



A Strategy
for the Implementation
of the
Addis Ababa Plan of Action
for Statistical Development
in Africa in the 1990s

(Abridged Version)

United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa



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**Addis Ababa
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Table of contents

	<u>Paragraphs</u>
Background	1 - 2
Review of past and current situation	3 - 11
Review of technical and financial assistance in Africa	12 - 40
The State of African Statistics in 1990	41 - 56
Major challenges in the 1990s	57 - 67
Strategy for Statistical Development	68 - 104
Implementation of Strategy	105 - 116
Conclusion	117

BACKGROUND

1. The twenty-fifth session of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)/Sixteenth meeting of African Ministers responsible for economic planning and development, held in May 1990, adopted the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s. The Plan is based on three cardinal principles:

- (i) the central role of an improved statistical system in economic and social development;
- (ii) the key role of ECA in the development and promotion of statistics in Africa without prejudice to the important role of other agencies and donors;
- (iii) the need for co-ordinating the support provided by international agencies and donors.

The achievement of **national self-sufficiency** in the production of reliable, relevant and timely data by the end of the century is the ultimate objective of the Plan.

2. As recommended in the Plan of Action, a Working Group meeting was convened by UNECA to "further review and elaborate on the principles, objectives and recommendations of the plan". The meeting discussed and adopted for that purpose a strategy document which was subsequently endorsed by the seventh session of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers. The strategy document highlights actions that should be taken to give effect to the plan.

REVIEW OF PAST AND CURRENT SITUATION

3. The state of statistics in Africa has over the past two decades been of considerable concern. Some of the deficiencies that have been identified include: poor management of National Statistical Services (NSSs)¹, inadequate funding, lack of timeliness in delivering statistical data, unsatisfactory quality of data produced and inability to respond quickly to new data needs.

Data Production

4. After independence, early efforts in data production concentrated mainly on economic statistics. Among the subjects covered were trade, prices, household budget, agriculture, industry, and labour.

5. Though demographic and social statistics were initially not given much attention in most of the countries, some of them did carry out population censuses shortly after attaining independence. During the 1970s African countries became more interested in the size, structure and other characteristics of their population. In this connection, population censuses and demographic surveys were given prominence in the statistical agenda. These censuses also constituted the major source of employment and unemployment data. The major sources

¹NSS is being used synonymously with such terms as Central Bureau of Statistics, Central Statistical Office, etc. National Statistical System refers to all producers in the public sector.

of social statistics (health and education) were administrative records from hospitals and schools, respectively.

Staffing and Manpower Development

6. **Staffing:** At the time of independence most NSSs had a significant number of expatriates among the professional staff. These expatriate officers were in most cases in charge of the management of the statistical offices and their sections. However, soon after independence most of the expatriate staff were phased out, although in some countries some of the expatriate officers remained under technical co-operation agreements. It should be noted that during the initial phase of statistical development in Africa, there was a marked scarcity of well qualified African statisticians. This in turn created enormous problems when African governments wanted to Africanize their statistical services. At this early stage there were problems of finding sufficient numbers of candidates to study statistics.

7. **Training** of professional statisticians was initially done in overseas institutions and universities both for French-speaking and English-speaking African countries. Later, institutions were established in some African countries for the training of professional statisticians. In this connection, during the period under review, about 14 professional level statistical training centres were created in the region. The middle level staff were initially trained on the job but from 1960 onwards, middle level statistical training programmes were established by the United Nations in a few countries.

Data Processing

8. At the time of independence most statistical publications were based on manual processing, although some data were mechanically processed on the first generation computers. The paradoxical experience of this early stage was that data processed manually were released more timely than those that depended either partly or wholly on computer processing. However, it should be noted that the tabulation programmes used in computer processing were more elaborate than those used in manual processing.

9. Statistical systems have also suffered from the lack of development of user-friendly, easily updatable data base systems. These would significantly improve the interface between users and suppliers of statistical data.

Publications

10. In the 1980s apart from results of population censuses, there was a general deterioration in the timeliness of statistical publications. However, it should be pointed out that a few countries were able to release their statistical data within a reasonable time frame. Some countries had data available but, regrettably, not in a published form.

Data Quality

11. Quality of data has been a major concern in many African countries. Low response in surveys especially through mail questionnaires affect the timeliness and quality of data. There are examples of areas where statistical data are of questionable quality. For instance,

in population census results, age has been identified as one of the unreliable items in spite of attempts since 1960 to improve age data using historical and local events calendar. Trade data have, in most cases, been found to be inconsistent with data published by trading partner countries. In the case of national accounts statistics, owing to serious deficiencies, there are many planners and researchers in a number of African countries who disregard the estimates published by NSSs or Central Banks and use estimates produced by external multilateral institutions. Because modern methods of quality control were not generally used in the production of statistics, there has been a rather low level of confidence in the reliability which policy-makers and the general public place on statistics.

REVIEW OF TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IN AFRICA

12. Recent assessments of 30 years of technical assistance in Africa undertaken in the context of review of UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD) describe its impact as unsatisfactory. Although this criticism is directed to technical co-operation in general, some important aspects of this assessment also apply to statistics. This pertains, especially, to the aspect of capacity-building and sustainability of donor assisted programmes. It has been argued that while immediate objectives were often achieved, the same could not be said of long-term development goals. An example is data production per se, sometimes at the expense of capacity building.

13. It appears that a significant amount of resources had been made available by both multilateral and bilateral agencies in the field of statistics in Africa. For example, for the projects executed by the United Nations Department for Technical Co-operation for Development (UNDTCD), a steady increase on the amount spent on technical co-operation in Africa on statistics from 1983 to 1989 is noticeable. The UNDTCD figures do not represent the total UN assistance to statistics in Africa, since they exclude projects executed by other UN agencies or the countries themselves. Other multilateral assistance is available from the European Economic Community (EEC) and the World Bank. Bilateral assistance to African countries in statistics has been received from donors such as France, SIDA, UK (ODA) and USAID, etc.

14. With regard to UNDTCD, about 48 percent of total assistance from 1983 to 1989 was spent on personnel² compared to only 13 percent on training. This apparent imbalance between personnel and training has been identified by many critics as one of the inherent weaknesses of technical assistance under the UN System. In response to the criticism, it is argued that salaries of personnel who are recruited to train local staff in countries are usually included in the expenditures on personnel, hence the apparent imbalance.

The African Census Programme (ACP)

15. The ACP was established in response to requests from African Governments for technical and financial assistance to carry out population censuses in the 1970 round. Assistance was provided to 22 countries. Due to delays, some of the countries only carried

²Includes technical assistance staff

out their censuses during the 1980 round while some countries did not participate in either the 1970 or 1980 round of censuses.

16. The ACP encountered a number of serious problems. These include:

- time lag between the request for an expert and the fielding of that expert due in part to countries' delay in selecting such experts resulting in some cases in the loss of preferred experts;
- procurement of census materials and equipment including late delivery;
- lack of data processing know-how.

17. The success of the ACP in the 1970s was especially marked in the training of local staff. The expected salutary effect of this success was however not realized in the 1980 round of population censuses due mainly to the brain drain from the NSSs. This had adverse effect on the capability meant to have been developed. However, it is necessary not to lose sight of the fact that the ACP generated large population related data for participating countries, although the effective utilization of the data remains an open question.

World Fertility Survey (WFS)

18. The WFS was carried out by the International Statistical Institute (ISI) in collaboration with the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) with funds provided by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The United Kingdom Overseas Development Administration, also contributed. About 13 African countries participated in the WFS. The Programme made an important contribution to the collection and analysis of fertility data in Africa. Both policy makers and researchers made use of the data from the WFS. In addition, African countries benefitted from a large number of technical documents and the state-of-the art of survey organization.

19. The major criticism made against the WFS was that it was an expensive undertaking with all its staff based in London, and relatively over-extensive use of consultants, even though the project was meant for developing countries.

The African Household Survey Capability Programme (AHSCP)

20. The AHSCP was officially approved by the legislative organs of the UNECA in 1978 with activities starting immediately, first only with UNECA staff and later with the ILO adviser in household surveys. Thirteen African countries originally enrolled in the AHSCP. However, due to financial problems not all the 13 countries could implement their household survey programmes usually drawn up with the assistance of UNECA, UN Statistics Office, ILO, FAO, and UNICEF.

21. The AHSCP which was conceived by African countries themselves appears to have been well-designed. The need for the programme to be country specific and to be flexible in subject coverage and survey design was recognized.

22. In countries which have implemented the programme over a reasonable time span, a capability has been developed for nationals to deal with all aspects of survey undertaking. It has also been argued that the AHSCP has assisted in the transfer of skills from short-term experts and regional and interregional advisers to local personnel.

23. The main problems encountered in the AHSCP were funding and delays in releasing survey results. These notwithstanding, more technical manuals for use by countries may have contributed more to its success. However, the programme is continuing with presently 22 participating countries.

Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)

24. The DHS is a world wide programme. It started in 1984 and has been carried out in more than 40 developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Twelve of the countries are in Africa. It is currently co-ordinated by Macro System, Inc., and funded by USAID.

25. The DHS was intended to obtain data on reproduction, fertility preferences, contraception, infant mortality, and health related issues. The survey has provided basic demographic and health information for use by policy makers, planners and social scientists.

26. Critics of the survey argue that the capacity building impact of the DHS is relatively weak because of the competing claims of completing the survey by a set deadline on the one hand and capacity building on the other. It has also been stated that because DHS was funded by a single bilateral donor, political preferences of that donor country played a major role in determining which African countries should be included in the programme.

National Accounts Capability Programme (NACP)

27. The NACP was conceived by UNECA in 1978 as a means of improving basic economic statistics, which in turn would lead to timely and reliable estimation of national accounts. The NACP helped a few countries to update their estimates of national accounts. However the programme did not succeed for, among others, the following reasons:

- countries which were selected for the programme were those in urgent need of attention but these were also countries where impetus for national accounts work was lacking;
- insufficient number of advisers (one or two) to cover about 50 countries;
- countries were mainly interested in aggregate Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures, but not the preparatory work for generating appropriate basic economic statistics, because limited national resources were devoted to improving basic economic statistics.

The Living Standard Measurement Study (LSMS)

28. The LSMS was set up as a research project of the World Bank to develop analytical methodology, based on household surveys, for measuring living standards and analyzing welfare issues. Three African Countries participated in this study.

29. One notable success of the LSMS was the decentralization of data processing. The main criticism was that the content of the questionnaire was determined outside Africa and was not readily amenable to country level adaption. Other critics argued that the survey costs, although defrayed with World Bank loan, which even when given at a concessionaire rate, were nonetheless adding to the debt burden of the African countries that participated.

Statistical aspects of the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA)

30. SDA is a project co-sponsored by UNDP, the World Bank and the African Development Bank. Other multilateral and bilateral donors later made contribution to the project. It was designed in response to the concern of African Governments and the donor community in general about the deteriorating quality of life which accompanied programmes of structural adjustment in many African countries. SDA was mainly concerned with poverty issues but in order to deal with such issues effectively, the SDA unit initiated the design and preparation of household surveys to collect a variety of requisite data. About 33 African countries have so far indicated their interest in participating in the SDA.

31. Some concerns have been expressed on inter alia the usefulness of the surveys, their possible disruptive effect on the work of statistical offices and their sustainability. Nonetheless the SDA has generated a lot of debate and may have raised the level of awareness and attention paid to statistics. Its full impact may not be known until the countries have actually carried out the surveys.

Pan Arab Project for Child Development (PAPCHILD)

32. PAPCHILD is sponsored by the League of Arab States and supported by the Arab Gulf Fund for UN Development Programme (AGFUND), the UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO as well as the United Nations. The project which is in its first phase covers five Arab countries, four of them in Africa.

33. The project is geared at conducting statistical surveys on maternal and child health including infant and maternal mortality. The project appears to be a good example of collaborative efforts in statistical development.

The Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA)

34. The main objective of the STPA was to make Africa self-reliant in the provision of trained statistical personnel at all levels. There are currently 16 centres (8 francophone, 7 anglophone and 1 lusophone) participating in the STPA. In addition there are 8 associate centres from outside Africa.

35. Activities of STPA focussed on training of trainers, for which a number of fellowships are awarded; co-ordination of training activities through the biennial meetings of directors of STPA centres; conduct of workshops; preparation of guide syllabuses for in-service, middle and undergraduate level training courses; and provision of short-term teaching consultants and advisory services.

36. The STPA has contributed to the training of a large number of statistical personnel at all levels. The main constraint to its further development seems to be the inability to provide or persuade donors to provide funding for student fellowships.

Statistical Development Programme for Africa (SDPA)

37. The SDPA project was initiated in 1987 as a result of merging of three separate regional projects related to the regional components of AHSCP, STPA, and NACP. The project like its erstwhile components was funded by UNDP and executed by ECA. ILO continued to provide one adviser in household surveys.

38. SDPA has continued to provide short-term teaching assistance to STPA centres, supplied some limited equipment, awarded fellowships for training of trainers, organized workshops and seminars and provided advisory services in national accounts, household surveys, statistical training etc. to upgrade the knowledge and performance of serving statisticians. Although funds for running the SDPA centres are given by national governments and donors, SDPA in its co-ordinating role could be said to have played a key role in training of a large number of professional and middle level statistical staff.

39. A major problem of SDPA was that it did not receive enough resources to increase its impact in African countries. Also, it did not appear to be well known in countries in contrast to its component parts.

Overall evaluation of Technical Co-operation

40. Some measure of success has been identified in a number of technical co-operation programmes. However emerging problems whose solution could add to such success include the following:

- resource constraints both internal and external vis-a-vis overall statistical development;
- ineffective co-ordination of the scarce resources especially of donor assistance (census co-ordination an example of success story in inter-agency collaboration);
- non-sustainability of externally funded programmes due in part to (a) the technically complex nature of the programmes, (b) inadequate development and use of local manpower, (c) high turnover, and (d) failure of African Governments to provide counterpart funds and necessary satisfactory conditions of service;
- possible disruptive effect of external programmes on the work of statistical offices, etc.

THE STATE OF AFRICAN STATISTICS IN 1990

Organizations of NSS

41. Most NSSs in the region are centralized with a central office responsible for the production of all types of statistics. This does not preclude other organizations, like the Central Bank from also producing relevant statistics. It also does not exclude ministries from having statistical units producing statistics relevant to their areas of competence and concern. Such central offices are generally part of the civil service of a particular country and usually come under the supervision of the ministries of Planning or Finance. There is at least one notable exception to this arrangement. For example, Ghana has an autonomous Statistical Service which is outside the civil service but remains in the public sector.

42. For most NSSs there is usually a legislative basis for their establishment and statistical activities. The statistical acts usually set out functions of the NSS, penalties for non-co-operation of respondents, for mutilation of documents, for false information etc.

43. Organizationally, by 1990, most national statistical offices were structured along three principal technical divisions, namely, Economic Statistics, Demographic and Social Statistics and Data Processing.

44. It has been argued that each statistical office should have certain basic supporting infrastructure such as a decent building with adequate furniture; transport; equipment; printing facilities; communication facilities; a statistical library or reference unit; and above all adequate trained staff. Less than half of the African statistical offices assessed had all these basic supporting elements.

Co-ordination

45. Co-ordination of statistical activities has been recognized as one of the prerequisites for sustained statistical development in the African region. However, for many countries of the region there was a total absence of formal mechanisms for co-ordination among producers and between producers and users of statistics.

46. Up until 1990, attempts to bring users and producers together were also largely unsuccessful. Lack of effective co-ordination both within the statistical system of the country and among international donors resulted in unnecessary duplication of efforts.

Data Production

47. Data continued to be collected through administrative records, censuses and surveys. For population censuses, most countries have established a decennial series by ensuring that the censuses carried out in the 1980 round will be repeated in the 1990 round, unless constraining circumstances prevail. Although administrative records are still being used to produce trade and financial statistics, NSSs have not shown enough innovation in tapping other administrative records like social security or National Provident Fund records. With regard to surveys, although a number of countries have formulated their own survey plans,

funding problems have forced some countries to default, and opt for programmes that they would not otherwise have selected had they been able to secure funds for their own projects.

Computer Use

48. With the advent of micro-computers, the way statistical data are handled has been revolutionized. Micro-computers are now involved in the conduct of surveys from questionnaire design to the production of final reports. Notwithstanding the above, many African countries have had problems relating to the provision of hardware and software by some donors. Some of the hardware have not been compatible with other equipment already in use. In addition some software packages supplied may not have been the most appropriate. Above all, because data analysis is not a priority in most statistical offices, knowledge of analytical software packages has tended to be very limited.

Publication/Dissemination/Timeliness/Quality

49. Data dissemination in most NSSs appears to have followed the traditional mode of distribution of published material. Experience has shown that there are delays in printing such publications. The publication may take years to reach the intended users, by which time most of the data is obsolete. It is worth mentioning that short summaries of highlights of survey results may be more useful to policy makers than the voluminous reports of statistical tables and texts. Very few NSSs had adopted the short summary reports by 1990.

50. With respect to publication of results, there were still considerable delays between completion of data processing and publication of results in 1990. For example a number of African countries that participated in the 1980 round of Population Censuses have not yet published all their census reports. Such delays in publishing of results and reports have adverse effect on the timeliness of statistical data. This may well be true of some other censuses like Agriculture in some countries. By 1990 there had been a modest improvement in the timeliness of the disseminated data, but there were still many countries in Africa with a huge backlog of unprocessed and unpublished data. In trying to meet users demand in a timely manner it may sometimes be necessary to produce provisional publications even if at the expense of completeness of coverage and/or precision of results. The quality of data had by 1990 shown only some modest improvement.

Analysis/Application/Utilization

51. In the areas of data analysis and application, there is an emerging consensus that statistical data are being subjected to critical analysis and more extensive use than previously done. It is worth noting, however, that this process was not being pushed by policy makers and planners who should be the primary users of statistical information. Instead, the major users and analysts of such information in the region were researchers within universities and multilateral and bilateral agencies.

52. In terms of output, most African countries produce some data on economic, demographic and social statistics. Indeed some of the data are rudimentary and of poor quality. Most NSSs have neglected natural resources and environmental statistics. However, most countries have a lot of data in different ministries and departments but there has been

no effort to organize the data into a coherent framework which can be referred to as statistics on natural resources and environment.

Work Programmes

53. Less than half the countries of the region prepare work programmes. This makes it difficult to relate output to resources. It has been argued that the absence of work programmes in most NSSs is also linked to poor management of statistical services. The lack of managerial skills has resulted in failure to set priorities.

Manpower

54. It has also been observed that despite the use of subject-matter specialists to carry out some of the tasks previously undertaken only by computer specialists, the brain drain to the private sector has led to qualified data processing staff at senior levels being in short supply in many countries.

55. Another problem with the present state of statistical offices is the low ratio of professional staff to junior staff. This results in inadequate supervision. The establishment levels of most African Statistical Offices may require revision.

56. Part of the cause of the indifferent state of African statistics is attributable to poor career prospects as reflected in most schemes of service and the general lack of motivation of statistical personnel.

MAJOR CHALLENGES IN THE 1990s

Demand and Supply

57. It is obvious that major challenges in the statistical field in Africa in the 1990s are implicit in the deficiencies exhibited by national statistical systems at the moment. Because of inter alia, delays in delivery of outputs by statistical offices, some users find data out of date and largely useless leading to the inevitable and erroneous conclusion that there was no demand for such data and/or such data is not policy relevant. By and large as of 1990 African statistics can not be said not to have always been demand driven, though in some cases the demand may have been latent.

58. The challenge ahead will be in the more timely production of data to meet ever increasing, new and sometimes competing demands and more effective utilization of such data. Competition between internal and external demand for statistical information will pose a challenge. Data requests will continue originating from regional and global organizations. Most of such requests will originate from resolutions and programmes adopted by these bodies to which most African countries belong. Many of these programmes require statistical data for monitoring which most African countries in their present precarious financial position can not afford to produce. There is therefore need for the NSSs to draw up a coherent and cost-effective programme that their resources can afford and sustain. In this connection, priority should be given to internal demand while not ignoring external demand.

59. The issue of whether NSSs should have a minimum core of subjects will continue to be on the statistical agenda in the 1990s. However, the consensus at the global level has been that every country has its own specific data requirements and priorities. Regional organizations have also emphasized that data requirements are country specific. Any attempt to provide a list of core subjects should therefore be seen only as a guide to countries.

Infrastructures and human resources

60. The previous section has identified most of the issues associated with the need to provide an adequate infrastructure, improved training of manpower, higher ratio of professionals to supporting staff, improved schemes of service in relation to other professionals in the public sector (to minimize brain drain from NSSs), better management practices, etc.

Data production, analysis, dissemination and utilization

61. There is a need to maintain a careful mix of data obtained from administrative records, censuses and surveys, to make appropriate use of micro-computer technology, to maintain data quality controls, to widen and deepen data analysis and applications, to use non-NSS collaborators in this analysis, to improve data dissemination techniques, to make more effective utilization of data and to develop and use statistical data bases.

62. The experience of UN agencies and other organizations in setting up data bases should be taken into account by national, sub-regional and regional organizations when establishing their own data bases.

Funding/Resource Use

63. The economic downturn in Africa has meant that limited resources are available for statistical as well as other activities in the public sector. The situation is likely to persist during most of the 1990s. Developed countries are also experiencing economic problems and increased support to statistics cannot always be assumed. NSSs will therefore have to depend more on government and local resources rather than on external financial aid and to introduce more accountability.

Co-ordination

64. The question of co-ordination within the NSS, among statistical producers within the country, between producers and users, and between donors and the recipient country will assume greater prominence in the 1990s as resources become scarce and statistical demands increase. Mechanisms will have to be established to co-ordinate activities within the NSS itself.

Women's Issues

65. The need to address women's issues was given prominence in the Nairobi Forward-looking strategies for Advancement of Women. Currently there are very few women

professional statisticians in NSSs and in training institutions (both trainees and trainers). There will be need to redress this situation in the 1990s.

Methodology

66. In the 1990s there is need for more methodological studies in Africa and the application of comparatively uniform standards (in concepts, definitions and classifications), especially within the same country. In addition, the issue of quality control will remain one of the important challenges of the 1990s. To help NSSs to carry out such functions, there is need to establish Methods and Standards divisions within their offices depending on the level of development of statistical capacity. Such divisions should as much as possible and where appropriate examine the feasibility of developing low cost methods of data collection other than censuses and surveys.

Statistical Associations

67. National, sub-regional and regional statistical associations are expected to play an enhanced role in the development of statistics in the region in the 1990s. At the regional level the African Statistical Association (AFSA) should be encouraged in its effort to serve as forum for discussions of statistical matters among all statisticians. Government support for national, sub-regional and regional statistical associations is necessary to ensure that these associations continue to provide useful service to countries. Where national statistical associations do not yet exist, efforts should be made to establish them. Involvement of other NGOs is also crucial.

STRATEGY FOR STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT

68. Guided by the preceding review the proposed strategy which is meant to serve as a framework, outlines what could be done at the national, sub-regional, regional and global levels to revitalize African statistical development, and suggests ways of implementing its various elements.

69. In drawing up this framework, it is generally agreed that, given the diverse state of statistical development in African countries, no uniform prescriptions should be administered. The need for a joint effort in and among countries, with support from the international community, has been the driving force in formulating the strategy. This notwithstanding, individual countries will have to devise their own modalities in implementing it in accordance with their national plans and priorities.

70. The Strategy for implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action needs to be understood in the context of several important recent global and regional initiatives which aim at reinforcing the development planning capacity in the African region. In addition, the international community has recognized the need to assist countries of the region in building up their national institutional capacities, including statistical capacity, and in reintroducing a stronger long-term, developmental perspective into policy-making. This implies that all the initiatives will result in enormously expanded data requirements both in quantity and quality. In this connection, the issue of priority setting and concentrating on a core list of data requirements naturally arises and will need to be addressed. The ultimate objective is to

provide data needed for policy formulation, analysis, monitoring, etc. The proposals that follow on what needs to be done in the main areas of concern are considered separately for each of the three levels of activities viz national, regional/sub-regional and global.

National Level

Statistical Development Plan

71. While appreciating that African statistical services are at different stages of development, general guidelines can be formulated to assist countries in drawing up and implementing plans to enhance their statistical capacity.

72. To facilitate drawing up of a Plan, the first step that has to be taken in each country is a Needs Assessment (NA) or Programme Review and Strategy Development (PRSD) in order to find out what the current and future needs of primary users of statistics are likely to be. A high powered team will need to be constituted for this purpose. The determination of priorities by an independent group is an essential step for making optimal use of the capacities of the statistical services. Some of the criteria the team should take into consideration in setting priorities should include a minimum list of subjects, policy relevance, requirements for efficient economic management and social development.

73. In order to allow priority needs to be met, the assessment team should also be mandated to determine the physical, human and fiscal requirements of the entire statistical system. If necessary it should make recommendations on restructuring the overall statistical organization.

74. As situations differ from country to country, no single model is being proposed. In a number of countries there are enough local experts that can undertake such an assignment. In a second group of countries, there might be need for only one or two international experts to join the team, while a third category of countries might require a team with a majority of its members being international experts. It is suggested that the team should consist of about five members and be chaired by a prominent personality from the user side of statistics. The appointment of the team and determination of its terms of reference should be done at the highest possible level if its recommendations are to carry weight within the government circles.

75. As earlier stated the Needs Assessment Team is also expected to suggest better structures and legislation that must be put in place if the Statistical System is to perform more efficiently. It has to explore whether a technical advisory committee or a Statistical Commission should be established to oversee the work of the Statistical Office, and the relationship of the office to other producers.

76. Development Plan/Work Programme: After its needs have been ascertained each country will have to draw up a 5-10 year statistical development plan. The plan should take into account all major statistical production activities. A section on the development of the human resources required to implement the plan will have to be included. The management of the NSS should undertake greater efforts to increase the participation of women at all levels. Before preparing a statistical development plan, the NSS will have to carry out

extensive discussions with its primary users. Their comments on the draft plan will be essential.

77. After the 5-10 year Statistical Development Plan has been approved, an annual or biennial work programme budget needs to be prepared. After the work programme budgets have been approved, the management of the NSS³ should prepare programme implementation plans.

Some specific activities

78. Without prejudice to the outcome of a Needs Assessment exercise, actions that need be taken in some areas of normal work of NSS are given. These areas are:

- data production encompassing collection, processing, storage retrieval, basic analysis and dissemination;
- research and methodology;
- training;
- public and user awareness;
- technical cooperation;
- coordination.

Data Production

79. Data Collection: What to collect by whom and how to do so in a cost effective manner within the overall system will normally be an issue on which the Needs Assessment Programme Review exercise should make recommendations. This is all the more necessary in the light of the competing and increasing demand for data.

80. Data Analysis: Each NSS should carry out, as a *minimum*, preliminary descriptive analysis of data that it collects. For in depth analysis, there are options which the NSS can take depending on the number, qualifications and experience of its professional staff. If it has a reasonable number of professional staff with requisite qualifications and experience, then it can take the in-depth analysis in close collaboration with outside research institutions or individual researchers. Without such qualified staff the in-depth analysis has to be done by an outside institution.

81. Data Processing: The NSS should keep abreast of the developments in the area of data processing, and should evolve a data processing plan which includes estimates of present and future demand for specific data processing resources. Such a plan could be part of an overall Statistical Development Plan or a supplement to it.

³Emphasis being placed on NSS in this document presupposes a coordinating role for it vis-a-vis other producers such as line ministries, central banks, etc. The exact role of the NSS within the National Statistical System will be determined in each country possibly as part of the recommendation of the Needs Assessment Programme Review exercise.

82. The procurement policy of the NSS should take into account the type of application for which the data processing equipment will be used, and whether maintenance services for the equipment are available locally.

83. The issue of data storage, retrieval and dissemination should be linked to both the use which the data will be put and types of users. However, proper storage of data is important to ensure data protection on the one hand and easy retrieval and utilization on the other. the design of user-friendly, easily updated data bases should increasingly be seen as part of the NSSs.

84. It will be necessary for a clearing house function on criteria for software acquisition and an advisory role relating to data protection and communication limits. This role could be assumed by regional bodies like UNECA and possibly also by using an expanded existing unit in the UN Statistical Office.

Research and Methodology

85. Methodological research can similarly be undertaken by the NSS alone or in collaboration with appropriate national, sub-regional, or regional research institutions. Support for such research from donors may be necessary where the country cannot afford it.

Public and User Awareness

86. As the ultimate purpose of statistics is to contribute to informed decision-making by the public and its representatives in Government, the NSSs should cast a more dynamic role for themselves in publicizing the results of their work and in inculcating a "statistical culture" in countries. This should generate more effective utilization of data.

Training

87. Formal and informal training for both middle and professional level staff are essential. Equally important are the training and retraining of junior cadre staff. Existing in-service statistical training programmes in most countries should be strengthened and should be initiated in countries which do not have them. Training and research activities have direct bearing on national level statistical activities. Training should be provided to planners and analysts in the use and interpretation of statistical data.

Technical Co-operation and Co-ordination

88. In order to achieve the development objectives of technical co-operation programmes and projects in the statistical field, donors and recipient countries have both been examining new approaches to maximize the impact of the use of technical co-operation resources to create durable statistical infrastructures in the region and generate meaningful statistical programmes. Some of the initiatives already include country execution of projects, use of local experts and procurement of compatible equipment.

89. Co-ordination will have to be improved. First, there should be co-ordination of all the statistical activities within the NSS. The second type of co-ordination should involve all producers within the country on the one hand, and producers and users on the other. Further, each country should have a local body to deal with co-ordination of technical co-operation in statistics in which both producers of statistics within the country and donors meet periodically to discuss programmes, assess progress and propose remedial actions if necessary. The fourth type of co-ordination will be at the level of donors in the country. In addition, Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (TCDC) initiatives will have to be well planned to enable participants to gain maximum benefit out of them.

90. The monitoring of the implementation of the strategy at the national level will have to be an ongoing exercise from the start, with periodic review.

Political Interference with Data Production

91. The possibility of political interference with Data Production remains a reality which cannot be ruled out. Delays which may be non technical in nature such as that due to political interference could affect not only timeliness but also quality of data. While the implication of such interference can be quite clear and serious, no easy remedy can be prescribed. All that can be advocated is to plead with Governments for timely release of statistical information.

Regional and Sub-regional Level

92. The inevitable catalytic, facilitating and supportive role of regional/sub-regional institutions to country level activities cannot be overemphasized. Some specific areas of action are outlined. However the adequacy or otherwise of the capacity of existing institutions to handle proposed actions and the need to strengthen them will need to be examined.

Methods, Research, Standards and Training:

93. Regional organizations like the UNECA, ADB and Sub-regional institutions such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Eastern and Southern African Preferential Trade Area (PTA) should play a leading role in adapting global concepts and classifications to suit conditions in the region or subregions. In this connection, regional and sub-regional expert group meetings should be stepped up to discuss some of these issues and come up with well thought recommendations.

94. Guidelines: Most of the national statistical offices in the region will require guidelines for preparation of national statistical development plans. The UNECA in cooperation with other agencies should take the lead in preparing such guidelines. The guidelines should be prepared as soon as the strategy document has been approved.

95. Methodology: A number of handbooks and manuals have been produced at the global level for use by statistical offices, especially in developing countries. Some of these handbooks and manuals may require regional adaptation. In this connection, resources should be provided to institutions or agencies best suited for the work.

96. Training: Within the framework of the implementation of the strategy there is need to strengthen the existing 16 regional and sub-regional institutions currently participating in the STPA. This can be done by ensuring the availability of qualified staff for all basic courses and specialists to teach applied courses like agricultural statistics and national accounts. The number of micro-computers and corresponding software need to be increased in order to provide trainees at the centres with easy access to micro computers. Apart from teaching, the statistical training centres should also undertake methodological research. It may be necessary to designate and develop a much fewer number of centres as truly regional centres especially for specialized courses.

Advisory Services

97. Generally, advisers either maintained by the UN and its specialized agencies or those provided by other multilateral and bilateral agencies have performed well in the past. However, their services will continue to be needed to provide short-term advisory missions, especially as long-term technical advisers in statistics are gradually being phased out. A reasonable number of advisers in various areas of statistical specialization will be needed at both regional and sub-regional levels. In addition, special consultants would be required for selected topics. The main function of advisory teams is to advise individual countries on different aspects of statistical activity, especially in those areas where the countries experience difficulties.

Regional Information System

98. The UNECA should play a key role in supporting regional data bases. In order to be able to achieve this task the already established statistical data base in UNECA will need to be improved to make it an authoritative source of statistical data on African countries. This will be without prejudice to collaborating with a number of international agencies which have their own, often specialized data bases which cover or are solely dedicated to the African region.

99. The establishment of credible data bases requires not only donor support, but the contribution of UNECA member states in providing high quality data on their countries.

Co-ordination

100. Co-ordination at regional level will be necessary. In this regard, a regional inter-agency committee to which major donors should be invited should be instituted. The committee should meet periodically to discuss relevant issues including preparation of guidelines for:

- (i) needs Assessment missions;
- (ii) statistical development plans;
- (iii) work programme budgets; and
- (iv) monitoring statistical capacity

101. The Committee should also serve as an informal Steering Committee to monitor strategy implementation, thereby assisting the Joint Conference of African Planners,

Statisticians and Demographers in its duty of overall monitoring of Statistical Development in Africa.

Global Level

102. The UN Statistical Office, the Statistics Divisions of the specialized agencies and the IMF which are at present mandated to prepare global standards in specific fields should continue to do so. In preparing such documents, African experiences and problems should be taken into account. For this reason, adequate African representation in groups that prepare the standards should be ensured.

103. In the past, inter-regional advisers from the UN and its specialized agencies have provided additional support for regional advisers in their work in countries. As these inter-regional advisers also deal with other regions, they bring to their work a broad experience in similar countries. So do the advisers/experts provided by bilateral and multilateral organizations.

104. There should be a formal or informal machinery for co-ordination at the global level. The group will not discuss African issues per se but rather concentrate on global problems. However, as African issues form part of the global agenda, it is expected that such co-ordination of technical co-operation at the global level will benefit Africa. The UN Statistical Commission and ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities which already exist for such purpose will probably need to be more effective in their co-ordination role.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY

Actions to be taken at the national level

105. Initially, the head of NSS should request the appropriate government minister to appoint a Needs Assessment or Programme Review and Strategy Development Team. The initiation of such teams should involve potential donors where necessary. The first draft of the report of the team should as much as possible be ready within five months of its appointment for discussion by producers and users. Copies of the final document should be sent to bilateral and multilateral agencies whose assistance may be required.

106. The government, after examining and accepting some recommendations, will proceed to constitute an appropriate overseeing body eg. a statistical board which will inter alia supervise the implementation of accepted recommendations. At this stage, the country should undertake the necessary structuring or restructuring of the national statistical system. Mechanisms on co-ordination should be in place at an early stage of the implementation of the strategy.

107. The NSS will then have the responsibility of preparing the medium-term (5-10 years) statistical development plans. In some countries, only a review will be necessary. The draft should be discussed with producers and users to get their comments. The draft should then be submitted to government for approval. It will also be necessary to seek donor assistance as necessary for fund mobilization and possible establishment of a special statistical development fund. While awaiting the approval of the statistical development plan, the NSS

should initiate work on annual/biennial work programme budgets which should be submitted to the ministry of finance in accordance with rules and regulations that may be in force in the country.

108. Although the long term objective is for the recurrent costs of the programme to be financed from local funds, donor support may be needed at the initial stage. It is important that this is provided in a co-ordinated manner. It would therefore be useful to involve donors in the programme at a relatively early stage. This may include seeking donor support to help fund the initial Needs Assessment exercise.

109. It is necessary to point out the iterative nature of the exercise which allows for continual review and updating. A country can start the exercise from any point depending on the state of statistical development in the country. Monitoring of the progress towards the achievement of the goals of the strategy will have to be entrusted to a body such as the statistical board.

Actions to be taken by Sub-regional and regional bodies

110. The regional organizations such as UNECA should circulate the draft strategy to African governments and the international community.

111. The success of any steps to implement the strategy will depend, to some extent on the support provided to national bodies by regional and sub-regional institutions such as UNECA, ADB and PTA. Such institutions should provide financial and/or technical support to their respective member countries. Regional/sub-regional statistical programmes will have to be prepared in order to support the implementation of the strategy.

112. UNECA, with the cooperation of other agencies, will have to develop guidelines for inter alia:

- carrying out needs assessment and programme review and strategy development;
- preparing statistical development plans; and
- monitoring statistics capacity.

113. In monitoring the implementation of the strategy an inter-agency group will have to play a central role. In this connection, UNECA will have to convene meetings of the group in which most of the principal international actors who are geared to assist African statistical development have to be represented. The inter-agency committee will have to examine the draft guidelines stated above. It will also monitor and periodically review progress made by individual countries in the implementation of the strategy.

Actions to be taken at global level

114. At a global level, there is need to report periodically on the implementation of the strategy to the UN Statistical Commission, ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, and to some extent also to the UN Population Commission.

115. With regard to resources, UNDP should take the initiative to discuss with donors the question of mobilizing additional resources for statistical activities in Africa. Further, prospects of establishing a special statistical fund should be explored.

116. Co-operation of bilateral and multilateral agencies will be necessary to ensure that technical assistance programmes do not disrupt countries' work programmes and are in line with national priorities.

CONCLUSION

117. The state of African statistics has to be redressed with great urgency. If it is allowed to further deteriorate, it will seriously hamper attempts to revive African economies since relevant, reliable and timely data will not be available. Its development therefore has to be seen in the context of overall improvement in public sector services and the general state of the economy.