

African Statistics Day 2025

Leveraging innovations in data and statistics to promote a just, peaceful, inclusive and prosperous society for Africans

Background

African Statistics Day is an annual event that is celebrated on 18 November to raise public awareness of the critical role of statistics in shaping social and economic development across the continent. In 2025, it will be held under the theme “Leveraging innovations in data and statistics to promote a just, peaceful, inclusive and prosperous society for Africans”, which is informed by the African Union theme of 2025: “Justice for Africans and people of African descent through reparations”. This year, on African Statistics Day, celebrations will be focused on the increasing importance of harnessing the transformative power of data and statistical innovations to address development challenges in Africa. In view of that importance, statistical systems need to be transformed, including through the adoption of cutting-edge technologies, to ensure that data are timely, relevant and inclusive and can, therefore, be used to support evidence-based policies that foster peace, justice and prosperity.

Importance of statistics

Africa continues to face considerable challenges in its efforts to achieve inclusive sustainable development. More than one in five people in Africa faced hunger in 2024 and average levels of hunger are rising on the continent.¹ As set out in *Global Peace Index 2025*, in sub-Saharan Africa, where 3 of the 10 least peaceful countries in the world are found, the average peacefulness score fell by 0.17 per cent over the past year. Overall peacefulness improved in half of sub-Saharan African countries and deteriorated in the other half. Sub-Saharan Africa faces several security crises, in particular the increase in political unrest and terrorism in the Central Sahel; 6 of the 10 countries with the highest scores in relation to the negative effects of terrorism are in sub-Saharan Africa.² Peace and access to justice are cornerstones of human rights and are interlinked with all aspects of prosperity. Therefore, ensuring peace and access to justice is critical for the realization of sustainable development in Africa.

Although the availability of data pertaining to Sustainable Development Goal 16 (promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels) has greatly improved since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, States need to do more because reporting progress on the related indicators is still a challenge: sufficient data (at least two data points) to measure progress are produced for only a marginal number of countries. Significant efforts are required to strengthen national statistical capacity sufficiently to provide the necessary statistics and other data for monitoring peace, justice and inclusion at the national level, including in respect of the Goal 16 indicators. Those efforts must come from

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Children’s Fund, World Food Programme and World Health Organization, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025: Addressing High Food Price Inflation for Food Security and Nutrition*. (Rome, New York, Geneva, 2025).

² Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Peace Index 2025: Identifying and Measuring the Factors that Drive Peace* (Sydney, Australia, 2025).



national statistical systems, which bear primary responsibility for producing, compiling and reporting such data.³ Accordingly, robust data systems that inform policy and track progress are needed. Beyond ambition, the necessity of scaling up investment in innovations to produce data and statistics is more pressing than ever, considering the growing demand for reliable statistics on all subjects, including governance, justice, inclusion and socioeconomics, all of which are incorporated into the theme of African Statistics Day 2025.

Investing in data innovations for modernized national statistical systems

Across the continent, some States have already embraced digital and technological approaches to harnessing transformative governance and service delivery for better lives. Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and mobile data, are increasingly being used to bridge gaps in education, healthcare and civic engagement. Examples include interoperable banking and mobile platforms for financial inclusion; the digitalization of public service platforms for the improved and more accessible provision of social services; and the use of biometric identification systems to streamline immigration, banking and pension services. Such innovations are not simply technologies: they are social tools that empower citizens, reduce inequality and promote peace and prosperity. In the future, platforms powered by artificial intelligence and contextualized to meet the needs of African people should be used as enablers of innovation and data should be freely accessible, as a public good.

For instance, Ghana Statistical Services has modernized the collection of data for governance statistics using computer-assisted telephone interviews, and the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs of Uganda is improving its administrative data systems by increasing the harmonization and interoperability of the governance statistics that it produces. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have jointly developed the Sustainable Development Goal 16 Survey Initiative, a high-quality, well-tested tool that States can use to measure the progress made in attaining many of the Goal 16 indicators.⁴ Furthermore, the Praia Group on Governance Statistics plays a vital role in expanding on existing standards and developing internationally agreed-upon methodologies for the production of reliable, comparable governance statistics that might inform development policy after the end of the 2030 Agenda. The Praia Group focuses on governance-related development challenges: non-discrimination and equality, participation in political and public affairs, access to and quality of justice, absence of corruption, openness, responsiveness, trust, and safety and security.

Innovation and modernization through a standards-based statistical business architecture, including legal frameworks and well-functioning national statistical systems that promote rather than hinder innovation, are fundamental, since technical solutions by themselves often do not lead to lasting change. To make the most of investments, it is important to support technical efforts that are aligned with broader objectives, such as improving stability, inclusion or long-term development. Such efforts include using digital technologies or other innovations for a particular output or service, in order to prove the overall benefit of official statistics to users. Methodologies and systems for driving innovation and efficiency in official statistics

³ United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Global Progress Report on Sustainable Development Goal 16 Indicators – at the Crossroads: Breakdown or Breakthrough for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions* (New York, Vienna, Geneva, 2024).

⁴ UNDP, UNODC and OHCHR, *SDG16 Survey Initiative: Questionnaire and Survey Initiative: Implementation Manual* (New York, Vienna, Geneva, 2022).

using geospatial technologies, big data and citizen-generated data are areas in which research and development need to be supported.

African States are urged to invest heavily in innovation in order to fully capitalize on the benefits of the emerging opportunities that have been proved to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of processes in the data value chain, as data systems evolve. In addition, data innovations led by young people, new statistical products and platforms that meet the needs of data users, and broader and deeper engagement with users are all critical for enhancing the visibility of data for sustainable development.

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