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**COORDINATION ISSUES INVOLVED IN STRATEGIES  
FOR STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA**

**Report prepared by the Economic Commission For Africa**

## **Introduction:**

An assessment of the Statistical Capacity of 32 African countries undertaken under a UNDP/IBRD/ECA project: Data collection related to development programmes and aid flows in Africa, revealed the urgent need to redress the deterioration of national Statistical Services in Africa. Consequently, in 1990, the Sixth-Session of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers (PSD) formulated, and the twenty-fifth Session of the Commission/Sixteenth Meeting of African Ministers responsible for economic planning and development adopted the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s. A detailed strategy for the implementation of the Plan of Action was formulated by a Working Group Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, 16 - 20 July 1991, and adopted by the Seventh-Session of PSD. It will be presented to the ECA Conference of Ministers in April 1992 for adoption.

Apart from these African initiatives, the international community, responding to studies and reports on Africa's medium- and long-term prospects, has become alerted to the need to assist countries in the region in building up their national and regional institutional capacities and in reintroducing long-term development perspective into policy-making. Two of these initiatives are mentioned here:

AFRISTAT is the embodiment of the initiative of the fourteen African countries in the French zone, which initiative has earned the support of France. The operationalization of AFRISTAT includes establishing close collaboration with other institutions/organizations, e.g. ECA, working in the area of Statistical Development in Africa.

STATCAP is a World Bank initiative for providing support for statistical capacity-building in Africa which is being developed within the framework of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action.

## **The Strategy:**

The Strategy for the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s, is an overall framework detailing possible actions at the national, subregional and regional as well as the global levels.

## **Co-ordination issues**

Co-ordination is of central importance to the strategy, not only because lack of effective statistical co-ordination in the past had led to duplication of efforts, distorted priorities and waste of scarce resources, but more importantly, as it is an essential pre-requisite for the successful implementation of the Plan of Action.

## At the National level

Most African National Statistical Services (NSS) have a centralized structure with a National Statistical Office (NSO) empowered to collect, analyse and disseminate statistical information. However, this provision does not preclude other organizations like the Central Bank from also producing data and in some cases duplicating the efforts of the NSO. A decentralized structure provides for a NSO, but other offices/departments of government also collect, process and disseminate data related to their field of competence, e.g. Ministry of agriculture - agriculture statistics, Ministry of Labour - labour statistics. In such cases there is usually the requirement that the NSO should ensure compliance with standards, concepts, definitions and classifications and be responsible for co-ordination of statistical activities. However, in many countries of the region there appears to be a lack of formal mechanisms for co-ordination among producers of statistics. Within the same office, there is sometimes failure to co-ordinate activities and also lack of harmonization of concepts, classifications and definitions. The absence of meaningful interaction between producers and users of data lead to statistical priorities which ill-match demand. Also, while it is recognized that national needs should take precedence over international needs, the requirements of donors sometimes influence the process of priority setting.

It is obvious that co-ordination among producers of data and between users and producers had not been too successful by 1990. However, co-ordination is so important to statistical development that every effort should be made to achieve it. Formal mechanisms for user-producer dialogue should be supplemented by regular informal contacts.

Co-ordination within NSS and among statistical producers will assume more prominence in the 1990s as resources became scarce. In some countries priority setting has not received due attention because of day-to-day work pressures.

The strategy provides for a Needs Assessment/Programme Review and strategy development as the first step that has to be taken in each country. This should lead to a determination of priorities which is an essential step for making optimal use of the capacities of the NSS. After its needs have been ascertained, each country will have to draw up a 5-10 year statistical development plan which should be an integral part of the overall national development plan. This should give a clear and co-ordinated picture of the statistical requirements for the national development plan including its monitoring and evaluation. The new direction have the following main areas of co-ordination:

- (i) Co-ordination of all statistical activities within the NSS. Although the Needs Assessment Team's work ends with the presentation of its report, it is also expected to suggest better structures and legislation that must be put in place if the statistical system is to perform efficiently.

- (ii) Co-ordination should involve all producers of statistical data within the country. In this regard it would be desirable to determine the relationship of the NSS with other producers of data.
- (iii) Close and continuous relationship between producers and users of data is envisaged.
- (iv) Each country should have a local body to deal with co-ordination of technical co-operation in statistics in which both producers of statistics within the country and the donors meet periodically to discuss programmes, assess progress and prepare remedial action if necessary.

**Regional and Sub-regional level**

Here, emphasis is put on the strengthening of regional and subregional institutions, in particular those participating in the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) to enable them to strengthen their teaching and research programmes, contribute to the development and co-ordination of concepts, definitions and classifications suited to the African regions as well as the preparation and adaptation of handbooks and manuals.

In response to the Strategy, an Inter-agency Meeting on Co-operation for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s was held at ECA, Addis Ababa from 18 to 19 December 1990. On 6 March 1992, the First Inter-Agency Meeting on the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa was jointly convened by ECA and UNDP in Addis Ababa.

Further, and with the consent of PSD a "Co-ordinating Committee on African Statistical Development (CASD) has been established. The Committee shall act as the principal co-ordinating body at the regional level. Its activities shall complement and reinforce in-country co-ordination and ensure that duplication of effort, and distortion of priorities are avoided and the development of statistics promoted in the context of the strategy. It should be noted that:

- (a) CASD is expected to function through the following Sub-Committees: Over all Monitoring; Training; Management of Statistical Offices; Methods and Standards; Data Sources (Censuses, Surveys, Administrative records); and Technical Co-operation. ECA shall be the Convener of the Sub-Committees, the arrangement being subject to periodic review by CASD.
- (b) The Bureau of PSD will represent the African countries in CASD. It is hoped that this provision will improve communication and co-ordination between regional and national actors. Also, continuous cooperation with national, subregional and regional institutions should give donors good feedback in the use of resources. Also represented in CASD will be representatives of sub-regional

*Committee shall establish sub-committees with certain convenors*  
*Training ECA WB*  
*Research UNDP/ECA*  
*Data Source UN/FAO*

organization; IGOs and NGOs; multi lateral and bilateral donors and UN agencies; and representatives of regional training centres.

- (c) Membership of CASD is open to all actors interested in statistical development in Africa.

**Conclusion:** Given the various tasks called for in the strategy for the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for statistical development in Africa in the 1990s, the major component programmes i.e. national, subregional, regional and global levels, coordination of activities is of paramount importance.