

**UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION and  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE  
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

**UNECE Work Session on the Communication of Statistics**

(29 June – 1 July 2011, Geneva, Switzerland)

- (ii) Gathering user feedback from websites

**UNCTAD  
Division on Globalization and Development Strategies  
Development Statistics and Information Branch (DSIB)**

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***Gathering user feedback***

1. On its 56th session of the Trade and Development Board in October 2009 UNCTAD defined itself as a “communicating” organization. A mandate and main objectives had been laid outlining the UNCTAD’s communication strategy. This new policy is meant to “enhance visibility, credibility and impact of UNCTAD’s work, through a sensible mix of traditional and innovative methods of engagement and dissemination.” Aiming to reach a wider audience and core constituencies more directly, it was agreed that all “appropriate channels of communication shall be maximized”, from traditional to the most innovative ones.
2. But even the most up-to date methods can be counterproductive if they are not built on the basis of an in-depth analysis of users’ needs. That is why it became an imperative to shift from a concept of statistics dissemination to the development of a broad communication strategy.
3. Making sure that we keep and further strengthen the UNCTAD position as a comprehensive reference point on data on world trade, investment, international financial flows, and development, we constantly examine whether what we produce is needed, consulted, in what manner and whether people use the data effectively. We invest a lot of time and energy to build and maintain good relationships with our users.
4. Creating effective interaction channels we gather user feedback in three dimensions:
  - I. publish (websites)
  - II. send (direct mailing)

III. speak (presentations/private interactions).

## I. WEBSITES

5. We have several websites that are targeted at different user groups. Here they are presented in a bottom-to-top order in terms of user coverage.

### I.I. Internal DSIB staff portal

6. The purpose of this portal is to provide easy access to reference materials, business tools and information necessary for the daily work of the Development Statistics and Information Branch. It is used to keep our colleagues abreast on the new Branch developments, production files and production calendar, and provides direct access to data resources and specifications. The staff can also consult the decisions made at weekly Chiefs of Unit meetings. This facilitates dialogue and ensures transparency and involvement.



### I.II. IntraStat

7. IntraStat was launched to assist information exchange among the statisticians and economists of UNCTAD. This portal's objective is to consolidate statistical resources; it is a workspace where expertise is shared and UNCTAD's statistical knowledge is preserved. IntraStat gives an access to statistical news, UNCTAD classifications, international nomenclatures, and external data providers; and it is a direct entry point to the internal database GlobStat and external UNCTADstat.



8. Users can always propose additional information by sending their comments to our generic mailbox [statistics@unctad.org](mailto:statistics@unctad.org), which receives over 80 queries per month, or contact us directly with their feedback.

### I.III. www.unctad.org webpage

9. A statistics section on [www.unctad.org](http://www.unctad.org) is the second most visited after the homepage. The page briefly describes the statistical mandate of UNCTAD listing the themes and indicators we are covering. It gives access to our data dissemination platform UNCTADstat highlighting its principles. It offers users an overview of the latest UNCTAD statistics, related news and publications.



10. At the moment, the UNCTAD's website is undergoing major updates in both content and its technical platform. The new statistics page will provide links to relevant data and metadata information (classifications, methods, sources & notes, limitations, etc). It will be more explicit in regards to the indicators we produce, facilitating a one-click access to respective data sets. Users, as always, can contact us by sending messages to our generic mailbox that are answered in a timely manner. Everyone who makes an inquiry is added into our user database for any communication initiative we undertake.

#### I.IV. Social media websites

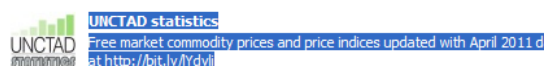


11. Social media websites are very effective in terms of keeping dialogue with users and gathering their feedback. You have to take care of content, while promotion goes together with an increase of hosting name popularity. By having an account on Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, Flickr, etc. you ensure that news published on these websites is quoted by the Internet searching engines faster and is ranked higher in popularity than the same news on your organization's website.

12. Using social websites you can't see how many people are frequenting your site or clicked on it. Instead, you use an indicator of active users that "follow" or "like" you. Once they have indicated their interest in your site, you can add their names to your direct mailing inventory.

13. Several organizations of the United Nations system have already created their profiles on social media websites. UNCTAD statistics have accounts on Facebook and Twitter. While the second is used to post small news items that redirect users to consult our sites and database, Facebook is meant to establish dialogue. Those who arrive on our page can leave their questions and comments. As this page is directly connected to our generic mail, we are alerted and react immediately. Answering an inquiry in a few minutes creates a powerful image of an effective organization.

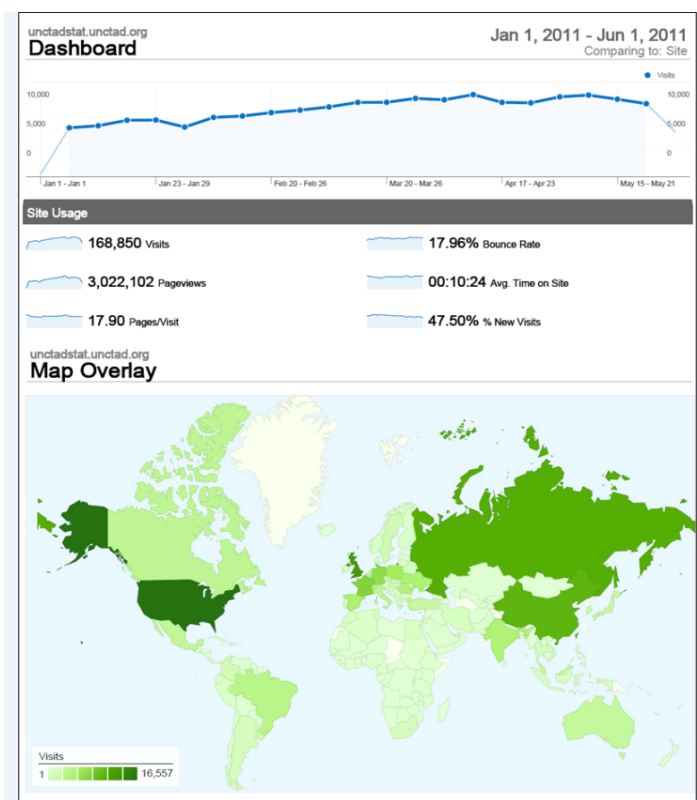
14. News regarding the updates on the UNCTAD statistical database UNCTADstat is linked to respective tables. If a user has a



question, he/she can leave it using the ‘comments’ tab, post it on a ‘wall’ or go back to Facebook and leave it there.

15. However, being active on social networking sites is a two fold phenomenon. Indeed, it helps to establish an image of a vibrant and effective organization; on the other hand, it requests a serious commitment in terms of time and human resources.

## I.V. Website statistics



16. Website statistics are one of the most powerful tools for performance measurement. For internal websites we count on our IT team to have an overview of our users and site traffic. For external ones, we use the Google analytics platform. Here are the statistics for UNCTADstat.

17. Upon demand, you can have information on visitor number, time spent on a site, tables consulted, how users get into the site, bounce rate (it represents the percentage of visitors who enter the site and "bounce" (leave the site) rather than continue viewing other pages within the same site), etc. You can compare your indicators by month, by year, etc. All this information combined helps to further develop our service.

## II. DIRECT MAILING

### II.I Internal

18. We regularly communicate with the statisticians and economists of UNCTAD via direct mailing on the subjects of high importance to the UNCTAD statistics production.



For example, we asked our colleagues for advice and feedback on the design and content of a new statistics page on [www.unctad.org](http://www.unctad.org). As this page will be a common platform of all UNCTAD statistics, it is crucial to learn the opinion of all stakeholders.

19. We also welcomed their comments on the internal statistical web data server GlobStat. It was important to know how they think the site can be improved to better suit their needs. They rated the use of indicators by its importance to their work. A high response rate, over 50%, allowed us to correctly prioritize our indicators portfolio. It resulted in a clear vision of what products have more value added. Those which were rated the least priority we either removed from our workload or linked to the original data providers. Such indicators revision released time needed to develop and maintain those series which we were asked to add.

## II.II External

a) The above mentioned users assessment went in parallel with another survey we initiated on **HandBook of Statistics On-line**, which was at that time our external dissemination platform. Preparing a launch of a new database, UNCTADstat, which has replaced our old platform, we wanted to ensure that we meet users' needs and anticipate any difficulties users might have.



First, using site statistics we collected the names and e-mails of the HBS online's most active users and approached them announcing an upcoming survey. A few weeks later, we sent them a direct link to a questionnaire. Additionally, the survey link was posted on IntraStat, UNCTAD statistics page, and HBS online. The survey results provided a comprehensive overview of our users. We learned how they evaluate our service in terms of content, quality and site design, what indicators are used the most and what is the primary purpose of its use.

These findings were very important for a creation of UNCTADstat website content and layout. These efforts proved to be successful if you compare the usage statistics on the two sites.

Comparative data based on 5 months observations.

	UNCTAD HANDBOOK OF STATISTICS	UNCTADSTAT
Number of visits	41,005	155,166
Number of visitors	21,756	77,983
Page views	662,823	2,848,804
Bounce rate	40.65%	27.36%
Number of pages per visit	16.16	18.36

In a near future, we plan to initiate another evaluation to rate UNCTADstat. Comparing the results of these two surveys will serve as success indicators to date and will establish new milestones we want to reach

in the future.

b) We also collect feedback on the **HandBook of Statistics** publication.

A questionnaire is attached to the book and once filled in sent to us by post or fax. Readers assess the quality of the publication and propose other analytical indicators they would like to find in HBS.

### **III. DIRECT INTERACTIONS**

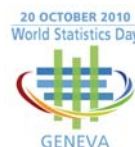
#### **III.I Internal meetings**

20. Regular meetings take place with UNCTAD statisticians and economists to develop a common vision, share knowledge, find ways for better collaboration, gather comments and feedback, etc. Strategy-building meetings are semi-annual with various adhoc sessions upon demand.

#### **III.II Inter-organizational meetings**

21. UNCTAD introduces and is actively involved in statistics-related joint inter-organizational initiatives on global and local levels.

22. First it is the World Statistics Day conference of 20.10.2010 led by UNCTAD, which reunited a number of the Geneva-based organisations working in the statistical domain. That event triggered other joint projects.



23. One of them is the Geneva World Statistics Learning Project (GWSLP). The project will contribute to providing an informed global view of statistics to main user groups by helping them make better use of existing data generated by international organisations. It aims at developing international statistics in line with the interest of users and creating an interface between users and providers of international statistics. GWSLP will start by identifying users' needs and expectations through collecting their feedback on the service that we, international statistics providers, produce. This will establish a basis for a dialogue between us and create an active network for information exchange.