

The Global SDG Indicators database and the SDGLab

Information note to the IAEG-SDGs

by UNSD, March 2020

Global SDG Indicators database

1. The Global SDG Indicators Database maintained and regularly updated by the Statistics Division makes data on the global SDG indicators available to all users and includes both country-level data and regional and global aggregates. As of July 2019, it includes data for 166 of the 232 indicators and more than 1.2 million data records. The data is compiled through the UN System in preparation for the Secretary-General's annual report on "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals". An accompanying metadata repository provides the metadata for the indicators that have internationally established methodology and standards. Access to the country-level data and the metadata ensures full transparency with respect to the data and methodologies used for global reporting. The Database and metadata repository are maintained by the Statistics Division while the data and metadata are provided by international agencies and entities, also referred to as custodian agencies in accordance with their mandates. Access to the Global SDG Indicators Database and the accompanying metadata repository is available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>.

2. Custodian agencies provide country-level data that are internationally comparable and are provided according to criteria for the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals agreed by the Statistical Commission at its 50th session. In June 2019, the data structure definition (DSD) for the global SDG indicators has been made available which allows custodians to use SDMX for data exchange and dissemination.

3. The Global SDG Indicators database and user interface are not geared towards and are not suitable for the processing, storage and dissemination of country-level data reported by countries that may or may not be internally comparable, whether provided by countries themselves or through custodian agencies. This would also not align with the mandate of the Statistics Division which is the promotion of international standards and the compilation and dissemination of internationally comparable data. Additional information, such as concerning the relationship of country level data reported by custodian agencies and reported by countries can be provided in the reference metadata or structural metadata (such as footnotes).

SDG Lab

4. The SDG Lab established by UNSD is part of a project financed by the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to make the

Goal indicators available to the broadest possible audience and to strengthen the capacity of countries in the compilation and use of the indicators. The SDG Lab collects and visualizes SDG indicators and metadata from both international agencies and national statistical systems. It allows the detection and analysis of anomalies and discrepancies within and between international and national datasets based on the data and metadata. The global data and metadata are sourced from the Global SDG Indicators database while the availability of nationally reported data relies on SDMX based exchange of data and metadata with national statistical offices. As part of the DFID project 20 developing countries are supported in making their SDG data and metadata available via SDMX. Other countries are invited to submit/exchange their data and metadata in SDMX format which will allow them to compare their nationally reported data with the globally available data. Access to the SDG Lab is available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdglab>. A password will be provided upon request.

5. At this time the SDG Lab contains nationally reported data for 20 project and non-project countries which was submitted in SDMX format. As for the metadata, a draft global metadata structure (MSD) for the SDG indicators was agreed by the IAEG-SDGs working group end of December 2019. An authoring tool which will facilitate the compilation and allow the exchange of metadata in SDMX format is expected to become available in the second half of 2020.

6. Without appropriate metadata the SDG Lab cannot be made available to a wider audience as discrepancies will remain unexplained and misleading as there are many valid reasons why country-level data reported by international agencies and reported by countries are different. Therefore, DFID project countries currently do not agree making their data on the SDG Lab available to a wider audience, especially in the absence of explanatory metadata and the opportunity to comprehensively analyze any differences.

7. All countries that wish to participate in the SDG Lab need to prepare and submit their data for the global indicators in SDMX format and submit indicator level metadata according the finalized MSD so that it can be uploaded as soon as the authoring tool becomes available. Countries may wish to participate in the test of the SDMX metadata authoring and exchange tool or support its development.
