CONCEPT NOTE

From trust to use: Getting official statistics into decisions

Associated event of the Tenth Committee on Statistics

Statistics Division
3 December 2026 (3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. UTC+7)
Conference Room 1, United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok

Background

The theme of the Tenth Committee on Statistics is building trust in official statistics in a digital society. Trust is a precondition for use, but trust and use are not the same thing: official statistics can be trusted and still sit unused when policies, budgets and investments are decided. This event, therefore, explores what turns trusted data into data that is actually used.

The question matters across the region. Although large volumes of data and statistics are produced, they are not always used effectively to inform policy and investment decisions. ESCAP's work has identified persistent data use gaps: situations where relevant data exist but are underused, due to barriers such as limited accessibility, poor communication, weak data sharing across government, or lack of awareness of available data and how they can be applied. The stakes are rising as the international community focuses on measuring progress Beyond GDP: richer statistics on wellbeing, sustainability and inclusion will only deliver value if they are used when decisions are taken.

ESCAP's Power of Data project is supporting countries across the region in closing these data use gaps. The project, funded by the 2030 Agenda Sub-Fund of the United Nations

Peace and Development Trust Fund, enhances the capacity of policymakers to use data and statistics for decision-making, working alongside national statistical offices and other data producers, with each country focusing on a transformative entry point aligned to national priorities: digital transformation in Vanuatu, jobs and social protection in Mongolia and Lao PDR, and environment and climate change in Timor-Leste.

The event will bring perspectives from a group all too rarely in the room at statistical meetings: senior data users. High-level decision-makers from Lao PDR, Mongolia and Vanuatu, alongside their chief statisticians, will share their insights and experiences on what is needed to unlock the data dividend to achieve the SDGs, leading into an interactive session exploring how data use gaps can be closed across the region. Practical ideas generated during the event will feed into regional guidance on increasing the use of data and statistics, to be developed under the project.

Objectives

1. To extend the discussion of trust in official statistics to the demand side, examining what turns trusted data into data that is used in decisions.
2. To hear directly from senior decision-makers about what enables and prevents their use of official statistics.
3. To share country experiences from the Power of Data project, including what senior officials plan to do to strengthen the use of data in decision-making.
4. To identify practical actions that data producers and data users can take, separately and together, to close data use gaps, as input to regional guidance to be developed under the project.

Participation

The event is open to all participants in Asia-Pacific Statistics Week. The session is interactive and participants are encouraged to contribute their own experiences and ideas.

Agenda

Time	Session
15:00–15:15	**Opening: trusted, but used?** Welcome and framing remarks, including reflections from senior regional statistical leaders. An interactive poll will be used to gather views on how far decision-makers trust official statistics, how often they use them, and what most often stands in the way.
15:15–15:50	**From trust to use: country experiences** A facilitated conversation with senior data users and chief statisticians from Lao PDR, Mongolia and Vanuatu on their experience under the Power of Data project: what they set out to do, what has changed, and what they plan to do next to strengthen the use of data in decision-making.
15:50–16:40	**What turns trusted data into used data?** Working in mixed groups of producers and users, participants examine concrete reasons why trusted data still goes unused, and identify practical actions for producers, for users, and for both together. Groups share priorities through a gallery walk and voting.
16:40–17:00	**Bringing it together** Synthesis of the practices identified and how they could inform regional guidance, connections to the Committee's trust agenda, and closing reflections.

Registration

Participants are kindly requested to register on Indico at https://indico.un.org/event/1023597/ or via the QR code.

For information, please contact Mr. Richard Tonkin, Statistician, Statistics Division, at richard.tonkin@un.org.

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