



MESSAGE FROM THE UN

International Conference on Sustainable Development Goals Statistics
“Level Up: Shaping a Strong Data Ecosystem for Monitoring SDGs”
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By

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Secretary Ernesto Pernia of the National Economic and Development Authority,

National Statistician Lisa Grace Bersales of the Philippine Statistics Authority,

Statistics Officials from over 50 countries represented in this International Conference,

Representatives from the different national agencies and local government units,

Colleagues from the United Nations and other development partners,

Friends from civil society organizations,

Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is a pleasure to be here today at the 2017 International Conference on Sustainable Development Goals Statistics.

The theme of the Conference “Level Up: Shaping a Strong Data Ecosystem for Monitoring SDGs” recognizes that much work on SDG monitoring still needs to be done to ensure that no one is left behind.

By leveling up, we recognize the great opportunity to scale up the coverage of traditional data sources.

Tracking progress on the Sustainable Development Goals requires an unprecedented amount of data and statistics at all levels. The recent report of the UN Secretary-General on progress towards the SDGs highlights that this expectation poses a major challenge for national and international statistical systems.

It is estimated that developing countries need \$1 billion in statistical support annually from domestic and donor sources to meet the data requirements of the Sustainable Development Goals.

However, in 2014, developing countries only received \$338 million in financial support for statistics, which accounted for only 0.18 per cent of total ODA. Obviously, much support is still needed.

Beyond financing, data gaps are one of the biggest challenges in monitoring SDG achievement. These data gaps particularly apply to measuring progress against the targets for the environment, climate change, and governance. Indicators relating to these targets are not in place or are not collected regularly and methodologies for effectively collecting data against these indicators are largely still in their infancy,.

The challenge of obtaining comprehensive disaggregated data also looms large across countries in the Region. Data disaggregation based on geographic location, sex, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religion allows countries to have an evidence base to reach the most vulnerable and remote populations. These

groups are often the hardest to reach and are left behind by traditional development efforts.

Ultimately, the availability of disaggregated data is essential to monitoring progress on the commitment of countries to “Leave No One Behind”

Levelling up also underlines the need to move beyond traditional data sources and to identify and incorporate non traditional sources.

Data innovations are critical to gain a more nuanced understanding of development challenges, with the end goal of improving people’s lives.

The good news is that we live in an era of the data revolution. In South East Asia & Oceania alone, 28 million 5G (5th generation mobile networks) subscriptions and 180 million cellular Internet of Things (IOT) subscriptions are predicted by 2022, while the mobile data traffic is projected to grow by eleven-fold in the same period.

Information about location, social patterns, movement, population density, finances and even ambient environmental conditions can be derived from the data logged in mobile systems. As this data is uniquely detailed and tractable, it can capture information not easily found from other sources at a scale that would be difficult to recreate through other means.

Data coming from social media, financial transactions and call records, sensors, drone and satellite imagery also provide us with an almost unlimited wealth of data that we can tap into to understand and tackle development challenges.

Direct and realtime feedback loops to inform policy and programs are also critical. The UN’s MY World survey, for instance, is a good example of how a data crowdsourcing platform was used to gather votes globally on important development topics, which eventually informed the development of the 2030 agenda.

Harnessing these new types of data can bring down the resource requirements for timely and disaggregated data collection. It can also enable countries across the world to inform policies with evidence, while ensuring more robust monitoring of progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Experts across sectors however have suggested that despite its potential, the use of big data for social good remains largely in the pilot phase, a situation common to many cutting-edge fields. While the examples to date are compelling in showing the range of potential uses for this data to serve the social good through the achievement of the SDGs, the lack of examples that have scaled or become sustainable indicates there are still gaps that need to be addressed.

We in UNDP, recognize the potential of big data to strengthen the quality and availability of data for SDG monitoring and reporting. Building on the strong partnership with the Philippines Statistical Authority and its partners, we are committed to ensure a strong linkage between national statistical efforts and the global goals.

Statistics plays a big role in sustainable development. It serves as a key foundation in the design of policies and programmes, in planning, decisionmaking, as well as in monitoring and evaluating the progress of the SDGs.

Partnerships for statistical development are vital and should consider bringing together governments, NGOs, development partners, and private sector in data sharing efforts for measuring and driving forward sustainable development.

The volume of data is exploding. More data has been created in the past two years than in the entire previous history of the human race. However, while the amount of digital data being created globally is doubling every two years, only 0.5 percent of it is ever analyzed.

Many people still go uncounted – including some of the most vulnerable populations groups. Mediocre and antiquated data are among the challenges.

Take into consideration that potentially 250 million people worldwide are not covered by household surveys. In other words, as many as 25-30 percent more people could be living on less than \$1.90 a day than current estimates suggest. This only adds to the importance of collecting timely and accurate information.

There is an urgent need to mobilize the data revolution for everyone in order to monitor progress, hold governments accountable and foster sustainable development.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Philippine Statistics Authority and the UN Statistics Division for organizing the 2017 International Conference on SDG Statistics.

We look forward to working with all of you here to make statistics a powerful tool in combatting inequality and in “Leaving No One Behind.”

Thank you.