

PARIS21 Annual Board Meeting *DRAFT Record of the Proceedings*

On 7 April 2020, PARIS21 held its Annual Board Meeting, bringing together representatives from 22 countries, 20 multilateral organisations and 4 civil society and private sector institutions via a virtual meeting. All documents and presentations are available for download [on the PARIS21 website](#). A record of decisions, list of participants and results from the satisfaction survey are available in the Annex.

I. Introduction

The Secretariat, represented by its Executive Head Mr. Johannes Jütting, welcomed participants to the first virtual PARIS21 Annual Board Meeting, which has been organised as a web meeting due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Chair of the PARIS21 Board, Ms. Ariunzaya Ayush (Mongolia), greeted participants and presented the meeting agenda. The agenda was approved by Board members (*Decision 1 – see List of Decisions*).

II. Documents for approval and discussion

The Chair introduced three documents for approval by the Board:

- List of Board members for 2020-2022;
- PARIS21 2020 Programme of Work and Budget; and
- PARIS21 Strategy 2021-2025.

Board members were reminded that an extensive review process had been conducted for the documents over the past months. Special attention was given this year to this prior consultation given the fact the board meeting would be conducted virtually, because of the COVID-19 pandemic. All documents had been circulated to the PARIS21 Executive Committee for review at its meeting on 1 March 2020 and were approved with minor comments. The Secretariat updated the documents in line with these comments and shared the revised versions with Board members for written consultation by 24 March. Feedback from Board members was then integrated into a final set of documents that were sent to Board members on 27 March for approval at the Annual Meeting.

Board members 2020-2022

The Chair asked members if there were any objections to the proposed composition of the Board for 2020-2022. No objections were expressed.

2020 Programme of Work and Budget

The Secretariat presented the 2020 Programme of Work (PoW) and Budget, including an overview of priorities, the Secretariat's COVID-19 mitigation plan, four new initiatives and the status of funding:

- In 2020, the Secretariat's work will be guided by the following priorities: showing impact and transitioning to the new 2021-2025 Strategy; maintaining agile and demand-driven operations; integrating country, regional and global work; and engaging further with partners.
- Adjustments to the PoW are ongoing in response to COVID-19 and include: focusing on partner-specific needs and providing urgent support; strengthening e-learning and remote outreach and support; and anticipating normative and methodological work.
- The Secretariat intends to launch four new projects in 2020:
 - The Trust Initiative, launched as a follow-up of the Cross Regional Forum 2019 to promote trust in NSS and its data ;
 - A Clearing-house for Financing Development Data to support greater transparency and coordination within the data funding landscape among donors and countries, as part of the Bern Network on Financing Data for Development¹ of which PARIS21 serves as the Secretariat;
 - An NSDS impact task team and pilot studies with countries to improve data planning in the decade of action; and
 - Gender data e-learning modules for statisticians and journalists to use and explain gender statistics for gender equality.
- The 2020 budget is EUR 5,438,126 million, in line with previous years' budgets. There is a funding gap of EUR 750,000 that the Secretariat expects will be filled over the course of the year. The Secretariat does not anticipate that the COVID-19 crisis will have an impact on the 2020 fundraising at this stage.

Discussion

Kenya (KNBS), Paraguay (DGEEC) and Malawi (NSO) thanked the Secretariat for the proposed PoW and the responses taken to adapt to the COVID-19 crisis, voicing support for the work plan and its continued focus on supporting developing countries.

Kenya (KNBS) welcomed the recent collaboration undertaken with the Secretariat, including on capacity development to improve SDG review and reporting and a training workshop on using ADAPT² to support data planning and NSDS implementation. The importance of using alternative, non-traditional data sources such as citizen-generated data (CGD) was highlighted and Kenya announced that it will be working with the PARIS21 Secretariat on new activities to clarify and operationalise CGD.

Paraguay (DGEEC) expressed its appreciation for PARIS21's work in Latin America and the Caribbean and its desire to continue cooperation with the Secretariat and partners, in particular to improve data communication and capacity development through peer exchanges and innovation. The regional workshop on communicating statistics, planned in September 2020, was mentioned as an opportunity to conduct further dialogue on these issues.

Malawi (NSO) thanked the Secretariat for the technical and financial support it received to develop its NSDS, which is an important document for NSOs to take stock of and plan for greater data demand nationally and

¹ <https://bernetwork.org/>

² Advanced Data Planning Tool (ADAPT).

internationally, align statistical activities with other ministries and public agencies, and consolidate budget requirements to carry out its planned work. The NSDS can also serve as a one-stop-shop for donors to identify areas of support for statistical activities. Malawi stated its appreciation for the support received from PARIS21 for its activities since the NSO was established in 2006.

The Secretariat thanked Board members for their comments and their support for the proposed work plan for 2020.

Strategy 2021-2025

The Secretariat presented the final version of the PARIS21 2021-2025 Strategy ('Strategy'), which will be accompanied by a new, unified results framework that will be developed together with members and include a theory of change for PARIS21. The new strategy outlines:

- A clear vision and mission for PARIS21 that is designed to speak to different communities represented on the Board. PARIS21's activities will continue to prioritise low- and middle-income countries and small island developing states.
- Three strategic areas for PARIS21's activities: accelerating innovation, bridging data ecosystems, and developing statistical capacity. Cross-cutting themes such as gender have been mainstreamed across these areas and will continue to be expanded in work plan activities.
- A two-pronged business strategy to allow PARIS21 to be on a strong and stable financing footing for the period of the strategy and beyond, which includes: strengthening PARIS21's core funding base and tapping into new funding sources, for example through the PARIS21 Foundation currently under development.

Discussion

Board members welcomed the new strategy and plan to develop an accompanying results framework. **Canada**, speaking on behalf of Global Affairs Canada and Statistics Canada, noted that one of the benefits of a unified results framework would be greater coherence and coordination among various partners working jointly on it, and stated its interest to contribute to the elaboration of the framework. **The UK (DfID)** voiced its support for the development of a theory of change as part of the results framework, which will help prioritise PARIS21's activities.

In terms of the strategy's content, **Canada** welcomed the mainstreaming of gender, equality and inclusiveness across the three areas of the strategy, noting for example that having a gender equality component is important in statistical capacity development. **Norway**, represented by Norad and Statistics Norway, raised the importance of south-south cooperation, noting that it should be highlighted in the results framework. There are resources that can be accessed through south-south cooperation, a point reflected in Norad's own strategy.

Board members recognised the importance of data and statistics to shape effective responses to the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath. **Jordan (DOS)** underscored the importance of capacity development for NSOs in this context, which would allow them to better respond to the significant demands placed on them for data analysis and machine learning and more information for decision-making during the crisis. It was observed that the global health crisis provides an opportunity for highlighting the value of data and statistics, in particular in developing countries, and increasing people's trust in data and in NSOs. Jordan observed that peer-to-peer exchanges to share experiences on how to communicate the value of data to policy-makers would be a useful activity to undertake and recommended that a specific action plan for MENA be developed.

Regarding the resourcing of PARIS21's work, **Canada** noted the importance of securing financial stability for the partnership going forward. **Jordan (DOS)** flagged the need to find creative solutions to enhance PARIS21's capacity to mobilise financial resources, for example having a country lead regional work in a specific area and to finance such activities.

Decisions

The Chair proceeded to the endorsement of the three documents and asked members for any final comments. No final comments were made by members.

The Board took the following decisions unanimously (*see List of Decisions*):

- Approved the list of Board members for 2020-2022 (*Decision 2*).
- Adopted the 2020 Programme of Work and Budget (*Decision 3*).
- Adopted the PARIS21 2021-2025 Strategy (*Decision 4*).

The Chair thanked all members for their contributions to shaping the documents.

III. PARIS21 in 2019: Selected highlights

The Secretariat presented PARIS21's achievements in 2019, which included engaging with a record number of 94 countries, 22 fragile states and 18 small island developing states, as well as supporting 23 NSDS and RSDS.

In 2019, PARIS21 focused on three key areas:

1. Impact through partnership

- Through its impactful partnerships, notably with UN Women, PARIS21 integrated the gender aspect across its core programmes and mainstreamed gender statistics in its online tools, such as ADAPT, as well as including gender analysis in the 2019 PRESS report.
- The three SDGs for which PARIS21 is a custodian agency were upgraded to Tier 1.
- PARIS21 became the Secretariat for the Bern Network on Financing Data for Development, which grew to over 140 members in 2019.

2. Capacity development of low/middle-income country NSS

- PARIS21 developed the Capacity Development 4.0 guidelines (launched in January 2020) which cover south-south cooperation and pilot case studies, including Bolivia and the Dominican Republic.
- ADAPT 2.0 was launched and includes a costing module to assist NSOs with budgeting of data plans, including NSDSs. The updated tool was rolled out with regional trainings in Africa and Asia.

3. Putting innovation and modernisation at the heart of NSS

- PARIS21 continued its data visualisation work to support the ways NSOs communicate data, and worked on citizen-generated data with 'Partners for Review' to build trust between traditional and new actors in the data ecosystem.
- PARIS21 launched its statistical leadership training in the Africa and Asia-Pacific regions.
- As part of the Steering Committee of the PRAIA City Group, PARIS21 contributed to a chapter on openness in the Handbook on Governance Statistics, which is a significant contribution to good data on governance.

Discussion

Senegal (ANSD) recognised the excellent partnership it has with PARIS21, which in 2019 included providing support to reinforce Senegal's NSS and NSDS, using ADAPT to identify data gaps. Senegal noted that the NSDS is an effective tool to coordinate the NSS, and the NSDS allows NSSs to position and organise themselves around a strategic vision and mission that is well-defined. Senegal stressed that partnering on such projects is crucial, as the implementation process is possible only if all stakeholders involved work towards the common goal.

Lao PDR (LSB) highlighted the importance of PARIS21's CRESS, which LSB started working on with key stakeholders in 2019. Through CRESS, LSB anticipates that the government will be able to increase its commitment to fund statistical development over the next 10 years, taking into account the new and emerging needs of LSB, including staff and a new census. In this context, CRESS serves as an important tool for Lao PDR to rationalise and prioritise NSDS activities and identify funding gaps. LSB expressed its gratitude to PARIS21 and other development partners, for their work and continued commitment to help Lao PDR improve its statistical capacity.

The Secretariat thanked Senegal and Lao PDR for their interventions. **The Chair** expressed her thanks to members for the collaborative activities undertaken by all under PARIS21 and the quality of the work accomplished by the Secretariat.

IV. How is COVID-19 affecting the PARIS21 community?

In the light of the ongoing coronavirus outbreak, **the Secretariat** proposed an interactive discussion to allow partners to share experiences and views and to explore the impact of COVID-19 on NSOs. To set the scene, **the Secretariat** shared its recent work on this issue, which has focused on three areas:

- Reaching out to NSOs to collect anecdotal evidence from countries on the impact of COVID-19 and where they need help, particularly concerning demand/supply side considerations.
- Conducting a dialogue on COVID-19 during the Board and accompanying webinars on 8 April, and preparing a policy brief to be launched on 8 April 2020 which summarises PARIS21's findings so far and explores how statistics can be safeguarded during the crisis.
- Launching a Rapid Action Task Force on the crisis, which PARIS21 Board members are welcome to join.

In addition, **the Secretariat** noted that the OECD has created a digital workspace for NSOs to exchange experiences in a safe environment open only to registered users. The registration details will be made available in the coming weeks. Likewise, UNSD has set up a website together with partners to serve as a resource to collect content and experiences from multiple stakeholders.

The Secretariat passed the floor to **Ghana (GSS), Sweden (Sida) and UNSD** for three interventions covering the perspectives of an NSO, a donor country and a multilateral entity on responses to COVID-19.

Ghana (GSS) shared the concrete measures it has undertaken to make the NSO relevant for policy-making, and therefore for citizens. In practical terms, such measures involve adjusting working methods to suit remote working and thinking about how the NSO can balance its operations with economic activities. In terms of routine operations, Ghana has tentatively delayed its next census (planned for June 2020) and noted that

all other censuses and surveys will have to be pushed back. Ghana is considering how to go ahead with data collection for CPI. As an institution, GSS is positioning itself to help the government during the crisis and enhance its relevance. Working with Flowminder, UK and Vodaphone, Ghana is involved in a project using phone records to assess how measures against mass congregation are having an impact. Ghana also has a project with UNDP to measure the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.

In terms of communication, **Ghana (GSS)** informed members that it has developed a dashboard on its website to include new indicators that go beyond tracking infection rate to visualise hotspots of COVID-19. Such functions are assisting the Ministry of Social Protection to identify persons affected by the lockdowns and enable rapid policy responses. GSS is looking to assess the impact of different crisis measures such as the lockdown on the outbreak and would be interested to work with partners on such work.

From the donor perspective, **Sweden (Sida)** stated that it has put together a team to analyse the crisis from multiple angles, including its impact on human rights and poverty in partner countries. Based on the information gathered from partners, Sida will adapt its approach so that it can continue to be a reliable and flexible partner. The demand for data and statistics is rising and the need for transparent data is clear to Sida. Sida noted capacity development is a key focus area and stated its desire to work with the Secretariat and partnership to figure out how capacity development at institutional level can be achieved in the current circumstances. Sida is also working with Statistics Sweden on methodology to explore how to continue the work on COVID-19.

UNSD noted that data and statistics are critical to responding effectively to the COVID-19 crisis. Big data can help stakeholders monitor the situation and the impact on NSOs and NSSs. UNSD informed participants that it has been in touch with countries undertaking censuses to understand what their various responses have been. As the crisis continues, e-learning tools and online solutions will help ensure that some activities are maintained. UNSD has launched a global COVID-19 response webpage together with partners to pool information and resources so that they can be easily accessible to all. UNSD observed that while short-term emergency responses are important, it would be necessary to connect them to a long-term vision, for example enabling NSOs to play the role of data stewards and raising visibility around the value of data and statistics for the long-term.

The Secretariat thanked the speakers and opened the floor for open discussion among participants, which included written comments submitted via the teleconference chat function.

Discussion

UNDP noted that on COVID-19, it is rolling out packages of support to country offices in coordination with the WHO. UNDP noted that in several countries, resident UN Offices are bypassing NSOs in designing or fielding assessments and/or surveys to measure the impact at household level. UNDP suggested that PARIS21 and UNSD could issue guidance to stakeholders undertaking such assessments. **Jamaica (STATIN)** and **the UK (DfID)** expressed concern over this issue and noted that there is an opportunity to raise awareness.

Malawi (NSO) noted that Malawi and other countries have been requested to conduct a high frequency phone survey of households on the impact of COVID-19 by the World Bank. In this context, Malawi observed that it would be useful to have guidelines on how to conduct such surveys, an area where PARIS21 and UNSD could provide assistance. **The UK (DfID)** expressed its interest in such guidelines.

UNECA raised a point regarding the availability of internet connection in developing countries and the impact this can have on people's ability to adapt to the crisis. **UNDP** suggested that it would be useful to have a real-

time tracker on the impact COVID-19 is having on statistical activities and the measures being taken by NSOs on website, for example on UNSD's COVID-19 response webpage.

The Secretariat thanked all participants for their contributions to the discussions and reminded members that PARIS21 will be hosting a webinar on the impact of COVID-19 on NSOs on 8 April 2020.

V. Conclusion

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking all participants for their contribution to making the first PARIS21 Annual Board Meeting a success, noting that PARIS21 had successfully adopted its new list of Board members, Programme of Work and Budget for 2020 and new strategy, had reflected on the many achievements undertaken under the partnership in 2019, and discussed the impact of COVID-19 on the PARIS21 community. **The Secretariat** thanked the Chair for her leadership and informed participants that a series of videos will be screened sharing the experience of several NSOs working with PARIS21 from the following countries:

- **Bhutan intervention** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qe0iQR0hmqQ&t=53s>
- **Burkina Faso intervention** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-8jrvyEMDs>
- **Maldives intervention** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBc2zsI-p6w>
- **Mali intervention** - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ci_BNoKZt4
- **Philippines intervention** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7u-YRgZUpM&t=202s>

Record of Decisions

The PARIS21 Board reached the following decisions:

Decision 1. Draft Agenda

The Board adopted the meeting agenda.

Decision 2. Board members 2020-2022

The Board approved the list of Board members for 2020-2022.

Decision 3. 2020 Programme of Work and Budget

The Board adopted the 2020 Programme of Work and Budget.

Decision 4. Strategy 2021-2025

The Board adopted the PARIS21 2021-2025 Strategy.