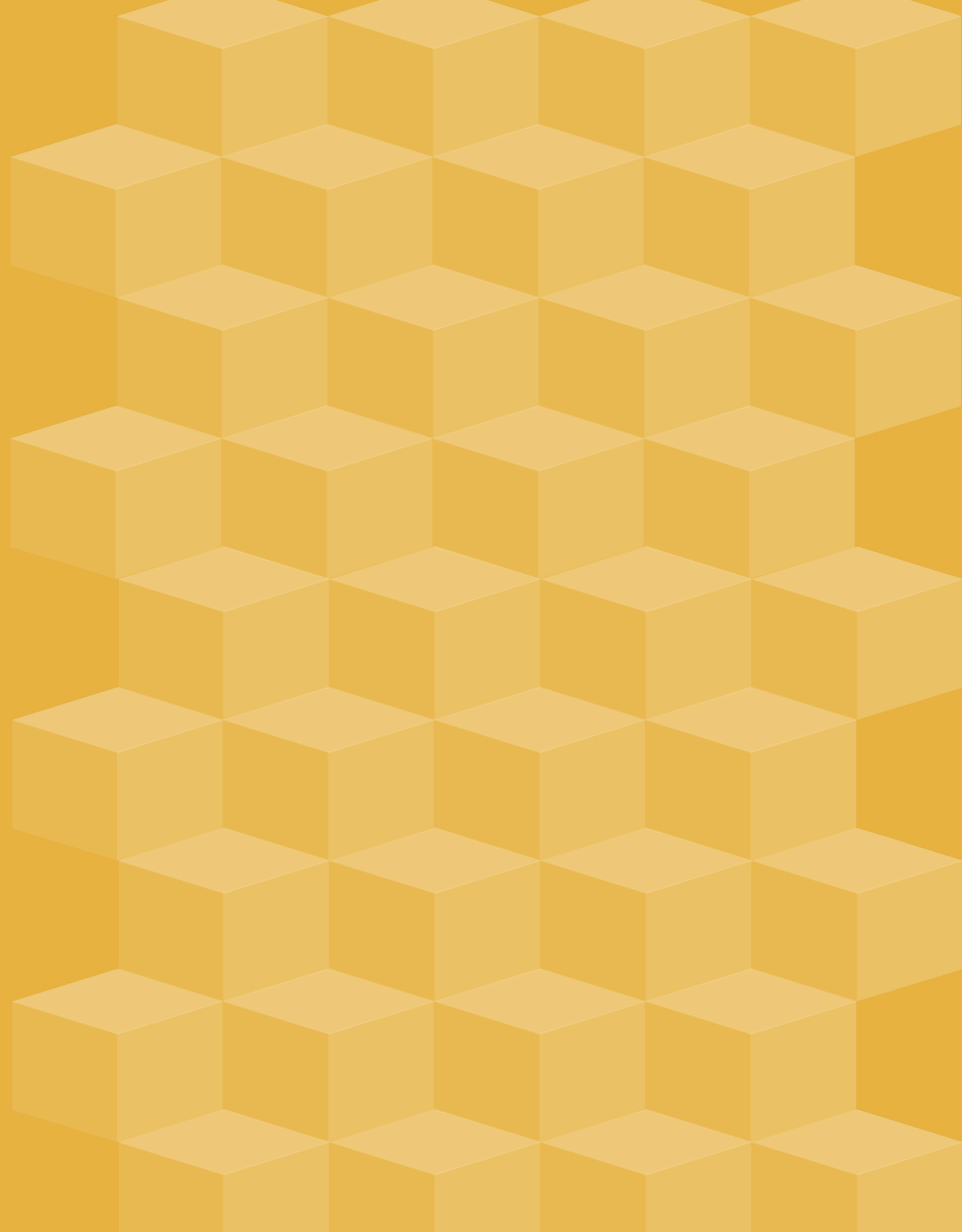


**DRIVING
INNOVATION**



Implementing the UN Legal Identity Agenda

In 2020 the United Nations adopted the UN Legal Identity Agenda – a holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics and identity management – as a recommended model for ensuring universal registration of all vital events, translated in regular, comprehensive and accurate vital statistics and legal identity for all.

As a co-chair of the UN Legal Identity Agenda TaskForce, UN DESA helped drive development of a system that encompasses different government infrastructure components and establishes interoperability between:

- health institutions delivering their responsibilities of informing on the occurrence of births and deaths;
- national civil registration systems responsible for issuing legal tenders;
- national statistical systems in charge of producing reliable and regular vital and population statistics;
- the population registers that serve as a constantly updated list of people in the country; and
- the national identification system responsible for issuing legal identity credentials throughout the lifetime of an individual.



Sustainable Development Goals Investment Fair

The 2021 SDG Investment Fair focused on how to build forward from COVID-19 by scaling up long-term investment for sustainable development. Convened by UN DESA, the Fair brought together ministers and senior government officials, the private sector, including CEO Members of the GISD Alliance, representatives from development finance institutions, multilateral institutions, academia and think tanks to discuss concrete actions on how to address the decline in foreign direct investment during the pandemic and

the continuous need to mobilize additional investments for the implementation of the SDGs. Ministers of Finance and Foreign Affairs pointed out the need to shift incentives towards the long term for all actors across the investment chain. In addition, participants discussed the need for sector-specific SDG-related metrics to strengthen the reporting on the sustainability impact of companies and to strengthen the alignment of private investment with sustainable development.

Improving the efficiency of household survey systems

UN DESA responded quickly to the tremendous challenges to national household survey programmes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey by UN DESA and the World Bank found that 96% of national statistical offices either partially or fully stopped face-to-face data collection at some point during the pandemic. At the same time, there is an increased need for timely, high-quality data on the impacts of the pandemic, and heightened demands for more efficient household survey systems. UN DESA together with the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys (ISWGHS) and other expert groups leads discussions on how household surveys should be best positioned for the next decade. The ISWGHS developed the technical guidance note, **Planning and Implementing Household Surveys Under COVID-19**, a COVID-19 impact surveys dashboard, and the UN Expert Group on Innovative and Effective Ways to Collect Time-Use Statistics developed a survey instrument to inform policy makers on the impact of crises on people's daily life.

Leveraging big data: the UN Global Platform

Hosted by UN DESA, the UN Global Platform, is run by and for the global statistical community



to enable statisticians, data scientists, and data engineers to develop new methods and applications using big data and data science. A new dashboard on trade, travel and transport indicators was developed on the platform, tracking ships and airplanes world-wide, and allowing close monitoring of the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. ARIES for SEEA was also launched on the platform, a state-of-the-art application that can generate ecosystem accounts for any region in the world.

The Department also develops training materials for big data and data science in official statistics. In 2021, hands-on training was provided remotely to Senegal and Uganda on the use of satellite data for crop statistics and for Cambodia in dissemination of national statistics and indicators using .STAT technology.

UN Public Service Awards

The United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) programme recognizes the creative achievements and contributions of public service institutions in realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially in advancing effective, efficient, transparent, accountable, innovative and citizen-centered public governance and services for sustainable development.

The 2021 UNPSA featured four categories:

1. Fostering innovation to deliver inclusive and equitable services for all including through digital transformation
2. Enhancing the effectiveness of public institutions to reach the SDGs
3. Promoting gender-responsive public services to achieve the SDGs
4. Institutional preparedness and response in times of crisis

A total of 214 nominations from 44 countries were received for the 2021 Awards. Category 1 had the greatest number of submissions and SDG 3, 5, 16 and 17 were the most ubiquitous SDGs for innovation. Asia-Pacific was a leading region with the largest number of initiatives submitted.

The winning initiatives were invited to share their experiences and lessons learned at the UN Public Service Forum in Dubai, UAE, in October 2021.

UN innovation competition and exhibition

The 2021 STI Forum included a virtual exhibition featuring the winners of two innovation competitions organized by UN DESA, in 2020 and 2021, in partnership with the Global Innovation Exchange. The 2021 competition sought innovations developed or adapted to address COVID-19-associated disruptions, while the 2020 competition focused on innovations for transformative change more broadly. The 10 winners of the 2021 competition were chosen from more than 625 entries, and the 15 winners of the 2020 competition were selected from among nearly 350 entries. The virtual exhibition consisted of a series of moderated roundtables that allowed the innovators to describe their cutting-edge initiatives and share insights from continuing to implement their innovations in context of the covid-19 pandemic. The roundtables were organized around themes: food systems, vulnerable communities, education, maternal and child health and environmental sustainability.



Harmony with Nature

Earth-centered law has emerged in many of the United Nations Member States, linking planetary health and human well-being, and gaining visibility and momentum because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Nations Harmony with Nature Programme has documented and analyzed legislation and policies on the rights of nature

that have been either adopted or for which work is currently ongoing in 36 countries. It has also documented and analyzed collaboration among NGOs, civil society organizations, legislators and legislative bodies working together to draft, adopt and implement laws or policies recognizing nature as a subject of rights and/or a legal “person” protected by law. UN DESA launched an online platform of country profiles and practices that will serve as a reservoir for new initiatives.



Sharing innovative approaches to the VNR process

For the fourth year, UN DESA supported Member States in reflecting on innovations related to the VNRs. It organized 17 VNR Labs in the margins of the 2021 HLPF. The VNR Labs

provide an informal platform for experience-sharing and reflection on the VNR process. Some discussed issues cutting across the VNRs, such as policy coherence, the principle of leaving no one behind, data and statistics, resource mobilization and partnerships. In addition, three countries, Japan, Tunisia and Uruguay, presented their national processes in detail and engaged in longer interactions.



Taking a catalytic approach to data development

Through a Development Account Project beginning in March 2021, and over a four-year period, 2021-2024, UN DESA is working to improve the institutional capacity of selected countries in special situations to develop policy experimentation and regulatory sandboxes for new technologies. This innovative and catalytic approach to data development is expected to accelerate progress towards achieving the vision in the Decade of Action and delivery of sustainable development, embodied by the 2030 Agenda. Under the right circumstances,

Governments could adopt an experimental approach to policy design, using empirical data to validate theoretical and historical understandings of the impact of variations in regulations and policies. In this environment, novel digital technologies, financial products, and business models can be tested under a set of rules, supervision requirements, and appropriate safeguards. These measures bring the cost of innovation down, reduce barriers to entry, and allow regulators to collect important insights before deciding if further regulatory action is necessary, especially when existing regulations (or the absence thereof) can impede innovation. Policy experimentation and sandboxes constitute an essential component of the innovation ecosystem and institutional resilience. Policy experimentation or regulatory sandboxes can provide opportunities to study feasibility and scalability.