Official Development Assistance - Office for National Statistics - High Quality Statistics That Improve Lives Globally

**2024/2025 Project Annual Review**

Monitoring and Evaluation and Learning Lead  
Health and International Division/ International Development Team   
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# Executive Summary

A formal review of progress and effectiveness is a core requirement for all Official Development Assistance (ODA) funded projects.

This review is smaller in scope compared to previous annual reviews due to an end-term independent Impact, Process and Value for Money evaluation being undertaken at the same time, by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), covering the period 2022-2025. The independent evaluation is scheduled for publication in autumn 2025 and will be available via the via the [International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) Registry](https://datastore.iatistandard.org/activity/GB-GOV-24-001) and the Cabinet Office’s [Evaluation Registry](https://evaluation-registry.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/). This annual review should be read alongside it.

This annual review assesses the ONS International Development project's performance in 2024/25, during which 119 activities were delivered working with over 25 countries and partners (annex 3) — exceeding the previous year's 108 activities. The project demonstrates strong technical delivery while facing strategic challenges that require targeted attention.

Technical outputs substantially exceeded expectations, with data science and digital technology capabilities showing particularly strong results. The project trained 1,127 people with 97 per cent rating training as useful. Notable successes include supporting Kenya's digital infrastructure transformation, advancing census methodologies across Africa through the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) partnership, and delivering Women into Leadership programmes that demonstrated measurable individual-level change in five countries. Operational and advisory outputs showed variable performance, with policy engagement, leadership development, and communications falling moderately below expectations. A new partnership with Zimbabwe, which delivered successful outputs for the first eight months and saw good technical coordination, was not renewed beyond the initial 12-month MoU. This reflects the importance of robust risk management and taking into consideration wider external factors.

As the project enters its final year, three critical areas require attention: strengthening outcome measurement through systematic tracking tools, developing a formal inclusivity policy to remove participation barriers, and refining the theory of change (ToC) to better align activities with measurable outcomes. These improvements will be essential for demonstrating sustained performance in the 2026 Project Completion Review.

# Recommendations

## Progress made on 2023/2024 recommendations

Significant progress has been made on several recommendations made in the 2023/2024 annual review. The theory of change (Annex 1) was successfully reviewed in collaboration with NatCen, with further guidance on activity mapping underway. Outcome monitoring has improved, with earlier-stage tracking now embedded in planning, although resource constraints have delayed the development of outcome-level indicators. Sex-disaggregated data has been included where possible, but more work is required to improve the collection. Communication with Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) country posts has strengthened, particularly in Jordan and Somalia, despite contextual challenges. The project monitoring database has been expanded to include outcome data, and quality assurance processes have been introduced for 2025/26. Inclusive design remains an area for improvement, and actions to increase female participation in data science are being planned. Coordination with FCDO has deepened, though a formal joint strategy is yet to be developed. The UNECA partnership has evolved to focus on sustainable training and technical assistance, with progress across priority areas including demographic and economic statistics.

## Recommendations for 2024/2025

1. **Embed inclusivity in activity design and strategic planning**

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| While progress has been made in developing sex-disaggregated statistics, there is a need to go further by embedding a gender-inclusive lens into the design of activities, policies and strategies. This means ensuring that inclusivity is not only reflected in data collection but also in planning and implementation. The success of the Women into Leadership programme demonstrates the positive impact of targeted initiatives, and there is a valuable opportunity to expand this approach across other areas of work. By doing so, the project can foster more equitable participation and outcomes and strengthen its commitment to inclusive leadership and representation. See recommendations in Annex 5. | Important  This will be embedded into the design of the next phase of the project. |

1. **Strengthen outcome measurement**

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| To enhance the effectiveness of training initiatives, it is crucial to improve outcome measurement by conducting work that can track post-training implementation and assess its impact on statistical quality, value, trustworthiness and organisational performance. | Urgent  Work will be conducted to collect this across partnerships. |

1. **Streamline indicators and metrics**

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| To improve clarity and reduce duplication, organisational reach metrics should be consolidated and indicators merged across outputs. A tiered engagement model (such as light, moderate and deep levels of involvement) should be introduced to better reflect varying degrees of stakeholder participation. Additionally, consideration should be given to removing or lowering the target for influencing strategic policy documents under Output 1, as this may not be fully aligned with the nature of the activities. | Urgent  Data collection methods will be adapted this year to reflect this. |

1. **Refine and align the theory of change for next phase of project (2026-2029)**

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| --- | --- |
| Ongoing refinement and testing of the theory of change is recommended to strengthen the logical pathways between activities, outputs and outcomes. | Important  Refinement of the ToC will begin in the next phase of the project. |

# Introduction

The project aims to strengthen statistics for the public good in low- and middle-income countries, with a focus on countries that are a priority to the UK government. This is in line with [the UKSA international development strategic plan](https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/statistics-for-the-global-good-high-quality-statistics-to-improve-lives-globally/pages/3/) by improving the skills and knowledge of individuals in statistical methods and tools, supporting good leadership practices to ensure that these skills are implemented effectively and sustainable change is embedded. Additionally, the project establishes mechanisms to sustain this work at a system level by providing resources such as advice on legislation, National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), and by improving relationships with stakeholders in national statistical systems.

## Annual Review approach and methodology

This review attempts to answer this question for the year 2024/25: **has the project delivered on its planned output targets?** The review, led by the ONS International Development Team’s monitoring evaluation and learning lead, is based on internal data collected during the year. It is not an independent data collection exercise but rather contributes to a wider body of evidence on project progress. The main data sources are output-level monitoring and financial data. Data was disaggregated by geography (countries), sex, and when possible, age of participants. To avoid duplication with the independent end-term evaluation, this review did not undertake new outcome-level evidence collection; as such, no stakeholder interviews were conducted. The review team assessed evidence that came to light and worked with the external evaluation team to consider how outcome learning from the evaluation and internal monitoring data during the lifetime of the project can come together to make a comprehensive assessment of outcome for the project completion review in 2026. As a result, the evidence base of is narrower than in the previous annual reviews (2022/23 and 2023/24).

To prevent duplication and ensure efficient use of resources, two additional review questions were incorporated into the independent evaluation conducted by NatCen and WPI Economics — an economic consultancy responsible for the value for money component of the evaluation.

* Are outputs leading to outcomes in line with the project theory of change? NatCen’s independent assessment, alongside internal evaluation will come together to make a comprehensive assessment of outcome of the project in the Project Completion Review in 2026.
* Did the project provide good value for money? WPI Economics analysis will offer an objective review of the project's efficiency, effectiveness and overall impact, helping to inform future decision-making and ensure accountability.

# Findings

## Has the project delivered on its planned output targets?

The project delivered 119 activities during 2024-2025, an increase on from 108 the previous year. Analysis of targets achieved by country, delivery method and output are presented below.

Overall, delivery was broadly in line with expectations. Some priorities shifted during implementation and certain changes in modalities were adopted, when they were deemed more effective. Most targets for technically focussed outputs (Outputs 1–3) were exceeded while the operational and advisory outputs (Outputs 4–7) showed more varied results — some targets were achieved or surpassed, while others fell short.

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| 1 | Improved statistical methods and tools | Moderately exceeded expectations |
| 2 | Enabled increased use of relevant digital technologies | Substantially exceeded expectations |
| 3 | Strengthened data science capability | Substantially exceeded expectations |
| 4 | Improved ways of working | Met expectations |
| 5 | Strengthened national statistical systems through establishing legislation, frameworks and data ethics principles | Moderately below expectations |
| 6 | More sustainable and inclusive leadership | Moderately below expectations |
| 7 | Improved communications and dissemination | Moderately below expectations |

*Assessment of outputs, ONS 2025*

A detailed breakdown of results is provided in Annex 2.

Where targets were not met, some likely contributing factors were identified:

* Dependency on partner priorities has influenced the achievement of strategic targets — particularly in areas related to policy and strategic support. This is evident in the number of cases where the ONS provided advice or support to countries in developing or reviewing National Strategies for the Development of Statistics or contributed to strategic policy documents. During the year, 15 strategic policy documents were published with direct input or advisory support from the ONS, against a target of 20. While substantial work was undertaken on additional policy documents, these could not be included in the final count as they were not yet finalised. As a result, the reported figure does not fully reflect the extent of ONS’s contributions.
* Engagement through training versus engagement through other methods. Each output included two key indicators: (a) number of people reached through various methods, and (b) number of people trained. In half of the cases, one of these indicators exceeded targets significantly, while the other fell short. This suggests a compensatory effect between the two indicators. There is currently no evidence that one method is more effective than the other as they are context dependent and methods may vary year on year. Conducting qualitative follow-up or outcome-level evaluations to assess the relative impact of each method could inform future indicator weighting or prioritisation.
* Counting method. Organisations are only counted once regardless of the depth or frequency of engagement. Going forward, this indicator should be consolidated into a single overarching indicator across outputs to avoid duplication and improve clarity. A tiered engagement model (such as light, moderate, deep engagement) could also provide more nuanced insights.

## Activities by partner

During 2024-25, the project worked most closely with nine national statistical systems where formal cooperation agreements were in place.

These core partnerships included Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Namibia, Palestine, Jordan, Somalia, Zimbabwe and with the Africa Centre for Statistics at UNECA. All partnerships operate under-signed memoranda of understanding (MoUs).

The project also delivered targeted work in Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania to explore future partnerships. A formal partnership with Tanzania began before the year-end. Single activities took place in other countries through direct cooperation or via FCDO and regional partners.

*Table showing number of activities by country and partnership, ONS, 2025*

The partnership with UNECA delivered the highest number of activities across countries. This partnership provided the ONS with the opportunity to reach a greater number of stakeholders across the continent, including national statistical organisations (NSOs) and other development partners such as United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and US Census Bureau. Some of the highlights of this work include:

* Leading of Census Expert Group Meeting and contributing to the development of an e-Census Handbook for Africa (output 2)
* Designing and implementing a communications strategy and workplan for the Africa Data Science Regional Hub and establishing the Africa Data Science Champions Network (output 3)
* Delivering the Statistical Leadership and Women into Leadership programmes (output 6)
* Supporting The Gambia with Post-Enumeration Survey (PES) matching and subsequent PES analysis work (output 2)
* Providing technical support to the East African Community (EAC) in drafting statistical guidelines (output 1)

The ongoing conflict in Palestine limited the ability of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) to engage with the project, resulting in fewer activities compared to other partners. Despite these constraints, the work completed had significant impact on PCBS's technical development and international visibility, particularly strengthening their data science capabilities. The project helped PCBS establish a GitHub repository for better code sharing and collaboration, with ONS recommendations significantly reducing code runtime and improving efficiency. PCBS also presented their reproducible analytical pipelines work at the New Techniques and Technologies for Statistics conference in Brussels, showcasing their expertise and building relationships for future collaboration.

The embedded partnership with the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStat) was paused in November 2024, and the MoU ultimately not extended at the one-year point in March 2025. While unforeseen, the conclusion followed a period of productive collaboration which delivered some positive outputs contributing to meaningful capacity building. Notable achievements included the development of national and subnational population projections through two in-country visits and weekly remote support. Programming skills were strengthened via mentoring from the ONS Data Science Campus, with a focus on Python and Git Hub. These skills were applied to streamline occupation data processing for the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) and the National Social Security Authority (NASA) survey, reducing time spent on quality checking and correcting occupation coding to six from 10 days every quarter. Additional engagements covered secure data use and the UK Code of Practice.

There were two main lessons identified when reviewing the end of the partnership: a) the importance of a good understanding of the context, bilateral relationship and external risk factors and working closely with the Embassy and ZimStat to mitigate these risks during implementation and running of the partnership; and b) the need to build in flexibility to our delivery model until such time that we can be confident of the durability of a partnership.

The remaining 13 countries reported one targeted one-off activity per country. While valuable, these engagements did not evolve into long-term collaborations, due to limited need or available resources.

## Activities by delivery method

The data indicates a diverse range of engagement approaches. The most frequently used method was technical assistance (on-the-job), accounting for 30 instances, followed by 'other' activities with 23 occurrences. Training and partner meetings were also prominent, with 17 and 16 instances respectively. Facilitated workshops (9), exposure or study visits (8), mentoring (7), and peer assistance (7) were used less frequently but still contributed meaningfully to the overall delivery strategy. This distribution reflects a strong emphasis on practical, hands-on support, complemented by collaborative and developmental formats.

## Activities by output

### Output 1: Improved statistical methods and tools

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Achieved** | **Target** | **Percentage achieved** |
| Number of people trained (formal session with feedback form) | 53 | 40 | 175% |
| Percentage of people trained who rate training as useful | 99% | 85% | 116% |
| Number of people reached through other methods | 356 | 250 | 166% |
| Number of organisations or countries reached through regional or global events | 55 | 55 | 113% |
| Number of cases of where ONS has provided advice on strategic policy documents and there is evidence that this advice has had an influence on the final product | 0 | 3 | 0% |

The data reflects strong progress in capacity strengthening under Output 1. All targets were achieved — and in most cases, exceeded — with 26 activities delivered, training 53 individuals in statistical methods, with 99 per cent rating the training as useful. Engagement through other channels reached 356 individuals, with occasional spikes in participation. Regional and global events reached 55 organisations or countries, demonstrating widespread engagement.

Examples of activities under this output include:

* Monthly Indicators of Economic Growth (MIEG), Ghana: A six-day workshop laid the foundation for a reliable MIEG publication, with ongoing virtual support since November 2023.
* Natural Capital Accounts, Rwanda: A four-day scoping mission alongside the World Bank led to follow-up work on various natural capital accounts.
* Iraq census launch: A three-day visit included panel participation at the census launch and strategic meetings with UNFPA and the Iraqi NSO to explore future collaboration.
* Population projections in Zimbabwe: Through two in-country visits and regular weekly remote calls, significant capacity has been built within the national demography team. As a result, new population projections have been developed at both national and subnational levels, enhancing the country’s ability to plan and respond to demographic trends.

One target under this output was not met: there were no recorded instances where ONS advice demonstrably influenced strategic policy documents during the reporting period, indicating a potential area for improvement. Nonetheless, substantial policy-related work was undertaken, which could not be counted due to its ongoing nature. For example, the ONS provided technical support to the East African Community (EAC) in drafting statistical guidelines which is expected to have strategic influence once finalised.

#### **Case study: integrated R and survey methodology training in Nigeria**

Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) needed to strengthen survey methodology capabilities using modern analytical tools. Two remote trainings were a one-day R workshop and a five-day course on sampling, estimation and weighting. The R workshop introduced participants, many of whom were new to the software, to essential skills needed for the main training. While engagement was high, the pace was challenging for some and feedback suggested that future sessions should offer pre-distributed materials and slower progression. Support from an in-country coordinator helped resolve issues and maintain communication. The five-day training built on the R foundation, enabling participants to design surveys aligned with international standards. Feedback was largely positive, with participants reporting improved understanding and a desire to apply their skills in practice. Female participation was notably strong. Suggestions for more localised examples and face-to-face sessions were noted. The Statistician General pledged to support the implementation of the training outcomes. Together, these sessions demonstrated the value of integrated learning and highlighted the importance of pacing, contextual relevance, and institutional support in driving long-term impact.

### Output 2: Enabling increased use of relevant digital technologies

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Achieved** | **Target** | **Percentage achieved** |
| Number of people trained (formal session with feedback form) | 58 | 10 | 580% |
| Percentage of people trained who rate training as useful | 94% | 85% | 110% |
| Number of people reached through other methods | 326 | 150 | 217% |
| Number of organisations or countries reached through regional or global events | 88 | 60 | 146% |
| Number of ODA eligible countries with Open SDG platforms progressed, by receiving direct assistance from the ONS or using knowledge products that the ONS has developed | 14 | 8 | 175% |
| Number of partner organisations using new software this year, as a direct result of the ONS intervention | 5 | 5 | 100% |

The data shows that all targets were substantially overachieved with a strong emphasis on training and outreach in digital technologies. A total of 58 individuals were trained, with training usefulness ratings reaching up to 100 per cent, though a limited number of feedback forms were collected (4 out of 21 activities). Outreach through other methods was substantial, with 309 people reached and 88 organisations or countries engaged through regional or global events. 14 ODA-eligible countries progressed with Open SDG platforms and five partners adopted new software directly due to ONS interventions. These results suggest solid capacity-building efforts and growing technical adoption, though strategic influence remains an area for further development.

#### **Case study: ONS contribution to the 2024 Expert Group Meeting on the e-Census Handbook**

In September 2024, the ONS played a central role in the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) held in Pretoria, South Africa. Organised in partnership with UNECA, UNFPA, the East African Community Secretariat, Statistics South Africa, and the US Census Bureau, the EGM brought together census experts from across the African continent to review and validate the draft e-Census Handbook. The handbook aims to guide the implementation of digital censuses through innovative technological and methodological approaches.

The ONS provided significant technical expertise to support, with four experts attending the EGM to shape the content and approach. The ONS experts advocated for including case studies from countries still completing their census cycles and emphasised integrating quality assurance throughout the handbook rather than treating it as a separate element. This expertise was recognised when UNECA invited the ONS strategic advisor to join the technical working group responsible for revising the handbook and leading its transition to an online format.

The ONS also conducted a survey among African NSOs to gather practical data on recent census operations, such as staffing and costs. The responses from 39 countries will inform future updates to the handbook, making it a more practical and relevant resource.

The EGM provided the ONS with a platform to influence the recommendations for the 2030 round of African censuses. Their feedback was incorporated into revised recommendations and the ONS was invited to join the newly established African Committee on Census Coordination (ACCC). This committee will guide census planning and implementation across the continent, with a focus on improving data quality, accessibility and cost-effectiveness.

In addition to strengthening existing relationships, the ONS used the EGM to build new connections with census leaders from African NSOs. These contacts have already led to follow-up activities, including training in census dissemination and communications in Uganda and potential collaboration with Statistics South Africa on continuous population surveys.

The ONS’s presence at the EGM not only elevated its profile among African NSOs but also reinforced its strategic advisory role within UNECA. The organisation’s contributions to the handbook and its continued involvement in the ACCC position it to play a lasting role in shaping the future of demographic data collection and dissemination across Africa.

#### **Case study: advancing digital data linkage in The Gambia**

The ONS and UNECA supported The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) to introduce advanced tools and programming skills into its statistical operations to contribute to digital transformation, improving data quality and operational efficiency.

A one-week workshop on automating the matching of census and post-enumeration survey (PES) data was delivered. The team successfully implemented Python-based automatic matching and established the CROW clerical matching system, enabling GBoS to continue the process independently. The workshop was designed as a hands-on demonstration, rather than a structured training. This approach allowed participants to engage directly with real data challenges, accelerating progress and fostering practical understanding.

Participants valued the problem-solving nature of the sessions. However, for staff unfamiliar with Python or data linkage, the intensity of the experience highlighted the need for more accessible, structured training. Feedback also emphasised the need for longer training to build sustainable local capacity. In response, the ONS is exploring the development of a modular data linkage course using synthetic data, suitable for broader applications including administrative data integration and population register development. GBoS’s openness in sharing data facilitated rapid progress and a formal data sharing agreement has been established to ensure compliance. Looking ahead, GBoS will require continued support for analysis and dissemination, and has expressed interest in statistical leadership training. This engagement demonstrates how targeted digital interventions can drive sustainable improvements in national statistical systems.

### Output 3: Strengthened data science capability

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Achieved** | **Target** | **Percentage achieved** |
| Number of people trained (formal session with feedback form) | 810 | 70 | 1157% |
| Percentage of people trained who rate training as useful | 97% | 85% | 114% |
| Number of people reached through other methods | 438 | 200 | 242% |
| Number of organisations or countries reached through regional or global events | 165 | 50 | 330% |
| Number of cases of where ONS has provided advice on strategic policy documents and there is evidence that this advice has had an influence on the final product | 3 | 3 | 100% |
| Number of data science mentoring and training interventions | 11 | 9 | 122% |
| Number of successful data science project interventions | 2 | 5 | 40% |

Output 3 demonstrates significant investment in data science capacity building. 32 activities were delivered under this output, including 12 mentoring and training interventions (against a target of 9), compared to 15 the previous year; and two project interventions (against a target of 5), compared to 11 the previous year. This shift highlights a growing emphasis on sustainable capacity-building, with mentoring emerging as a very valuable tool. 733 individuals were trained, with 97% finding the training useful. Engagement through other methods reached 438 people and 165 organisations via regional or global events. The target on influencing data science strategic policy documents was met (3/3). Several examples illustrate the depth and diversity of this work:

#### **Case study: Zimbabwe remote data science mentoring**

Through the Data Science Campus, the ONS provided remote mentoring support to Zimbabwe’s national statistics team, followed by an in-country visit. This blended approach significantly enhanced the team’s programming capabilities, with a particular focus on open-source tools such as Python and Git.

The newly acquired skills were applied to streamline the quality assurance processes for occupation data in both the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) and the National Social Security Authority (NASA) survey. By integrating data science techniques, the team achieved a more efficient workflow, resulting in a reduction of processing time by more than 50 per cent. This not only improved data quality but also demonstrated the value of targeted capacity building in modern statistical methods.

#### **Case study: international data science masterclass**

This initiative targets non-analytical senior policy leaders, future leaders and middle managers to put data and evidence at the heart of their organisations and decision making. It provides a refresher for those who are analytical. It was **​**delivered 184 people in 2024/25, the programme provided foundational and advanced training in data science techniques for official statistics.

#### **Case study: CPI modernisation: Data Science Campus mentoring**

A one-week technical workshop supported the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) in developing an open-source software pipeline for producing CPI official statistics. The activity combined technical presentations with hands-on implementation, enabling new data scientists to contribute meaningfully to the pipeline. It also facilitated strategic discussions between the data science and CPI teams, leading to methodological refinements. This was part of a longer-term engagement that began three months prior and is still ongoing.

#### **Case study: mentoring support to Ghana Statistical Service (GSS)**

Targeted mentoring was provided to the new head of the Data Science Unit at GSS, helping to shape and manage the organisation’s data science work programme. The activity was highly successful, with the mentee demonstrating increased confidence and capability. It also fostered stronger collaboration between technical and methodological teams, laying the groundwork for future innovation.

#### **Case study: using machine learning to map settlements for population data collection in Somalia**

In 2023/24, the ONS developed a machine learning model to automatically identify the footprints of tents and shelters in camps for internally displaced people (IDP). This enables users to estimate the number of households currently living in these IDP camps, which is a key input into drawing the boundaries for enumeration areas. These techniques fill a key data gap that cannot be met using existing methodologies.

In 2024/25 the ONS supported WorldPop, UNFPA and the Somali National Bureau of Statistics (SNBS) to use this model as part of generating enumeration areas for a project to collect socio-demographic data from five pilot districts in Somalia. This project will provide evidence on if these methods can be used to improve the coverage and quality of future population data collection methods and will support the capacity building for SNBS.

A tool was also developed that has the potential to enable other users to generate similar outputs from their own licensed satellite imagery. Technical workshops were held with SNBS in 2024/25 to demonstrate the tool. With further development, or licensing of further satellite imagery, the tool could be used to scale this work in Somalia.

A satellite image of a city

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

The image (Vaccination Programmes Somalia, Data Science Campus, ONS, 2025). shows the red outlines of buildings from an existing source: Overture Maps (using data from OpenStreetMap, Google Open Buildings and Maxar). The blue footprints are additional tents derived by the ONS work that were missing from the Overture data. The image shows Flowminder’s use of ONS outputs to plan vaccination programmes in Somalia. The footprints give an indication of the likely number of vaccinations required at the two immunisations centres marked by the red crosses.

#### **Case study: building data science capability in Kenya through digital transformation**

The ONS supported the development of a prototype version of StatsChat, an AI-powered tool that enables users to query PDF documents hosted on the KNBS website. The tool was locally developed and tested, successfully demonstrating its ability to direct users to relevant content based on their questions. An in-person visit helped secure senior management buy-in, gather early user feedback and build technical capacity within the KNBS team.

This activity strengthened data science capability, by embedding AI tools, improving digital infrastructure and enhancing user access to statistical information. Next steps include refining StatsChat for production use, continuing staff training in digital content creation, and supporting KNBS in publishing clearer, web-friendly bulletins alongside detailed PDFs. The collaboration has laid a strong foundation for sustained digital innovation and improved public engagement with official statistics.

#### **Case study: International Data Science Accelerator Programme**

The International Data Science Accelerator Programme is a virtual mentoring initiative designed to build data science capability among analysts working in NSOs worldwide. Delivered by the ONS Data Science Campus, the programme pairs mentees from ODA funded countries, with experienced mentors to work on applied data science projects over a 16-week period. It aims to enhance participants’ technical skills, foster international collaboration, and promote the use of innovative data science techniques in official statistics.

An evaluation of the programme delivered in 23/24 was carried out in 24/25. Mentees reported increased confidence and capability in applying data science methods, with many continuing to use and share these skills within their organisations. Mentors also benefited professionally, developing leadership and problem-solving skills through cross-country collaboration. In organisations where senior leaders were highly engaged there was a larger impact on use and attitudes towards data science.

The evaluation does not yet provide sufficient evidence to assess the immediate outcomes of improved quality, value or trustworthiness of statistics and data. As the programme is still ongoing, future assessments may be better positioned to capture its full impact on these areas.

These examples demonstrate the growing maturity and strategic importance of data science within national statistical systems. While training and mentoring have delivered tangible results, future efforts could focus more explicitly on embedding data science into institutional strategies and decision-making processes.

### Output 4: Improved ways of working

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Achieved** | **Target** | **% achieved** |
| Number of people reached through other methods | 7 | 10 | 70% |

The previous annual review recognised that only a small number of activities had been mapped to this output. In 2024/25, Output 4 continued to be underutilised due to a narrow interpretation of what qualifies as relevant activity. Consideration should be given to expanding the definition of qualifying work to include technical facilitation, stakeholder engagement and systems-level coordination. This would ensure that the output reflects the full spectrum of contributions being made and supports more meaningful reporting and learning. The revised framing should allow for the inclusion of support and coordination work that previously fell outside the scope.

### Output 5: Strengthened national statistical systems through establishing legislation, frameworks and data ethics principles

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Achieved** | **Target** | **Percentage achieved** |
| Number of people trained (formal session with feedback form) | 59 | 10 | 590% |
| Percentage of people trained who rate training as useful | 94% | 85% | 110% |
| Number of people reached through other methods | 90 | 200 | 45% |
| Number of organisations or countries reached through regional or global events | 63 | 30 | 200% |
| Number of cases of where ONS has provided advice on strategic policy documents and there is evidence that this advice has had an influence on the final product | 9 | 10 | 80% |
| Number of cases of where the ONS has provided advice or support to a country to develop or review a NSDS | 2 | 4 | 50% |
| Number of ODA eligible countries with Inclusive Data Charter action plans progressed with the ONS support | 6 | 4 | 150% |

Output 5 achieved mixed results in supporting national statistical systems, with strong performance in training delivery but modest progress in policy influence. 59 individuals (against a target of 10) were trained in relevant topics providing a usefulness rating of 94 per cent, indicating strong satisfaction among a small cohort as limited feedback was collected (3 out of 17 activities). Outreach through other methods reached 90 people and 63 were engaged via regional or global events. There were nine recorded instances (target was 10) where ONS advice influenced strategic policy documents, reflecting meaningful engagement at the policy level. Additionally, two partner country progressed with a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), and six Inclusive Data Charter action plans were recorded this year.

The data suggests that while activity levels are modest, the output is contributing to strategic system strengthening, with policy influence and NSDS support emerging as key areas of impact. In addition, the ONS conducted a light touch review of NBS’s NSDS, taking on recommendations that ONS suggested. The document is yet to be published so cannot be counted in this review, but it demonstrates progress towards strengthening linkages to UNECA’s African Roadmap for Modernisation and Transformation.

#### **Case study: review of the Rwanda National Strategy for the Development of Statistics**

The National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) requested an end term review of its third (2019-24) National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS3). This followed a mid-term review that the ONS conducted in 2023, when the ONS recommended, among other things, a staff survey as part of addressing issues with staff turnover. This recommendation was taken on board. As part of the end-term review, the ONS reviewed the findings of the staff satisfaction survey. It made further recommendations on the future of NISR’s role in the Africa Regional Hub for Data Science and how to reflect this in NSDS and on ways to fulfil NISR’s growing ambitions for wider use of administrative data to fill data gaps and create efficiencies in data collection in the 2032 census.

#### **Case study: support to the development of the Jordan National Strategy for the Development of Statistics**

ONS successfully influenced the Department of Statistics and the World Bank in Jordan to include a chapter on monitoring and evaluation in the soon to be published new NSDS. This inclusion will influence the NSDS as it will give confidence that progress with the NSDS is being monitored and has key performance indicators (KPIs).

#### **Case study: enhancing data science and geospatial capabilities at the Namibia Statistics Agency**

The ONS and Ordnance Survey jointly hosted a five-day study visit to the UK that provided Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) with critical insights into the UK’s approach to addressing data, geospatial integration, and strategic planning. The success of this visit was reflected in the high level of engagement, effective logistical planning, and the value added by external stakeholders. As a direct result of the visit, NSA undertook a comprehensive review of its Data Science Strategy and hosted a workshop in partnership with Statistics Norway and the ONS aimed at supporting its National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) and addressing strategy. Participants benefited from international perspectives on frameworks, funding models, and data-sharing agreements. The use-case presentations and discussions reinforced the importance of integrating geospatial data with statistical systems, a theme first explored during the UK visit. Together, these three interconnected activities have significantly advanced NSA’s strategic goals. The initial study visit inspired a more robust and inclusive Data Science Strategy, which in turn informed the practical development of geospatial infrastructure. NSA is now better positioned to deliver high-quality, efficient, and relevant statistical outputs, supported by a strong foundation in data science and geospatial integration.

### Output 6: More sustainable and inclusive leadership

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Achieved | Target | Percentage achieved |
| Number of people trained (formal session with feedback form) | 104 | 120 | 80% |
| Percentage of people trained who rate training as useful | 100% | 85% | 117% |
| Number of people reached through other methods | 24 | 10 | 240% |
| Number of organisations or countries reached through regional or global events | 7 | 10 | 70% |
| Number of cases of where ONS has provided advice on strategic policy documents and there is evidence that this advice has had an influence on the final product | 0 | 1 | 0% |

Across Tanzania, Somalia, Rwanda, and Nigeria, 104 individuals completed formal statistical leadership training, achieving 87 per cent of the target. 24 people were reached through other methods – including a study visit from Jordan to the UK focused on data science, the delivery of a UN side event on geospatial methods, and the development of a new e-learning module on statistical leadership. Seven organisations or countries were engaged through participation in regional and global events.

All leadership programmes in 2024/25 were delivered effectively; have a very high participant satisfaction; are clearly valued and have led to meaningful individual change.

While individual transformation is evident and some organisational changes have been implemented, the outcome-oriented language of this indicator makes it difficult to draw a direct and measurable link between activities and the output. The criteria are overly ambitious relative to the data that can realistically be collected. As such, it is recommended that Output 6 be revised to better reflect the scope and nature of the work being undertaken. This could involve scaling back the output to focus on technical-level achievements and repositioning the current output as a longer-term outcome. Such adjustments would improve alignment between activities, data collection capabilities and reporting expectations.

#### **Case study: Women in Leadership Programme**

The Women into Leadership (WiL) programme has led to clear and consistent individual-level changes, with participants reporting increased confidence, improved communication, and stronger leadership skills. In 2024/25, follow up assessments were conducted in five countries (Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Somalia, Tanzania):

In Tanzania, participants introduced internal communication platforms and regular information releases, suggesting a shift toward more inclusive decision-making. Most delegates cited increased collaboration between leaders and between managers and their subordinates, as a positive change. They reported that leaders are now in the habit of sharing their difficulties and brainstorming solutions together, after a previous culture of individual decision making and passing on orders. All delegates said the course highlighted the need to offer their subordinates a higher level of involvement and participation, and that this has yielded positive results so far. The need for better succession planning was repeatedly mentioned and it seems they both need and appreciate the learning about successful delegation and facilitating career development for their subordinates.

In Nigeria, 85 per cent of participants rated the programme as "very effective," and many described applying new leadership approaches such as delegation and motivation strategies. In Madagascar, participants expressed increased self-awareness and confidence, with some reporting changes in how they manage teams and communicate.

In Malawi, participants described a shift in mindset, increased assertiveness, and a stronger sense of agency. Several mentioned implementing MBTI insights, emotional intelligence strategies and improved communication in their teams.

In Malawi and Madagascar, the absence of senior leaders during the WiL training programme was noted as a missed opportunity for institutional buy-in. In Madagascar, while the temporary director general was supportive, broader leadership involvement was limited. Promoting engagement from senior leadership could ensure further steps are put in place within the organisation to promote leadership opportunities and create inclusive workplace. Furthermore, mentorship and peer learning programmes already exist in the project and could be utilised to support institutionalisation through embedding practices into organisational systems.

#### **Case study: Statistical leadership training for Somalia and Somaliland**

One of the most complex and logistically demanding activities delivered this year was the statistical leadership training provided to representatives from Somalia’s statistical system. The training brought together 17 participants from the National Bureau of Statistics of Somalia (SNBS), the Somaliland Central Statistics Department (CSD), and the statistical offices of five federal member states (FMS). Due to security and logistical constraints, the training was hosted in Rwanda, chosen for its strong institutional ties with Somali statistical bodies, excellent training facilities at the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), and the presence of an ONS adviser based in-country. NISR’s prior experience with the course also contributed to a smooth delivery. The training was a success, with 100 per cent of participants (10 men, seven women) reporting the course as useful. The programme fostered cross-regional cooperation, with participants actively sharing ideas and solutions. It not only strengthened leadership capacity but also helped build relationships with one of the ONS’s newest and most complex partners.

### Output 7: improved communications and dissemination of statistics

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Achieved** | **Target** | **Percentage achieved** |
| Number of people trained (formal session with feedback form) | 43 | 100 | 43% |
| Percentage of people trained who rate training as useful | 100% | 85% | 117% |
| Number of people reached through other methods | 209 | 70 | 298% |
| Number of organisations or countries reached through regional or global events | 93 | 20 | 490% |
| Number of cases of where ONS has provided advice on strategic policy documents and there is evidence that this advice has had an influence on the final product | 2 | 3 | 67% |
| Number of partners' products developed with direct consultation of users, supported by the ONS | 2 | 3 | 67% |
| Number of stakeholder/user organisations spoken to by partners, supported by the ONS | 12 | 20 | 60% |

Output 7 highlights growing activity in communications and dissemination, with 43 individuals trained. While training usefulness rated 100 per cent in activities where it was collected, feedback was limited. Engagement through other methods reached 209 people, and 93 were engaged via regional or global events, showing a broad reach. There were two recorded instances of policy influence, alongside two products developed with direct user consultation and 12 stakeholder organisations engaged, indicating a growing emphasis on user-centred design and stakeholder dialogue. The data suggests that while stakeholder engagement is well established, increased efforts to enhance participation could enhance the inclusivity and relevance of statistical outputs.

#### **Case study: support to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics to redesign its website**

The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) faced significant challenges with its digital infrastructure, particularly its outdated website. Built on an old WordPress installation with insecure plugins, the site was vulnerable to Cross-Site Scripting (XSS) attacks, which in some cases redirected users to malicious content. These issues undermined the integrity and accessibility of KNBS’s data, prompting urgent remediation efforts. In response, the ONS provided support to strengthen the website’s security. Following on from this, it conducted a comprehensive review of the site’s structure, usability and content presentation. With limited internal resources, KNBS requested further support and the ONS funded a consultant developer, Digital for Africa, to lead the rebuild. The new website was designed to align with international best practices in usability, accessibility, and data presentation, making statistical content easier to find and understand.

As a result of this work, statistical content is now more accessible and easier to find. Important statistical reports, such as the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) 2022, are now being found organically via search engines, a significant improvement from the previous site. User engagement had increased, with organic search and direct traffic becoming the primary ways users accessed the site. Improved user experience has led to greater visibility of more pages and sections, allowing users to explore a wider range of statistical content. By supporting KNBS in enhancing its digital presence, the ONS has helped ensure that vital statistical information is more accessible, user-friendly and impactful for a wide range of audiences.

# Looking ahead

As part of the external evaluation, NatCen reviewed key project data and documentation to inform future development. A central focus of this work was assessing the suitability of the existing theory of change. To support this, NatCen facilitated a dedicated workshop to evaluate whether the framework remained fit for purpose and to identify areas for refinement.

During the workshop, several structural and conceptual changes were agreed. Activities were reclassified to distinguish between their delivery format, such as training, mentoring, or technical assistance, and their content or purpose, including areas like data science, leadership, or policy support. In addition, both activities and outputs were grouped into two broad categories: technical and operational/advisory. This reorganisation was intended to better reflect the nature of the work and its intended impact.

Some outputs were amended, added, or removed. Notably, the previous Output 4, “Improved Ways of Working,” was removed based on workshop feedback. However, after testing the revised theory of change, it was felt that this output still captured valuable aspects of the project and may be reinstated. In its place, a new output titled “Improved Statistical Systems and Processes” was introduced.

One of the most significant structural changes was the splitting of the original Output 5 into two distinct outputs. The first, now labelled Output 5, focuses on the standardisation of data ethics principles, legislation, and frameworks. The second, introduced as Output 8, centres on enhancing National Statistical Offices’ ability to form meaningful and impactful relationships with key organisations within the national statistical system.

This change reflects the need to differentiate between the technical and normative work on data governance and ethics, and the institutional and relational work that strengthens the role of National Statistical Offices within the broader statistical system. These revisions aim to improve clarity, alignment with actual delivery, and the ability to track progress against outcomes more effectively. The updated theory of change [Annex 4] will continue to be tested and refined in collaboration with NatCen and the internal MEL team.

# Conclusion

The 2024/25 Annual Review demonstrates that the project continues to deliver strong technical outputs. With 119 activities completed (up from 108 last year) the project shows clear momentum, particularly in areas such as statistical methods, digital technologies, and data science, where targets were substantially exceeded.

However, delivery across operational and advisory outputs was more variable. Outputs related to leadership, policy engagement, and communications fell moderately below expectations, largely due to external factors such as shifting partner priorities, political instability and the long-term nature of policy change. These challenges underscore the importance of adaptive planning and flexible delivery models.

One of the key insights from this review is the need to strengthen outcome measurement. Although early-stage tracking has improved, the use of outcome-level indicators has been delayed due to resource constraints. This limits the ability to assess the long-term impact of activities, particularly in areas like leadership and institutional change.

The theory of change has been revised to better reflect the realities of delivery. It now distinguishes more clearly between technical and advisory work and introduces new outputs and classifications. Continued work from the onitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) team will be essential to ensure the framework remains strategically coherent and fit for purpose.

While individual-level training, especially in leadership and data science, has delivered tangible results, understanding their impact on institutional change remains a challenge. Stronger follow-up mechanisms, greater involvement of senior leadership and better integration with organisational strategies will be needed to ensure lasting impact.

Progress has been made in promoting inclusivity, particularly through the Women into Leadership programme and the collection of sex-disaggregated data. However, the absence of a formal inclusivity policy and the continued presence of participation barriers suggest that further work is needed to embed inclusive practices across all project activities.

Strategic partnerships, especially with UNECA, continue to be a cornerstone of regional engagement. The partnership has enabled broad reach and sustainable training models

Finally, improvements in monitoring and evaluation processes are positive developments, such as the expansion of the project database to include outcome data and the introduction of quality assurance. These will support more accurate reporting and inform the Project Completion Review scheduled for 2026.

As the project enters its final year, the focus will shift to consolidating learning, refining strategic frameworks, and preparing for the project completion review.

Strengthening outcome tracking, enhancing institutional engagement and embedding inclusive design will be critical to ensuring the sustainability and legacy of the project.

# Annexes

## Annex 1: Project theory of change

Project Theory of Change - High quality statistics to improve lives globally. 
Diagram showing the vision throuh to outputs. 

##### Key assumptions

* Activities and outputs targeted at individuals will promote system-wide change.
* Partners will employ skills and knowledge gained from training to improve official statistics.
* Partner NSOs have adequate resource and financial investments available.
* Success of programme creates buy-in from senior leadership (in partnerships, ad-hoc partners and the ONS).
* Partners are incentivised to continue partnerships due to success of programme.

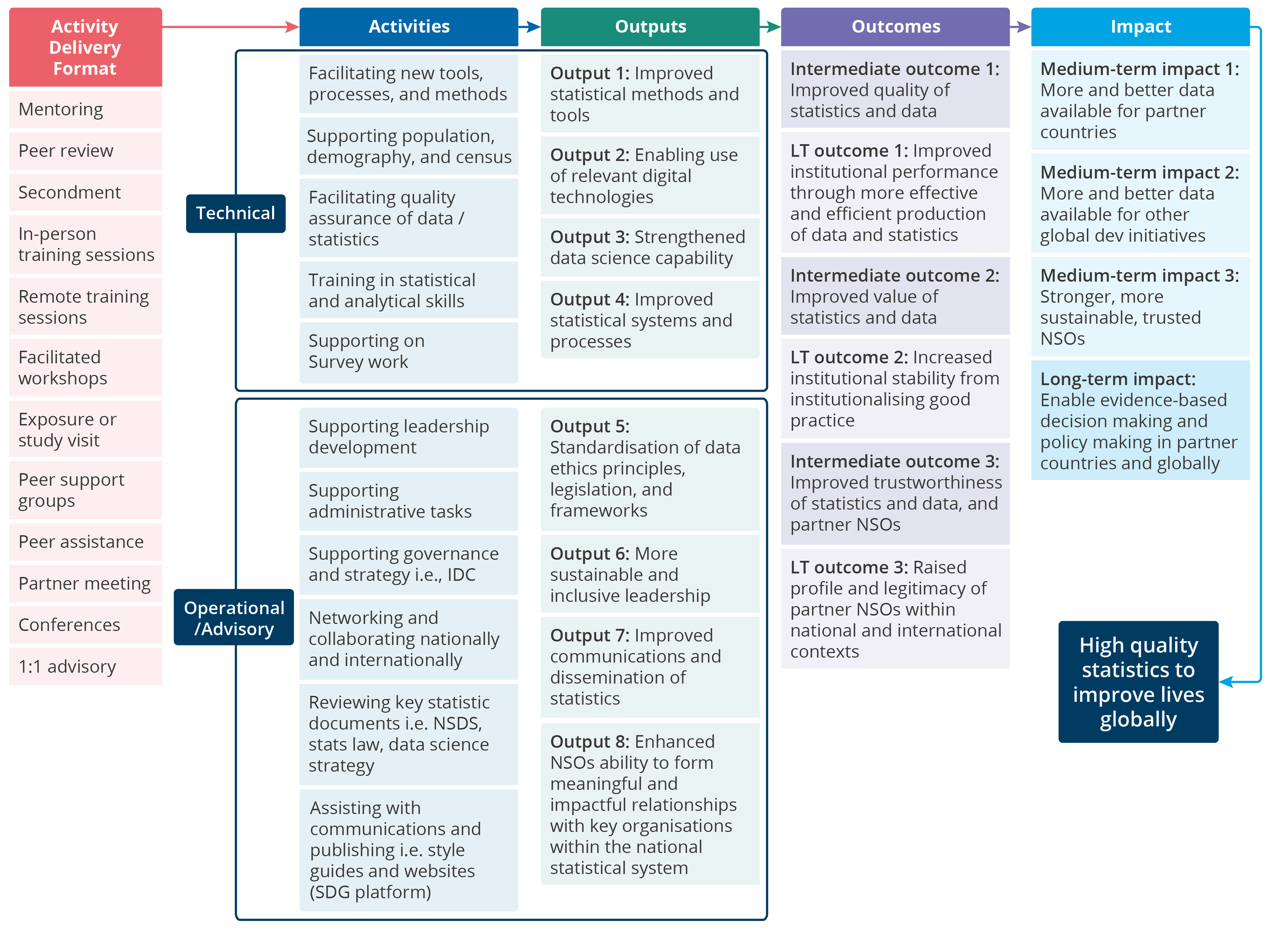
## Annex 2: Project performance indicators and targets reached

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Total achieved 2024/25** | **Target**  **2024/25** | **% achieved** |
| Number of people trained (formal session with feedback form) | 1127 | 350 | 322% |
| Percentage of people trained who rate training as useful | 97% | 85% | 115% |
| Number of people reached through other methods | 1450 | 890 | 162% |
| Number of organisations or countries reached through regional or global events | 471 | 225 | 209% |
| Number of cases of where ONS has provided advice on strategic policy documents and there is evidence that this advice has had an influence on the final product | 15 | 20 | 75% |
| Number of ODA eligible countries with Open SDG platforms progressed, by receiving direct assistance from the ONS or using knowledge products that the ONS has developed | 14 | 8 | 175% |
| Number of partner organisations using new software this year, as a direct result of the ONS intervention | 5 | 5 | 100% |
| Number of data science mentoring and training interventions | 11 | 9 | 112% |
| Number of successful data science project interventions | 2 | 5 | 40% |
| Number of cases of where the ONS has provided advice or support to a country to develop or review a NSDS | 2 | 4 | 50% |
| Number of ODA eligible countries with Inclusive Data Charter action plans progressed with the ONS support | 6 | 4 | 150% |
| Number of partners' products developed with direct consultation of users, supported by the ONS | 2 | 3 | 67% |
| Number of stakeholder/user organisations spoken to by partners, supported by the ONS | 12 | 20 | 60% |

## Annex 3: Project partners

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Organisation** | **Type of organisation** | **Type of partner** | **Start of partnership (year)** | **ONS Strategic Adviser model** |
| Department of Statistics, Jordan | National Statistics Office | MoU | 2022 | Unembedded |
| Ghana Statistical Service | National Statistics Office | MoU | 2018 | Embedded |
| Kenya National Bureau of Statistics | National Statistics Office | MoU | 2018 | Unembedded (based in Rwanda) |
| Namibia Statistics Agency | National Statistics Office | MoU | 2021 | Unembedded (based in Zimbabwe) |
| National Institute of Statistics Rwanda | National Statistics Office | MoU | 2019 | Embedded |
| National Institute of Statistics Tunisia | National Statistics Office | Ad hoc | 2023 | None |
| National Statistical Office of Malawi | National Statistics Office | Ad hoc | 2021 | None |
| Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics | National Statistics Office | Ad hoc | 2023 | None |
| Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics | National Statistics Office | MoU | 2022 | Unembedded |
| Somali National Bureau of Statistics | National Statistics Office | MoU | 2023 | Unembedded |
| Statistics South Africa | National Statistics Office | Ad hoc | 2023 | None |
| Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics | National Statistics Office | Ad hoc | 2019 | None |
| UN Development Programme | Multilateral organisation | Ad hoc | 2023 | None |
| UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific | Multilateral organisation | Ad hoc | 2019 | None |
| UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia | Multilateral organisation | Ad hoc | 2023 | None |
| UN Economic Commission for Africa, African Centre for Statistics | Multilateral organisation | MoU | 2018 | Embedded |
| Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency | National Statistics Office | Ad hoc | 2023 (MoU expected 2024) | Embedded (in 2024) |

## Annex 4: Proposed theory of change by NatCen



## Annex 5: Recommendations

### Annual Review recommendations 2024/2025

#### Strengthen outcome measurement

* + Improve outcome measurement by developing tools to track post-training implementation and its impact on statistical quality, value, trustworthiness and organisational performance.
  + Analyse how individual leadership development contributes to outcomes. Consider introducing a specific leadership-focused outcome to enable targeted data collection.
  + Test and refine the updated theory of change, including new outputs and reclassification of activities.

#### Refine and align the theory of change following the end of the project

* Continue refining the theory of change, ensuring stronger linkages between activities, outputs and outcomes.
* Revise Output 6 (Leadership): Scale back to focus on technical-level achievements and reposition it as a longer-term outcome.
* Refine Output 4 to broaden its scope, including technical facilitation, stakeholder engagement and systems-level coordination.

#### Streamline indicators and metrics

* Consolidate organisation reach metrics and merge indicators across outputs to reduce duplication and improve clarity.
* Introduce a tiered engagement model (e.g., light, moderate, deep) to better reflect levels of involvement.
* Consider removing or lowering the target for influencing strategic policy documents under Output 1, as it may not align with the nature of activities.

#### Enhance institutional engagement and follow-up

* Encourage participation of senior leaders in training programmes to ensure institutional buy-in and promote inclusive workplace practices.
* Strengthen institutional follow-up mechanisms to support sustained implementation and learning transfer.
* Develop stakeholder engagement strategy to manage partner expectations.

### Recommendations taken forward from 2023/24 Annual Review

#### Develop a Policy to Enhance Inclusivity in Project Activities

* Develop a clear inclusivity policy to guide the design and delivery of project activities, ensuring they are accessible and welcoming to all participants.
* Proactively identify and remove participation barriers, with particular attention to promoting gender balance and equitable engagement across diverse groups.
* Continue collection of disaggregation by sex.
* Implement systematic follow up across activities.

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Review the ToC, reflecting on overlaps between outputs, and how output 4 fits with the project logic.

**Progress as of May 2025**

Completed in partnership with NatCen.

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Following the review of ToC, provide new guidance on mapping of activities to outputs.

**Progress as of May 2025**

In progress: Guidance will be provided.

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Develop a policy on how the project can make activities more inclusive. More could be done to design activities that have a better gender balance by default, for example by conducting equality impact assessments and proactively removing barriers to women’s participation in project activities.

**Progress as of May 2025**

Not completed: Collecting participant metrics by gender is standard now, which encourages more inclusive design. However, no specific policy has been introduced, and activities are still not designed with an inclusive lens and barriers aren’t addressed prior to activities taking place.

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Determine what actions can be taken to increase female opportunities in data science activities.

**Progress as of May 2025**

Not completed: Going forward, actions will be assigned to owners and updates on progress to increase opportunities for women in data science will be provided in updates to programme board. A workshop will be designed and held to consider perceptions and action needed to target the policy level.

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Develop analysis of sex-disaggregated output data in annual reviews to link to broader outcomes in partner countries, for example changes in participation after running Women into Leadership training. This builds on a recommendation made in the 2022/2023 annual review to refine project-wide monitoring evaluation and learning processes to include sex (and consider age) disaggregation of all indicators, where possible, to collect the data using a survey or observation.

**Progress as of May 2025**

In progress: sex-disaggregated output data in the 2024/2025 annual review has been included however more can be done to link to the broader outcomes as there are not always clear causal pathways between output to outcome.

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Identify and monitor project outcomes from an earlier stage in activity planning. This builds on two recommendations made in the 2022/2023 annual review to consider the best way to follow-up on activities to increase translation of outputs into outcomes (for example, evaluation survey response rates, length of time before follow-up meeting, visit to assess changes further in future) and consider the use of outcome level indicators to supplement qualitative analysis.

**Progress as of May 2025**

In progress: project outcomes have been monitored from an earlier stage. Outcome level indicators have not been due to lack of resources. A plan will be developed on this in October 2025.

### Recommendation from 2023/24024 Annual Review

Continue to work on managing partners’ expectations.

**Progress as of May 2025**

Complete: ONS have continued to manage partners’ expectations to foster balanced, collaborative relationships, ensuring mutual understanding of roles, responsibilities, and timelines.

They have strengthened formal agreements (for example, MoUs) by including clearer timelines and response expectations, as demonstrated in recent adjustments made during discussions with the Jordan team. This will be reviewed formally in 2025.

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Ask partners to provide evidence of the longer-term outcomes of partnerships. This could also include providing more technical assistance for monitoring and evaluation.

**Progress as of May 2025**

Completed by NatCen

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Ensure regular communication with the FCDO at country posts, particularly where the ONS’s staff are not based in-country, to ensure that any existing projects in-country from FCDO are aligned with the ONS’s activities to maximise strategic outcomes.

**Progress as of May 2025**

Complete: In Jordan there has been wider exposure to other colleagues work at the Embassy. For example, sharing information on plans for the census and how data can support social protection initiatives. Although to a lesser extent there has been more exposure to FCDO’s work in Gaza on understanding population estimates.

In Somalia and Somaliland, changes in ONS and FCDO has required time to foster build relationships across colleagues. Political and security changes in Somalia and Somaliland have also created challenges for both ONS and FCDO work and shifted strategic priorities and outcomes at short notice. This has slowed pace of delivery at times and provided additional barriers to regular and structured communication.

Comms with FCDO in Somalia is very strong. Improved over the last year.

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Consider the creation of a joint ONS-FCDO international development strategy for statistics, as part of a refresh of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) international strategy.

**Progress as of May 2025**

Not started: While a formal joint ONS-FCDO international development strategy has not been created, coordination between the two departments has significantly increased across multiple levels. This includes weekly G7 global statistics meetings led by the Head of Data and Statistical Engagement, and regular calls between the heads of international development in ONS and the head of profession for statistics in FCDO as well as a joint visit to Ghana by deputy directors in ONS and FCDO demonstrating a strengthened and practical partnership in international statistical development.

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Consider how to assess effectiveness robustly by the end of the project.

**Progress as of May 2025**

Complete: Covered by end-term evaluation

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Include FCDO stakeholders in a ToC workshop before the next Spending Review in preparation for the next phase of the project.

**Progress as of May 2025**

Postponed due to changes in external environment – intend to carry out before March 2026

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Introduce regular quality assurance of activity monitoring data inputted in the project monitoring database, to improve detail and accuracy.

**Progress as of May 2025**

In progress: This was not achieved in 24/25 but has been introduced in 25/26.

### Recommendation from 2023/24 Annual Review

Expand use of the project monitoring database to outcome data.

**Progress as of May 2025**

Complete: A column has been added to document outcomes evidence.

### Review what should be delivered in the UNECA partnership, and whether that is still achievable within the constraints noted in this review.

Work in the partnership is more focussed on co-ordination of inputs from the ONS and delivery of technical assistance rather than one of the original goals of working to improve ACS. However, a successful train the trainer model was used to develop and deliver CRVS R-pipeline project whereby ACS staff were upskilled to deliver training without the ONS after working with the ONS on development and delivery of the training in the first three countries. A similar approach is being taken with the economics statistics project whereby the ONS are developing a mentoring relationship with the Econ Stats Division at ACS to upskill and enable ACS to subsequently provide training at NSOs.

#### Strive to raise awareness of what the UNECA partnership can offer beyond demography and ensure that ACS staff are empowered to engage and contribute.

There are currently two projects ongoing with the Economic Statistics Division at ACS as well as work with the Innovation Division. Geography Division remains difficult to engage.

#### Clarify ways of working, especially in terms of roles within ACS for identifying priorities.

It remains the case that the most effective way of working with ACS colleagues is to engage in face-to-face conversation. Engagement with the officer in charge (OIC) following the departure of the previous director general is positive.

#### Identify a reduced list of priorities for UNECA

Priorities are Demographic Statistics, Administrative Data, Sustainable Training, Economic Statistics. Work has been progressing in all these areas apart from the long-term admin data plan due to the request to replan work to ensure completion by March 2026.

#### Prioritise engagement with core development partners

The ONS met with Stats Norway and Stats Denmark to conduct CRVS work. The ONS also met with Paris21 to discuss statistical leadership training. Working with EASTC on SLT and planning to engage with PanStat and ENSEA, ENSAE to discuss further opportunities to spread SLT via the Regional Hub trying to engage with AU and AfDB.

#### Strengthen linkages with the FCDO, to leverage their political and policy expertise alongside the ONS’s technical expertise.

The ONS has been attending UK to AU team meetings and spending time at embassy whenever there is something of importance going on. Shared work on economic statistics with team as this is most aligned with their priorities. Possible collaboration with bilateral health team in Ethiopia to assist with completion of DHS analysis and dissemination.

### Recommendations carried forward from the 2022/23 project review

#### Improve two-way communication between partners and the ONS to clarify requirements, level of support needed and manage expectations while remaining partner led.

See comments against recommendation 8.

#### Use improved monitoring data to assess the value for money of most expensive activities more critically.

Being covered by end-term evaluation.

#### Increase focus on value for money in next year's annual review and build into monitoring processes.

Being covered by end-term evaluation – has been built more into monitoring processes with cost data at activity level.

#### Re-run the survey of benefits to the ONS staff involved in delivering technical assistance.

SLA staff have been interviewed and surveyed focussing on the effectiveness of different partnerships, but not on the benefits to the ONS.