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**Update on work, including guidelines and tools, of the Global Network of Institutes for
Statistical Training (GIST)**

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

Update on work, including guidelines and tools, of the Global Network of Institutes for Statistical Training (GIST)

This summary of the work carried out under the GIST umbrella highlights some of the key achievements in 2020 and agreed upon next steps. The report is structured in three parts: first, an overall summary of the work of GIST in the past year; second, a more detailed overview of the work in each of the current task teams; and third, a brief overview of preliminary plans for work in 2021.

Some general information for reference:
- 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/
- GIST is structured as follows:
    o GIST Board, consisting of the Chair, task team leaders (currently US Census Bureau, UNITAR and UN SIAP) and secretariat (UNSD)
    o Task teams of GIST members, each focusing on particular objectives and strategic action areas of GIST
    o GIST members, consisting of international organizations, regional training institutes and NSOs who provide trainings outside of their own borders (currently 25 members)
    o GIST Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) consisting of 12 countries who provide input to GIST on the direction and content of the work
    o Annual meeting held at the margins of the UN Statistical Commission where all members and the SAG meet to discuss achievements and plans.
- The work of GIST is currently carried out through three task teams:
    • Online gateway and e-learning community of practice
    • Statistical Literacy in the context of the 2030 Agenda
    • Addressing specific NSO demands

Key achievements of GIST in 2020 were:
- The UN SDG:Learn statistics platform for courses was officially launched at a side-event to the UN Statistical Commission in March 2020, with over 50 courses from a number of GIST organizations: https://www.unsdglearn.org/statistics/
- A number of case studies, templates and guidance documents were initiated and will be uploaded to the GIST homepage in February 2021
- Strategic planning for projects supporting NSO and NSS development and statistical literacy initiatives were completed and implementation commenced
- GIST proposals for conference sessions were developed and submitted to organizers
- Active collaboration among members across a range of issues, including joint products and initiatives, meeting the overall objective of GIST

1. Overall update on the work of GIST

1.1 Membership

At the UN Statistical Commission in March 2020, a number of African countries requested that GIST membership should be expanded to include more regional training institutes from the African region. Following this, the GIST secretariat (UNSD), reached out to a number of African institutes. This led to the inclusion of the Ecole Nationale de la statistique et de l'analyse Senegal (ENSAE). The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) had already become a member at the end of 2019, and interest was renewed by the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (EASTC) and Ecole Nationale Superieure de Statistique et d' Economie (ENSEA). In addition, both UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and African Development Bank (AfDB) are members.

The secretariat also followed up with other less active GIST members when relevant.

1.2 Meeting with the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG)

The Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) of GIST consists of representatives from National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and plays an advisory role providing 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 at the margins of the UN Statistical Commission in March 2020. They provided useful guidance and inputs on a number of the items raised. See minutes from the meeting here[1].

In 2020, the SAG was extended from 8 to 12 countries. The original eight countries, who all reconfirmed their interest, are Ghana, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Philippines and the State of Palestine. The four new members are Ethiopia, Fiji, Morocco and Mozambique. The new members were added to better reflect regional variation as well as to strengthen the voice of the global south.

A SAG meeting was held in September 2020 to onboard the new members, get input from the SAG on the work and plans of the task teams, and to ask SAG members for their contribution to some of the work. The SAG overall supported the work of the GIST task teams and provided a number of suggestions for further work. A few key points were as follows:

- The UN SDG:learn platform is a very useful tool and efforts should be made to expand it with more courses and other types of training materials and documents.
- A number of specific course needs were mentioned by the different members. The GIST Board agreed to forward those needs to GIST members and other relevant partners.
- The guidance materials under development were welcomed and concrete input on areas to cover was provided.
- The inventory of statistical literacy initiatives was also seen as very useful.
- They were interested in good practices from other countries on the different areas discussed.

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[1] https://unstats.un.org/gist/meetings/

- They suggested that the work of GIST and its materials are more actively promoted so that more actors become aware.

Minutes from the meeting and an excel file with detailed overview of input received was made available to GIST members. The minutes can also be found on the GIST homepage [here](#).

1.3. Meetings of the GIST Board

The Board met at regular intervals throughout the year to discuss the work in the task teams, aiming at improving synergies across the teams and to ensure that the work was in line with the strategic action areas of GIST. The Board also jointly prepared and presented at the meeting of the renewed and expanded SAG. Minutes from the Board meetings are available on the GIST homepages [here](#)[2].

1.4. Collaboration arising from GIST work and discussions

One of GIST's roles is to feed into the work of its members through information, seeding ideas, motivation from discussions and supporting initiatives where possible. This exchange has increased substantially in 2020. A number of GIST developments and initiatives by GIST members have benefitted from collaboration across GIST members, and inputs from work in other areas of GIST members or close collaborators. One example is a course on statistical literacy that UNITAR initiated based on a GIST literacy survey and where the preparation of the initial draft was enabled through GIST contacts andthe materials reviewed and strengthened by significant input from GIST members (including the GIST chair, the GIST secretariat and ECA). The motivation for the microlearning videos currently under development came from significant ongoing discussion across two GIST teams and involves different GIST members. Other elements include members providing each other feedback on course materials, members planning their own support work along the lines of what has been discussed in task teams and similar.

1.5. General updates

At the UN Statistical Commission in March 2020, GIST organized its first open side-event with the title *Collaborative efforts to enhance statistical training*. At the event, the UN SDG:learn statistics hub was launched and ILO, SESRIC and Statistics Norway all spoke about how they contributed to GIST and appreciated the collaboration. The GIST secretariat and UNITAR had also put forward proposals for sessions at the planned IAOS meeting in Zambia and the UN World Data Forum, but due to cancellations and reduced scope, the sessions could not take place.

The COVID-19 pandemic did not affect the work of GIST as task teams had always been working remotely. It was discussed at a number of meetings if specific COVID-19 related activities should be initiated, but it was agreed to rather leave this to the individual members. All members have adapted their trainings and approaches throughout the year, and it is expected that this also will lead to an increase in e-learning and microlearning materials being available in general and on the UN SDG:learn statistics hub.

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[2] https://unstats.un.org/gist/resources/documents/

The GIST webpage was updated with latest files and information 3-4 times through the year. GIST members requested that a file structure be established for GIST related materials to be available to them. The GIST secretariat considered various options and will be setting this up in 2021.

2. *Work of the task teams*

2.1 Online gateway and e-learning community of practice

Statistics hub on UN SDG:learn

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

The task team has established a statistics gateway or hub for statistical training materials on UN SDG:learn: www.unsdglearn.org/statistics. It provides information and web links on courses and training provided by different members of GIST and others. The hub was launched at the UN Statistical Commission in March 2020 and now has around 60 statistics courses available, mostly e-learning. Courses are categorized on the basis of three different aspects: i) SDGs, ii) type of learning (e-learning, face-to-face, etc.) and iii) statistical theme or category, loosely following the Classification of Statistical Activities (CSA). The statistics pages are managed by the GIST secretariat, who has an overall responsibility for providing log-in access for those who want to upload courses and to assess and approve uploaded materials. The overall platform management and development is handled by UNITAR and UNSSC. The development of the statistics page was also funded by UNITAR. The task team continues its efforts to improve the gateway and add courses from additional partners.

The general UN SDG:learn platform also has a category called microlearning which includes short learning videos, quizzes, platforms, webinars, etc. As more materials of this sort become available, the task team has agreed to include them on the statistics platform.

Linked to the work, the task team has discussed criteria for uploading a course, both in terms of quality of learning and relevance for statistics. At present, course information needs to be added manually by the course provider, but more automated options may become available moving forward.

Review and evaluation of courses

Aim: To facilitate knowledge and improvement of training materials through mutual experience exchange. Guidance materials are also expected to be made generally available.

The task team has exchanged experiences, documents and views on review and evaluation of courses. An initial discussion was on review and feedback on the courses available on UN SDG:learn. This included peer feedback, evaluation and feedback by participants. Two documents were prepared in connection with this: a list of guidance input and questions for peer review of courses (meant to take a similar form as a book or movie review); and list of questions that could be asked to participants for their review. The purpose of the documents is to provide potential students more information about the courses, provided by others who have taken them. The reviews could be placed on the various platforms where the courses are available, as well as on UN SDG:learn, with the consent of the course provider.

The work on external reviews of courses started a more in-depth discussion on evaluation of courses. It became clear that many agencies were following the same principles, but that there was a variation as to how detailed a review or evaluation of courses was carried out and who had access to the evaluation. The task team therefore agreed to develop a guidance document on course evaluation, following the Kirkpatrick model, also bringing in practical examples from different entities. The different agencies in the task team expressed an interest to learn from each other to improve and also to share this with a wider group of training providers. The task team has agreed to develop some guidance material and templates linked to course evaluation by participants, and the first drafts are currently under consideration by the team. The task team has also developed a template for external peer reviews of courses, in the format of movie or book reviews.

Statistical Literacy in the context of the 2030 Agenda

Inventory of statistical literacy initiatives

Aim: To promote initiatives in statistical literacy, and make it easier to find relevant statistical literacy information and materials.

The task team has been working on the development of an inventory of initiatives to improve statistical literacy relevant to official statistics. The idea is for the information and any relevant materials to be used by partners and by NSOs who want to support initiatives and reach out to users to help increase statistical literacy. The information on the literacy initiatives is structured under a number of categories. One key category refers to the key recipients of the statistical literacy initiative: school children, students, media, decision makers or others. Other categories are type of guidance or learning materials, language etc. A template for initiatives in statistical literacy has been developed and trialed through drafts by team members, followed by development workby the UNSD web development team, and finalized submissions by team members. A call for members outside of the task team was made at the end of January 2021 and it is expected that more entries, also from non-members, will be added in the course of 2021. A pilot version can be found here: https://unstats.un.org/gist/statistical-literacy/.

E-learning course on statistical literacy

Aim: To increase statistical literacy among important user groups through a MOOC applying good practice in e-learning.

This task team was established 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, to which UNSD, UNECA and the GIST Chair have provided input. Three of five modules are now available on UN SDG:learn here[3].

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[3] https://www.unsdglearn.org/courses/understanding-data-and-statistics-better-for-more-effective-sdg-decision-making/

Addressing specific NSO demands

Reports on sustainable training programmes and training for NSS coordination

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.

A key role of GIST is to improve coordination of statistical training in official statistics, particularly as relevant to the 2030 agenda. After carrying out an assessment of the course inventory and consultant report produced in 2018, task team members agreed that they could play a role in helping better coordination of statistical training activities. While in some thematic areas where there are many actors and a risk of overlap in the training provided (more supply than demand), in other areas very few if any partners are providing support, although there is a clear need for it (more demand than supply). The task team developed four case studies that showcase challenges in coordination of statistical training with a focus on balancing supply and demand. The task team then decided to move forward with two case studies where there is a strong demand from NSOs and the NSS for more training and guidance. One is linked to coordination of the National Statistical System and one is linked to NSO's managing, planning and implementing continuing professional development of their staff by establishing sustainable in-house training programmes.

The task team agreed that it would be helpful to hire consultants for more in-depth research on these two topics, to carry out an assessment of materials already available and interviews of a selected number of countries and provide recommendations. The GIST Secretariat was able to secure funds and three consultants were hired in December 2020 who will provide their reports in early February 2021 (these will also be uploaded to GIST homepage). The task team will then decide, based on the findings and recommendations, how to proceed. A probable outcome is that guidance and tools will be developed to help countries to better address the challenges faced. If needed, GIST will also aim at bringing in members of the network to potentially develop target trainings, mentoring or peer-exchange programs.

3. Suggested plans for 2021

3.1 Reaching more users

GIST has been doing extremely relevant work since it was established in 2018 but with limited public profile. The visibility of the GIST among national statistical offices, in particular, has been limited. Many potential users are not aware of the tools and materials GIST members have developed. It is therefore proposed to have a stronger emphasis on reaching out to the statistical community to make GIST and its work more widely known so that more can benefit from it. A communication strategy has not yet been developed. Organization of sessions at conferences, webinars and similar will be some of the approaches to increase the visibility of GIST. The members of GIST, including its SAG, also have a role to play in referring to the work of the group.

Among the activities already planned is an open side-event at the Statistical Commission in 2021 on February 11th. A session for the World Data Forum had earlier been approved and will probably be included in the agenda for the 2021 event. Submissions have also been made to the ISI World Statistics Congress in July and are similarly planned for the IAOS conference planned for August/September.

Another way to reach users is to provide materials that users can benefit from. Linked to the UN SDG:learn hub, UNITAR, UNSD and UNSIAP are currently developing microlearning videos on core topics which also will include a reference to GIST, as the work and idea came through GIST collaboration. Other outreach and learning materials could also be developed along the same line to raise the profile of GIST.

3.2. Collaboration and consultation

As stated in 1,4, a number of GIST developments and initiatives by GIST members have greatly benefitted from collaboration across GIST members, and inputs from work in other areas of GIST member or their close collaborators. These include input on evaluation, reviews, teaching, programme development, and facilitating online infrastructure for course information, inventories and microlearning. Much of this lies in collaboration within and across GIST members, with feedback, input and suggestions also coming from SAG. Hopefully, this will also lead to further joint endeavors.

One concrete result already mentioned above is the ongoing work on microlearning videos. UNITAR and UNSD already have initiated work on a microlearning video on trust in statistics and are planning to develop a few more, also with input from SIAP and potentially other GIST members.

In addition, GIST has also seen the advantages of access to input from the broader community of teaching statistics, not just in training for official statistics, and the GIST Board proposes to set up a small advisory group linked to 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.

The establishment of such an advisory group is subject to approval at Annual Meeting.

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.

The GIST Secretariat will work on a system where files can be accessed by all GIST members. This will probably be set up in a Wiki. Members can view, but not upload or edit files due to security restrictions. This is, however, the only option that would allow all members access as other options either are not accessible by all or difficult to maintain for the Secretariat.

3.4 Work of the task teams

All task teams will continue their work carried out in 2020. 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
- Extend to include microlearning as a main feature along face-to-face and online trainings, and add microlearning materials
  - Finalize evaluation guidance document
  - Call for peer reviews of courses
- 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
  - Use reports from consultants on sustainable statistical training programmes in countries and trainings for NSOs and NSSs as a starting point to agree on which tools and materials could be developed.

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.