili, PharmAccess Foundation, pointed out that identifying who is responsible for data governance is crucial for appropriate alignment among stakeholders.

Data-driven Vaccination Strategy for a COVID-19 Free World: Towfiq Khan, Centre for Policy Dialogue, highlighted responses from an online survey during the Forum. Agnes Binagwaho, Vice Chancellor, University of Global Health Equity, attributed Rwanda’s successful vaccine strategy to use of the principle of implementation science, despite “rich countries hoarding vaccines.” Anir Chowdhury, Aspire to Innovate, highlighted, *inter alia*: coordination across government agencies; vaccine diplomacy; and leveraging of intermediary bodies such as community clinics.

Natalia Aquilino, Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth, shared insights on Argentina’s challenges and recommended, *inter alia*: enhanced regional collaboration; open data policies and monitoring; and disaggregation for combining data sources. Terry Parris Jr., New York Times, showcased how community organizations and grassroots efforts filled gaps to overcome inequities and supported vaccine rollout to minorities and marginalized communities, successfully achieving a 70% vaccination rate in New York City.

Panelists discussed: the role of data in post-vaccination surveillance; consideration of COVID-19 impacts; identification of missing aggregated datasets from populations that get left behind; and overcoming vaccine hesitancy. Panelists concluded by underscoring the value of trust building and transparency, increasing data literacy and data visualization capacity, and ensuring health systems are resilient.

Building Trust in Data and Statistics

High-level Panel: Trust in Data: Balancing Quality, Privacy and Transparency: During a plenary session on Tuesday, 5 October, James Lowry, City University of New York, outlined methods for data trustworthiness, including assigning custodians and designing audit systems. He called for reflecting on how to apply controls at scale in the world of Big Data. He cautioned against conflating participation and trust and noted the importance of building technical know-how to assess new technologies, such as blockchain.

Pam Dixon, Founder and Executive Director, World Privacy Forum, identified emerging social norms around data that call for establishing modern data governance. She lauded the forthcoming Indian data bill, noting it criminalizes re-identification of anonymized data, which is key to increasing public trust. She underscored the relevance of exemptions for socially beneficial research purposes.

Julia Lane, Co-Founder and Director, Coleridge Initiative, argued that declining quality and ability to use data requires a “democratization” of data. She noted new technology supports accessing data in a confidential way and pointed to tiered approaches between the extremes of government-limited access versus completely open data. Anirudh Burman, Carnegie India,

noted the challenge in India is to maintain trust. He said many people use data generating processes, like online payments, out of necessity. He underscored that despite weaknesses, current public digital infrastructure is much more inclusive than it used to be.

Mulenga Musepa, Interim Statistician General, ZAMBIA Statistics Agency (ZamStats), described the national strategy for statistics development, which led to the development of apps used to integrate and coordinate statistics across the country. Drudeisha Madhub, Data Protection Commissioner, MAURITIUS, called for a citizen-centric approach to data protection, noting citizens and economic actors have different views on where the problems with “trusting data” lie.

In discussions, panelists addressed, among others: the use of aggregated telecommunications data in crisis response; governments relying on private sector actors rather than building in-house capacity; and uncovering biases in technology development.

Is It Possible to Learn About Open Geospatial Data Platforms in 75 Minutes to Harness Non-Official Sources for the 2030 Agenda? Steve MacFeely, WHO, presented the [Snakebite Information and Data Platform](#), which combines geospatial data about snake environments and health facilities with statistics of snakebites and citizen-generated data on snake sightings to prevent snake bites.

Monika Kuffer and Dana Thomson, University of Twente, the Netherlands, introduced the [IDEAMAPS Network](#), an initiative that combines various data sources to develop gridded maps that blur conceptual boundaries like city limits to provide a more accurate picture of deprivation. Serkan Girgin, University of Twente, outlined a one-stop geospatial data analysis platform that can be accessed through an internet browser and enables collaborative computing of geospatial data.

Olga Henker, Global Colombia Certificación, explained that certification is key to harnessing the power of non-official data for storytelling. Javier Teran, OCHA, presented the [Humanitarian Data Exchange](#), a global platform combining more than a thousand datasets that can be used to assess humanitarian crisis information, and the COVID-19 Explorer with information on 60 countries. Julia Janicki, data journalist, presented principles and tools for data visualization, noting interactive visualizations invite users to analyze data whereas data stories are more immersive, connecting data with lived experiences and other sources of information.



Thomas Gass, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Twice Invisible: Lack of Education in Crises Leaves Internally Displaced Children Behind Time to Act! Thomas Gass, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, underscored displacement often lasts the length of childhood, making education for IDPs a key tool for tackling poverty in the next generation. George Mogga, Ministry of General Education and Instruction, SOUTH SUDAN, noted conflict and climate change impacts, such as flooding, are key causes of displacement in his country. He identified IDP camp remoteness and sustaining financial resources as key challenges for ensuring IDP education.

Christelle Cazabat, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, highlighted a lack of data on disaster-related displacement and age disaggregated IDP data. She cited access issues for data collection and IDPs hiding from authorities as challenges and pointed to the use of satellite imagery as a solution. Jean Claude Ndabananiye, UNESCO, underscored disaggregated data is key to ensure the right to education and noted a lack of insights on learning outcomes.

Harpinder Collacott, CEO, Development Initiatives, called for better integration of data collection by humanitarian agencies into national datasets. She underscored the importance of comprehensive birth records and the provision of legal identifications as foundations for robust assessments. Christian Stoff, Education Cannot Wait, pointed to progress on data collection, including through the International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix, and existing capacity gaps for data analysis. He underscored IDPs in urban settings are difficult to assess since they are not centrally organized, as opposed to in IDP camps.

Microdata Use, Dissemination, and Emerging Issues: Moderator Pietro Gennari, Chief Statistician, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), explained that microdata is usually suppressed to ensure privacy, noting that making these data available could support SDG monitoring. Lara Cleveland, University of Minnesota, presented [IPUMS](#), a university-led network providing access to census and survey microdata from around the world for research. She noted that in its 25-year history, IPUMS has never had a confidentiality breach.

Ivana Bjelic, UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), said her organization is working towards providing access to microdata from household surveys, and stressed the need to overcome political sensitivities. Haoyi Chen, UN Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys, shared that 90% of national statistics laws address microdata and data confidentiality, but more research is needed to confirm their use in practice. Peter Stokes, UK Office for National Statistics, outlined Integrated Data Services which allow joining data from multiple trusted research environments like IPUMS through standard formats and metadata.

Mario Kunz, Syngenta Foundation, explained how his company is collaborating with FAO to use microdata from Syngenta’s agricultural producer surveys, pointing out legal challenges and reservations against using private-sector data. Gennari added that Syngenta’s microdata is essential to monitor SDG target 2.3 on small-scale agriculture. Responding to questions, panelists said metadata is crucial to inform users about data quality and what data is lost when merging datasets.

Data for Good: Toward a Sustainable Ecosystem, Beyond Philanthropy: JoAnn Stonier, Mastercard, welcomed the increased interest in leveraging different forms of data for

social good. She underscored the need for further reflection on, among others, ensuring accountability and integrity and minimizing biases in datasets. Pedro A. de Alarcón, Telefónica Tech, highlighted the importance of close cooperation between private actors and NSOs to complement official census data. He emphasized commercial approaches for the scaling and long-term sustainability of “Big Data for social good” projects

David Salgado, Statistics SPAIN, underscored official statistics agencies are faced with high stringency constraints. He underscored that further work is needed on leveraging big data for sectoral analyses, including on the tourism sector. Dominik Rozkrut, President, Statistics POLAND, noted statistics offices are supposed to be data stewards and emphasized they need to build capacity to leverage the “avalanche” of new data sources.

Hilary Kemp, Global System for Mobile Communications Alliance, highlighted that during the pandemic some countries shifted from no alternative data use to relying on co-created dashboards for decision making. She emphasized the value of concrete cases for spurring collaborations and fostering government interest in analytics. Rachel Sibande, Digital Impact Alliance, UN Foundation, underscored the relevance of developing open access and replicable tools to reach impact at scale, and called for funding digital capacity building, not just individual projects.

Building Trust in the Humanitarian Data Ecosystem: Towards Common Principles for Responsible Data Sharing with Donors: Christine Löw, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, framed discussions by identifying risks of exposing vulnerable populations in the absence of responsible data sharing between humanitarian organizations and donors, referring to the Humanitarian Data and Trust Initiative framework.

Vincent Cassard, International Committee of the Red Cross, confirmed a lack of coherence among global frameworks and discussed drafted principles and commitments for responsible data sharing. He drew attention to the need to build capacity at every level of the data custody chain, particularly for citizens to have agency over their data.

Irina Conovali, UNHCR, provided examples of responsible data sharing, highlighting work to further develop safe and accessible public microdata sets. She cautioned that principles alone do not solve problems, and called for collective efforts to apply data responsibility principles.

Nuno Nunes, International Organization for Migration (IOM), said a lack of data, standards, and guidance in IOM operations makes it challenging to manage solutions.

Panelists discussed using common language to apply data principles and practices from the humanitarian sector to the general development community, and the need to build capacity in data literacy at all levels.

Bringing Alternative Data to Official Use: Cross-sector Partnerships to Leave No One Behind in SDG Monitoring and Review: Thomas Wollnik, Partners for Review, said only a fraction of existing data finds its way into SDG monitoring, indicating that partnerships require well-prepared arrangements between organizations. Peter Koblowsky, International Civil Society Centre, presented two initiatives: the international Leave No One Behind partnership supporting country coalitions of CSOs that collect data on marginalized populations to stimulate policy dialogue; and the Inclusive Data Partnerships initiative bringing together NSOs, national SDG coordination bodies, national human rights institutions, and CSOs.

Sanila Gurung, Beyond Beijing Committee Nepal, said her work in Nepal focuses on toolkits for citizen-generated data for SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). Mustafa Khawaja,

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, reported on a partnership between the Bureau and administrative bodies of the Palestinian Government to mobilize administrative data. Lambert Luguniah, Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, GHANA, said his organization identified data gaps that can be addressed with human rights data.

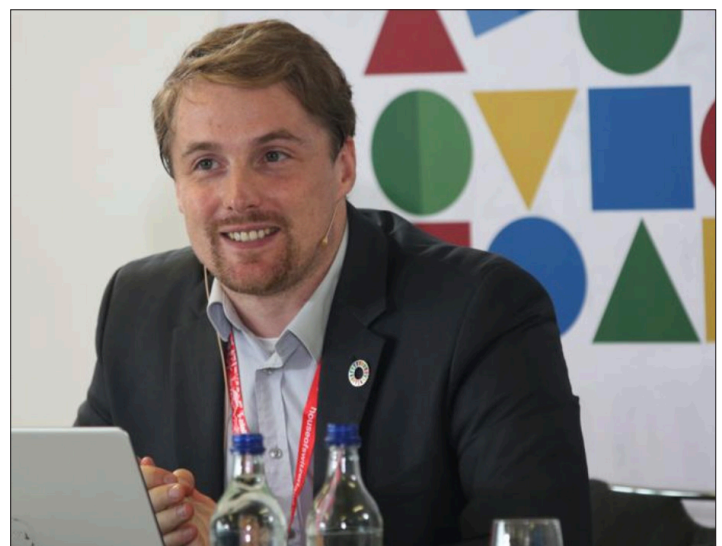
Annie Namala, Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, outlined the work of the 100 Hotspots project, which aims to collect household data on 20-25 indicators that can reflect the situation and needs of different marginalized groups in India. In response to a comment, panelists suggested third party data providers should have official status and equal participation space in international fora on SDG monitoring.

How Far Have We Come?

High-level Panel: The Road from Bern, Navigating the Data Future: During a plenary session on Wednesday, 6 October, Samira Asma, WHO, noted the world was unprepared to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic from a data perspective, pointing to the widespread lack of accurate death registries and even less standardized reporting on death causes. Chris Jones, Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, UK, noted COVID-19 represents a challenge at an unprecedented scale that allows for lessons learned on health governance and development more generally. He underscored the importance of clearly assigning responsibilities to foster trust in collaborations between government and private actors.

Samuel Kobina Annim, GHANA Statistical Service, highlighted the statistics community is in transition towards leveraging non-traditional data sources, pointing to the potential of citizen science, among others. Clint Brown, Director, Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri), said the pandemic was a wake-up call for the geospatial community, noting it brought about rapid action. He emphasized the need to reflect on how to transform data into information and how to broadcast this information to people.

Ola Awad, President, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, reflected on implementation progress of the Cape Town Global Action Plan and celebrated the recent launch of the Clearinghouse



Peter Koblowsky, International Civil Society Centre



Johannes Jütting, Executive Head, Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21)

for Financing Development Data. Maria-Francesca Spatolisano, UN DESA, emphasized opportunities to scale up collective efforts to deliver “timely, accurate, and reliable aggregated data,” addressing the need for new and smarter investments to anticipate future demand.

Paul Schreyer, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), noted the OECD Council at the ministerial level is considering the adoption of a recommendation on enhancing access to and sharing data. Pointing to the shared objective of creating public digital goods, which have high fixed costs, he emphasized cooperation and co-investment at the international level as crucial.

Haishan Fu, World Bank, announced the delivery of promises made during the second UN World Data Forum by launching the [Global Data Facility](#), a new hub hosted by the World Bank to harmonize donor support, ensure demand-driven investments, leverage larger financing, and support domestic investments. She explained the Facility, together with the Clearinghouse, will optimize coordination and align priorities around the world.

Panelists were challenged to count and connect those who are currently not visible with the same urgency, collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships used to swiftly administer six billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines. In closing, Spatolisano, encouraged the global data and statistics community to realize the objectives of the Cape Town Global Action Plan.

Smart Investments in Data for Development: Launch of the Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data:

Moderator Johannes Jütting, PARIS21, introduced the recently launched Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data. Haishan Fu, World Bank, called for the mobilization of domestic resources and coordinated international approaches and referred to the Clearinghouse and the World Bank’s Global Data Facility as instruments to inform country engagement and promote knowledge.

Francesca Perucci, UNSD, said the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data requires mobilizing funding for data that values national ownership and transparent decision making. Ida Mc Donnell, OECD, outlined how the Clearinghouse supports a path forward based on joining forces for progress, strengthening data uptake, and improving guidance.

Shaïda Badiee, Open Data Watch, discussed additional details about the Clearinghouse, highlighting that it references 36,000 projects, 23 international development assistance country profiles,

seven development agency profiles, and 700 downloadable resources. Jurei Yada, PARIS21, demonstrated the [Clearinghouse website](#), including for accessing information on funding flows and opportunities, gender financing data, and trends.

Josh Lozman, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, via pre-recorded video message, pledged continued support to advance the Clearinghouse as a sustainable architecture for more, and better, gender data financing. Mercy Kanyuka, National Statistics Office, MALAWI, said the Clearinghouse supports transparent resource mobilization, evidence-based planning, and regional partnerships and coordination. Ivan Murenzi, National Institute of Statistics, RWANDA, noted the usefulness of engaging relevant stakeholders, which furthers coordination and commitments.

Thomas Gass, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, celebrated the launch as evidence of the power to connect globally, increase transparency, and collaborate with one another.

High-level Plenary: Data for Accountability to the People

On Wednesday, 6 October, Amina J. Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General, in a pre-recorded video message, highlighted that data is key to driving change and putting data in the hands of citizens fosters transparency and accountability. She called for putting data to work for a safer and more just world for all.

Sowmya Kidambi, Department of Rural Government, Telangana, India, shared insights into a legally mandated public auditing of social welfare schemes in her region that aims to ensure tax funds effectively reach their intended beneficiaries. She highlighted the transversality of such public scrutiny mechanisms, pointing to examples in civil society initiatives in Kenya and South Africa. Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director, Twaweza East Africa, delineated his organization’s experience in conducting public polls on issues such as mobile phone taxation, openness towards refugees, and support for teen mothers returning to public school, and using this to lobby governments. He stressed the importance of feeding back results to poll participants, noting this empowers people and communities.

Fridah Githuku, Executive Director, GROOTS Kenya, highlighted the importance of engaging affected communities in co-creation, pointing to community-led data collection and advocacy work on gender equity and noting this empowers women to engage with decision makers. Georges-Simon Ulrich, Director General, Swiss Federal Statistical Office, underscored the role of NSOs as data stewards, ensuring quality standards and public accessibility to data. He emphasized the need to develop capacity on working with new tools, such as machine learning, and address the built-in biases these can carry.

On addressing data quality, Eyakuze asserted no compromise exists for rigor, outlining engagement with NSOs and efforts to build credibility with communities. Githuku concurred on the value of earning trust and credibility and Kidambi underscored the need for open and accessible data, saying “data collected from citizens must feed back to citizens.”

On communicating data products, Ulrich noted the role of media as a multiplier. Githuku explained that engaging with design tools and analysis promotes investment and ownership of dissemination. Eyakuze mentioned interest by the government of Tanzania to explore non-traditional sources of data, such as citizen science. Kidambi indicated how simplifying data opens accessibility. Githuku observed the presence of adequate government funding in areas the government is comfortable with,



Alicia Maldonado, UN Youth Delegate from Peru

and a lack of funding in areas it is less comfortable with. Kidambi spoke about the need for an accountability law for grievances related to data protection.

Patricia Danzi, Director General, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, highlighted, *inter alia*: the need for accountability for both the state and citizens; the value of partnerships; and different experiences to use data, such as bringing the government to the people in India.

Closing Session

Closing the third UN World Data Forum on Wednesday afternoon in a plenary session, Amina J. Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General, joined virtually to highlight the opportunity to leapfrog from the innovative partnerships created during the COVID-19 pandemic. She welcomed the initiatives launched at the Forum, namely: the Global Data Facility; the Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data; and the Complex Risk Analytics Fund. She said, “data is power, and is key to policy development and planning,” underscoring the need to level the playing field and enable citizens to use data for advocacy.

Alicia Maldonado, UN Youth Delegate, Peru, underscored the importance of data for “making invisible people visible” by actively engaging them in conversations on policy decisions. Nicolas Kurek, UN Youth Delegate, Switzerland, highlighted the importance of basing decision making on complete and accurate data, and called for more discussions on data privacy regulations for the private sector.

Francesca Perucci, UNSD, presented the [Bern Data Compact](#) for the UN Decade on Action for the SDGs, providing commitments to strengthen partnerships and leverage data solutions to produce inclusive data. Thomas Gass, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, said “we have it in our hands to give the power to the people,” which is necessary to get everyone involved and to achieve the SDGs.

Elsa Dhuli, Instat ALBANIA, announced the fourth UN World Data Forum will be hosted in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China, in April 2023, and the fifth in Medellín, Colombia, in 2024. Georges-Simon Ulrich, Director General, Swiss Federal Statistical Office, presented Jiang Xiaowei, Chinese Embassy in Switzerland, with a traditional Swiss bell. Xiaowei accepted, saying he looked forward to China hosting the next Forum. Juan Daniel Oviedo Arango, Director General, Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, welcomed all to Colombia in 2024, expressing belief the data community can help ensure sustainable development is inclusive and effective.

Stefan Schweinfest, Director, UNSD, celebrated the 2021 UN World Data Forum as a great demonstration of passion and enthusiasm, reporting 6983 virtual participants and urging all to “stick together.” Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General, UN DESA, via video message, congratulated participants on the important advancement of cutting-edge data solutions and

partnerships, reinforcing that in our common future, data is central. Ulrich closed the Forum, urging everyone to take the inspiration home and turn it to action.

Upcoming Meetings

Second Building Bridges Conference: Building Bridges is an open and collaborative effort that aims to accelerate the transition to a more sustainable economy in Switzerland and abroad, promoting the finance community’s contribution to realizing the SDGs. **dates:** 29 November-2 December 2021 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** www.buildingbridges.org/

UN Economic and Social Council’s 2022 Partnership Forum: The Partnership Forum will discuss ways to define and promote effective partnerships and how partnerships can best advance the sustainable development agenda and the 17 SDGs. **date:** 2 February 2022 **location:** New York City, US **www:** undocs.org/en/E/2021/L.34

Resumed fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA): The overall theme of UNEA-5 is “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.” The event will be followed by a special session of the to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the UN Environment Programme, from 3-4 March 2022. **dates:** 28 February-2 March 2022 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea5

Seventh UN Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum): The STI Forum is expected to discuss science, technology, and innovation cooperation around thematic areas for implementation of the SDGs, congregating all relevant stakeholders to actively contribute in their area of expertise. **dates:** 5-6 May 2022 **location:** New York City, US **www:** www.un.org/ecosoc/en/events/2022/multi-stakeholder-forum-science-technology-and-innovation-sustainable-development-goals

Tenth session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF): This HLPF session will hold in-depth reviews of SDGs 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 14 (life below water), 15 (life on land), and 17 (partnerships for the Goals). **dates:** 5-15 July 2022 **location:** New York City, US **www:** sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf

Fourth UN World Data Forum: The fourth edition of the UN World Data Forum will convene in April 2023 in Hangzhou, China. **dates:** tbd **location:** Hangzhou, China **www:** unstats.un.org/unsd/undataforum/

For additional upcoming events, see sdg.iisd.org/

Glossary

CSO	Civil society organization
IDP	Internally displaced people
IIASA	Institute for Advanced Systems Analysis
NSO	National Statistics Office
PARIS21	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN DESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNSC	UN Statistical Commission
UNSD	UN Statistics Division
WHO	World Health Organization