

# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

## Press Center



### Remarks by Treasury Secretary Jacob J. Lew at The Harnessing the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development Event at Financing For Development

7/15/2015

*As prepared for delivery*

**ADDIS ABABA** – Thank you, and I want to thank the ONE Campaign, the Government of Mexico, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and UN Economic Commission for Africa for bringing us together today. Thanks also to everyone joining us today — your participation underscores the importance of data to the post-2015 Development Agenda.

We are here because we recognize that for Financing for Development to fulfill the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals we must transform how we “do development.”

While we live in a world flooded with data, most developing countries lack reliable, high-quality — and perhaps most importantly — useable data on key areas, from poverty and employment, to health and education, to governance and corruption. Generating accurate and timely statistics is not easy in the best of circumstances. And it can seem virtually impossible in countries with few resources, limited capacity, and with other often much more pressing challenges.

However, I would like to highlight three reasons why harnessing the data revolution is so worth the investment and is critical to fulfilling our collective ambitions.

First, data enables evidence-based policymaking. The smart and strategic use of data is absolutely necessary for development effectiveness. For example, accurate and timely poverty data helps policymakers target development programs and social protection to the neediest households. While this sounds straightforward, a recent World Bank study found that 77 out of 155 countries measured do not have adequate poverty data.

Reliable data is also a critical component of any robust and well-functioning tax system, a priority to so many of us here today, without which developing countries will be unable to mobilize the necessary domestic resources to make development truly sustainable.

Data can accelerate progress on inclusion, by shining a light on the situations of women, youth, and other disadvantaged groups. In sub-Saharan Africa, gender-disaggregated data in agriculture has transformed our understanding of the challenges facing female farmers. For a long time, experts believed that women-led farms produced less mainly because women have less access to inputs like fertilizer, water, and information. Thanks to gender-disaggregated data we now know that women often face obstacles mobilizing the labor they need to help their farms thrive. These insights create opportunities to pursue policies that will allow all of Africa’s farmers realize their potential.

Second, data gives us a tool to monitor and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals — though we must improve the global approach to monitoring, evaluating, and learning from development data. We must collect more data and it must be of higher quality, including disaggregation by gender and other demographics. It must become more open, transparent, and useable for all stakeholders.

We must also enhance the use of data for evaluation and learning. Ultimately, our ability and firm resolve to analyze and act on data will be the key to better policymaking.

Third, data empowers citizens and it enables a more informed dialogue within and between countries. When shared openly, it gives an unprecedented voice to citizens. We have seen exciting examples around the world of citizen-led efforts to increase budget transparency and accountability. One good example is in Brazil, where participatory budgeting increased local investments in sanitation and health services and reduced infant mortality.

Data also plays a key role in the private sector as a public good that can help firms make informed investments and take smart risks. Improving the quality of data from weather stations, for example, has the potential to attract the private sector to make agricultural insurance more accessible to smallholder farmers.

Our efforts across these areas will be aided by continued advances in technology, which are already driving a revolution in fast-and-cheap data collection.

The United States is stepping up our leadership on this collective effort to harness the data revolution for sustainable development.

At the global level, the United States is forming and will provide \$3 million in initial support to a Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, alongside the governments of Mexico, Colombia, Kenya, Senegal, and other partners including CIVICUS, the ONE Campaign, the Hewlett Foundation, the World Bank Group and a number of private sector companies.

We are also working to support data at the country-level. In partnership with the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) will invest \$21.8 million to create “Country Data Collaboratives” in several sub-Saharan African countries. These Collaboratives will use HIV/AIDS and broader health, gender equality, and economic growth data to improve local programs and policy impact.

Lastly, we will support initiatives to improve data across specific sectors critical to the new development agenda. We will increase support for efforts to make agriculture and nutrition data available, accessible, and usable by deepening our commitment to the Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN) initiative. We are pleased to announce \$4 million in support of the initiative’s Secretariat, matching the contribution by the United Kingdom. To support the Climate Services for Resilient Development, USAID will provide \$9 million to support needs assessments and climate-service activities.

Through these initiatives and by taking action together to harness the power of data for sustainable development, I am confident that the global community will be all that much closer to achieving the aspirations of the post-2015 development agenda.

Thank you.

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