



Financing a country-led data revolution

For the 1.25 billion people who live in the rich countries of the world, the data revolution is already happening. With the explosion in the volume, production and demand for data, people in these countries are not so much concerned about generating more data as they are about coping with the deluge of existing data – IBM estimates that every day the world generates about 1.25 quintillion bytes of data – while addressing concerns of security, confidentiality and privacy.

Fifty percent of the data ever produced has been generated over the past two years. Yet for most of the 82% of the world's people who do not live in wealthy countries, concerns are quite different. They are not about managing data, but rather about being counted in the first place. In 2013, UNICEF estimated that worldwide about 35% of all live births were not officially registered, a proportion rising to 62% in the least developed countries. A child that is not registered cannot always access health care and education, nor play a full role in society as she or he grows up. On the other hand, governments that do not know how many children are born each year, or where they live, cannot effectively plan and deliver basic services. If the data revolution is to help drive sustainable development, it must reach the poor and the places they live.

Realising the potential of the data revolution for sustainable development

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), countries will need to engage in careful measurement and monitoring to underpin effective and sustained policies, programmes and services to help lift the poor out of poverty – and keep them there. In other words, developing countries will need to fully benefit from the data revolution. Success comes when countries set their own priorities, goals and strategies using their existing national resources and institutions. To bridge the existing global data inequalities, national statistical offices (NSOs) must be at the heart of the data revolution. The well-established system of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) is the perfect tool to match data supply with demand and maximise limited resources to enable an effective worldwide data revolution. It comprises a set of core principles for managing data and a process to establish standards.

Small investments can drive big improvements in developing country data performance

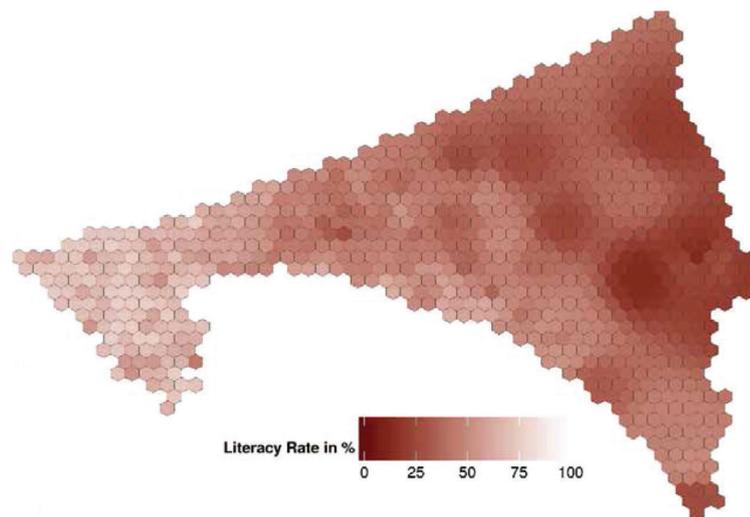
Making the data revolution a reality in developing countries will require efforts on many fronts:

- increasing funding for statistics
- exploring the potential of new sources of data
- strengthening national capacities.

Yet the amount of resources needed is relatively small: just USD 200 million a year of additional support from the international community coupled with an equivalent increase in domestic resources could enable the 77 countries in the World Bank's International Development Association to successfully monitor their progress on the 17 SDG targets and indicators.

To complete the package of short and longer-term actions to help developing countries produce the data needed for effective government planning, new forms of funding must also be fostered, such as trust funds and challenge funds. The up-front investment can yield both cost savings and better data over the long run.

FIGURE 1. ESTIMATING LITERACY RATES IN DAKAR, SENEGAL USING MOBILE PHONE DATA



Source: Cookbook for a socio-demographic basket: Constructing key performance indicators with digital breadcrumbs, Bruckschen, Schmid, and Zbiranski (2014).

Beyond funding, new sources and forms of data are needed to help fill data gaps, such as satellite images, call logs, social media and big data. Lessons are being learned from pilots and projects making use of such information to answer countries' needs. For instance, in Senegal a research project is using mobile phone data to estimate literacy rates. By consistently incorporating this data deluge into their programmes and planning, countries can improve the quantity, frequency, disaggregation and availability of relevant statistics.

Nonetheless, more funding and better data will not suffice to ensure effective policymaking; greater collaboration at the national, regional and international level will be essential. Strengthened partnerships with a scope beyond the traditional statistical and development community will help to make this possible. A large number of stakeholders within countries will also need to be engaged, including statistical offices and other public and private data producers, civil society organisations, the media, political leaders, decision makers, business leaders, investors and many more. International and regional organisations will have an important role to play. All actors will need to remain as engaged as possible to ensure that the data needs of developing countries are at the top of their agenda. Finally, the World Forum on Sustainable Development Data and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data can build on existing initiatives to drive change on the ground, helping to produce better data for better lives.

Ingredients for a country-led data revolution

PARIS21, with the financial support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, published a *Road Map for a Country-led Data Revolution*, a step-by-step guide to help developing countries produce more and better data to measure and monitor progress towards the SDGs. The PARIS21 road map is grounded in the experiences collected through an online compendium on the organisation, management and performance of national statistical systems – the *Metabase* – and through an online *Innovations Inventory* of existing solutions for filling data gaps, reducing costs and improving efficiency.

More information on: <http://datarevolution.paris21.org/>

Founded in 1999, PARIS21 promotes the better use and production of statistics throughout the developing world. The partnership has mapped out the main building blocks in how to better assist developing countries in measuring and monitoring the SDGs and will continue to pave the way forward by promoting use of statistics nationally, regionally and globally.

More information at: <http://paris21.org/>