Economic Commission for Africa
and
United Nations Development Programme

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

United Nations New York and Addis Ababa, 1993

The Strategy was adopted at the twenty-seventh session of the Economic Commission for Africa/Eighteenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic development and planning, held in April 1992

Foreword

At its fifth session, held in Addis Ababa in March 1988, the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers expressed concern about the decline in the quality and quantity of African statistics towards the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s and requested that detailed assessments of national statistical capacities be undertaken. In compliance with that request, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) conducted such assessments in 32 African countries during 1988 and 1989 under a World Bank/ECA/UNDP project entitled "Data collection related to development programmes and aid flows in Africa". The findings were considered at the sixth session of the Joint Conference in January 1990 and led to the formulation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s, which was adopted in May 1990 by the ECA Conference of Ministers responsible for economic development and planning.

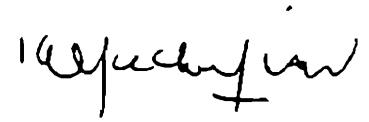
One of the recommendations in the Plan of Action was that ECA should convene a working group meeting to further review and elaborate the principles, objectives and recommendations of the Plan and to formulate detailed strategies for its implementation. The working group meeting was held in Nairobi in July 1991. It was attended by producers and users of statistics from 20 African countries, representatives of the academic community, bilateral and multilateral institutions and donor agencies, as well as international organizations. The basic strategy document for discussion by the working group was prepared by K. T. de Graft Johnson, a consultant to ECA. The Strategy for the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action was formulated at the working group meeting and was subsequently endorsed at the seventh session of the Joint Conference in March 1992. The Strategy was formally adopted in April 1992 by the ECA/Conference of Ministers.

The Strategy provides a comprehensive framework for the development of statistics in Africa in the 1990s. It calls for a concerted effort by all those concerned with statistical development, including African Governments, national institutions, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, as well as other international organizations. To help attain this objective, the Coordinating Committee on African Statistical Development was established in March 1992. Subcommittees to deal with specific issues are also being proposed in the following areas: training, management of statistical offices, research, methods and standards, data sources (censuses, surveys, administrative records), data processing, and regional information systems, including databases.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all African Governments

for the importance they have attached to the present efforts to rehabilitate and revitalize the statistical systems in the region May I also express my sincere gratitude to all agencies and individuals for their valuable contributions to this joint endeavour To support the relevant preparatory activities, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided the necessary resources under the project entitled "Statistical development programme for Africa" and made available the services of Mr Biyi Afonja, Senior Statistician with the Office for Project Services

On behalf of ECA and UNDP, it is my great pleasure to present the Strategy for the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s I sincerely hope that the concerted efforts of all concerned will result in the effective strengthening of statistical capacities in the African region, which will help in achieving the objective of socio-economic recovery and transformation



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Introduction

The Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s was adopted at the twenty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Africa/Sixteenth meeting of African ministers responsible for economic development and planning, held in May 1990 The Plan is based on three cardinal principles

a The central role of an improved statistical system in economic and social development,

b 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,

c The need for coordinating 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

As recommended in the Plan of Action, a working group meeting was convened by ECA to "further review and elaborate on the principles, objectives and recommendations of the Plan of Action" 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 highlights actions that should be taken to give effect to the Plan

1. Review of the past and current situations

1 The state of statistics in Africa over the past two decades has 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

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

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

Staffing and manpower development

4 At the time of independence most national statistical services 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 Soon after independence most of the expatriate staff were phased out, although in some countries some of the expatriate officers remained under technical cooperation agreements 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

5 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, 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

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

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

Publications

8 In the 1980s, apart from results of population censuses, there was a general deterioration in the timeliness of statistical publications, although a few countries were able to release their statistical data within a reasonable time frame Some countries had data available but, regrettably, not in published form

Data quality

9 Quality of data has been a major concern in many African countries Low response in surveys, especially through mail questionnaires, affects 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 calendars 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 national statistical offices 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

2 Review of technical and financial assistance in Africa

10 Recent assessments of 30 years of technical assistance in Africa undertaken in the context of the review of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD) describe its impact as unsatisfactory Although this criticism is directed to technical cooperation 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

11 It appears that a significant amount of resources has 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 Cooperation for Development (DTCD), a steady increase on the amount spent on technical cooperation in Africa on statistics from 1983 to 1989 is noticeable The DTCD figures do not represent the total United Nations assistance to statistics in Africa, since they exclude projects executed by other United Nations agencies or the countries themselves Other multilateral assistance is available from the European Economic Community and the World Bank Bilateral assistance to African countries in statistics has been received from donors such as France, Sweden, (SIDA), UK (ODA) and USAID

12 With regard to United Nations DTCD, about 48 per cent of total assistance from 1983 to 1989 was spent on personnel[2] compared to only 13 per cent 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 United Nations 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 imbalance is only apparent

The African Census Programme (ACP)

13 The African Census Programme 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 out their censuses during the 1980 round while some countries did not participate in either the 1970 or 1980 round of censuses

14 ACP has 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 selection, resulting in some cases in the loss of preferred experts,
- Procurement of census materials and equipment and late delivery,
- Lack of data processing know-how

15 The success of 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 national statistical services This had adverse effects on the capability meant to have been developed It is nevertheless a fact that ACP generated extensive population related data in participating countries, although the effective utilization of the data remains an open question

World Fertility Survey (WFS)

16 The World Fertility Survey 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 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 In addition, African countries benefitted from a large number of technical documents and state-of-the-art survey organization

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

The African Household Survey Capability Programme (AHSCP)

18 The African Household Survey Capability Programme was officially approved by the legislative organs of ECA in 1978 and activities started immediately, first only with ECA staff and later with the ILO adviser in household surveys Thirteen African countries originally enrolled in AHSCP and programme were usually drawn up with the assistance of ECA, the United Nations Statistical Office, ILO, FAO and UNICEF However, due to financial problems not all the 13 countries could implement their household survey programmes

19 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

20 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-taking It has also been argued that AHSCP has assisted in the transfer of skills from short-term experts and regional and interregional advisers to local personnel

21 The main problems encountered in AHSCP were funding and delays in releasing survey results These notwithstanding, more technical manuals for use by countries should have contributed to a greater success However, the programme is continuing with 22 participating countries at present

Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)

22 The Demographic and Health Survey 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 coordinated by Macro Systems, Inc , and funded by USAID

23 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

24 Critics of the survey argue that the capacity building impact of 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)

25 The National Accounts Capability Programme was conceived by ECA in 1978 as a means of improving basic economic statistics, which in turn was expected to lead to timely and reliable estimation of national accounts 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,
- There was too few 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)

26 The Living Standard Measurement Study 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

27 One notable success of 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 adaptation Other critics argued that the survey costs, although defrayed with World Bank loans, even when given at a concessionaire rate, were nonetheless adding to the debt burden of the African countries that participated

Statistical aspects of Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA)

28 Statistical aspects of the Social Dimensions of Adjustment is a project co-sponsored by UNDP, the World Bank and the African Development Bank Other multilateral and bilateral donors have made contributions 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 SDA

29 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 SDA has generated considerable 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)

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

31 The project is geared to 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)

32 The main objective of the Statistical Training Programme for Africa is to make Africa self-reliant in the provision of trained statistical personnel at all levels There are currently 16 centres (8 francophone and 8 anglophone) participating in STPA In addition, there are 8 associate centres outside Africa

33 Activities of STPA focus on training of trainers, for which a number of fellowships are awarded, coordination 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

34 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)

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

36 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, and so on, to upgrade the knowledge and performance of serving statisticians Although funds for running SDPA centres are given by national governments and donors, SDPA in its coordinating role could be said to have played a key role in training a large number of professional and middle level statistical staff

37 A major problem of SDPA is that it has not received enough resources to increase its impact in African countries Also, it does not appear to be well known in countries, in contrast to its component parts

Overall evaluation of technical cooperation

38 Some measure of success has been identified in a number of technical cooperation programmes However, emerging problems whose solution could enhance this degree of success include the following

- Resource constraints, both internal and external, *vis-à-vis* overall statistical development,
- Ineffective coordination of scarce resources, especially of donor assistance (census coordination an example of a success story in interagency 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 and the like

3. The state of African statistics in 1990

Organization of national statistical services

39 Most national statistical services in the region are centralized with a central office responsible for the production of all types of statistics This does not preclude other organizations, such as 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 are some exceptions to this arrangement For example, Ghana has an autonomous statistical service which is outside the civil service but remains in the public sector

40 For most national statistical services 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-cooperation of respondents, for mutilation of documents, for false information, etc

41 Organizationally, by 1990 most national statistical offices were structured with three principal technical divisions, namely economic statistics, demographic and social statistics, and data processing

42 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, communications 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

Coordination

43 Coordination 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 coordination among producers and between producers and users of statistics

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

Data production

45 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, national statistical services have not shown enough innovation in tapping other administrative records, such as 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

46 With the advent of microcomputers, the way statistical data are handled has been revolutionized Microcomputers are now involved in the conduct of surveys, from questionnaire design to the production of final reports Nevertheless, many African countries have had problems relating to the provision of hardware and software by some donors Some of the hardware has 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 and quality

47 Data dissemination in most national statistical services 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 voluminous reports of statistical tables and texts Very few national statistical services had adopted the use of short summary reports by 1990

48 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 such as 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' demands 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 and utilization

49 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 It is worth noting, however, that this process has not been 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 have been researchers within universities and multilateral and bilateral agencies

50 In terms of output, most African countries produce some data on economic, demographic and social statistics, even if some of the data are rudimentary and of poor quality Most national statistical services have neglected natural resources and environmental statistics While most countries have considerable data in different ministries and departments, there has been no effort to organize the data into a coherent framework for statistics on natural resources and environment

Work programmes

51 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 national statistical services is also linked to poor management of statistical services The lack of managerial skills has resulted in failure to set priorities

Manpower

52 It has 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

53 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

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

4. Major challenges in the 1990s

Demand and supply

55 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 present 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 is no demand for such data and/or such data are 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

56 The challenge ahead is 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 demands for statistical information will pose a challenge Data requests will continue to come from regional and global organizations Most 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 national statistical services 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

57 The issue of whether national statistical services 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

58 The previous section has already 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, and so on

Data production, analysis, dissemination and utilization

59 There is a need to maintain a careful mix of data obtained from administrative records, censuses and surveys, to make appropriate use of microcomputer technology, to maintain data quality controls, to widen and deepen data analysis and applications, to use non-national statistical services collaborators in this analysis, to improve data dissemination techniques, to make more effective utilization of data and to develop and use statistical databases

60 The experience of United Nations agencies and other organizations in setting up databases should be taken into account by national, subregional and regional organizations when establishing their own databases

Funding and resource use

61 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 National statistical services will therefore have to depend more on government and local resources rather than external financial aid and will have to introduce more accountability

Coordination

62 The question of coordination within national statistical services, 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 coordinate activities within each national statistical service itself

Women's issues

63 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 national statistical services or in training institutions (either as trainees or trainers) There is need to redress this situation in the 1990s

Methodology

64 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 each 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 census and surveys

Statistical associations

65 National, subregional 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 efforts to serve as a forum for discussions of statistical matters among all statisticians Government support for national, subregional and regional statistical associations is necessary to ensure that these associations continue to provide useful services to countries Where national statistical associations do not yet exist, efforts should be made to establish them Involvement of other non-governmental organizations is also crucial

5 Strategy for statistical development

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

67 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 to implement it in accordance with their national plans and priorities

68 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 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 in terms of both 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 formation, analysis, monitoring, and so on The proposals that follow are considered separately for each of the three levels of activities, namely national, regional/subregional and global

National level

Statistical development plan

69 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

70 To facilitate drawing up 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

71 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

72 As situations differ from country to country, no single model is being proposed In a number of countries there are enough local experts to 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 Government circles

73 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

74 After needs have been ascertained, each country will have to draw up a 5-10 year statistical development plan/work programme 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 national statistical service 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, whose comments on the draft plan will be essential

75 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 national statistical service[2] should prepare programme implementation plans

Some specific activities

76 Without prejudice to the outcome of a needs assessment exercise, actions that need be taken in some areas of normal activities of NSSs 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

77 *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 competing and increasing demands for data

78 *Data analysis* Each national statistical service 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 undertake this in-depth analysis in close collaboration with outside research institutions or individual researchers Without such qualified staff, the in-depth analysis will have to be done by an outside institution

79 *Data processing* The NSS should keep abreast of 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 the overall statistical development plan or a supplement to it

80 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

81 The issues of data storage, retrieval and dissemination should be linked to both the uses to 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 national statistical services' responsibility

82 It will be necessary to establish a clearinghouse function on criteria for software acquisition and an advisory role relating to data protection and communication This role could be assumed by regional bodies such as ECA and possibly also by using an expanded existing unit in the United Nations Statistical Office

Research and methodology

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

Public and user awareness

84 As the ultimate purpose of statistics is to contribute to informed decision-making by the public and its representatives in Government, NSSs should create 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

85 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 a direct bearing on national level statistical activities Training should be provided to planners and analysts in the use and interpretation of statistical data

Technical cooperation and coordination

86 In order to achieve the development objectives of technical cooperation 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 cooperation 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

87 Coordination will have to be improved First, there should be coordination of all statistical activities within the NSS The second type of coordination 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 coordination of technical cooperation 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 coordination will be at the level of donors in the country In addition, Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) initiatives will have to be well planned to enable participants to gain maximum benefit from them

88 Monitoring 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

89 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 subregional levels

90 The inevitable catalytic, facilitating and supportive role of regional/subregional 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

91 Regional organizations such as ECA and ADB, and subregional institutions such as the 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 subregional expert group meetings should be stepped up to discuss these issues and come up with well thought-out recommendations

92 *Guidelines* Most of the national statistical offices in the region will require guidelines for preparation of national statistical development plans ECA in cooperation with other agencies should take the lead in preparing such guidelines as soon as the strategy document has been approved

93 *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

94 *Training* Within the framework of the implementation of the strategy there is need to strengthen the existing 16 regional and subregional institutions currently participating in STPA This can be done by ensuring the availability of qualified staff for all basic courses and specialists to teach applied courses such as agricultural statistics and national accounts The number of microcomputers and corresponding software need to be increased in order to provide trainees at the centres with easy access to microcomputers 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

95 Generally, advisers either maintained by the United Nations and its specialized agencies or those provided by other multilateral and bilateral agencies have performed well in the past 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 subregional levels In addition, special consultants are required for selected topics The main function of advisory team(s) is to advise individual countries on different aspects of statistical activity, especially in those areas where countries experience difficulties

Regional information system

96 ECA should play a key role in supporting regional databases In order to be able to achieve this task the already established statistical data base in ECA 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 databases which cover or are solely dedicated to the African region

97 The establishment of credible databases requires not only donor support, but the contribution of ECA member states in providing high quality data on their countries

Coordination

98 Coordination 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

a Needs Assessment missions,
b Statistical development plans,
c Work programme budgets, and
d Monitoring statistical capacity

99 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

100 The United Nations Statistical Office, the statistics divisions of the specialized agencies and 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

101 In the past, inter-regional advisers from the United Nations 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 broad experience in similar countries, as do the advisers/experts provided by bilateral and multilateral organizations

102 There should be a formal or informal machinery for coordination at the global level, not to discuss African issues *per se* but rather to concentrate on global problems However, as African issues form part of the global agenda, it is expected that such coordination of technical cooperation at the global level will benefit Africa The United Nations Statistical Commission and ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, which already exist for such purposes, will probably need to be more effective in their coordination roles

6. Implementation of the Strategy

Actions to be taken at the national level

103 Initially, the head of the NSS should request the appropriate Government minister to appoint a needs assessment or programme review and strategy development team The initiation of such a team 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

104 The Government, after examining and accepting some recommendations, will proceed to constitute an appropriate overseeing body, e g 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 for coordination should be in place at an early stage of the implementation of the strategy

105 The NSS will then have the responsibility of preparing the medium-term (5-10 years) statistical development plan 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 the Government for approval It will also be necessary to seek donor assistance where needed for funds 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

106 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 coordinated 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

107 The iterative nature of the exercise 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 subregional and regional bodies

108 Regional organizations such as ECA should circulate the Strategy to African Governments and the international community

109 The success of any steps to implement the Strategy will depend to some extent on the support provided to national bodies by regional and subregional institutions such as ECA, ADB and PTA Such institutions should provide financial and/or technical support to their respective member countries Regional/subregional statistical programme(s) will have to be prepared in order to support the implementation of the Strategy

110 ECA, with the cooperation of other agencies, will have to develop guidelines for, *inter alia*

a Carrying out needs assessment and programme review and strategy development,
b Preparing statistical development plans, and
c Monitoring statistics capacity

111 In monitoring the implementation of the Strategy an inter-agency group will have to play a central role In this connection, ECA will have to convene meetings of the group in which most of the principal international actors who are geared to assist African statistical development must 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 the global level

112 At a global level, there is need to report periodically on the implementation of the Strategy to the United Nations Statistical Commission, ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, and to some extent also to the United Nations Population Commission

113 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

114 Cooperation of bilateral and multilateral agencies will be necessary to ensure that technical assistance programmes do not disrupt country's work programme and are in line with national priorities

7 Conclusion

115 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

Notes

1 NSS 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

2 Includes technical assistance staff

3 Emphasis being placed on the national statistical services in this document presupposes a coordinating role for them vis-à-vis other producers such as line ministries, central banks, etc The exact role of the national statistical service within the national statistical system will be determined in each country possibly as part of the recommendation of the needs assessment programme review exercise