

Capitalising on statistics – yet another ECA focus

Yaounde, 29 May 2014 (ECA) - The comparative advantage of the Economic Commission for Africa in disseminating statistics lies in its capacity to tell the story behind the numbers and its ability to capitalise on such data to plead the case for Africa's transformation. This was the principal remark made by experts in data collection, dissemination and communication from ECA's Sub-regional Office for Central Africa, during a recent UN workshop on the dissemination and communication of statistics, held in Niamey – Niger.



The experts from ECA's Sub-regional Office for Central Africa used the occasion to lay emphasis on communicating statistics which differs from, but complements and reinforces the simple dissemination of data. According to them, the gathering and dissemination of data is central to ECA's recent reform, not because data can impress but because advocating policies to whip up Africa's transformation must be evidence-based. Statistics for development, they added, must be communicated in very simple formats in order to get the attention of policy makers of the Commission's member states who are called upon to exploit such pieces of information in shaping policies that can lead their countries toward emergence.

After three days of discussion the experts, gathered in Niamey, called on African states to make the necessary legislative, regulatory and technical arrangements to ease researchers' access to micro-data, while respecting the principle of confidentiality regarding personal data. They also suggested that AFRISTAT embarks on discussions with technical and financial partners to try to harmonise database tools used by National Statistics Offices. The participants further implored governments across Africa

as well as the continent's development partners to speed up the process of harmonising data collection tools and methods at country levels.

Jointly organised by the UN Statistics Division, ECA's Sub-Regional Office for West Africa, the UN Economic Commission for Europe and National Statistics Office for Niger, the workshop brought together experts from 14 African countries and officials from eight different institutions across the continent.

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