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**Economic Commission for Africa**

First Inter-Agency meeting on the  
implementation of the Addis Ababa  
Plan of Action for Statistical  
Development in Africa in the 1990s.  
(Jointly convened by ECA and UNDP)

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 8 March 1992

**GUIDELINES FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT/PROGRAMME REVIEW AND  
STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON STRATEGY FOR STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN AFRICA

GUIDELINES FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT/PROGRAMME  
REVIEW AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

1 The Working Group Meeting on the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990's, Nairobi, 16-20 July 1991 recommended that each country of the region should undertake Needs Assessment or Programme Review and Strategy Development (NA/PRSD) exercises as the first step towards setting up sustainable and useful statistical systems in each country.

2 This paper is intended to expand upon the recommendations made in paragraphs 279-285 of the strategy paper entitled "A Strategy for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990's" which was adopted by the Nairobi meeting.

3 The paper does not distinguish guidelines for Needs Assessment separately from those for Programme Review and Strategy Development. This is because both exercises should involve similar tasks including project evaluation, analysis of user needs and priorities, etc. and the same guidelines are required.

4 The paper presents suggested guidelines under the following headings: objectives and terms of reference for the NA/PRSD team; who is responsible for setting it up and supporting it; the functions and duties of the team; its composition (as well as qualifications and sources of its members); its timing and duration; the likely contact points and documents to be consulted; likely support facilities; the content of the expected output of the NA/PRSD and to whom that output is addressed; and finally what is expected to follow from the NA/PRSD.

5 In preparing this paper, some ideas have been drawn from the UNFPA Manual for Needs Assessment and Programme Review and Strategy Development and from needs assessment missions undertaken by the British ODA within Africa. The current paper is intended to be a draft for discussion and for further elaboration at the next meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee.

OBJECTIVES AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE NA/PRSD TEAM

6 As stated in the "Strategy" document adopted at the Nairobi meeting, the main objective of the NA/PRSD is to "find out what the current and future data needs of the primary users of statistics are likely to be". In doing so, it will be necessary to assess the use of past data and how the lack of data has constrained planning, policy-making and other work.

7 The "Strategy" document also requires the NA/PRSD to determine the priority that should be attached to each type of data, to ascertain the requirements of the statistical system (physical, human and fiscal) for statistical development, and to indicate if possible the cost and sources of funds for the required resources.

8 In addition, the NA/PRSD will be required to prepare a detailed statistical development plan to satisfy the prioritised data needs.

9 The NA/PRSD might also identify any external aid inputs which may be envisaged.

10 In summary, the objectives of the NA/PRSD are to ascertain:

- (a) What data have to date been made available to users;
- (b) What data have been used in the past;
- (c) What are the data gaps;
- (d) How data gaps have constrained planning, policy making and other work;
- (e) What are the current and future data needs of the primary users, and what priorities are to be attached to these;
- (f) What will be the statistical programme to satisfy these requirements;
- (g) What will be the human and material resource requirements for the implementation of the plan; and
- (h) What external assistance might be required to achieve the proposed statistical development plan.

#### WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SETTING UP AND SUPPORTING THE NA/PRSD

11 It is recommended that "the appointment of the team and the determination of its terms of reference should be done at the highest possible level" (paragraph 284 of the "Strategy" document). It is suggested that the Minister who is responsible for the national statistical agency in each country should be the appropriate authority for appointing a Needs Assessment/PRSD team, and for issuing the terms of reference.

12 However, when it comes to the practical details of setting up and supporting the NA/PRSD, it may be necessary to consider the state of statistical development in the country.

13 The July 1991 working group meeting in Nairobi considered that there are three broad groups of countries in terms of statistical development: the first group would require substantial external assistance; the second group of countries will need limited external assistance; while the third group will be capable of setting up and undertaking the needs assessments within their own resources.

14 Each country will have to decide for itself the extent to which it will require external assistance. Countries in the first group (and maybe even some of those in the second group) may wish the initiative for the NA/PRSD to be stimulated from outside the country.<sup>1</sup>

15 For the first group of countries, it is suggested that the Statistics Division of the UNECA would be the appropriate international body to assist in launching this initiative and that this could take the form of a letter from the UNECA Executive Secretary to the Minister responsible for statistics proposing that the Minister sets up the NA/PRSD with the assistance of the UNECA - and suggesting terms of reference for the team. Various agencies may be required to participate in the exercise. The directors of statistical agencies in countries requiring this external stimulus should contact the UNECA as soon as possible.

16 If the Minister agrees to the proposal then, for these countries, the UNECA in consultation with the director of the statistical agency could arrange the setting up of the NA/PRSD. The UNECA would assist in the organisation of the team to the extent possible, but clearly a local organiser will be required. This local organiser should be the director of the statistical agency, but alternatively might be the UNDP Resident Representative, the permanent secretary of the Ministry responsible for statistics, or some other appropriate senior person. (See also "Likely support facilities" below".)

17 Countries in the second group (requiring some external assistance) which are able to initiate the preparations for the NA/PRSD themselves, but which still require some external assistance are invited to inform the UNECA Statistics Division as to which external agencies have been invited to participate.

18 Directors of statistical agencies of countries in the third group which do not require external support might prepare a proposal letter to their Minister who after consideration and approval, would proceed to set up the NA/PRSD.<sup>2</sup> It would be

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<sup>1</sup> There is an alternative point of view that all countries, even those in the third group, will require some external assistance because of administrative constraints and the need to ensure a smooth coordination of the exercise at regional level.

<sup>2</sup> It has been suggested that the NA/PRSD exercise will be speeded up if there is an external stimulus. If this approach is adopted, then the proposal for the NA/PRSD would not come from the local director of the statistical agency but rather from the UNECA.

appreciated if these countries could inform the Inter-Agency Committee (through the UNECA Statistics Division) of any such action so that the monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy Plan can be facilitated.

19 Whether external assistance is required or not, local support for the NA/PRSD (in terms of secretarial support, local transport, setting up of appointments, etc) should be provided by the ministry responsible for statistics and/or the national statistical agency.

#### THE FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES OF THE TEAM

20 The NA/PRSD team is expected to carry out two main functions:

A. To draw lessons from past experience and to identify needs and priorities, by:

- (a) Ascertaining country policies and priorities in respect of economic and social development, population planning, migration, economic activity and conditions of employment, status of women and children; environment, etc;
- (b) Identifying the availability and timeliness of existing statistical outputs, and the extent to which they are used;
- (c) Assessing the extent to which existing statistics have satisfied (and are expected to satisfy) users in setting and monitoring national plans and policies;
- (d) Ascertaining past and expected future gaps in the available statistics, assess the constraints that these gaps have placed on the work of users, and set priorities for existing or required statistical outputs;
- (e) Reviewing the statistical programme and recommend new or revised statistical outputs or the discontinuation of low priority and unused data. In particular, the team should recommend a detailed three year programme and give a broad perspective of a long term programme;
- (f) Assessing the infrastructures and institutional capabilities relating to project management, data collection, data processing, dissemination and statistical analysis, especially in respect of the national statistical system but also covering analytical capacities in the areas responsible for planning and policy making;
- (g) Making recommendations concerning statistical advisory bodies, statistical legislation, organisation and management of statistical organisations and services;

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- (h) Reviewing and making recommendations concerning statistical training and research in the country, including "in-house" training, on-the-job training as well as more formal training by government and non-governmental bodies;
  - (i) Reviewing previous external assistance to the statistical development of the country, covering issues such as the extent and sources of funds, the extent and content of assistance, the degree of capability building and its sustainability, the coordination of assistance, etc, and making recommendations on these matters to guide and make the most effective use of possible future assistance. The team should also identify and cost any external aid inputs which are envisaged to be achieved in the statistical programmes which the team recommends;
  - (j) Commenting upon likely or possible constraints to the implementation of programmes for statistical development in the country.

B. To formulate a draft 5 - 10 year national statistical development plan on the basis of the findings in A above, by:

- (k) defining clearly the objectives of the plan, the problems to be addressed during the plan period and possible solutions;
- (l) ascertaining the human and material resources required for the implementation of the plan;
- (m) identifying external assistance needs and possible sources of funds;
- (n) relating the proposed national statistical development plan to the Government's strategies, priorities and planning cycle.

COMPOSITION OF NA/PRSD (AS WELL AS QUALIFICATIONS AND SOURCES OF ITS MEMBERS)

21 As stated in paragraph 283 of the "Strategy" document, "no single model" for the composition of the NA/PRSD can be proposed. However, it is recommended that the team "consist of about five members and be chaired by an eminent personality who should be from the user side (an economist, economic geographer, sociologist, statistician or other social scientist) and be able to approach the Minister responsible for statistics directly if the need arises. Apart from the chairman, other members of the team should be equally divided between statisticians and users and their specialisation should cover all major fields."

22 Ideally, the members should all be senior and respected nationals drawn from government, private or parastatal (including university) sectors.

23 Although the previous Inter-Agency Committee recommended "about five members" on the NA/PRSD team, it may be difficult to cover "all major fields" as well as all institutional sectors within this number, especially if external advisers are also to be included. At the same time, the size of the team should not exceed 6-7 people as this may become unmanageable.

24 As already mentioned, countries requiring external assistance will need to invite appropriate external agencies to participate. It is probable that these agencies will have had (or be expected to have) considerable experience in supporting the statistical programmes in the country. They may be UN agencies, other multi-lateral or bilateral agencies as the country deems appropriate. It is assumed that each agency will be responsible for all costs associated with their representation in the team.

25 There may be arguments for and against including the director of the statistical agency in the team. On the one hand, it might be contended that the team will be able to make more independent recommendations and constructive criticisms if the head of the statistical agency is not a member. On the other hand, the director of the statistical agency will have detailed knowledge of data availabilities and constraints, organisational problems, etc. He/she will therefore make a substantial contribution to the deliberations of the NA/PRSD. In balance, it is recommended that the director of the statistical agency should be a member of the NA/PRSD (but not the chairman). If, however, a country decides not to appoint the director of the statistical agency as a member of the NA/PRSD, he/she should be extensively consulted by the team as a resource person.

26 Great care will need to be given to the choice of the best possible persons for the NA/PRSD. The selected persons are likely to have the following qualifications:

- (a) appropriate knowledge of quantitative analysis and/or data collection;
- (b) capacity for analytical and critical thinking;
- (c) able to express themselves clearly and concisely in writing;
- (d) able to work well in a team and under time pressure;
- (e) available for the period of the review; and
- (f) previous experience in evaluation of programmes/projects.

27 For any external advisers, these qualifications should be extended to include:

- (g) previous working experience in developing countries; and
- (h) appropriate language qualifications.

28 External advisers will be fully funded by their agencies. These agencies may wish to ensure that provision is made in their budgets for consultancies, travel funds, etc for this purpose.

#### TIMING AND DURATION OF THE NA/PRSD

29 The NA/PRSD should be held as soon as possible in each country. Ideally, the NA/PRSD should commence during 1992 so that the initiative for statistical development in each country will not be delayed.

30 It will take some time to set up a team comprising such important and respected members, each of whom may be available at different times and these need to be reconciled. Also, because of their likely limited availability, the NA/PRSD will probably have only limited duration.

31 The duration of the exercise will depend on the circumstances in each country, and may be considered to be in four parts - prior preparation by team members, a joint period of assessment and deliberation arriving at recommendations, a period of report preparation to present the findings of the NA/PRSD and a period of preparation of the draft national statistical development plan. It may not be necessary for all team members to be present for the entire duration of the exercise and the team leader may be able to designate responsibility for particular sectors, etc to individual members of the team. However, there should be periods, especially when the team is deliberating its conclusions, when all team members should be present.

32 There is much to be done by the team (see above functions). The NA/PRSD will have a period of individual literature search and background reading before meeting as a team for the assessment and deliberation period. The background preparations might take about one week, while the team operations on assessment and deliberation will take a minimum of two weeks, and more probably three weeks. Subsequently, a further three or four weeks will be required for the report and plan preparation (and the team leader will decide whether this is to be a shared task or delegated to a sub-set of the team).

33 These tasks are so important to the effective statistical development of the country, that they cannot be rushed. The durations suggested in the previous paragraph have been shortened to the extent possible in recognition of the likely limited availability of the team members, but longer periods would be preferable.



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LIKELY CONTACT POINTS AND DOCUMENTS TO BE CONSULTED

34 Prior to coming together as a team, the members should read as much background material as possible. A background document or briefing paper should be produced by the director of the statistical agency for the team which will identify and provide an analysis of the issues which the team should address. This paper should present facts without judgement and might be presented using similar headings to those recommended for the final report of the NA/PRSD. It should cover as much as possible topics such as existing policies and future plans; legislation; institutional infrastructure and arrangements; human and technical resources, equipment, supplies and training; planning and management resources; local and external funding; details of previous evaluations (if any); etc.

35 In addition, the NA/PRSD should consult documents such as National Development Plans, previous project evaluations, previous assessments of statistical capacity, all statistical publications, and other quantitative outputs of government, universities and other parastatal and private organisations.

36 The NA/PRSD will also benefit from reading the "Strategy" paper adopted at the Working Group Meeting in Nairobi in July 1991.

37 The NA/PRSD should have discussions with all major producers and users (or potential producers and users) of statistics in the country. Appointments for these discussions should as far as possible be set up in advance of the exercise (see next section).

38 As stated in paragraph 280 of the "Strategy" paper, the users include the Ministries of Planning and Finance and the sector Ministries, the Central Bank, academic and research institutions as well as the private sector. Representatives of important sectoral groups such as employers, employees, agriculture, trade and so on should also be consulted.

39 In addition, the NA/PRSD should consult with statistical producers to ascertain their priorities, future plans, resource constraints, degree of integration, standardisation of definitions, concepts and classifications, training arrangements, and other matters relevant to the terms of reference of the team. The principal producer would presumably be the government statistical agency, but other possible producers will be the statistical units of ministries (which may or may not be outposts of the central statistical office), the central bank, universities, selected non-government organisations and so on.

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LIKELY SUPPORT FACILITIES

40 The NA/PRSD will need local support prior to and during its operation. Preparations for the NA/PRSD include assisting the Minister in preparing terms of reference for the team on behalf of the Minister; choosing the team members, sending invitation letters to these and undertaking other administrative aspects of their recruitment; consulting with the team leader to determine which appointments are required and then setting up these appointments; preparing the briefing paper (see paragraph 30 above); assembling sets of relevant documentation (see above); arranging accommodation and transport for external members; etc.

41 During the NA/PRSD operation, the following support will be required: administrative and secretarial support, office accommodation, transport, stationery supplies, and other administrative and logistical support.

42 It is hoped that the government statistical agency or perhaps the Ministry of Planning or Finance will be able to provide this support. The UNECA will assist with the identification of external members from UN and other multilateral and bilateral agencies. Funds should also be allowed for in the UNECA budget for recruitment of consultants for this purpose is required. The local UNDP office may also be able to assist with local administrative and logistical support if necessary.

CONTENT OF THE EXPECTED OUTPUTS OF THE NA/PRSD TEAM AND TO WHOM THOSE OUTPUTS ARE ADDRESSED

43 The team is expected to produce two main outputs, namely a report on statistical needs assessment/programme review and strategy development and a draft plan for national statistical development.

44 The report, which states current and previous features as well as likely future changes in these, would cover the following issues:

- (a) Country background and setting, including geographic, social, demographic, economic and administrative features.
- (b) Country policies and priorities, including economic policy, population policy, development objectives, National Development Plans, etc. Government policy in terms of government staffing, recruitment, training and remuneration may also be covered if this is considered relevant to statistical development in the country.
- (c) Infrastructures, institutional capacities and objectives in the areas of planning, policy making and statistics.

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Managerial and administrative abilities and capacities should also be evaluated in this section which should also cover the structure of the statistical organisation, including whether it is centralised or not;

- (d) Data availabilities, including the extent of data analysis, dissemination and utilisation, and mechanisms and procedures for data collection, processing and analysis. Data gaps are to be identified as well as constraints arising from these gaps.
- (e) Statistical research and training aspects, including infrastructure, courses offered, etc. This section will cover both in-service training and formal training at institutions;
- (f) External assistance, including whether multilateral, bilateral or non-governmental assistance, the source and extent of funding, and the coordination of this assistance.
- (g) Recommendations arising from the above evaluations, including recommendations on the future statistical work plan, statistical priorities, legislation, formation of a statistical advisory board (or similar), organisational structures, etc.

45 The report may also contain annexes on budgets, staffing, organisation charts, lists of statistical outputs, etc. Annex I to this paper presents the above recommendations in the form of a table of contents in order that the reports for different countries might have a standard presentation.

46 The draft national plan for statistical development could include such issues as overview of statistical development; major challenges for the 1990s within the framework of the Government's overall development objectives; objectives, strategies and priorities of the plan; statistical information system, including among others organisation and management of statistical services, statistical committees and statistical legislation; statistical priorities and development of human resources.

47 It is not intended at this stage to propose a table of contents for the draft national statistical development plan as the situation and conditions vary from one country to another.

48 The team leader will be responsible for the presentation of the final report and draft plan. The NA/PRSD report and the draft plan for statistical development should be addressed to the Minister responsible for statistics who appointed the team, and copied to the relevant permanent secretary and the director of the statistical agency.

49 The draft plan for statistical development should then be circulated among users and producers for their comments and suggestions which should be taken into account in the revision of the draft by the body overseeing the work of national statistical service.

WHAT IS EXPECTED TO FOLLOW FROM THE NA/PRSD

50 The Minister responsible for statistics, after due consideration and approval of the NA/PRSD report and the revised draft plan for statistical development, may take the necessary action to obtain the Government decision on statistical development. The Minister may then direct the permanent secretary and/or the director of the statistical agency (and other Government officials as appropriate) to implement the recommendations and the national statistical development plan accepted by the Government.

51 The implementation may entail the preparation of revised statistical legislation; the setting up of new statistical advisory boards and new mechanisms for improved consultations with users; preparation of a budget document showing details of inputs and final outputs for each financial year; formulation of specific project(s) for external assistance, including implementation strategies, technical specifications, cost estimates and coordination of assistance; etc.

52 It should be pointed out that the national statistical development plan should be an input to the overall national development plan.

CONCLUSION

53 As stated in the Introduction, this paper presents a draft set of guidelines for discussion at the next meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee. In view of the different stages of statistical development now experienced by different African countries, it is difficult to generalise. Countries may wish to adapt these various suggestions to suit the appropriate conditions in their country.

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ANNEX I  
POSSIBLE CONTENTS OF NA/PRSD REPORT

- A Country background and setting (past and present features, as well as likely future changes)
  - 1. Geographic features
  - 2. Social features
  - 3. Demographic features
  - 4. Economic features
  - 5. Administrative features
  
- B Country policies and priorities (current situation and likely future changes)
  - 1. Economic policy
  - 2. Population and social policy
  - 3. Development objectives, National Development Plans
  - 4. Public service human resource management policy
  
- C Infrastructures, institutional capacities and objectives, including managerial and administrative abilities and capacities (current situation and likely future changes)
  - 1. Planning
  - 2. Policy making
  - 3. Statistics
  
- D Statistical system
  - 1. Data availabilities (taking into account all major production of statistics in the country)
  - 2. Data gaps and constraints arising from these
  - 3. Data collection methodologies
  - 4. Data processing methodologies
  - 5. Data dissemination methods and coverage
  - 6. Methods and extent of data analysis and utilisation
  
- E Statistical research and training aspects
  - 1. Infrastructure
  - 2. Courses offered (type and location)
  - 3. Attendance and output
  
- F External assistance
  - 1. Multilateral assistance
  - 2. Bilateral assistance
  - 3. Non-governmental assistance
  - 4. Source and extent of funding for statistical work
  - 5. Coordination of assistance

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- G Recommendations arising from the above evaluations
1. Future statistical work plan
  2. Statistical priorities
  3. Statistical legislation
  4. Statistical advisory board (or similar)
  5. Organisational structures
  6. Other

Annexes on budgets, staffing, organisation charts, lists of statistical output, etc.