



The Multilateral Development Banks, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations taking further steps to collaborate on Statistics for Sustainable Development

In early 2013, the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations (UN) anticipated the role of data in the ambitious post-2015 development framework. They also recognized the need to increase their collaboration to enhance statistical capacity building support to developing countries and facilitate inter-agency sharing of knowledge, tools, standards, and data to monitor post-2015 development outcomes. To record this commitment, heads of MDBs, the IMF, and the UN signed, on April 19, 2013, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on *Cooperation on Statistical Activities*.

As the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) process has advanced, the importance of data as a means of support for development has become globally recognized. Through the preparation of the Addis Ababa Accord, member states have acknowledged that high-quality, disaggregated, and timely data are essential for informed and transparent decision-making. Member states have also agreed that a focus on data and country-level data systems is especially important to strengthen domestic capacity and accountability. The Addis Ababa Accord recognizes that the fundamental responsibility for organizing the global development partnership lies with governments; but success will depend on the resources, knowledge, ingenuity and cooperation of private sector, civil society, scientific community, academia, philanthropists and foundations, parliaments, local authorities, volunteers and other stakeholders.

MOU signatories recognize that it is time to step up their existing collaborations in an effort to support countries. In this context, they stand ready to work with other actors - civil society, private sector, and foundations - engaged in the development data agenda. This collective must recognize the challenge to build sustainable national information systems that focus on national and local priorities, and at the same time follow international standards in order to allow aggregation for regional and global analysis.

In its report, "A World That Counts", the UN Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable

Development (IEAG) recommended four priority areas for action. The MOU signatories will scale up their efforts in these action areas as follows.

Improving Principles and Standards

The 2013 MOU sets out 9 guiding principles to enhance coordination on statistical activities. These principles recognized the centrality of country ownership and leadership when outlining statistical development plans for countries, fostered greater collaboration and coordination when providing assistance, and promoted greater use of data that are being collected by the local and international communities.

MOU signatories reaffirm their commitment to the principles of the 2013 MOU, and recognize that high level principles such as data quality, disaggregation, dissemination, usability, openness, timeliness, and privacy are central to strengthening country data systems.

The MOU signatories will continue to play a key role in setting standards based on our core professional commitment and the principles drawing from the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics to guide collective actions within the global development data community and according to common norms. The recent work of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) on traditional and new data sources, transformative agenda for official statistics, modernization of statistical systems, endorsements of the IMF enhanced General Data Dissemination System, and the creation of a UN Inter-secretarial Working Group on Household Surveys are part of their continuing efforts to guide capacity development and support greater comparability of data over time and across countries.

Signatories also recognize that other groups advancing the data agenda have put forward principles in keeping with these themes including the Open Data Charter, the Africa Data Consensus, and The Open Government Partnership Principles. New partnerships to support data should draw on principles such as these as they contribute to a common framework for collaboration.

Technology, Innovation and Analysis

More attention must be given to how the technology revolution can spur sustained improvements to country data systems. There are opportunities of complementing traditional sources with the use of new and emerging data sources in statistical production processes for monitoring and analysis based on official statistics, improving systems for global data sharing, identifying and filling research gaps and creating incentives for various actors - including civil society and private sector - to meet these challenges. The Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics, established under the UNSC, will be a key contributor to ensuring that the confluence of new data sources with conventional approaches meet quality and suitability requirements for development needs.

However, these activities alone will not be sufficient to produce more timely data for effective policy use. A collective dialogue with data producers and users on how institutional structures may have to be changed to maximize the value of new kinds of information will be critical.

Financing, Capacity and Resources

Funding for development data – a key public good – is part of the SDG financing challenge. Increases to domestic resources for data are an essential part of the SDG financing model. More domestic resources would demonstrate country ownership and trigger more financing from development partners. Donors must improve the coordination of aid for data, and adopt and expand innovative approaches to funding.

The MOU signatories commit to targeting funding for official statistics and the engagement with the broader development data community. Targeting funding to those who need it most entails encouraging the

efficient deployment of aid that reflects a country's ability to self-finance the necessary public investments, its commitment to pursue evidence-based decisions, and its capacity to absorb funding efficiently.

The signatories commit to improving their coordination of resources for country-led programs with national ownership. Investments in national information systems to produce relevant, timely and high quality development data should be better coordinated to support the most important development issues facing decision-makers, and ensure that data is accessible and maximum value can be extracted from its production.

To ensure improvements are sustained, predictable and sustainable resources from governments and international institutions are required and should be used to support and strengthen country systems to produce data that can make a difference at the national and local level – while also monitoring international commitments.

Leadership

The MOU signatories, while building the momentum for the agreed statistical activities related to official statistics, endorse in principle the idea of a regular “World Forum on Sustainable Development Data” to provide a complementary platform for innovation, knowledge sharing and technology transfer, and to provide regular opportunities for engagement between private, public and community level data producers and users. Signatories commit to working with other interested parties to ensure a forum would provide concrete steps and actions to engage policy makers at global, regional, national, and local levels as well as support better pathways for official statistics and development data to support the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.



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