

Keynote speech by Richard Manning, Chair of OECD/DAC

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Introduction

Let me add my welcome to all of you here today and thank ECA for hosting this important meeting. I am speaking in my capacity as DAC Chair and co-chair, with Grace Bediako, of Paris 21. This is a really important occasion to bring together so many key stakeholders in the course of better statistics in Africa.

Where are we now?

Since 1999, the Paris 21 secretariat and partners (including many of the countries and organizations represented today) have succeeded in raising the profile of statistics. There is an increased recognition among policy makers as previous speeches have said of the need for statistics both to influence and monitor development outcomes.

And there is also recognition among statisticians of the new challenges they face in meeting the data needs of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) and other development policies. To help meet these challenges, many countries are developing strategic plans for statistics (NSDSs), with support from development partners.

These are important steps towards PARIS21's goals to develop a culture of evidence-based policy making and implementation to improve governance and government effectiveness in reducing poverty and achieving the MDGs. We can all help to achieve this by stimulating greater demand, availability and use of better statistics in national, international and civil society decision-making and policy dialogue.

But funding, both from governments and donors, still has a long way to go. For developing countries, statistics are just one among many demands upon government finances. And while most donors recognize the importance of statistics, few see them as a priority in their own right. But for successful design and implementation of PRSs, Sector-Wide Approaches and other national development policy frameworks statistics must be seen by both governments and donors as a key cross-cutting component when they allocate resources.

Is there a reason for optimism?

Good statistics are increasingly recognized by governments and their development partners as being essential to managing results. Also, among donors, there has been a big improvement in recognition of the need to harmonize procedures between donors and to align with national processes.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness last year stressed the need to:

- First and foremost, put control in the hands of partner countries;
- Secondly, aligning donor support with partner countries' development strategies, institutions and procedures, and harmonizing donor actions to be collectively more effective;
- While monitoring implementation and outcomes within a framework of mutual accountability.

This requires a sound statistical database for more effective aid. Donors badly need evidence to support scaling up development cooperation. There was a commitment to increase aid by 60% development assistance from 2004 to 2010. There is no need to say this in a room full of statisticians, but this means an increase in aid in excess of 8% a year.

Better statistics are needed most importantly for greater effectiveness of public expenditure generally, however it is funded, and much more remains to be done to ensure the better use of statistics as part of the enabling environment for development. This means that governments and civil society need to demand better statistics and donors should stand ready to support this according to partner country priorities, either directly or indirectly as part of budget or sector support.

The Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS) agreed by the Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, held in Morocco in February 2004, followed by the first meeting of FASDEV in May 2004, and now the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for African Statistical Building are important landmarks. These set out concrete steps towards building sustainable capacity to meet the challenges of managing for results and better development outcomes.

This momentum has already gathered some pace, with consensus around the need to design and implement NSDS. A good statistical development strategy, adequately funded and successfully implemented, can make a big difference to the performance of a national statistical system and help resource-starved statistical services to break free from the vicious cycle of under-funding and under-performance. The PARIS21 secretariat is helping through programme of regional briefing and advocacy workshops and follow-up activities with countries, as well as by helping to mobilize funding and to provide methodological underpinning to the NSDS approach, which enshrines the principles of country ownership, leadership and demand-focused; being developed in a consultative and inclusive way; is comprehensive and coherent; and integrated into national development policy processes. We need to ensure that sectoral initiatives, such as the Health Matrix Network – and I am pleased to see the Network represented here today – are developed in ways consistent with these processes.

The PARIS21 secretariat will present a report on progress by African countries in preparing NSDSs; and a complementary report for statistical capacity building by the donor community. These two reports demonstrate that progress is being made on both counts, but much more needs

to be done to reach the MAPS aim that all countries can produce better statistics for national and international use by the time of the next major reviews of the Millennium Declaration in 2010 and 2015. We need to review again at the third International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results – expected to be held in Vietnam toward the end of the year.

The future/next steps

The outcome of this meeting and its follow-up activities should make every African Ministry of Finance and National Statistical service; and every financial and technical donor partner more aware of the needs:

- Firstly, for **a greater focus on capacity building**, including the capacity for every country to demand and use statistics
- Secondly, to respect **country ownership, with all statistics programmes, however they are funded, set within the coherence framework of NSDSs designed in response to country needs**
- Thirdly, for **an appropriate share of national and donor budgets** to be allocated for the development and sustainability of statistical capacity in every African country
- Fourthly, for greater **provision of technical assistance** by technical partners to enhance and sustain the capacity of national statistical services.

These are encompassed within the recommendations of the RRSF and MAPS, which place responsibilities both on countries and their development partners.

As part of our contribution, Grace Bediako and I will write jointly to every African Minister of Finance, and donor agency to emphasise the need for greater support and collaboration in statistical development, as was agreed at the last PARIS21 Steering Committee meeting. This will need strong collaboration among all the agencies represented here and strong government support.

Thank you.

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