

4th Expert Meeting

Conference Room 12, UNHQ, New York
6 – 8 December 2017

Summary Report

The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicator (IAEG-SDGs) Working Group on Geospatial Information met from 6 - 8 December 2017 in Conference Room 12, General Assembly Building, UN Headquarters, New York. There was a total of 30 participants comprising of 12 members, 14 invited experts and presenters, and four observers. In addition, three Secretariat staff members were in attendance and supported the three-day meeting.

The Working Group held its third meeting in Kunming, China, from 6 – 8 May 2017, deliberated on issues related to disaggregation according to geographic location, and data availability to produce indicators. The group recognized that disaggregation of national statistical data is considerably strengthened through the “geographic location” lens, and the need to demonstrate the availability and usability of geospatial information including Earth observations for SDG monitoring.

At its fourth meeting, the Working Group had three days of in-depth discussions and deliberations that were substantively aided by a total of 29 presentations delivered by members of the Working Group, invited experts and invited presenters. Of the 29 presentations, six were delivered by colleagues from United Nations Statistics Division. The members and invited participants commented at the end of the meeting that the presentations from UNSD were valuable, provided helpful information and context, informed their deliberations, and contributed to their decisions at the end of the meeting.

The Working Group had recognized that the disaggregation of national statistical data is considerably strengthened through the lens of geospatial information, and the meeting considered at length the issue of aggregation of geocoded unit level data alongside disaggregation. The meeting welcomed several country level presentations that demonstrated the inclusion of relevant and applicable international (global), new and complementary data in the production of certain indicators. Expert representatives of space agencies invited to the meeting informed of their initiatives to make available “analysis or production ready” satellite time series for the production of indicators.

The Working Group on Geospatial Information, after its fourth meeting, consists of 17 national representatives who are subject matter experts from 16 Member States, and 7 experts representing United Nations System and international organizations. The group is co-chaired by Mexico and Sweden.

Key Outcomes

- 1) Disaggregation by geographic location
Working Group to –
 - ask the Task Team on Disaggregation (established in its meeting in Mexico City, December 2016) to finalize and summarize its findings;
 - engage IAEG-SDGs on their current work stream on disaggregation and contribute its “geographic lens” expertise;
 - consider both aggregation of geocoded unit level data alongside disaggregation;



- work with the Expert Group on Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information that reports to Statistical Commission and UN-GGIM; and
- leverage the five key principles of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework.

2) Data availability

Working Group noted that –

- space agencies (particularly those active in EO4SDG initiative of GEO) have both expertise, resources and willing to contribute and to make available appropriate analysis or production ready dataset to support NSOs to produce indicators;
- some have experience and ongoing collaboration with certain NSOs and custodian agencies; and
- there is the commitment to ensure free and open satellite time series (a certain number) are available at least until 2030.

Working Group to -

- consider “pathway” for NSOs to uptake appropriate analysis or production ready dataset contributed by space agencies and this will include pilot studies/projects, guidance on methodology and training; and
- consider a modality to work with space agencies where countries (and custodian agencies) can address its data and methodological gaps. These can include feasibility studies; pilot projects, demonstration projects; and training initiatives.

3) Contribution to the work of custodian agencies

Working Group is ready to –

- engage and work with custodians and countries, where appropriate, to address methodological gaps, definitional issues and data availability of Tier III and Tier II indicators; and
- consider collaborating with custodian agencies in feasibility studies; demonstration projects; piloting initiatives; training programmes, including for Tier I indicators.

4) Application of international (global), new and complementary data

Working Group to -

- ask the two Task Teams, first on International (Global) Data, and the second on Alternative Data Sources (both established at its meeting in Mexico City) to complete its joint report on international (global), new and complementary data;
- consider developing guidance to national statistical offices on how to adopt and apply international (global) dataset (e.g. criteria for consideration or selection of data sources, such as completeness, resolution etc.); and
- consider compiling case studies/exemplars from countries using multiple data sources as well as any results from any analysis carried out on comparison of the merits of differing methodologies or data sources.

5) “National Assessment” exercise

Working Group noted that –

- the assessment of what is relevant data (by comparing outcomes from applying differing datasets to produce an indicator) is helpful; and
- the assessment of NSOs ability to produce the indicators listed in the WG’s initial short list (comprising 24 indicators) is helpful in improving understanding of NSOs



readiness, capability and needs as well as discovering data sources and relevance to national context.

Working Group to -

- request all NSOs represented in the WG to carry out similar assessment and report back to the WG.

6) Capacity Development

Working Group noted that –

- capacity development is needed, and in some developing countries, it's about modernizing basic statistical processes to incorporate geo-statistical methodologies;
- implementing the five principles of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework is a feasible starting point, particularly to geocode unit record data;
- important to leverage existing capacity development initiatives and activities (avoid duplication) including those from UN entities and space agencies; and
- capacity development should be “embedded” into implementation programmes (e.g. UNFPA’s support for 2020 Round of Census).

7) Other considerations

Working Group agreed to –

- leverage virtual meetings - convene more WebEx meetings (some meetings to address administrative matters, status reports etc., others to address specific task streams activities (issues, considerations etc.); and
- consider a face-to-face meeting in November/December 2018.

The Working Group progressed its work on disaggregation and data availability, and considered additional issues including addressing issue of analysis or production ready space-based information and capacity development for national statistical organizations in geostatistical processes. The meeting concluded with agreement to –

- ask the Task Team on Disaggregation (established in its meeting in Mexico City, December 2016) to finalize and summarize its findings;
- ask the two Task Teams, first on International (Global) Data, and the second on Alternative Data Sources (both established at its meeting in Mexico City, December 2016) to complete its joint report on international (global), new and complementary data;
- request NSOs represented in the WG to carry out an assessment of its readiness to produce the indicators listed in the WG’s initial short list (comprising 24 indicators); and
- establish two Task Streams-
 - the first addressing disaggregation by geographic location and aggregation of geocoded unit level data; and
 - the second addressing appropriate means to allow for NSOs to uptake appropriate analysis or production ready satellite time series data contributed by space agencies that includes feasibility study, pilot projects, guidance on methodology and training.

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