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Managing Issues addressing the Challenges of Using Administrative Data for Statistical Purposes

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1) Main uses of administrative data for statistical purposes

Administrative data have been used in Bhutan to produce figures in some specific areas: external trade, finance, money, health, and education statistics. However, the development of some other administrative data records (civil registration and business registration) have not yet reached a level of quality and coverage that enables their compilation for statistical purpose.

The sample surveys play an important role to produce data about the entire population. When there is a need for data at national and local levels (at district level), the data produced by the surveys must be significant. Therefore, the size of the sample must be increased. Hence, administrative data is preferred as it is cost effective.

Ultimately, the administrative data besides providing frames for surveys, it helps increase official statistics and produce statistics on their own right, and evaluate quality of data.

2) Main management issues from using administrative data for statistical purposes

One of the biggest issues of using administrative data for statistical purposes is the lack or very poor coordination among the producers of the data, which leads to delays leading to obsolete data. Also, many of the administrative data are collected irregularly and therefore cannot be relied as a data source.

Another issue of using administrative data sources is the risk of not being in conformity with international standard, poor quality or limited scope etc.

Some administrative data sources are currently under development. They do not offer a complete coverage of their reference population. This is the case for the civil registration system, which should be used to produce the vital statistics.

3) Management of quality of statistics derived from administrative data

With some of the administrative data e.g the Annual Education report, which are produced regularly, we try and compare data with previous reports and with other administrative data we try and compare their accuracy with some of our survey estimates. We even go to the organizations producing the data if we have any doubts on their data and discuss the issues and get any clarifications.

4) Managing relationship with the administrative departments engaged in compiling statistics

The National Statistics Bureau (NSB) is mandated to coordinate with other agencies/department engaged compiling/producing statistics. An Executive Order of the Prime Minister dated May 2006 has reaffirmed that the NSB is the “central authority for collection and release of any official data, and their custodian. As such all ministries, departments and agencies are directed to acquire prior approval from the NSB on all statistical activities----”. Also the NSB is mandated to provide technical support to the organizations in collecting data. Therefore, this creates a working relationship for the NSB with other organizations.

We at present do not have any training activities for the line ministries. This is largely due to shortage of manpower within our organization. In fact, we have only recently started to organize some basic training for our own staff. We are planning to extend the training to the line ministries in the future. In fact we are drawing up a proposal for a strategic statistical development of statistics in the country wherein the training component is also included.

4) Major obstacles/weakness on the use of administrative data

Following are the major constraints on the usage of administrative data :

i) Human resources: One of the key issues pertaining to administrative data is the lack of qualified manpower. A few of the ministries still do not have statistical personnel. Each district has only one statistical person to coordinate statistics activities in their respective

district. Therefore, increasing manpower (with appropriate skills) will be one solution to strengthen the use of administrative data.

ii) Legal framework: The lack of legal framework is an impediment on the usage of administrative data. Therefore, it is proposed that a Statistics Act should be in place. We have already drafted one and it will be submitted for enactment to the government very soon.

iii) Coordination: Lack of strong coordination among the partners of the Bhutan Statistical System is also a major constraint. A formation of Statistical Coordination Committee representing different ministries/agencies will be a step to improve the coordination.