

World Café

Beyond GDP Unpacked: A Rapid Briefing for the *RC System*

30 April 2026, 09:00-10:00 am, EST

Background

In May 2025, the Secretary-General of the United Nations appointed an independent High-Level Expert Group (HLEG) on Beyond GDP with a mandate to develop recommendations for a limited set of country-owned, universally applicable indicators that complement Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This initiative responds to the recognition that while economic growth remains central to improving living standards, GDP alone fails to capture essential aspects of life such as equity, inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

Since then, the HLEG undertook extensive technical deliberations and consultations with diverse stakeholders to select a narrative and a conceptual framework grounded in peace, human rights, and planetary boundaries. This framework adopts a multidimensional understanding of well-being, specifically monitoring the preservation of produced, natural, human, social, and institutional capital while accounting for cross-border spillovers. By recognizing the interdependence of people and the planet, the framework ensures that progress is measured as a collective and intergenerational effort rather than a short-term economic metric. To operationalize this, the Group developed a dashboard of indicators that draws heavily on the existing SDG framework to ensure feasibility while highlighting areas where current data fails to capture the true drivers of progress.

Contingent on leadership availability, the HLEG is set to launch its final report in early May 2026. Following the launch, the initiative will see a new phase, including a formal intergovernmental process as well as in-country piloting and testing. Resident Coordinator Offices (RCO) are identified as a critical actor in this next phase, serving as the primary bridge for the diffusion, implementation, and adoption of these metrics at the national level, bridging statistical and policy work. Beyond technical support, RCOs could play a proactive role in connecting national priorities to global deliberations, ensuring that country-level realities inform the intergovernmental process from the outset. The expertise of the network is essential for embedding these indicators into national processes—such as planning, budgeting, and accountability frameworks—to ensure that the Beyond GDP agenda leads to informed decision-making and improved lives.

Objectives

The World Café will provide an interactive space for RCs/ RCOs/ UN Country teams to:

- a. Provide a concise preview of the emerging recommendations from the Beyond GDP High-Level Expert Group ahead of the May report launch.
- b. Enhance awareness regarding the conceptual framework and the proposed dashboard of indicators.
- c. Activate the RCOs to support in-country work, including national dialogues and policy uptake.
- d. Identify practical pathways for RCs and UNCTs to engage National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and Ministries of Finance in the implementation and testing of the new metrics.

Expected Outcomes

The World Café will produce:

- a. Shared understanding among RCs and RCOs regarding the Beyond GDP narrative and its implementation roadmap.
- b. Practical guidance on how RCOs can inform Member State deliberations and connect national realities to the intergovernmental process.
- c. Recommendations for activating UN system support for in-country piloting and the integration of broader progress indicators into national budgeting and planning.

Audience

The dialogue is open to RCO teams (Heads of Office, Economists, and Partnerships Officers). RC participation is optional but highly welcomed. RCOs are encouraged to share the invitation with relevant UNCT colleagues who contribute to policy dialogue on economic governance, statistics, and sustainable development. The session will be recorded for colleagues across different time zones.

Agenda

Overall facilitation by DCO	
9:00-9:10	Welcome and framing - Carmen Arguello, Chief of SDG Financing, DCO
9:10-9:25	Understanding the Beyond GDP initiative - Laurence Chandy, Principal on Finance, EOSG - George Gray, Chief Economist, UNDP - Anu Peltola, Director of Statistics, UNCTAD
9:25-9:55	Open discussion
9:55-10:00	Wrap up and next steps Carmen Arguello- Chief of SDG Financing, DCO