Financing Digital Development Statistics

Global Call for Data Investment

22 September 2025

WTIS 2025 – Session on Financing Digital Development Statistics

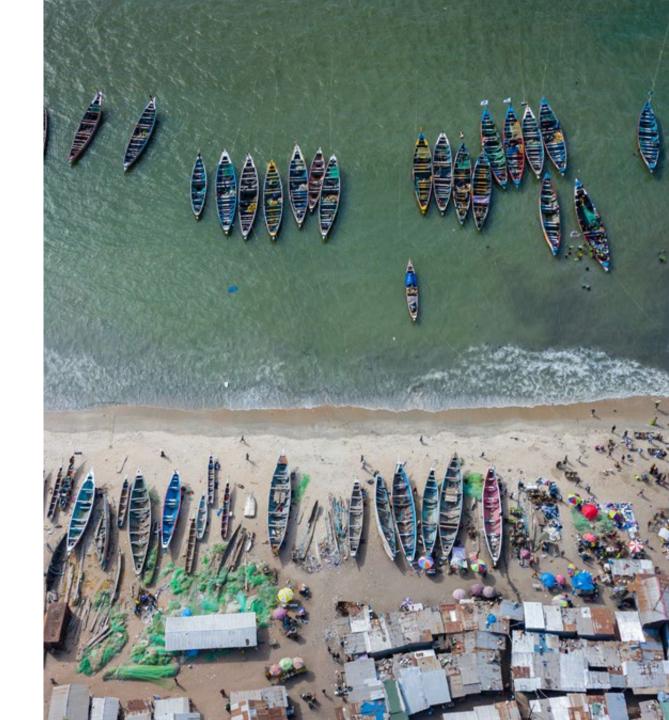*Anu Peltola, Director of Statistics, UNCTAD*

UN trade & development

PACT FOR THE FUTURE

- The Pact for the Future and its Global Digital Compact mention data 90 times

- Launch of Working Group on Data Governance at all levels

  - Coordinated by the Committee on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) at UNCTAD

  - Focus on inclusive, rights-based governance, interoperability, and trusted data flows

- Parallel Working Group on Data Governance by the UN Statistical Commission ensures technical rigor

Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4)

- Outcome Document: Strongest ever emphasis on data

- Recognizes data as:

  - A strategic asset for development
  - Essential for transparency, accountability, and trust
  - A foundation for digitalization, AI, and revenue modernization

- Calls for predictable financing and capacity building for national statistical systems

SPA initiative - FfD4 and the Future of Data: Strengthening Systems for Sustainable Financing

- Embed **data and statistics** at the core of financing strategies to deliver on all **FfD4 ambitions**

- **Spearheaded by** Colombia, Norway, United Kingdom, Canada, Ireland, Maldives, Nigeria, Switzerland + UN agencies & civil society

- **Strategic pillars:**

  ▸ **Efficient Financing**: Align support with national priorities and improve coordination

  ▸ **Future -Proofing**: Invest in tech-ready, AI-compatible, and innovative data systems

  ▸ **Political Commitment**: Strengthen cross-sector collaboration and long-term investment in national data systems

Bridging the Digital Divide with Data

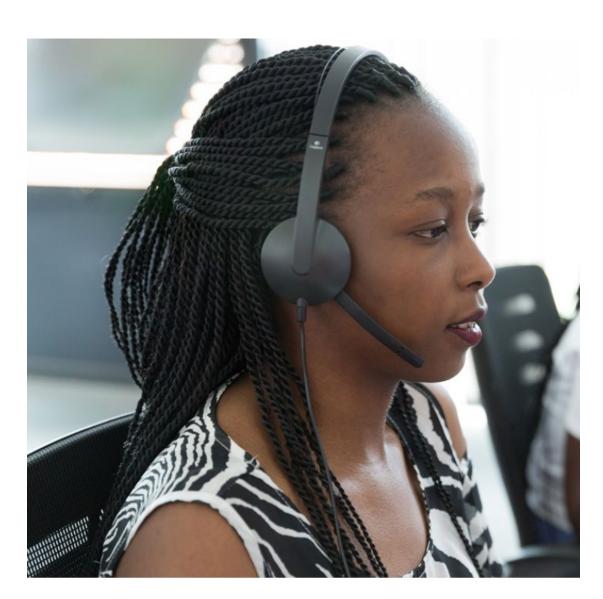FfD4 highlights persistent digital divides:

▸ **Connectivity, access, and use**

▸ **Infrastructure, innovation, and data gaps**

▸ Data can enhance **domestic resources**, innovation, digital **investment**, and **impactful development cooperation**

▸ Strong data systems can be effective in building **resilience**, **transparency**, and **stability**.

Yet, ICT statistics are underdeveloped, especially in developing countries

Two sides of Digital Development Stats

Close collaboration of ITU and UNCTAD

- ITU: Household surveys

- UNCTAD: Business surveys

Together, they provide both sides of digital transformation

- Data gaps are large due to the lack of financial and human resources in countries

  ▶ ICT-use by businesses: 67 countries

  ▶ e-commerce statistics: 48 countries

Informal digital activity often missed

- In many developing countries households do "business" activities without registering

Capacity development efforts

Key activities:

- Methodological development
- Capacity building
- Digital tools for statisticians
- Task Group on Measuring E-commerce Value

  - 80+ experts from ~30 countries & organizations (incl. ITU)
  - Developing guidelines & recommendations
  - Focus on business surveys as primary data source
  - Exploring methods to capture informal digital activity

Call to Action

- FfD4 and SPA call for:

  - Scaling up investment in data systems

  - Strengthening interoperability and innovation

  - Supporting national efforts to collect disaggregated, high-quality data

- Business statistics to be part of this agenda

- Can we scale up support together?

- How to enhance funding for data capacities?