



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.: GENERAL

E/ECA/STATCOM/1/3
21 January 2008

Original: English

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

First Meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa (STATCOM-AFRICA I)

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
21-24 January 2008

Report on Statistical Coordination in Africa

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1. Background

Following a review in 200 of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s (AAPA), the Committee on Development Information (CODI), the former subsidiary body of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in charge of statistics, at its second session, acknowledged that its principles and objectives were and still remain relevant to statistical development in Africa. It nevertheless, observed the slow level of implementation and resolved that a new plan, as proposed in the evaluation report, will not be necessary. Instead, CODI recommended the preparation of a new framework for statistical development in Africa taking into account full stakeholder participation at all levels, new demands for information strategies at the national, subregional and regional levels for enhancing statistical capacity, the plight of countries emerging from war and other crises, and mechanisms of continuous monitoring and evaluation.

In the meantime, UNECA increasingly recognized, during the year 2004, the critical role of reliable statistics in policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, especially in addressing data demands for the new development agenda including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs), and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Following this recognition and in line with the recommendation of CODI, the Commission embarked on the preparation of a strategic framework designed to engage partners in a coordinated statistical development process that would help equip African countries with statistical systems capable of supporting their economic, political and social development efforts in a sustainable manner. The first draft of this document was presented for comments to the Advisory Board on Statistics in Africa (ABSA) and the first meeting of the Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV) in 2004.

Following the comments and observations from ABSA and FASDEV, the major sponsors of the latter, namely the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) Consortium, and the World Bank, decided to contribute to the preparation of a Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa (RRSF) under UNECA coordination and in line with the Marrakech Action Plan on Statistics (MAPS). This was decided during a meeting of representatives of the primary sponsors of the FASDEV and International Monetary Fund (IMF), held in Tunis in 2005.

Following the successful design of RRSF, its endorsement by the Heads of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) during FASDEV and the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development held in Addis Ababa in February 2006 and April 2007 respectively, major regional institutions, namely AfDB, the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), and UNECA have agreed that their respective statistical activities must be in line with it. This was emphasized during both the first and the second meetings on the coordination of statistical activities in Africa held in Tunis, Tunisia, in September 2006 and 2007 respectively.

This report presents mechanisms put in place by major regional institutions in order to deal with the implementation of RRSF. These include and are not limited to the African Statistical Coordination Committee (ASCC) and the RRSF Implementation Working Group. The report is presented as follows. After the background, the second section summarizes the first African Statistical Coordination meeting. The third section deals with the second

coordination meeting. This is followed by the presentation of the RRSF secretariat and its mandate. The next section presents the already nominated RRSF coordinators at different levels. The final section concludes the paper.

2. The first African statistical coordination meeting

Following the endorsement of RRSF during the February 2006 FASDEV meeting, stakeholders recommended that UNECA and AfDB work out modalities for its joint coordination, implementation, monitoring, and reporting. Accordingly, representatives of UNECA and AfDB met in September 2006 to discuss the coordination of their statistical capacity-building work in Africa. During the meeting, participants considered their respective work programmes and noted the need for a more comprehensive process for coordinating their activities. They exchanged information on their future work plans for statistical capacity-building and focused on identifying mutual areas of interest for cooperation and coordination.

Participants agreed that their activities must be in line with RRSF goals and also emphasized “country ownership”—that is, the principle that countries must decide on their own development strategies, and that their role is to support those strategies. They also agreed on the need to lay the groundwork for facilitating concrete coordination of all statistical capacity building programmes and taking forward the recommendations of RRSF. They also agreed on how the two institutions could best complement each other’s operations, determining the right mechanisms for their collaborative activities, and producing an Action Plan with a realistic timeline of concrete joint activities that form the basis of a joint work programme in the next few years. It was agreed that the AUC, although invited but not present, would be requested to take the lead on aspects linked with statistical advocacy at the highest political level, and that AfDB and UNECA would take joint leadership on technical, methodological, and capacity-development issues.

As concerns the mechanisms for collaborative activities, the participants endorsed the proposal of frequent exchange of information on programmes of activities; joint missions; co-financing of activities; assistance to statistical training centres; exchange of experiences; cross-participation in statistical events: seminars, training workshops, meetings; and sharing of information on the activities of all development partners in statistical capacity-building in Africa.

The participants finally agreed that the overall coordination of the RRSF implementation would be carried out via an RRSF Coordinating Committee of which both AfDB and UNECA will be members. The committee will be composed of the Directors of Statistics in the AfDB and the UNECA, 2 Regional Coordinators (one from each institution), with a Secretary to the Committee based at the UNECA. The committee must meet at least once each year to follow-up on the implementation progress based on the RRSF coordination tasks (see appendix).

3. The second African statistical coordination meeting

As recommended by the first African statistical coordination meeting, the coordination committee met in Tunis, Tunisia, from 23 to 25 September 2007. The meeting brought together representatives of the AfDB, UNECA, the AUC, ACBF, as well as the

Statistician General of Statistics of South Africa, and the Director-General of the National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria.

The main objective of the second meeting which was jointly convened by UNECA and AfDB, was to establish mechanisms for achieving greater synergy in the implementation of statistical activities of various institutions within RRSF. Participants discussed issues pertaining to statistical capacity-building, the exchange of information on statistical activities aimed at statistical development on the continent, mechanisms for coordination of statistical activities, the harmonization of statistical data bases as well as the reinforcement of the capacities of the NSOs in Africa to enable them to better meet users' needs in order to make them more relevant to development policy design and monitoring.

Discussions that followed presentations and proposals made by the organizations represented at the meeting led to the establishment of working groups expected to propose specific coordination strategies. These working groups have been assigned quite precise objectives, results to be delivered, activities to be implemented, progress indicators, and the relevant implementation timeframe. The following working groups have been created under the themes:

- Regional Reference Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa (RRSF) - Having noted that little progress has been achieved in terms of coordination of the RRSF implementation mainly because the two coordinating institutions were undergoing institutional reforms, participants have agreed that a working group on RRSF coordination mechanisms be set up, under the leadership of UNECA. Its objective is to operationalize the RRSF coordination through the setting up of a functional structure. The tasks of this working group include the nomination of coordinators at the regional, subregional and national levels as well as the establishment of an RRSF coordination secretariat at UNECA.
- National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) - Given the slow pace in designing and implementing NSDS in African countries, the meeting decided to create a working group led by AfDB to increase the pace and rate of NSDS design and implementation in African countries. The working group is expected to follow-up and report on the status of NSDS design and implementation and to ensure the sharing of best practices on mainstreaming sectors into the NSDS design process.
- Support to fragile States: The meeting agreed to establish a working group on designing a statistical strategy and a framework for supporting statistical development in fragile states. The group will be led by AfDB.
- International Comparison Programme for Africa (ICP-Africa) - The meeting noted with appreciation the progress made in the implementation of the ICP-Africa programme, which is coordinated by AfDB. However, the meeting underscored the need for better packaging and dissemination of the results from the programme in order to optimize their policy usefulness.
- The Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) – Recognizing the centrality of statistical training for the production of quality statistics, the idea

revolves around a working group led by ECA/ACBF to propose a strategic programme on human resources and training in statistics.

- The African Statistics Charter - The meeting acknowledged the initiative taken by the AUC to design and implement the African Charter on Statistics and encouraged the AUC to prepare an implementation plan for the Charter.
- Measuring and Fostering Progress of African Societies - The meeting agreed to establish a working group that will prepare a forum every two years bringing together statisticians and other experts involved in analysing the dynamics of African societies and undertake related studies. The AfDB was to take the lead.
- Statistical Associations - The meeting acknowledged with appreciation the ongoing work by ACBF on the revival of the African Statistical Association. However, the meeting also noted the need to revive/establish National Statistical Associations. It was therefore agreed that a working group on Statistical Associations in Africa (national and regional) led by ECA and ACBF be set up.
- African Statistical Award Programme - It was agreed that a working group on the African Statistical Award programme led by AfDB/AUC be set up, to promote excellence and innovation in statistical practice.
- African Statistical Coordination Committee - It was agreed that a working group on the finalization of a paper on ASCC, led by ECA, be set up to put in place mechanisms for the coordination of statistical activities in Africa.
- Joint African statistical databases and publications - In order to minimize duplication of effort and dissemination of conflicting data on African countries, it was agreed that a working group on databases and joint statistical publications led by AfDB/ECA be set up to harmonize regional statistical databases and publications.
- Consolidated African Statistical programme - It was agreed that a working group on the preparation of African statistical programmes, led by AfDB be set up, to achieve better coordination and synergy.

The Meeting agreed that all working groups should report to ASCC on progress made according to the RSFF recommendations. To achieve the objectives set, the principals in this coordination arrangement will mobilize the necessary consultancy and financial resources to undertake the activities identified.

4. The African Statistical Coordination Committee

During the second African Statistical Coordination meeting, the principals established an ASCC with AfDB, UNECA, AUC, and ACBF as members and AfDB and UNECA as co-chairs. This is an extension of the coordination committee put in place during the first coordination meeting. This Group is expected to put in place a functional structure and a coordination mechanism for the RRSF implementation.

This coordination mechanism is expected to be supported by a Secretariat based at UNECA with the mandate to support ASCC by overseeing the smooth implementation of the RRSF, and especially the coordination tasks as proposed in the RRSF document and re-emphasized during the first coordination meeting.

The function of the RRSF Coordination Secretariat include ensuring the nomination of regional, subregional and national RRSF coordinators; preparing reporting formats and ensuring timely reporting by regional, subregional, and national coordinators; ensuring the development of monitoring tools including an African statistical development index; ensuring the design and wide dissemination of advocacy materials around the RRSF; liaising with subregional coordinators to receive monitoring information on their activities and support to countries; undertaking supervision missions to countries and subregional organizations; reporting on progress on Framework implementation for discussion at different levels including the RRSF Coordination Committee; establishing and regularly updating a web page to post information about framework implementation; and convening meetings of ASCC.

5. RRSF Coordinators

One of the tasks of the working group on RRSF is to ensure that national, subregional and regional coordinators are nominated by their respective organizations. The nominees at the regional level are:

- African Development Bank: Mr. Adalbert Nshimyumuremyi
- African Union Commission: Mr. Yeo Dossina
- African Capacity Building Foundation: Dr. Coffi Noumon
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa: Dr. Dimitri Sanga

ASCC is liaising with countries and subregional organizations to complete the list of national and subregional coordinators. So far, 19 countries have already nominated their coordinators. Other tasks and the leadership structures, are presented in the appendix.

6. Conclusion

This report presents the efforts made by regional organizations in their quest to put in place coordination mechanisms aimed at dealing with issues pertaining to the implementation, monitoring and reporting on RRSF, in line with their willingness to undertake their capacity- building efforts in the framework of the RRSF. This process culminated in the setting up of ASCC, as well as a working group on RRSF with UNECA as the secretariat.

Appendix: RRSF Coordination tasks and leadership

N°	Tasks	Lead Institution
1	- Develop promotional materials and tools with development partners	ECA
2	- Mobilize the resources needed to implement, coordinate, monitor, report and evaluate the framework.	ADB
3	- Use existing technical assistance activities in countries and subregional organizations to assist relevant implementing agencies in line with the recommendations on the NSDS	Jointly
4	- Liaise with country and subregional coordinators on a regular basis to assist them on implementation matters.	Jointly
5	- Provide countries and subregional organizations with technical assistance on a need basis.	Jointly
6	- Work out reporting formats.	Jointly
7	- Undertake supervision missions to countries and subregional organizations	Jointly
8	- Monitor implementation of the RRSF.	Jointly
9	- Liaise with subregional coordinators to receive monitoring information on their activities and support to countries.	Jointly
10	- Report on progress on framework implementation for discussion at different levels.	Jointly
11	- Establish a web page to post the latest information about framework implementation.	ECA