

PARIS21 STRATEGY: 2016-2020

1. Context

1.1 The Emerging Post-2015 World

A new challenge: Moving from more data to a truly transformative agenda.

The global statistical landscape in 2015 is very different from that of 1999 when PARIS21 was created. Sixteen years ago, there was a critical and urgent need to help developing countries produce more and better data to underpin the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), build a culture of evidence-based decision-making, and strengthen accountability and good governance. Today, the challenge is not just producing more and better data to respond to an ever growing demand, but also supporting its effective use to lead to better policies and ultimately better lives.

With the expected adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015, the international community will have agreed on a comprehensive and long-term policy framework that is universal and transformative. Making progress towards the SDGs will require not only better coordination of policy agendas, but also of statistical programs to support monitoring and decision making at all levels – national, regional, and global.

Innovations are driving new opportunities...

What is driving the increased importance of data in everyday life? First, technological and institutional innovations have unlocked unprecedented new opportunities in data production, dissemination, and analysis. The volume of data in the world is increasing rapidly both from traditional and new sources, as technology makes possible new, more immediate, and often more detailed ways of collecting it – for example through mobile phones. This has led to experimentation, innovation, and adaptation – a true data “revolution.” Second, increased demand for data has spread to new stakeholders and new agendas. Data has democratised, in that it is being produced and used by a greater range of actors, from governments to private companies, researchers, and civil society more broadly – leading to rising expectations for how data can be used to enhance decision-making and transform lives.

...but also new risks.

At the same time, the data revolution poses new risks and challenges related to how data are accessed and used, including issues of privacy, reliability, and other concerns, particularly with non-official and “big” data. It has become clear that the ability to access, analyse, and use data imparts power – the power to know what is happening on any particular issue, what could and should be done, and the impact of actions and policies – which may not always be wielded for the public good.

Statistical systems are improving generally, but inequalities between countries are growing.

While significant inroads have been made in developing countries to plan for and build better statistical systems for data production and management, capacity weaknesses persist in many countries even for simple statistical analysis and the presentation of statistical information in a user-

friendly and policy-relevant format. Moreover, countries continue to experience severe financial constraints, preventing National Statistics Offices (NSO) from undertaking their core statistical collections on a regular basis without ongoing support from development partners. Indeed, there are huge and growing inequalities in countries' abilities to produce, analyse, disseminate, and use quality data. Some countries have seen an exponential growth in available data from a wealth of new sources, and know how to and have the resources to take advantage of it. Others have remained behind, lacking the capacity and specialised skills to deal with non-official data, and the needed institutional culture and knowledge for managing the risks and reaping the potential rewards of a rich new data ecosystem.

The task ahead – Bold action is needed.

There is a clear need to become bolder, pursue a wider vision of statistical capacity building, and sustain this vision over time. The value of statistics for evidence-based policy making, monitoring and evaluation of national development programs, and accountability has become widely accepted and increasingly relied on by all parts of government and civil society. The data revolution provides the potential for a sweeping approach to strengthen this demand even further, and improve data production and access to meet it.

As the new development and data environment is defined over the next few years – through the post-2015 and SDG discussions in particular – there is a greater need than ever for cooperation and coordination in the international community to ensure that the new data ecosystem serves the public good. All countries – particularly developing countries – will also need strong strategies that lay out their statistical priorities, needs, and interests in the immediate period ahead.

The strategy proposed in this document is placed within this new context. PARIS21 must play its part, in collaboration with others, in delivering on the expectations and demands of the international community – including the statistical development community but also reaching far beyond.

1.2 PARIS21's agenda revisited

While PARIS21 has a strong track record...

A recent evaluation of PARIS21's work concluded that the partnership has been very successful at meeting its original mandate and objectives, including putting statistics at the heart of policy making and development, through targeted advocacy at the country and regional level; helping NSOs better coordinate and strengthen National Statistical Systems (NSSs), through National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDSs); and supporting countries to improve data management through its Accelerated Data Program (ADP) and International Household Survey Network (IHSN) work.

Moreover, PARIS21 has become a genuine voice of support for developing countries, by highlighting and championing their statistical needs within the evolving discussions and agendas of the Busan Action Plan for Statistics (BAPS), post-2015 discussions and the data revolution. It has also responded resourcefully to their urgent and varied statistical needs, taking advantage of the partnership's flexibility and of its ability to take risks more easily than other organisations.

Nevertheless, important challenges remain to match data production to user needs and demand, strengthen coordination around and monitoring of support for national capacity building strategies, ensure sufficient funding for data production needs in general and with regard to the response of National Statistical Offices to the SDGs in particular, and help countries adapt to the data revolution.

..... *there is now a need for PARIS21 to expand and evolve.*

In 2013, the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda called for a data revolution and the establishment of a global partnership on development data. The Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution (IEAG), in its November 2014 report, provided a clearer idea of what “data revolution” means, while PARIS21’s Informing a Data Revolution (IDR) Road Map Document discusses how it can happen at the country level. Parallel progress has not yet been made in the institutional implications and design of a global statistical system to respond to the new challenges. While some actors are calling for the establishment of new global institutions, programmes and mandates, others would prefer to strengthen existing structures.

The present document argues that PARIS21 can provide a middle ground, combining institutional innovation with a reality check from a truly bottom-up country perspective – ensuring that new approaches are aimed ultimately at delivering on core country needs. Indeed, the evaluation revealed a clear and strong demand for PARIS21 to respond proactively and flexibly to the new and emerging demands of the evolving data ecosystem – particularly through its ongoing work on the IDR project – while continuing and building on its core work of helping countries develop national statistical systems that provide the foundation to improve peoples’ lives. PARIS21 stands ready to respond to the various calls for a more inclusive partnership, bringing together a wider variety of data producers and users, with the aim to better serve the development community and respond to the needs of the SDG Development Framework, and the post 2015 development agenda, as well as hasten in the new data ecosystem and reap the opportunities of the data revolution.

Building on the evaluation’s broad recommendations, this document sets out a specific strategy for PARIS21 for the period 2016 to 2020. This will be a key period for seeking strengthened and sufficient investment in statistical systems to support the consensus that emerges from this year’s discussions on the SDGs and post-2015 agenda, and for laying out a road map to harness the data revolution for the benefit of development.

The proposed strategy implies a game-changing shift in the contributions of PARIS21’s partners, with regard to their relation to the Secretariat and to the overall statistical and development governance framework. Notably, their support and guidance will be needed in integrating and championing PARIS21’s unique role within the wider development and statistical community.

2. Vision

2.1 The Role of the PARIS21 Partnership in the overall data and development landscape

The governance of the global statistical landscape stands at a crossroads. There is wide consensus that reforms are needed to find a better balance between the need for global monitoring on the one hand, and strengthening capacities at the local level to produce the data needed to improve people’s lives on the other hand. Several proposals are on the table: The UN Secretary-General’s synthesis report has called for the establishment of a new global partnership on development data, and the UN Statistical Commission’s Friends of the Chair Group called for a High Level Group for Partnership Coordination and Capacity Building for post-2015 monitoring. There also exist several suggestions for the creation of other groups and institutions such as a Global User Network.

The discussions so far have not led to any emerging consensus on which arrangement will be pursued; and the negotiations might continue for some time. Hence, it is an appropriate time to think strategically about how PARIS21 will fit into the new emerging data ecosystem.

Towards a broader and more inclusive partnership

The data revolution discussions that have taken place over the last year and a half have brought together different groups involved in data that previously did not interact: think-tanks like the Center for Global Development, foundations such as Gates and Hewlett, NGOs such as ONE and Oxfam, and businesses such as telephone companies. Academics have started to exchange ideas with existing partners including representatives of NSOs and UN agencies. These exchanges have proved very useful and led to the organisation of multiple events such as the “London workshop” in July 2014 and the upcoming Data Festival in Cartagena, Colombia. Through its partners or secretariat, PARIS21 has been involved in many events, either as an organiser or contributor. It has positioned itself as a facilitator of informed dialogue between different communities and has been able to link those discussions back to the “traditional” statistical community.

It has become clear also that more “outreach” to and possible alliances with other data communities of relevance to the evolving development and data revolution agendas – e.g. to environmental groups - will be necessary to help fill the identified gaps in the data landscape approaching post-2015. A mapping exercise of the various other development data groups and an exploration of the possibilities to associate them with the PARIS21 partnership is required. A first, promising step has been already undertaken with the Data-Driven Development Initiative at the World Economic Forum, which should be pursued.

Overall, this strategy proposes a role for PARIS21 that continues to be focused on and responsive to the core needs of developing countries for statistical capacity building, but that also expands enough to help position countries effectively to take advantage of new opportunities. To this end, PARIS21 aims to focus its activities around four key roles: knowledge-sharing and innovation incubator; advocacy; coordination and monitoring; and technical support.

KNOWLEDGE-SHARING AND INNOVATION INCUBATOR

Understanding the new data environment is key to “harnessing” it. There are high expectations on the contribution that data and statistics can make to governance and development goals. A complex and rapidly evolving data ecosystem, as well as the new SDGs, present both opportunities and risks which countries need to understand better. Having earned the trust of developing countries, PARIS21 is well-placed to provide a bridge between them and the multiplicity of data interests and agencies currently working on data and involved in monitoring the SDGs, and facilitate a knowledge and innovation exchange that brings together and shares the experience of individual partners and clients. Through its wide partnership, it can advise on the suitability and sustainability of innovations, and share other countries’ experience. It also has the flexibility to implement pilot projects for statistical capacity building, and identify specific needs for which innovations would be tested - from improved data collection and use of technology to new methods in analysis, user promotion and data dissemination in a cost-effective manner.

ADVOCACY

The interests in data and statistics needs of developing countries must be championed in the context of intensifying post-2015 discussions. PARIS21 already has a strong track record of being a voice of support for developing countries’ interests in the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS), BAPS, post-2015, and data revolution discussions. It will need to remain as engaged as possible in initiating

dialogue on new and emerging statistical issues relevant to any ongoing and new discussions to ensure that the interest in the data and statistics needs of developing countries remains in the forefront. At the local level, there is a continuing need to raise demand for data and statistics in decision-making, and strengthen the related support and funding for its provision at the highest and broad levels of government.

COORDINATION AND MONITORING

With more actors and a more complex data landscape, there is a need to strengthen existing institutional frameworks and partnerships to make them fit for that purpose, ensuring that joint efforts ultimately benefit developing countries. The ever-increasing demand from the international community and national actors for more and better data provides a unique opportunity for PARIS21 partners to increase their involvement in statistical capacity development, funding, and coordination. Given its diverse membership and its ability to adapt itself in flexible configurations, PARIS21 has demonstrated that its strongest comparative advantage is in rallying, facilitating, and coordinating its partners. Its work so far (on NSDSs, Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS), Data Management, etc.) gives it an advantage at the country and regional level in particular, but there is a need to play a stronger role at the international level too and strengthen the coherence and synergies of the interventions of its individual partners, in particular with regard to their commitments to international initiatives. PARIS21 has built a reputation for expertise in facilitating discussions and seeking agreements on key issues and strategies to strengthen data and statistics among all relevant partners and it must build on this role, especially where it can do so through a country-level prism. Moreover, PARIS21's already established role as a monitor of funding commitments from both donors and developing countries (through its PRESS and Country Report on Support to Statistics (CRESS) reports, respectively), of the NSDS processes worldwide, as well as the BAPS indicators on the use of statistics will need to be reinforced with the monitoring of countries' measurement capabilities.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Significant inroads have been made on PARIS21's core objective of strengthening NSSs, but there is a continued and evolving agenda. There is still a way to go to implement strategies [NSDSs 2.0], update these strategies to help countries seize the opportunities of the data revolution, and meet the new demands for development data, including from the SDGs. PARIS21's neutrality has earned it the trust of developing countries, and a strong relationship with NSOs, giving it a strong advantage in continuing to provide guidance and develop frameworks, with a focus on improving national statistical systems, strengthening regional cooperation and improving access and use of statistics.

3. Objectives

3.1 Key Objectives

In 2015, the international community will establish a new post-2015 framework with the SDGs at the core of the agenda. Additionally, decisions related to the global governance structure of the international statistical system will be aligned with the data revolution discussions and outcomes. PARIS21 will closely monitor these discussions and, when appropriate, adapt its objectives to the emerging global landscape. PARIS21 will continue to strengthen and develop alliances with other actors on specific issues that go beyond its expertise and reach out to the non-traditional actors, in particular user groups and other partnerships on thematic topics.

The following four broad objectives are in line with the BAPS implementation strategy and continue to deliver on PARIS21's core activities while also allowing room for new ones.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND INNOVATION

- Produce and share knowledge on and, where appropriate, spearhead innovations in data and statistical capacity development.
 - Take part in, and consider organising, global dialogue and fora on data and development bringing together a wide range of data users and producers. As relevant and needed, and in cooperation with other key stakeholders, produce materials (reports, flagship publications) to inform discussions at events – e.g. an analysis of countries' performance in improving their capacities on measurement, statistics and data production, and dissemination.
 - Become a resource and knowledge hub where partners and countries can identify, assess, and draw upon the latest innovations, best practices and other relevant tools
 - Conduct regular peer reviews of partners and countries to monitor progress.
 - Develop and regularly update an inventory of selected technological, institutional, and organisational innovations based on their cost-effectiveness and suitability to the needs of national statistical actors.
 - Produce lessons-learned on specific issues based on PARIS21's cross-regional and cross-sectoral engagement.

ADVOCACY

- Continue to enhance the status of statistics in major international initiatives to ensure that consequent data requirements are well-funded.
 - Develop multimedia advocacy material, facilitate developing partners' involvement in international debates and initiatives, and provide expertise at international fora.
- Enhance the status of statistics and statistical systems at the national level and ensure the government's priority and support.
 - Highlight and advocate for the importance of statistics to policy-makers from various areas to secure their support (financial and otherwise) in national statistical development, in particular through the identification of champions for specific issues.
 - Advocate for proper funding for data and statistics initiatives, from both domestic and external resources.
- Continue to incentivise increased use of statistics by policy-makers, businesses, and civil society in policy-making.
 - Promote local research by academics and policy think tanks through an increased access to official statistics.
 - Emphasise the public good of these statistics as fundamental to creating an environment of evidence-based decision making.
 - Empower citizens and increase statistical literacy through informed user-producer exchanges, training of journalists and other infomediaries, and the development of multimedia material adapted to the relevant country and regional contexts.
 - Bolster governance and country specific development directives by improving the relevant data legislation and policies.

COORDINATION AND MONITORING

- Facilitate discussion on key issues affecting data and statistics, and seek agreements on needed action where appropriate, among all relevant partners, at the national, regional and international levels.
 - Take part actively in the design and implementation of any possible global discussions on development data, and other relevant international initiatives.
 - Explore the feasibility of a data and statistical capacity “compact,” to be signed by partners and countries. If approved, this compact would set out a commonly agreed “global” framework of data capacity building priorities, translated into individualised commitments anchored in countries’ NSDS or in Regional Strategies for the Development of Statistics (RSDS). A light touch peer review process would provide the tool for holding partners accountable and would serve as a coordination tool among PARIS21 partners.
- Strengthen the capacity of countries to monitor and measure their development progress.
 - Build on PARIS21’s already established tracking and monitoring role of financing contributions through the PRESS and CRESS, NSDS, and BAPS indicators, to include a more comprehensive statistical capacity assessment of countries (in collaboration with the World Bank, among others).
 - Continue to develop and improve tools for improving coordination at the country level in particular with regard to strategic planning, data management and costing, and inter-governmental agencies processes.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

- Continue to strengthen capacity in National Statistical Systems and its linkages to decision making processes.
 - Assist traditional partners to engage in dialogue with non-official data producers and users.
 - Improve regularly the NSDS process through its design, implementation and evaluation.
 - Improve the statistical legislative landscape to facilitate data production and dissemination.
 - Pilot innovations and extract lessons learned for scaling-up by partners where adequate.
 - Strengthen the coordinating role of NSOs within the governmental architecture and non-official data producers.
- Foster and improve the production and dissemination of quality data for development.
 - Improve access to traditional and non-traditional data.
 - Foster collaboration among official data producers for production and dissemination of survey and administrative data including civil registration and vital statistics.
 - Undertake country expert and peer reviews.
 - Collaborate with regional support centres to ensure economies of scale and the development of context-specific approaches and solutions.

4. Means of Implementation

4.1 Inclusive, Engaged, and Responsive Partnership

PARIS21 will continue to create an inclusive environment for all stakeholders. When appropriate and to offer new perspectives, PARIS21 will seek to bring in new partners from outside organisations, alliances, or networks (whether in the private sector, foundations, civil society organisations, and intermediaries) that can contribute to delivering on the key objectives outlined in section 3. PARIS21 has already started to reach out to other communities (including specialised agencies as well as other stakeholder groups, such as in the environmental community) with a few pilots within the Data 4 Development and Data 4 Climate Change initiatives. It will continue to seek the advice of its Executive Board and advisory groups – such as the High Level Advisory Group that has been informing and advising on this strategy – on when and which potential new partners or groups to invite in, to help address what issues, and under what conditions.

Building on its achievements in bringing in new partners as needed (e.g. the Gates Foundation on the data revolution), PARIS21 will generally seek to maintain a flexible approach to gathering relevant actors for particular issues, possibly in adaptable and time-bound configurations, as needed and most appropriate to the theme at hand. This flexible approach allows PARIS21 to balance the trade-offs between the desirability of being a more inclusive – but also bigger and more unwieldy – partnership, and the need to remain participatory, nimble, and productive by remaining smaller.

PARIS21's ability to demonstrate results and value-added in tackling – in collaboration with the right group of interlocutors and partners – an expanded range of important and complex issues is critical to galvanising and maintaining high level attention and support beyond PARIS21's "traditional" NSO audience. PARIS21 will seek to strengthen the engagement and ownership of partners by providing means of independent coordination, i.e. regular peer reviews of partners to monitor progress.

Given the ongoing nature of the discussions on data and development objectives, there will be a need for the implementation of this strategy to evolve, even as the broad strategy itself remains steadfast. Yearly revisions of the workplan will provide an opportunity to consider adaptations to respond to evolving needs and new requests, to review feasibility relative to available funding, and to focus partners on the tasks ahead. A planned mid-term evaluation of the strategy – in 2018 – will also provide an opportunity for deeper reflection on the strategy's continued adequacy relative to the evolving environment, and the consequent adequacy of funding expectations.

In the short-term, PARIS21's focus is expected to continue to be on developing countries and regions, in particular IDA-eligible, least developed, and post-conflict and fragile countries. It may be useful to review the target countries at the time of the mid-term evaluation.

4.2 Resources

In order to carry out the mandate and objectives presented in this strategy, a significant scaling up of funds for the Secretariat will be required, based on the average level of expenditure from 2011 to 2015. Commitments from donors must be sought in a targeted manner, adapted to an ever-changing environment, but will need to be reliably secured through multi-year, untied funds that cover the full duration of the strategy (2016–2020). These financial needs will be periodically reassessed in collaboration with donors, and as expected activities change.

PARIS21 will continue to look to broaden the financing base beyond the donors that have been involved so far, in particular looking to increase the involvement and participation of private foundations (as with the IDR project). In addition to additional funding, PARIS21 partners will need to scale up their in-kind engagement through:

- A stronger advocacy role, acting as champions of statistical development as relevant through chairing, speaking and mission-team leader roles.
- The provision of remote expertise, as well as the dispatching of technical experts to the Secretariat on a temporary basis, and/or a longer term basis through secondment processes.
- The engagement in task teams as set up by the governing bodies of PARIS21.

4.3 Secretariat

The implementation of this strategy, as drafted, will require a competent secretariat with a diversity of skills and experience relevant to the mandate. As supported by and recommended by the recent evaluation, a solid – and enlarged – core of long-term staff will be essential, complemented by bringing in additional experts for specific tasks or projects as needed.

To involve partners more closely in the processes of PARIS21, key partners will be invited to second staff to the Secretariat on a regular basis but for specific, limited periods.

The secretariat will need to maintain flexible engagement processes to allow it to adapt quickly to a changing environment and take on board new activities when necessary – and when financing can be secured – reacting quickly to the new demands from the international community and its partners.

The secretariat will continue to strengthen the communication strategy, so as to trumpet successes more, advertise best practices, and generally make policy-makers and a broader public aware of PARIS21's work through its website, newsletters, and other means.

5. Conclusion

With the strategy outlined above, PARIS21 aims to continue its core role in providing support to developing countries to build statistical capacity, while also acknowledging and encompassing the need to help countries adapt to the current data realities and context and to the expected objectives of the post-2015 agenda, and respond to calls for greater coordination among the various actors in the statistical and development landscape and for a more inclusive and engaged partnership.

By providing up-to-date and innovative expertise to help developing countries strengthen their national statistical systems, and foster greater use of statistics by all, PARIS21 will seek to make data and statistics a high-quality, well-managed, and easily accessible public good that allows and underpins strong evidence-based decision-making; empowers citizens and bolsters governance; and contributes to making and monitoring progress towards key national, regional, and international development objectives, including poverty reduction and sustainable development goals.