



HIGH IMPACT INITIATIVE:

POWER OF DATA

UNLOCKING THE DATA DIVIDEND FOR THE SDGs

The 2030 Agenda is a promise, not a guarantee and halfway to the 2030 deadline, we are not halfway there. To succeed in the second half, we need to take a significant leap forward and embrace the radical political, economic and social change that the SDGs demand. This requires ambitious action at speed and at scale and an ever expanding alliance of actors pushing in the same direction. To support this effort, the United Nations has joined with Member States and key stakeholders to generate fresh political leadership and integrated support across some of the most critical aspects of the SDGs. Known as the High Impact Initiatives, together, they can deliver fresh momentum. They can prove that keeping the 2030 promise is still possible.

Dedicated sessions will be convened for each initiative at the SDG Action Weekend, on September 17, 2023. Further information can be found [here](#).

VISION FOR IMPACT

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 invested¹. 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 siloed².

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 times³. 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.

OVERVIEW: POWER OF DATA

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.

ACCELERATING THE SDGS

Strong data systems and capabilities underpin progress across all of the SDGs, and it is clear that investment in data systems drives real benefits across all sectors. These benefits are realized when data is used as an asset to create new products or services, and through increased efficiency, higher levels of productivity and revealing new opportunities for impact. There are clear examples of data accelerating development across the SDGs:

- **SDG 3 Good health and well-being:** Data improves visibility on health needs, resource constraints, and outcomes as so visibly demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **SDG 4 Quality education:** Data helps allocate resources for better equity in education, for instance the Government of Sierra Leone was able to use data to understand the areas of greatest need for a new girls' school to close the education gap.

- **SDG7 Affordable and clean energy:** Data has informed the rapid growth of the solar power sector across Africa, revealing new economic opportunities for investors in the green transition.
- **SDG15 Life on land:** Crowdsourced data and satellite imagery are supporting the fight against illicit logging in Brazil and Indonesia.

Over the past few decades, a lack of information on the needs of communities, on what works, and on changes over time means that donors and domestic governments have missed multiple opportunities to distribute resources more equitably and efficiently, to close gaps in provision and to make lives better. For the future of all the SDGs, the Power of Data High Impact Initiative is hoping to unlock the data dividend for realizing the SDGs.

Citations and Footnotes: 1. Multiplying progress through data ecosystems https://www.data4sdgs.org/sites/default/files/file_uploads/Investment%2Bcase_Multiplying%2Bprogress%2Bthrough%2Bdata%2Becosystems_vFINAL.pdf
2. Unlocking Data <https://www.data4sdgs.org/resources/unlocking-data-better-greener-safer-future> 3. Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2023.pdf>

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



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