



Spotlight 2.2

The role of international organizations in improving public intent data

International organizations can aid countries bilaterally to address challenges regarding funding, technical capacity, governance, and data demand and create global public goods to overcome these barriers.

More and better financing for data production

Coalitions of international organizations and development partners can provide coordinated global solutions for activities that fulfill specific data needs. Governments can finance such activities either under national budgets or through loans or grants from multilateral development banks. For example, the World Bank's Data for Policy Package identifies a core set of social, economic, and sustainability statistics crucial for monitoring and evaluating development outcomes and provides governments with loans or grants to address these data needs. For relatively lower income, data-deprived countries, this aid can help governments to prioritize which gaps to fill and supplement scarce national funding. Another example is the 50x2030 Initiative to Close the Agricultural Data Gap, a multipartner initiative that seeks to transform agricultural data systems across 50 low- and middle-income countries by 2030. It uses innovative funding mechanisms, leveraging donor funding to mobilize national funding and create national ownership.

Advancing research and development in methods and tools

In addition to investing in improvements in the technical capacity of data producers and users, international organizations can also foster technical capacity more broadly by providing global public

goods through research and development in methods of data collection, curation, and analysis. For example, they can support innovations in data capture, including through portable sensors and mobile applications. These innovations must be validated rigorously through methodological research activities that compare the relative accuracy, cost-effectiveness, and feasibility of new and traditional methods of data collection. Based on such research, guidelines can be formulated for integrating validated innovations into surveys, censuses, and administrative records. International organizations can play an important role in carrying out such research and promoting these innovations and associated guidelines. Partnerships between international organizations and national statistical offices (NSOs) in methodological research and development increase the likelihood that innovations in data capture will be adopted and implemented.

Developing, disseminating, and implementing global standards for statistical activities

International organizations can also support efforts to develop, disseminate, and implement international standards and guidelines for statistical activities. International statistical standards and guidelines need to be disseminated and adopted at the country level for data to be comparable across countries and hence for policy makers to be able to compare their performance with that of their peers. Among many examples are the Systems of National Accounts



developed by the United Nations in collaboration with several other partners; the International Labour Organization's International Standard Classification of Occupations; and the monitoring and harmonization of data related to drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene by the World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Technical collaboration—including joint research among like-minded international organizations, NSOs, technical partners, and academia—is critical to the successful production of international standards and guidelines, as are international forums for peer review, discussion, endorsement, and promotion of these public goods.

Coordinating actions to ensure the effective diffusion of public goods and funding activities

In the absence of coordination, organizations might finance overlapping activities or fragment investments, overwhelm national data systems, or produce conflicting standards and guidelines. The Inter-Agency and Expert Working Groups as well as the Intersecretariat Working Groups, under the aegis of the United Nations Statistical Commission, provide a platform for catalyzing collaborative work on the

development of standards and should continue to be supported with periodic reviews of their terms of reference and desired outputs. Awareness of these working groups needs to be expanded, particularly within international organizations, to assure coordinated actions within an organization.

Making data accessible and compatible with national priorities and spurring local demand

To satisfy increasing demand for data, international organizations should make their own data, syntax files, and metadata widely available and easily accessible beyond their own institutions. The data that international organizations require, such as data on the Sustainable Development Goals, affect the data produced by countries and can even crowd out the domestic production of data. It is thus imperative for such standards and goals to be made compatible with the interests, priorities, and goals of countries. When this is the case, the data maintained by international organizations can spur local demand for cross-country data, foster their continued production, and create a virtuous cycle of data production and use.