

Assessment of the Status of Statistics for 10 Key Development Indicators in Africa

Abridged and Non-Technical Summary of Findings

This exercise examines statistical practices and outputs for 10 key development indicators across African countries to better align the continent's statistical narrative with its development ambitions and realities. It covers five socioeconomic areas: population, unemployment, inequality, education, and well-being; three economic areas: gross domestic product (GDP), trade, and debt; and two natural resource areas: land and water.

The full draft versions and the one-page summary of each of them can be found [here](#):

The following is the abridged non-technical summary of findings:

- 1. Population statistics:** Three of Africa's four most populous countries, namely Ethiopia, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have not conducted a census for at least 20 years. South Sudan and Eritrea have not held a census since independence.
- 2. Unemployment statistics:** Headline unemployment rates obscure widespread working poverty, while only about half of African countries have ever conducted a labour force survey.
- 3. Inequality statistics:** Income-based measures do not fully capture inequality because informal activity is extensive. Differences in survey years at the national level also limit meaningful regional assessment of trends and patterns.
- 4. Education statistics:** Countries have not consistently institutionalized the sources, frequency, or estimation methods used for education statistics. Data on skills, investment, and outcomes remain far less available than enrolment data.
- 5. Well-being statistics:** Continental poverty estimates conceal major differences in the sources and timing of underlying data. Even for comparable years, national monetary and multidimensional poverty estimates vary because they rely on different methodologies.
- 6. GDP statistics:** GDP figures differ both between national statistical offices and international providers and among international providers. The first set of differences mainly reflects revisions and publication schedules; the second largely results from exchange-rate conversions.
- 7. Trade statistics:** International providers generally offer more complete trade data on African countries than Member States report. However, coverage and reported figures vary materially across external sources.
- 8. Debt statistics:** Data coverage is stronger for general government debt than for debt-service-to-exports ratios or household debt. Four countries do not report debt-service-to-exports ratios, and only 10 Member States publish household debt statistics.
- 9. Land statistics:** National statistical systems and policymakers have given insufficient attention to producing and disseminating land statistics. International agencies using satellite data provide limited coverage and often report inconsistent figures.
- 10. Water statistics:** Despite extensive advocacy and investment in the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), fewer than 20 African countries have begun compiling water accounts, and only six disseminate them regularly at stage three. In some countries, publication stopped after the initial release.