



UNWDF virtual roundtable

Data to leave no one behind in the context of Covid-19: Practical steps from Benin and beyond

Session summary

This 2020 Virtual UN World Data Forum session, organised by Development Initiatives and Benin's Ministry of Planning and Development, brought together experts with a range of perspectives and experience of using data to ensure no one is left behind. The panel examined a range of key questions to provide recommendations for enacting the commitment to leave no one behind.

Where are the people and places most likely to be left behind and what impact is Covid-19 having on them?

- According to the latest predictions, between 88 and 150 million people are expected to be pushed into extreme poverty in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Covid-19 is not significantly changing the distribution of poverty, but it is compounding it – hitting the people and places that were already the most vulnerable and least resilient to crises the hardest.
 - The poorest 20% of households have seen much slower improvements in their income.
 - Women are much more likely to report losing their jobs.
 - Children living in the poorest 20% of households, who were already less likely to engage in learning activities at home, saw their rates of learning at home drop even lower.

What kinds of data and statistics do we need to inform policy choices to tackle poverty and inequality in response to Covid-19?

- Covid-19 has demonstrated the need for quality data, and for it to be collected and disseminated very rapidly.
- Greater disaggregation of data is critical for analysing the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable populations.
- Linked administrative data at subnational level is vital for identifying people and formulating targeted policies.
- Innovative data collection approaches can support official data sources. Examples include:

- Web panels of the general population collecting statistically representative data remotely
- Crowdsourcing data directly from citizens
- Adding new sociodemographic information onto existing labour force surveys
- Rapid response phone surveys to track impacts on a monthly basis
- Assessment surveys to determine impact on wider economic performance.
- Digitalisation opens up new possibilities for monitoring poverty, which can complement established indicators derived from national surveys.

What new kinds of partnerships are required for sharing and using data effectively?

- Strong partnerships are needed across government ministries and with National Statistical Offices to share data on Covid-19.
- Trusted partnerships are needed across multiple sectors, including the private sector and civil society, to harness new technology and approaches. This can include support to modernise systems and improve access to tools and big data.
- Modern technology and the media can play a key role in disseminating information to citizens.

What should the role of the international community be?

- The principle to leave no one behind should be embedded into programming and policy responses to Covid-19, as countries seek to build back better.
- Indicators focusing on the poorest 20% of people enable progress to be tracked through the lens of inequality.
- The countries most at risk of being left behind are also the ones that lack robust data systems and strong data resources. Investment is required in:
 - Sustainable foundational data systems that are nationally owned and locally led
 - Modern data production processes, including data collection.
- National and local actors should be empowered to lead the response to the pandemic – those being impacted know what works best.