

**“SEMINAR ON THE EVOLUTION NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEMS”
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Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS)**

1. Establishment of the system

A ‘ National Statistical System’¹ (NSS) should have a relatively uniform capacity for generation and use of statistics in its constituent parts. The different parts should have a mechanism for coordination. It should ensure confidentiality of supplied data/information, adhere to principles of objectivity, transparency, integrity and professional independence in all its operations.

What is the legal framework?

An effective NSS should be underpinned by an appropriate statistical legislation. Such legislation should provide for an enabling institutional and regulatory framework for production and management of official statistics that ensures professional independence of a national statistical agency and other agencies within the NSS. This enhances the integrity, impartiality and credibility of official statistics as well as data confidentiality. The law should mandate the statistics agency to collect, process/compile, analyze and disseminate official statistics. The framework should cater for all stakeholders including producers.

- In Uganda, the current Statistical Act is essentially a Uganda Bureau of Statistics Act (UBOS) Act focusing on the national statistics agency and not the entire NSS. Although the NSS is alluded to in the Act, it is not sufficiently articulated in its current form to embrace other actors. In particular, it does not mention the users of statistics – rather it emphasizes those involved in gathering statistical data directly through surveys or administrative action.
- Some stakeholders do not feel that they belong to the system, hence, the UBOS Act is to be revised. The review will ensure that the supervisory mechanisms are clearly elaborated and all key stakeholders in the NSS are adequately empowered and have a sense of belonging to the NSS. The review will therefore, cover issues on; - Coordination in the NSS, Institutional framework for the NSS and the fundamental principles of official statistics.

¹ **The NSS** “Includes all agencies in Uganda, whether Government or not; under any enactment or otherwise; responsible for gathering statistical data through either surveys or administrative action” (UBOS Act, 1998).

To whom should those responsible for the NSS be accountable?

The NSS is comprised of various stakeholders namely; key data producers, suppliers and users. However for purposes of accountability regarding the quality (*timeliness, coherence, completeness, accessibility, reliability, and relevance*) of statistics, the NSS should be accountable to **Government**, the **public** and **development partners**. This is because, **governments** issue policies and regulations, set standards, inspect, supervise, monitor and evaluate performance, and provide for technical support and advice on the execution of mandates; the **Public** as key users and suppliers of statistical information; and finally the **development Partners** (Donors), for their part, of providing funding and technical assistance. Besides, they also use statistics to identify sectoral areas that need financial and technical support, and to monitor development results.

How can the leadership role of the National Statistical (NS) agency be affirmed.

The leadership role of the NS agency can be affirmed by a comprehensive regulatory framework which embraces the various players in the NSS, and guides the production, dissemination and use of statistics; defines the responsibilities/functions, rights and obligations of players in the NSS, and guides their mandates; and, pronounces the coordination and supervisory role of the NS agency in the NSS. This empowers the NS agency to ensure that national and international standards, concepts and definitions are adhered to, and that there is consistency in the linkages between MDAs to strengthen intra and extra institutional interaction; and, instil unconditional adherence to the statistical regulations. Finally, the role can be affirmed through the establishment and operationalisation of an institutional framework which demands that stakeholder roles are streamlined in the NSS, and, they are accountable to the system.

2. Management of resources and communication

The NSS needs high calibre, well-qualified staff with the requisite knowledge and skills to produce quality statistics in a rationalized manner. It is therefore important to ensure that they are well motivated and empowered to competently contribute to the NSS.

How can staff be kept well trained and motivated?

Staff are a key and very important resource for a NSS. This resource needs to be maintained, retained and motivated. Some strategies for doing this include;

- Establishing policies and guidelines with respect to staff matters covering recruitment, promotion/ advancement, postings and transfers, reporting lines, training, and better terms and conditions of service,
- Implementing a training programme that can develop the requisite knowledge of staff in all key Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to facilitate shared resources
- Establishing appropriate job profiles by function and highlight corresponding remuneration and standard career paths for each profile,
- Defining and setting up a system of internal promotion and merit based remuneration,
- Training of Statisticians and other personnel handling data production and management in the NSS through higher degrees (Doctorates, and Masters), short courses, computer aided training, and on-the-job learning through secondments and attachments.

How can statistical agencies keep up with fast changing information (IT) developments?

In order to keep up with the fast changing Information Technology (IT), the statistical agency should develop an IT strategy. The strategy should cover IT architecture, training, hardware and software policies and plans for harnessing the ever changing information technology as well as replacement plans. This should involve the following;

- Developing the standards and infrastructure for supporting more effective use of IT to promote production and dissemination of high quality data and reduce management costs.
- Facilitating access to broadband technology by players within the NSS to ease access to data/information through the web or online.
- Developing internal sharing channels to improve data/information sharing within and between MDAs.
- Designing and developing a web based but exclusive platform (Extranet) for data/information and knowledge sharing on changing IT, and

- Continuously upgrading the IT equipment and the requisite skills for staff according to market demand.

How can new outreach methods be developed to reach users?

An appropriate dissemination strategy should be developed to ensure that data products reach all categories of users in the most usable format and through user-friendly reports. This enables the NS agency or MDA to effectively meet the increasing demands of its users. The outreach methods can be developed by;

- Undertaking a user satisfaction survey which will not only help to identify the key users based on the indicators demanded and source, but will also show the magnitude of user demand etc.
- Improving on data analysis and using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to present data spatially.
- Drawing up a plan for the release of statistical information using appropriate media such as hard copy publications including abridged reports, press releases and press briefings, websites, CD-ROM, e-mails and user/producer workshops.
- Engaging the media in various statistical activities to increase their appreciation and use of statistics in news reporting to better inform the public
- Increasing advocacy to create awareness about statistics and its relevance to national development

3. Evolution of an efficiently functioning national system

Uganda's statistical system evolved from a department under a major government ministry with relatively few professional and unmotivated staff. The statistics department then relied more on rudimentary manual data processing and management, and less user friendly products. There was also limited availability and use of household survey data, limited data user-producer consultations, data generation was almost exclusively for government and a few development partners, and there was virtually no collaboration between the department and research institutions. In addition, minimal analysis of the data was undertaken and access to existing data was limited. This had an impact on the functioning and visibility of the efforts and proceeds of the system on national development.

The transformation of the then department of statistics in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) as a semi-autonomous agency of government under the

UBOS Act, June 1998, was undertaken so as to make official statistics more impartial and credible. This wave of statistical reforms ensured that the Bureau would; collect, analyse and publish integrated, relevant, reliable and timely official statistics, and constitute a coordinating, monitoring and supervisory body for the National Statistical System (NSS). The reforms coupled with government and donor support improved and increased the type, quantity and quality of official statistics in the country thereby improving the monitoring and evaluation of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) and progress towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Although, the transformation accelerated statistical development in the country and UBOS registered numerous achievements and recognition at international level, the UBOS Act did not appropriately empower the Bureau to perform the supervisory role of the NSS. Most Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and other significant players in the economy continued to produce and use statistics with limited compliance to best practices and standards. Their efforts were thus not sufficiently coordinated and harmonized to ensure consistency, quality and synergy in the production and use of data. This is largely because other players in the NSS have regulations, from which they derive their mandates. As a result, most agencies worked at cross purpose, with increasing duplication and wastage of resources.

This coupled with other factors rendered, Uganda's NSS fragile and vulnerable to a number of challenges including: organizational and institutional weaknesses; unpredictable and insufficient funding, data gaps on key indicators; inadequate infrastructure; inconsistent data flows; and under utilization of data. These challenges are to be addressed by the second wave of reforms highlighted in the Plan for National Statistical Development (PNSD) which provides a new strategic direction for improving statistical production and development in a holistic manner.

Proven success of system configuration

In Uganda, the proven success of this transformation can be attributed to;

- (i) Production of reliable, consistent, accurate and timely data for policy formulation and planning by the Bureau.
- (ii) Effective leadership
 - a. The highly technocratic and focused Board of Directors with hands on experience as the governing body.

- b. A professional and dedicated management team responsible for day-to-day operation of the national statistical agency.
 - c. The effective organizational management system namely; the legal framework governing statistical production, the favourable terms and conditions of service, the Financial management Systems, Information Technology strategy etc.
- (iii) Establishment of structures that promote vertical and horizontal coordination in the NSS e.g. Producer- producer, producer-user and user committees
- (iv) Recruitment of highly skilled and motivated staff - with opportunities for soft Skills development and the innovative working environment
- (v) Statistical and physical infrastructure investments, e.g. establishment of IT networks and Management information systems and adequate working environment for the NS agency.

Future direction of the NSS

The next wave of reform requires that mechanisms are instituted to enable the national statistical agency to strengthen its coordination and supervisory role of the NSS by mainstreaming sectoral statistics, including promotion of adherence to international standards and methodologies, and effectively monitoring progress in statistical development across the public sector. Other key areas of strategic importance are;

- Statistical Advocacy through creation of greater awareness in the country about the importance and role of statistics in national development at all levels of governance.
- Establishment of a National Statistics Policy to mainstream statistics within national development policy processes and provide mechanisms for linking statistics to policy and decision centres at different levels.
- Coordination of the NSS through provision for stronger linkages within the National Statistical System including implementation of joint and harmonized work plans for data collection among sectors
- Improved organization and management of statistics especially in government ministries, departments and agencies, as well as in districts and local authorities.
- Capacity building and infrastructural development through unified training programmes, improving capacity and infrastructure to produce better statistics (including sharing and pooling of resources -

where possible) and improving the flow of statistical information to users.

- Creation of data production standards to improve data quality from various data sources
- Utilization of statistics to guide government-wide performance and results-based management consistent with objectives of the National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (NIMES).