

The **UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)** was launched by UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon in 2012 to mobilize global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical problem solving for sustainable development, including the design and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Within this initiative, SDSN hosts an expert **Thematic Network (TN) on Data for Sustainable Development** comprised of statisticians, data scientists, and other leading experts from academic and scientific institutions, private companies, and non-governmental organizations. This TN operates under the leadership of three co-chairs:

Shaida Badiee, Open Data Watch, Washington DC, USA

Shaida Badiee is Managing Director and co-founder of the Open Data Watch, an NGO providing knowledge and assistance to promote open and high-quality development data. She brings several decades of experience in managing global development statistics as the long-time Director of the World Bank's Development Data Group.



Robert S. Chen, CIESIN, New York, USA

Robert Chen is director of CIESIN, the Center for International Earth Science Information Network, a research unit of the Earth Institute at Columbia University in New York. He manages the NASA Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center (SEDAC), a unique source of interdisciplinary, open access geospatial data and information focused on human- environment interactions.



Enrico Giovannini, University of Rome Tor Vergata, Rome, Italy

Enrico Giovannini is an Italian economist and statistician who serves as an expert advisor and board member on various high level panels in Europe and globally. Most recently he is serving as the co-chair of the Independent Expert Advisory Group (IEAG) on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, established by the Secretary General of the United Nations.



What do we do?

TN on Data's objective is to serve as an information and education hub on data collection, processing, and dissemination for sustainable development. It seeks to identify solution-oriented approaches to measuring the progress on the SDGs, to strengthen the cross-sectoral

and multi-scalar analysis of data for SDG monitoring, and encourage greater frequency and quality of data production. Additionally, TN on Data works on identifying and promoting new, innovative ways of collecting data and building information systems for sustainable development.

This group organizes its work around two pillars: the first pillar consists of analytical and visionary work on new data infrastructures, whilst the second pillar revolves around piloting practical data-related projects and applications – under the banner of SDSN “Solutions Initiatives.” There are five key objectives, under these two broad pillars of work:

- To convene data experts from across disparate communities, sectors and institutional silos, and serve as an information and education hub on data collection, processing, decision-making, and dissemination for sustainable development.
- To recommend cost-effective, systematic applications of information-innovations and new technologies that help to drive progress on the SDGs.
- To identify solution-orientated approaches to monitoring the SDGs that strengthen the value of information systems and capability of providing cross-sectoral and multi-scalar analysis of data, with specific attention to the global and regional level.
- To review gaps in data and information systems in support of the SDGs and provide fit-for-purpose recommendations, specifically those that jump-start filling SDG data gaps and encourage methods that increase the frequency and quality of data production and reporting.
- To provide policy and technical support to national and regional networks and global partnerships preparing for data-driven SDG implementation.

Contact Us

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Solutions Initiatives

SDSN Solutions Initiatives promote new technologies, business models, institutional mechanisms, policies and combinations thereof that can dramatically accelerate progress towards sustainable development. On September 23, 2015, TN for Data launched one such solutions initiative project called **New Data Infrastructures for Sustainable Development: Technical Tools for National Policy Makers**.

The Solutions Initiative “New Data Infrastructures for Sustainable Development: Technical Tools for National Policy Makers” is putting together a team of experts to produce a “living manual” to help bring down to earth the many exciting possibilities opened up by advances in measurement technology and decision science on behalf of the SDGs. Our plan is to synthesize proven best practices that have emerged across a wide range of policy domains and jurisdictional settings. These emerging best practices point the way to developing information systems that increase value by being relevant to the highest-priority decision-making needs and that reduce costs by combining data streams in novel ways. In parallel we are working on a white paper that maps these ideas to specific clusters of national policy innovation, aimed at governments seeking to create an enabling environment capable of encouraging the most widespread adoption of these practices.

GPSDD



SDSN's TN for Data members are also closely involved in supporting the new Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD). Launched on the 28th of September 2015 at the 2015 UN General Assembly, and hosted by the United Nations Foundation (UNF), the GPSDD is a global network of governments, NGOs, and businesses working together to strengthen the inclusivity, trust, and innovation in the way that data is used to address the world's sustainable development efforts.

SDSN Secretariat and TN members actively participate in the GPSDD's Interim Steering Group (ISG) as well as across the seven working groups. Jessica Espey (SDSN Associate Director) and Shaida Badiie (TN Co-Chair) co-facilitate working groups on Data Collaboratives and Country Roadmaps. The Data Collaboratives group seeks to leverage multi-stakeholder data partnerships or 'collaboratives' that bring together diverse actors from the public, private and civil society sectors to solve a particular data challenge, or fill data gaps, for the SDGs. The Country Roadmaps group aims to help countries develop a strategy for strengthening their national data and statistical systems to monitor the SDGs, by strengthening existing infrastructures and looking to new monitoring approaches.

Some of GPSDD's recent activities are:

Open Government Partnership in Mexico (Oct. 28, 2015)

Sanjeev Khagram, coordinator of GPSDD, moderated a multi-stakeholder debate on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development and its synergies with open government, particularly in the form of open data for achieving and monitoring the SDGs.

Sustainable Development Goals Community Event (September, 2015)

USG working with members of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data hosted the first of a series of community data events, starting with one in September in Washington DC bringing together policy makers, data scientists, statisticians, application developers, and other data users and producers. The aim is to look together for new ways to find solutions and identify opportunities to fill the SDG data gaps, identifying new or existing data sources, data analysis, and data sharing methods for sustainable development data. Based on the lessons learned from the September event, other events will be organized to replicate it in other locations and to collect and share the results.

IEAG-SDG Indicators Process

The 46th Session of the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) marked an important moment in the development of an SDG monitoring system. The Commission provided recommendations on a roadmap for developing indicators, including the establishment of a multi-stakeholder process, via the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). UN Statistics Division (UNSD), within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, serves as the Secretariat for the IAEG-SDGs. UNSD developed the first preliminary long list of SDG indicators, and has managed the list and led the process since the work of the IAEG-SDGs was formally launched in June 2015. The group will present its recommendations for to the UNSC ahead of their next session in March 2016.

Over the past one year, SDSN has done extensive work on identification of key indicators for SDG monitoring, identifying pathways for statistical capacity development for countries, and developing financial strategies to support the data revolution for sustainable development. With this expertise, SDSN has actively contributed to the discussions and the decision-making of the IEAG-SDG.

More information can be found at:
<http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/members>

News from our Members

Jeffrey D. Sachs, et al.

Jeffrey D. Sachs, Professor of Sustainable Development, Professor of Health Policy and Management, and Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, is also Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on the Millennium Development Goals. His books include *The End of Poverty*, *Common Wealth*, and, most recently, *The Age of Sustainable Development*.



The Data Revolution for Sustainable Development

The TN for Data's co-chairs, in collaboration with Jeffrey D. Sachs wrote an article on Sep 18th, 2015 to emphasize the importance of the ability of governments, businesses, and civil society to harness data for decision-making, and the importance of investing in building innovative data systems that draw on new sources of real-time data for sustainable development.

The authors talk about the importance of using mobile apps and other innovations in technology to enable more real-time measurements of data such as health, education, and economic transactions, to enable smart decisions and to significantly reduce lag-times. With this motivation, this article declares the creation of a new Thematic Network on Data for Sustainable Development.

The full article can be accessed at:

<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/sdgs-data-collection-by-jeffrey-d-sachs-et-al-2015-09>

Keith D. Shepherd

Keith D. Shepherd leads the Science Domain on Land Health Decisions at the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF), Nairobi, Kenya, and heads Decision Analysis and Information Systems in the Research Program on Water, Land, and Ecosystems at the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).



How Much Development Data is Enough?

In an article dated Dec 29th, 2015 — Keith cautions towards the overestimation of the amount of data and a misunderstanding of what type of data is needed to make a good decision, in reference to the data revolution. The key recommendation in this article is to combine understanding of behavior with universal principles of coherent decision-making. Keith proposes a three step approach to minimize these risks.

The full article can be accessed at:

<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/decision-science-role-in-policy-making-by-keith-d-shepherd-2015-12>

Virginia Murray

Professor Virginia Murray is a consultant in Global Disaster Risk Reduction, Public Health England. She is a visiting professor in Health Protection, MRC-HPA Center for Environment and Health, Imperial College and King's College, London, and a Policy Fellow Alum at the Centre for Science and Policy.



Over the past several months, Virginia and other members have been actively participating and making valuable contributions in the realm of Disaster Risk Reduction. Virginia will be representing the UNISDR at the upcoming Open-ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group (OIEWG) on Terminology and Indicators related to DRR meeting, to be held from 9th to 11th February 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland. She will also be participating in the upcoming UNISDR Science and Technology Conference on the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 -2030, to be also held in Geneva from 27th to 29th January 2016.

More information can be found at: <http://www.unisdr.org/partners/academia-research/conference/2016/>