

IODC¹⁸ PRE-EVENT

OUTCOME REPORT

National Reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals

**Using open data and interoperability
to maximize impact**

International Open Data Conference,
Buenos Aires, Argentina September 26th, 2018



This outcome report has been prepared for Open Data for Development by Open Data Watch.

Introduction

On September 26th, 2018, Open Data for Development (OD4D), working with PARIS21, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD), World Bank, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), and Open Data Watch, convened an International Open Data Conference (IODC) pre-event on the intersection of open data, interoperability, and national reporting and dissemination platforms for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The event, titled [National Reporting for the SDGs: Using open data interoperability to maximize impact](#), featured representatives from seven national statistical offices (NSOs) who were invited to give their perspectives on SDG reporting and the challenges and opportunities that come alongside it. Presentations were also given by colleagues from the UNSD, World Bank, OD4D, and other organizations on the state of SDG reporting and how interoperability and open data can be used to increase impact. The objective of the meeting was to continue to strengthen the links between the open data and official statistics communities. It provided a space for NSO representatives to share their experiences, including the challenges they are facing, and offered an opportunity to meet the relevant stakeholder groups who are positioned to support and learn from them.

As part of a larger effort to strengthen the links between the open data and official statistics communities, the event created a space for shared dialogue that began at the last IODC in Madrid. Working with the World Bank, PARIS21, Development Gateway, and Open Data Watch, Open Data for Development convened several sessions on open data and official statistics at the 2016 IODC. It marked the first-ever inclusion of country representatives from NSOs at the IODC. Building on last year's discussions on how to leverage open data and official statistics for the SDGs, this year's agenda expanded the focus to the intersection of open data, interoperability, and national reporting and dissemination platforms for the SDGs.

This year's pre-event was divided into two components: (1) scene setting remarks and flash presentations from expert organizations and NSO representatives and (2) roundtable problem solving sessions to collectively discuss common challenges with the aim of identifying practical solutions. The meeting included high-level participation from UN, IDRC, and World Bank representatives, including Tim Herzog and Craig Hammer, Program Managers at the World Bank; Francesca Perucci, Assistant Director, Statistics Division at United Nations; and Fernando Perini, Senior Program Specialist at IDRC; and Shaida Badiie, Managing Director of Open Data Watch. A full list of speakers and panelists can be found at the end of this document.

This document provides a summary of the main challenges presented at the meeting, followed by take-away points from the problem solving sessions, and concludes with a discussion of SDG reporting-related events at IODC and next steps for the SDG reporting agenda, open data, and interoperability.

State of SDG reporting and challenges identified by NSOs

The pre-event began with a series of introductory presentations on the state of open data for official statistics, open data standards, national reporting platforms, and interoperability for SDG data. Following these presentations, the seven NSO representatives from: Argentina, Ecuador, Jamaica, Malaysia, Namibia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Tanzania (not present — presentation given by Eric Swanson, Director of Research, Open Data Watch) gave flash presentations on the status of their country's national reporting for the SDGs, specifically focusing on challenges they are facing, good practices they have adopted, and progress they have achieved thus far. The presentations were followed by questions from the audience.

The questions posed to the NSO representatives focused on how the organizations present could better support the NSOs, how the SDGs and the corresponding results framework have been helpful to their work, and what tools and resources have been valuable. Similar themes arose from each of the presentations and the main challenges that were common throughout are listed below.

Data quality

Many of the data that are needed for SDG reporting are still published in PDFs and are not in machine-readable format. There are also often quality concerns regarding the data that are made available. The push to use non-traditional data sources, which some NSOs don't have the mandate to use, could exacerbate these data quality concerns as the validity of these data has yet to be fully proven. Further issues exist with integrating and aggregating spatial data with other datasets and in monitoring the use of these data.

Data disaggregation

A similar issue, but different from the data challenges above, is the problem of data disaggregation. The level of disaggregation, both at the subnational level and for the appropriate disaggregations for the "leave no one behind" movement, represent a level of granularity that many NSOs find difficult to record. Without such disaggregations, policy makers struggle to use the data to make precise, data-driven decisions.

Coordination and cooperation

Coordination between different ministries and data producers within a government, and the increasing number of actors and data producers outside of the government — non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private actors, and international agencies — was mentioned as a challenge for many of the NSOs in attendance.

Lack of capacity and resources

NSOs reported that they need more resources and capacity to report on the SDGs and fulfill their official mandate. This is especially problematic because NSOs are expected to handle and create increasingly complicated datasets and methods of dissemination. More domestic and international resources, alongside technical support to build capacity, are needed to fill these gaps.

Tackling problems and identifying solutions

With the background on SDG reporting established, the problem-solving roundtables portion of the event provided an opportunity to collectively discuss common challenges with the aim of identifying practical solutions across the three cross-cutting areas of open data, interoperability, and national reporting for the SDGs. Based on the logic that the best solutions to any problem are those that are sourced collaboratively, this portion of the event created a space in which participants from a range of sectors, many of which had not previously met, could share details of the practical problems they face in their work in the three areas of open data, interoperability, and SDG reporting. While the session primarily leveraged the knowledge and ability of participants in the room, the organizers placed at least one expert in each of the breakout groups to guide the group conversations. After the breakout groups, participants reported back on their answers to the questions. A range of challenges and possible solutions were discussed.

SDGs as a common set of goals to drive the data revolution and collaboration

Multiple NSOs agreed that the SDGs bring a sense of urgency to data collection and have helped NSOs to coordinate and enhance data quality.

Standards to reduce the reporting burden and increase interoperability

Standards for data exchanges need to be implemented to reduce the reporting burden and provide timely data to decision makers. Tags and metadata need to be made and standardized so users can trace the ownership and origin and increase the interoperability of the data. This process can also increase trust in the data. [Data Catalog Vocabulary \(DCAT\)](#) is one possible solution to this metadata challenge. The use of standards is especially important to SDG indicator reporting, non-official data, and geospatial data.

Leverage existing platforms and tools

Existing platforms should be reusable to make it easier for countries to leverage each other's investments in data infrastructure. The open-source tools and platforms that are available can be utilized as a low-cost solution for SDG reporting and can leverage work done by other countries and organizations.

Increase use of metadata and strengthen laws to increase trust in NSO data

NSO metadata should be utilized to increase trust in NSOs and their data. Freedom of information and open data laws should be strengthened to support the open data movement. Assurances need to be made that these data that are made available will not be misused or abused and that best practices to protect user privacy will be implemented.

Engage with users and other stakeholders to support data use and NSOs

A broad coalition of society members is needed to support the work of the NSO. Processes for user engagement, such as forums with users, legal representatives, and policy makers, should be implemented to get direct feedback on data use and impact. Effort should also be taken to find common goals across governments and between local and regional groups to foster collaboration. Strategic collaborations should also be made with organizations outside the government, including international agencies and NGOs.

Next steps

The pre-event was designed to start the discussion on SDG reporting, interoperability, and open data before the IODC conference. Conversations and takeaways from the pre-event were discussed at the IODC conference event National Reporting for SDGs: Open Data Priority Actions, but the topics were also discussed in several other conference sessions: Strengthening Global Commitments to Open Data, The State of Open Data, Putting Open Data Measurement to Use, and at the #ODCRefresh sessions. The takeaways from these sessions and the relationships built between the official statistics, open data, and interoperability communities was further leveraged at the [World Data Forum \(WDF\)](#).

Beyond continuing this conversation at the WDF in October 2018, the input from these discussions helped to inform the interoperability data collaboratives brief and guide as well as Open Data for Development's future work streams. Further, the NSOs will likely take their learning from IODC to their home offices and continue to be open data champions. It is hoped that the conversations started here will continue throughout the year, and there is much anticipation for the next meeting of the IODC in Kenya.

Annex

List of speakers and panelists:

Introductory and scene setting remarks:

Deirdre Appel, Master of Ceremonies, Program Manager at Open Data Watch
Craig Hammer, Program Manager at the World Bank and Secretary of the World Bank's Development Data Council
Shaída Badiée, Managing Director at Open Data Watch
Fernando Perini, Senior Program Specialist at IDRC
Francesca Perucci, Assistant Director, Statistics Division at United Nations
Katarina Rebello, Director of Programs at the Center for Open Data Enterprise
Tom Orrell, Founder of DataReady
Luis Gonzalez Morales, Statistician at the United Nations

National statistical office representatives:

Mr. Hernán Muñoz, National Director of Statistical Planning and Coordination, National Institute of Statistics and Census of Argentina, Argentina
Ms. Marsha Windross, Statistician, Statistical Institute of Jamaica, Jamaica
Mr. Alex Shimuafeni, Statistician-General & CEO: Namibia Statistics Agency, Namibia
Mr. Noel Perez, Information Technology Officer, Philippine Statistics Authority, Philippines
Ms. Nikole Pepinós, Servidor Público 1, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, Ecuador
Mr. Nebin Lal Shrestha, Deputy Director General, Central Bureau of Statistics in Nepal
Ms. Siti Haslinda Mohd Din, Director (Senior Statistician) in the Department of Statistics, Malaysia
Dr. Albina Chuwa, Director General of Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics, Tanzania (Not present — presentation given by Eric Swanson, Director of Research, Open Data Watch)

Links to relevant resources:

[IODC 2018 Brochure: National Reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals](#)
[Interoperability Data Collaborative](#)
[PowerPoint Presentations](#)
[SDG National Reporting Initiative](#)
[UN Statistics Wiki: Data Interoperability](#)



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