



HIGH IMPACT  
INITIATIVES



SEPTEMBER 2023

# POWER OF DATA

Unlocking the data  
dividend for the SDGs

# HALFWAY TO 2030

HIGH IMPACT INITIATIVES AT SDG ACTION WEEKEND, 2023

## The SDGs are essential but we are off track

World leaders made a historic global promise to secure the rights and well-being of all peoples when they adopted the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. This Agenda recognizes that collectively, we can deliver a better future for all. However, the Agenda is a promise, not a guarantee.

Over the past eight years, the world has seen unprecedented mobilization around the SDGs and we have made significant progress on some fronts, laying the critical foundations for our future success. However, now halfway to the 2030 deadline, we are not halfway there – in fact, we are only 15% of the way.

## To keep the promise, we need a fundamental pivot

It will take more than rhetoric or increased attention to deliver the promise. We cannot stay wedded to current ways of working. Everything we do, in every corner of our world, will need to evolve for us to advance.

The fundamental pivot we need at the core of the 2030 Agenda demands that countries reorient economies, ways of working and mind-sets to ensure the rights and aspirations of all can be achieved while preserving our climate and natural environment.

## This change will take everyone

In many ways, the foundations for transformation are right in front of us - the technical know-how, institutional infrastructure, global financial resources and proven programmes – but we need to channel these resources more effectively. This is the critical moment for political leadership and bold action from national governments; for the international community to come together in common purpose; and for all partners on the SDG journey to take their contribution to the next level. We start tomorrow, by accelerating what works today.

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## THE HIGH IMPACT INITIATIVES AT SDG ACCELERATION DAY *SUNDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER*

As we look to the future, our goal is simple: to generate renewed momentum, strengthen political leadership and channel tangible, integrated and coordinated support behind national plans and priorities. As part of the global effort to meet this challenge, the United Nations development system is mobilizing behind 12 high impact initiatives which provide a platform to help take SDG progress to scale. This platform will enable us to learn, evolve and scale what works with greater coordination and collaboration. The platform cuts across three major areas: economic and social transitions, means of implementation, and a core aspect of the cross-cutting issue of gender equality.

- **Energy** Compacts: Scaling up ambition to deliver on SDG7
- Nature Driving Economic Transformation: Leveraging the power of **biodiversity and nature** to drive equitable economic progress
- **Food Systems** Transformation: Transforming food systems for a sustainable world without hunger
- Transforming **Education**: Learning to build a better future for all
- Global Accelerator: The Global Accelerator on **jobs and social protection** for just transitions
- **Digital** Public Infrastructure: Scaling inclusive and open digital ecosystems for the SDGs
- The SDG Stimulus: Scaling up long-term affordable **financing** for the SDGs
- Transforming **4Trade**: Paradigm shift to boost economic development
- **Local2030** Coalition: Pushing key transitions and achieving the SDGs by 2030
- FutureGov: Building **public sector capabilities** for the future
- Power of **Data**: Unlocking the data dividend for the SDGs
- Spotlight Initiative: To eliminate **violence against women and girls**

## POWER OF DATA: VISION FOR IMPACT

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Data is the fuel that powers progress across all the SDGs. Stronger data systems are essential to good policy, and foundational to the digital transformation and improvements in public services that will accelerate progress worldwide.

Investments in data pay an average "dividend" of \$32 for every \$1 invested<sup>1</sup>. Despite the substantial returns, Member States have not been able to capitalize on this dividend due to a lack of political prioritization; fragmentation; inadequate and siloed investment; and shortfalls in capacity.

The Power of Data High Impact Initiative tackles these barriers and strengthens national data systems to accelerate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) progress. By working together to create transformational national data partnerships, we will unlock this powerful data dividend. The newly formed data partnerships will be the engines that:

- Revolutionize decision making
- Accelerate countries' digital transformation agendas
- Open up new economic opportunities, for a more equal and sustainable world

The urgency grows greater each day. Since the SDGs were agreed upon, the amount of data in the world has increased more than five-fold. However, official development assistance for data and statistics has remained almost static since 2015 and investments are too piecemeal and siloed<sup>2</sup>.

As a result, at the halfway point to the SDGs, critical information is missing. Globally, fewer than half of all countries have comparable data on gender equality and climate action, despite them being among the most existential challenges of our times<sup>3</sup>. Lack of data hits marginalized groups the hardest. Migrants, women, refugees, people with disabilities, and specific minorities, among other groups, are not well represented in data, resulting in their needs remaining unmet. We cannot achieve, accelerate, or transform what we cannot measure. This High Impact Initiative will scale new approaches and partnerships to drive political commitments and a stronger enabling environment, to realize the opportunity of the data dividend.

This High Impact Initiative will drive progress across all of the SDGs. Data underpins many of the vital transitions and means of implementation that will be instrumental in achieving the 2030 Agenda. We cannot advance what we cannot measure.

## OVERVIEW: POWER OF DATA

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Fully using the power of data and unlocking the data dividend for the SDGs will require both political leadership and financial commitments. This High Impact Initiative will strengthen both the national and global enabling environments for developing data systems. The High Impact Initiative will drive change through:

1. **Political leadership for new national data partnerships**, bringing together public and private stakeholders to drive timely, ethical, and efficient data use. The partnerships will build a common approach, catalyze new investments in capacities and infrastructure, and overcome fragmentation.
2. **More and better investment from development partners** from a transparent and strategic approach to financing data and statistical systems, promoting collaborative, aligned, country-owned investment.
3. **Demonstrating progress** through raising the percentage of available SDG data in countries to ninety per cent by 2027.

The Power of Data High Impact Initiative builds on recommendations from the Secretary General's 2023 SDG Progress Report calling for stronger national data systems, increased financing for data, and increased country-level data on the SDG targets. The Initiative also incorporates recommendations from other reports and consolidates existing data projects.

# PLANS FOR THE 2023 SDG ACTION WEEKEND

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The Power of Data session during SDG Action Weekend will serve as a launching point for the data partnerships and a unifying moment for streamlining financing for data systems. During the session, organizers will highlight the power of data to catalyze SDG progress through inspiring success stories and diverse voices. It will showcase how the High Impact Initiative will scale towards 2030. Collaborating Member States and partner organizations will announce commitments to the future success of the Data Dividend HII.

## ROADMAP TO 2030

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*Long-term plans will evolve as we learn and circumstances change; below is our current approach to acceleration through 2030 after SDG Action Weekend.*

By 2030, the Power of Data High Impact Initiative aims to launch 50 national data partnerships to boost government decision making, accelerate digital transformation agendas, and open up new economic and developmental opportunities.

### Timeline and deliverables for progress:

- *March 2024:* 10-20 National data partnerships will launch national data strategies
- *September 2024:* New national partnerships will be announced to reach a total of 30
- *After September 2024:* Continue to capitalize on other global summits including the Summit for the Future and the World Data Forum
- *Future HLPFs:* The Initiative will share commissioned reports and provide progress updates

### Metrics for success:

This Initiative will track its scale-up and success by monitoring:

- The growing number of national data partnerships
- The proportion of donor funding allocated to data systems
- The percentage of available SDG data over time

### Roles and responsibilities of partners:

The Power of Data High Impact Initiative will ensure partnerships are delivered effectively, resources are well used, and stakeholders are supported in their commitments through the following governance structures:

- **An Implementation Group**, comprised of technical representatives from participating countries and UN entities (including UN DESA, UNFPA, and CCS-UN), will define the principles of effective investment in data, mobilize funding for national data partnerships, track progress through commissioned reports, and share best practices across partnerships
- **A Secretariat**, run by the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, will monitor progress, coordinate stakeholders, and share best practices. In addition, they will convene meetings to review progress and manage partnership outreach
- **Partnership Liaisons** will assist each national data partnership with coordination, relationship building, and overall management best practices



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For an overview of the High Impact Initiatives, visit the [Transformative Actions](#) action tab on the [SDG Summit](#) website