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Background document  
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Item 3(a) of the provisional agenda

**Items for discussion and decision: Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development**

**Coordinating statistical training for increased accessibility and sustainability: the work of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training (GIST)**

Prepared by Global Network of Institutes for Statistical Training (GIST)

# Coordinating statistical training for increased accessibility and sustainability



## Overview

This background document provides an overview of the work of the members of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training (GIST). It has three main parts:

1. A summary of key achievements in 2021, with an emphasis on tools and guidance materials that have been developed for the benefit of the statistical community.
2. A more detailed overview of the work of GIST, including in the current task teams and
3. A brief overview of preliminary plans for continued work in 2022.

The GIST homepage provides general information on the Network, including its overall goals and objectives, current members and strategic action areas. Please visit the page here:

<https://unstats.un.org/gist/>

## 1. Key achievements

GIST members continued to actively engage around the work of the task teams and other prioritized areas. This resulted in a number of tools and guidance documents related to statistical training, some of which were developed from scratch and others enhanced in 2021. The majority of the work was carried out thanks to the staff time of representatives from the member organizations, but the GIST secretariat (UNSD) and UNITAR also secured some resources to fund consultancies to support the work on some of the tools. More details about the process and ideas behind these materials can be found in section two of this document.

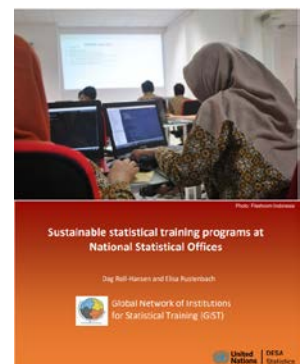
### I. Assessment and recommendations on **sustainable statistical training programs** at national level

An initial study of the structure of national statistical training programs showed that there is a wide variation in how statistical training is organized at the national level. Some countries have large training centers and comprehensive training programs while others have almost no internal training programs. What is being offered and to whom also varies. Based on these findings, GIST has started work to provide assistance on how to set up and maintain sustainable national

statistical training programs, including how to make better use of e-learning resources that are available online.

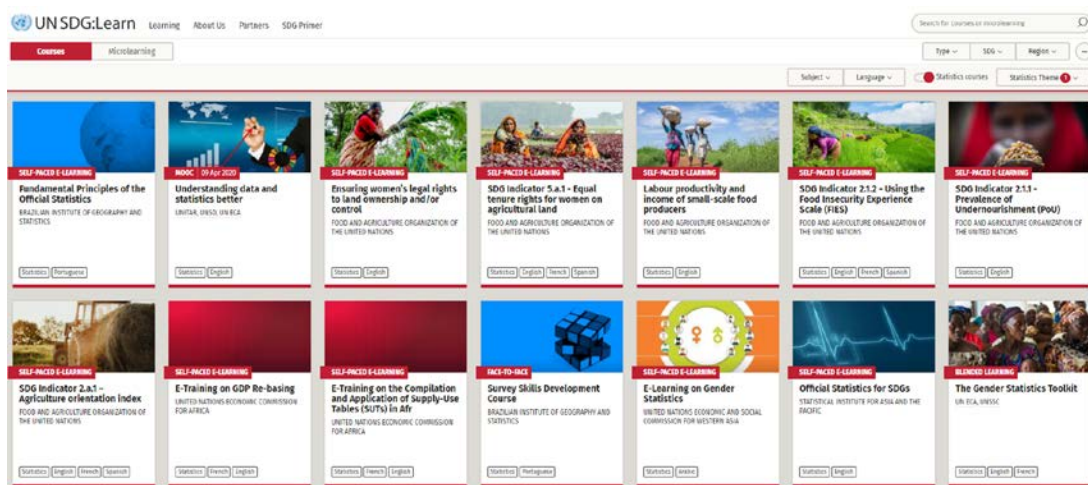
Some of this work is now being piloted in two of the Stakeholder Advisory Group member countries- Ethiopia and Ghana. The reports showcased here can be found here:

<https://unstats.un.org/gist/resources/reports-documents-by-gist>



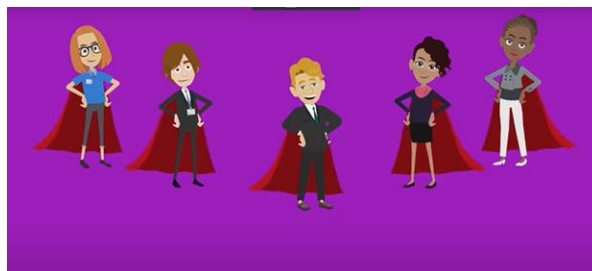
## II. A hub for statistical training courses and microlearning materials

The UN SDG:Learn statistics hub allows users to find statistical training materials from a number of different national, regional and international organizations. In 2021, not only were additional e-learning courses added to the platform, but a new microlearning feature was added that provides access to shorter learning materials such as videos, quizzes, learning platforms, tools, learning focused webinars and similar. In January 2022, the hub provided information on over 70 courses and more than 30 learning materials and the GIST secretariat is in the process of working with partners to add more. The hub can be accessed here: <https://www.unsdglearn.org/statistics/>



## III. Microlearning videos

Under the GIST umbrella UNSD and UNITAR have led the work of developing microlearning videos. The videos are targeted towards the general public in countries, providing input on what an NSO does and why it is important while at the same time including key aspects of official statistics. The four first videos can be found here:



- [National Superheroes Office – episode 1: Where are the green hats?](#)
- [National Superheroes Office – episode 2: Are the health data right?](#)
- [Data concierge](#)
- [Data visualization contest](#)

## IV. An inventory of statistical literacy initiatives

The inventory aims at supporting members of the National Statistical System in having easier access to materials on statistical literacy, also seeing what their counterparts in other countries are doing. It is currently in pilot format, with a limited amount of resources available, but is in the process of being populated. Two key streams are being followed to populated it. The GIST board and task team are

working with their colleagues and partners to prepare more examples. The GIST board is also in the process of establishing a partnership with the International Statistical Literacy Project (ISLP) to add the materials that the group is collecting through their network. As the ISLP already has a good

group of people engaged in this, it is expected that the inventory will expand over the course of 2022. The inventory can be accessed here: <https://unstats.un.org/gist/statistical-literacy/>

## Statistical Literacy Initiatives Inventory

**Search**

Search by Title

Select Organization

Filter by Target Audience

Filter by Product

Filter by Language

Filter Clear Back

**Census Academy (Organized by: United States Census Bureau)**

**Purpose of the initiative:**

Census Academy is the Census Bureau's new data education and training hub with a heavy focus on digital content. It was created to provide more accessible, cost-efficient, and intelligible educational content to adult learners. A virtual data hub for learning data skills, as well as exploiting the data resources available to the public at the Census Bureau for a mix of users. Courses help comprehension of statistical concepts and enhance skills for data analysis, visualization.

**Target Audience:**

- Civil society organizations (incl NGOs).
- Media
- Policy makers/Government/Civil service

### V. **Communication materials**, including a first newsletter

With the aim of making more people in the statistical community aware of the work of GIST and the tools and materials it provides, a first newsletter was published in December 2021. The plan is to publish two newsletters a year that provide information and updates on statistical training related work, including courses on offer, training approaches of specific entities and similar. The newsletter is available here: <https://unstats.un.org/gist/resources/newsletter/> You can subscribe [here](#).



In addition, a Trello board has been developed that members can use to share updates and news related to GIST. A Wiki page has also been set up to make it easier for members to access materials.

## 2. Overall update on the work of GIST

Since the GIST Annual Meeting in February 2021, GIST has continued its work along the three task teams, its board and stakeholder advisory group. In addition, the members of the board have pursued a few other aspects of work as was discussed during the Annual meeting, particularly outreach and communications work. This section is structured as follows: It first provides an overview of the work of the board, including the communication and outreach work and, followed by the work of the task teams and the Stakeholder Advisory Group, and covers a few general topics at the end.

### 2.1. Work of the GIST Board

The Board met at regular intervals throughout the year to discuss the different aspects of work, including overall strategic matters, communication and outreach, with an aim to ensure synergies across the task teams. It took an active role on the communication and outreach work as specified below. The

Board also jointly prepared and presented at the meeting of the expanded Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG). Minutes from the Board meetings are available on the GIST homepages [here](#).

The board saw a number of changes to its membership following the Annual meeting, including Dr. Mitali Sen from US Census Bureau as the new chair and Mr. Mamadou Cisse as the new task team leader of the task team on Addressing NSO demands from the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP). The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (UN SIAP) continued its engagement as a lead for the task team on Online gateway and e-learning community of practice but was first represented by Mr. Makoto Shimisu and later by Ms. Shailja Sharma, the new Director of UN SIAP.

#### 2.1.1. Communication and outreach

Following the guidance by the GIST annual meeting, the GIST secretariat initiated the work to more actively reach out to a wider audience, also engaging the GIST board in discussions.

A key activity was to develop a first **newsletter** about the work of GIST. The work started in the fall of 2021 and was published in December. The newsletters will be issued regularly moving forward, with an aim to publish them twice a year. The newsletter was sent out to over 800 recipients with an option to register for future newsletter, with over 60 persons having registered initially. The newsletter is also available on the homepage as indicated above.

With the support of a communications consultant funded by the GIST secretariat, the GIST board is also in the process of developing a communication strategy. The GIST secretariat has also been active on social media. Moving forward, the hashtags #GIST and #UNStatLearn will be used to make it easier to find information on the work related to GIST and the UN SDG:learn statistics hub. The communication consultant has also prepared a Trello board with materials that are meant to be easily accessible for GIST members to help spread the knowledge.

Another way to increase visibility of the work of GIST has been through **webinars/conference sessions**. The following four have been organized related to GIST:

- In April, the work of GIST was presented as part of the webinar series of the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians on Yammer.
- In May, the World Data Forum webinar series asked the questions “What will be the new normal in statistical training” where three of four speakers are active GIST members and also highlighted some of GISTs work in their interventions.
- In July, a session was organized at the ISI World Statistical Congress
- In October, a session was organized at the UN World Data Forum, focusing on statistical literacy. The session had many interesting examples and can be accessed [here](#).

The **IAOS Statistical Journal** had a special edition on training in official statistics in September 2021 to which several GIST members contributed. The articles where GIST has been explicitly mentioned, include:

- Guest Editorial New Developments in Training in Statistics, by Stefan Schweinfest, available [here](#)
- Getting the foundations right, by Helen MacGillivray, available [here](#)

- How can we better coordinate and make use of statistical training resources? A few reflections linked to the work of the Global Network of Institutions on Statistical Training (GIST), by Vibeke Oestreich Nielsen, available [here](#)
- The Tool for Assessing Statistical Capacity (TASC), by Mitali Sen and Derek Azar, available [here](#)
- Strengthening the competencies of policy makers for better use of data in public policy design, by Elena Proden, available [here](#)
- New needs and training modalities for the sustainable transfer of know-how on food and agriculture statistics in the COVID-19 era, by Pietro Gennari, Valerie Bizier, Cristina Petracchi, Dorian Kalamvresos Navarro, available [here](#)

The GIST secretariat is also in the process of setting up a Wiki page where all GIST materials will be made available to GIST members.

## 2.2. Work of the task teams

There are three task teams that are currently implementing much of the work of GIST:

- Task team on Online Gateway and e-learning community of practice
- Task team on Statistical literacy
- Task team on Addressing NSO demand

### 2.2.1. Online gateway and e-learning community of practice

The task team has established a **statistics gateway** or hub for statistical training materials **on UN SDG:learn: [www.unsdglearn.org/statistics](http://www.unsdglearn.org/statistics)**. It provides information on courses and training provided by different members of GIST and others and gives the link to where the course can be found. The hub was launched at the UN Statistical Commission in March 2020 and now has more than 70 statistics courses available, mostly e-learning. As specified above, the pages now also include around 30 microlearning materials. The GIST secretariat, with the help of an intern is in the process of engaging with members and other key training providers in official statistics to further increase the availability of statistical training courses and microlearning materials.

*Aim:* To make it easier for users to find and explore statistical training materials and avoid duplication

In addition, the task team is focusing on **exchanging experiences across agencies on development of e-learning materials**. Focus since the establishment of the task team has been on processes for peer feedback, course evaluation and participant's learning and benefit from the trainings. This includes a brief evaluation guidance which is available [here](#). In 2021, the task team has discussed how to further develop or expand on some of this work.

*Aim:* To facilitate knowledge and improvement of training materials through mutual experience exchange.



### 2.2.2. Statistical Literacy in the context of the 2030 Agenda

The task team has developed an **inventory of materials on statistical literacy** relevant to official statistics. A template for initiatives in statistical literacy has been developed and piloted through drafts by task team members. The literacy materials are classified using a few key dimensions. The first key dimension considers the main recipients of the statistical literacy materials: school children, students, media, decision makers or others. Other dimensions are type of guidance or learning materials, language of the material, etc. Both the US Census Bureau and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) have for example statistical literacy programs and practical toolkits for schools, to be used by teachers in lessons. Another example is the international poster competition of the International Statistical Literacy Project (ISLP), which has reached more than 50,000 school students across more than 30 countries. As a follow up to the UN World Data Forum session on statistical literacy, UNSD and UNITAR also initiated an exchange with ISLP on sharing statistical literacy materials. Representatives from ISLP appreciated the new inventory portal prepared by GIST and would like to contribute materials to it. Initial discussions have started related to the practical implementation of it.

*Aim:* To make it easier to find statistical literacy materials

This task team was initiated in 2018 when GIST conducted a survey among policy makers on their overall statistical literacy level. The insights from the survey and from SAG members have led to the development of an **e-learning course on statistical literacy** led by UNITAR where UNSD and UNECA also provide input. Four of five modules are now available on UN SDG:learn [here](#), and the fifth is expected to be published shortly.

*Aim:* To increase statistical literacy among important user groups

### 2.2.3. Addressing specific NSO demands

Members of this task team, prioritized areas where there is a strong demand from NSOs and the NSS for more training and guidance and not sufficient support provided. The first is linked to coordination of the National Statistical System and the second is linked to NSO's managing, planning and implementing continuing professional development of their staff through sustainable national statistical training programmes. To get a better overview of the situation in these areas, and to help inform further action, three consultants were hired to examine and analyze training practices of a select number of countries and partners and prepare reports.

The report on training for the NSS provides an overview of how the NSOs engage with members in the NSS in eight countries. Based on this and other findings, recommendations are proposed for what to focus training information on when engaging with members of the NSS. It is further proposed to develop NSS training materials at global level. The report is available here:

<https://unstats.un.org/gist/resources/documents/Report-training-NSS-coordination-Final.pdf>

The second report on sustainable statistical training programs at national level shows that there is much variation in how training is provided in the countries that are covered by the study. Some countries have entirely external training institutes, others have internal units, while still others only have a few dedicated staff. There are also countries where there is no staff working on training. Further, the approaches to how training needs are assessed and trainings provided also differs from comprehensive

assessment systems and training plans to more ad hoc approaches. The report can be accessed here: <https://unstats.un.org/gist/resources/documents/Sustainable-statistical-training-programs-at-NSOs.pdf>

Based on these and other findings, the report proposed four areas of follow up:

- A repository of training material and tools that can be used as a global common good
- An overview of a standard set of training courses to potentially cover in a training programme.
- Development of a set of recommendations for training
- Strengthening and clarifying the role of regional and international organizations in building training programs at the country level

The first recommendation is already executed by another task team through the establishment of UN SDG:learn statistics. The consultants were asked to initiate the work on the second and third proposals. This was initiated through online workshops with a number of participants and resulted in three documents. A draft suggested standard set of training courses, a proposal for how to establish and maintain national statistical training programs and a proposal around e-learning. Two documents have been published as a result of this: [Sustainable organization of statistical training programs](#) and [Introducing e-learning in NSOs](#). The document on standard set of training courses will need further engagement in the task team and with pilot countries before it can be made available.

Two countries have shown interest in piloting the recommendations for a sustainable statistical training program. Ethiopia showed strong interest during the stakeholder advisory group meeting in June 2021 and Ghana followed up with UNSD during the UN World Data Forum. Initial meetings have been held with both countries, with participation from GIST members such as the UN Economic Commission for Africa and its Institut africain de développement économique et de planification (IDEP), US Census Bureau, Statistics Norway, the International Labor Organization and UN Statistics Division. For Ghana, the Office of National Statistics of the UK and Statistics Ireland were also invited due to close collaboration and/or very relevant experience exchange.

Ethiopia has been working towards the establishment of a sustainable statistical training program for the NSS for some time, and have prioritized this in their new National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS). They will follow two parallel paths, one is to conduct a training needs assessment to get a better overview of the needs of the members of the NSS. At the same time, key training materials will be developed for core courses and trainings run in partnership with Statistics Norway, and potentially, other GIST members. Ethiopia has highlighted the need for curriculums that clearly state what a training should include to help ensure quality of the training and that it is practically oriented.

Ghana is at an earlier stage in the process and is scoping out priorities. They have already identified a few trainings that they see as core to be provided to staff and which they want to develop and provide.

*Aim:* Improve coordination of statistical training provided and help fill clear gaps in training. The ultimate outcome would be better functioning NSOs and NSS and a more relevant skillset of its employees.



### 2.3. Meeting with the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG)

The Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) of GIST consists of representatives from National Statistical Offices (NSOs) in 12 countries and plays an advisory role and provides GIST members with input on various matters, including the implementation of programme activities.

The SAG was invited to, and partially, attended the Annual Meeting of GIST on the auspices of the UN Statistical Commission in March 2021. They provided useful guidance and input on a number of the items raised, see minutes from the meeting.

A SAG meeting was held in June 2021. The main point of discussion was the work on sustainable statistical training programs. The work received positive feedback, but also some input for further consideration, including the need for materials in additional languages to English and making materials developed more known to a wider group of stakeholders.

Ethiopia and Ghana also volunteered to pilot some of the work. This pilot work has been initiated in both countries as also outlined under the information of the work on Addressing NSO demands.

The minutes can also be found on the GIST homepage [here](#).

### 2.4. General updates

One of GIST's roles is to nurture a statistical community of members by providing and exchanging information, seeding ideas, increasing motivation through discussions and supporting initiatives where possible. This exchange has continued to be strong in 2021. A number of GIST developments and initiatives by GIST members have been greatly assisted by collaboration within and across GIST members, and input from work in other areas of GIST member organisations or close collaborators. The work on a UNITAR initiated e-learning course on statistical literacy was finalized in 2021 through the collaboration of several GIST members. The microlearning videos developed came from significant ongoing discussion across two GIST teams and involves different GIST members. Other elements include members providing other members feedback on course materials, members planning their own support work along the lines of what has been discussed in task teams and similar.

#### 2.4.1. Wiki pages for members

The GIST Secretariat has worked on a system in the UN Wiki system where files can be accessed by all GIST members. Members can view, but not upload or edit files due to security restrictions. In 2021 this was set up and tested, while general access is expected to be given to all GIST members in the first quarter of 2022.

#### 2.4.2 Learning expert advisory group

In the 2021 Annual meeting, GIST members agreed to the establishment of a new advisory group that would create a closer link to the ISI community, including teaching experts from academia and tasked the former chair of GIST, Ms. Helen MacGillivray, with this. Work has been initiated, but not finalized. It is expected that the group will include members from IASE (the International Association for Statistical Education) and ISLP (the International Statistical Literacy Project), to which GIST task teams or GIST members can ask for input as desired.

### 3. Suggested plans for 2022

This section outlines overall priorities and plans of the work, as well as that of the task teams. The suggestions are kept quite general as the GIST members and Stakeholder Advisory Group will provide their input to the work of GIST at the Annual meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> February. Following the meeting, more detailed plans will be developed. The amount of work will further be guided by the amount of human and financial resources that the GIST members have to carry out the tasks.

#### 3.1 Continued work on outreach and communication

The communication and outreach work has been substantially stepped up in 2021, but more work can be done, so it is proposed to extend the focus on outreach and communications work to further increase visibility of the GIST among national statistical offices. This includes the work on two newsletters, finalization of a communications strategy and continued engagement on social media as well as at webinars, conferences and other venues as feasible.

Members will also be asked to increase their contribution to the communications work. UNITAR has already initiated work to create a blog series on data and statistics on UN SDG:learn.

#### 3.2. Collaboration and consultation

A number of GIST developments and initiatives by GIST members have been greatly assisted by collaboration within and across GIST members, and input from work in other areas of GIST member organisations or close collaborators. These include input on evaluation, reviews, teaching, programme development, and facilitating online infrastructure for course information, inventories and microlearning. In 2021, some of the SAG members have also become more actively involved through piloting of the sustainable statistical training program work. The GIST secretariat and GIST board will continue work to further facilitate engagement across members, including the SAG.

A collaboration with ISLP has started on statistical literacy which also looks very promising. On UN SDG:learn statistics, engagement with non-GIST members is also in process, which in some cases also may lead to extended GIST membership and engagement.

In addition, GIST is also expected to benefit from the advisory group on teaching statistics, as was outlined above.

#### 3.3 Organizational work

The Board will continue meeting around every second month and it is expected that the SAG will meet twice, tentatively in June and October.

Task teams will meet as necessary and based on capacity.

### 3.4 Work of the task teams

All task teams will continue the work of 2021. This currently includes:

- Online gateway and e-learning community of practice:
  - Continue work related to UN SDG:learn statistics hub.
    - Continue work to include more courses
  - Continue work on course review and evaluation
  - Potentially start working on a guidance on how to provide trainings in a virtual and remote format
- Statistical Literacy in the context of the 2030 Agenda
  - Continue work on the statistical literacy initiatives inventory, adding more entries, and promoting awareness
- Addressing specific NSO demands
  - Continue work on sustainable statistical training programs, engaging with pilot countries and further develop materials. This could include a simple-to-apply tool for assessing key training needs for staff at NSOs.

The task teams will also agree on further tasks, based on internal discussions as well as input from the SAG, Board and other members of the statistical community.