



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 October 2017

Original: English

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-sixth session

31 January–7 February 2018

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty to
achieve sustainable development for all**

Statement submitted by Community Systems Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Data for All: A Data Strategy for the Eradication of Poverty to Achieve Sustainable Development for All

I. Objective

The objective of this the Data for All strategy is to strengthen the SDG monitoring capacities of lower-income countries for improved governance and service delivery to drive progress toward sustainable development. The expected accomplishments are:

(a) **Software Development.** To use a collaborative, open source software approach to design, develop, test, deploy and manage a platform of SDG monitoring tools in consultation with Member States and international experts within the UN system.

(b) **Capacity Building.** To strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems to regularly produce and use a comprehensive set of reliable and relevant SDG indicator data to guide policymakers in monitoring national development priorities.

Development Issues Addressed

In the deliberations leading up to the 2030 Agenda, many Member States have shared their concerns about significant capacity gaps in data and analytics to support the objectives of the agenda. National statistical offices (NSOs) have express their need for technical support in monitoring the increased volume and added complexity of the SDG indicators, including subnational data disaggregated by a wider spectrum of socio-economic characteristics (age, sex, residence, wealth quintile, disability). SDG monitoring tools are needed that will produce a much wider set of data to support government performance, service delivery, transparency, and accountability.

Linkages to Normative and Analytical Work of the UN System

This strategy will provide a global platform for the UN system to leverage its pivotal role in providing support to the normative and analytical work required for successful monitoring of the SDGs by national statistical systems. The strategy will promote compliance with emerging international statistical standards endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission.

II. Overview of the Issue as It Relates to the Work of CSF

This strategy addresses the six strategic areas of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data.

Strategic Area 1: Coordination and strategic leadership on data for sustainable development. This strategy strengthens the role of national statistical offices in coordination of data between government data producers and consumers by integrating SDG monitoring tools into a seamless, well-organized platform. The strategy deploys a coordination mechanism for the collection, management, and dissemination of sustainable development statistics.

Strategic Area 2: Innovation and modernization of national statistical systems. This strategy promotes the modernization of governance and institutional frameworks that will help meet the demands of evolving data ecosystems. The strategy will

increase access to data on key national development priorities and improve the transparency of official statistics, in compliance with the principles of open data and consistent with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The strategy will promote the application of new software technologies and new data sources into mainstream statistical activities.

Strategic Area 3: Strengthening of basic statistical activities and programmes, with focus on addressing the monitoring needs of the 2030 Agenda. The strategy will support countries in the compilation and use of disaggregated data on SDG indicators. This strategy will broaden the scope of data sources for effective SDG monitoring. The system will use traditional reliable data sources (household surveys, population censuses, civil registration and vital statistics systems) and strengthen administrative management information systems (health, education). The strategy will help advance the use of new innovative data sources, including integration with geospatial data and information and, where relevant, crowdsourcing (disaster response planning), mobile device data collection, smart-meters, other citizen-generated data, and polling civil society. The strategy will strengthen statistical processes to improve access and use of disaggregated data to focus on the most vulnerable sections of society.

Strategic Area 4: Dissemination and use of sustainable development data. The strategy will implement innovative strategies to improve the dissemination and use of data for sustainable development. The strategy will focus on communication and dissemination strategies for policy-makers, legislators, the media, the public, and academia.

Strategic Area 5: Multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development data. The strategy will strengthen partnership of national and international statistical system through a collaborative platform for SDG monitoring tools.

Strategic Area 6: Mobilize resources and coordinate efforts for statistical capacity building. The strategy will assist countries in mobilizing resources for statistical activities to support SDG monitoring. The collaborative platform will allow countries to share resources and to build appropriate SDG monitoring tools based on agreed priorities and standards to implement the SDG indicator framework.

III. Specific examples of accomplishments by CSF and remaining challenges

This strategy builds in the achievements and lessons learned during the last fifteen years in the process of monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). During this period, countries strengthened their statistical capacities to monitor national development priorities through the use of tools, such as, the UN DevInfo (www.devinfo.org) database system, which was launched in 2004 and implemented in more than 120 countries by 2015 with technical support and implementation by CSF.

Lesson 1. Innovative, Nationally-Owned Tools for Monitoring Indicators. The UN DevInfo initiative gave full ownership of the system to national partners. This mode of engagement provided for the technology transfer required to build the capacity of national statistical systems, while, at the same time, it provided international expert guidance on the technical aspects of the MDG indicator framework, the indicator metadata, and quality assurance measures. The system allowed for the customization of MDG indicators to meet national development priorities. It allowed for multiple sources of data for the same indicator to be compared and stored in the system, and informed users of the reasons for differences between nationally and internationally reported data. This mode of

engagement of the UN system with Member States provided an effective and sustainable data management innovation with NSOs leading the way.

Lesson 2. Tool Development Strategy. Another lesson learned is that the best strategy for tool development is to embrace a collaborative approach of open source software development of tools for SDG indicator monitoring. Under this software development methodology, the monitoring system source code is made available under open source license to analyse, change and improve its design over time. The open source software license ensures that all contributions to the development of the tools are consistent with the overall requirements of national development needs and UN global monitoring requirements, particularly the need to monitor disaggregated SDG indicator data.

Lesson 3. Statistical Standards with Flexibility for National Customization. A third lesson learned is that indicator monitoring systems are most successful when developed based on international statistical standards. The UN DevInfo system was designed based on three emerging international standards in the production and dissemination of statistical information. These included standards for data and metadata exchange (www.sdmx.org), geographic standards (ISO 19115), and citation of data sources (www.ddialliance.org), and aid transparency standards for allocation and use of resources (www.aidtransparency.net). In addition, it was learned that it is critical to the design of the system to provide the flexibility within the system for national customization of the international standards to meet national user requirements.

Lesson 4. Implementation Principles. These key underlying implementation principles have proven to be successful:

- National leadership with full participation and engagement of national and global stakeholders in diagnosis, formulation and implementation of monitoring frameworks;
- Alignment of development indicator monitoring within the overall national and global development goals and objectives, such as national development plans and UN Development Assistance Frameworks;
- An exit strategy which results in a UN/government-owned indicator monitoring system integrated with a robust decision-support, and with the management of the system transferred to key UN/government institutions without dependencies on external technical support.

Lesson 5. Brand Strategy. Another important lesson learned is the importance of designing a powerful brand strategy to advocate for the use of a common platform of development monitoring tools. Brand consistency will contribute to brand recognition across the UN system and Member States. The brand should be flexible enough to offer creative solutions for specific-country customizations.

IV. Recommendations

CSF recommends that the UN system and Member States should endorse the Data for All strategy to develop and maintain a platform of open source software tools for monitoring national development priorities, including the Sustainable Development Goals. The DFA platform will promote interoperability within the ecosystem of socioeconomic statistics by complying with international standards. The toolkit will be a tightly-aligned, loosely-coupled set of open source software modules that are designed to meet the continuum of statistical business processes to capture, manage, and disseminate SDG data. For details see: www.dataforall.org.