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

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1- Introduction

Official statistical infrastructure and activities were largely non-existent two decades ago in Cambodia, but significant efforts have been made in recent years to improve its statistical system. In particular, notable improvements have been made in Cambodia's statistical efforts in areas of formal structure, management, staff training, dissemination practices and accessibility of data. Hitherto, development of official statistics has been piecemeal, constrained by lack of funds and partly driven by availability of external funding resources. There has been little opportunity to develop a long term, sustainable, coherent and realistic strategy for the development of official statistics.

However, there has been a significant effort to collect, estimate, and report on the MDG indicators, largely due to the preparation of the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals (CMDG) Report and the desire to integrate the MDG monitoring framework into national policy evaluation, especially through National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) monitoring. Successful completion of the 1998 and 2008 censuses and 2000 and 2005 Cambodia Demographic and Health Surveys (CDHS), in particular, has contributed to benchmarking important aspects of socio-economic conditions of the country. At the line ministries, a variety of management information systems that process administrative and other data have been developed including Education Management Information System and Health Management Information System, although the inter-system coordination and the donor dependency issues need to be improved.

In addition, demand for reliable and timely data as the basis of the indicators required for the NPRS and National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) is an important driver for further development of the statistical system.

Increasing demands are being made on the limited resources available for statistical work and on the limited capacity of the National Institute of Statistics (NIS), line ministries and the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC). Further demands are foreseen.

Adoption of the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) framework on statistical pre-requisites and core macro-economic and socio-demographic statistics in 2001 has further helped the process of statistical development in Cambodia. Initially this has drawn attention to the need for the prerequisites for good statistics: sound legal and institutional foundations. Work has already been undertaken to provide this underpinning for the statistical system.

Following extensive consultation, a new Statistics Law was enacted in May 2005. Sub-Decrees implementing various aspects of the Law was prepared. The Law gives the NIS a specific legal basis for its activities and gives it a broader role in the development of official statistics and of the statistical system as a whole. In particular, it provides the NIS with strong coordinating powers across other ministries and institutions:

“The National Institute of Statistics, under the Ministry of Planning, shall be responsible for making official statistical policies in establishing an integrated National Statistical System, encompassing all designated official statistics and statistical organizational units within ministries and institutions. The Royal Government shall issue a Sub-Decree on the operation of the National Statistical System and designated official statistics.”

A Statistics Advisory Council was established to “facilitate the development of the National Statistical System”. This will be a forum for stakeholders to influence the planning and priorities of official statistics and also be a mechanism for encouraging and monitoring coordination across the statistical system. Additionally, a Statistics Coordination Committee was established to “assist...the technical coordination of the official statistics of the Royal Government”. The details of how these two bodies will work have set out in Sub-Decrees.

The Law will encourage an integrated National Statistical System (NSS) by making the NIS the official statistical policymaking body, with responsibilities to coordinate official statistical activities over all statistical units within the ministries and other government organizations.

2- Administrative Sources

Health, Education, and Agricultural Administrative Data

Key line ministries such as health, education and agriculture already collect information through their ongoing administrative systems. In some areas there are concerns about the quality of data collected. As the Education Management Information System (EMIS) in the Ministry of Education has shown, improvements to data quality can be obtained through training, feeding information back to province and district levels, and vigilant checking. As staff became more and more familiar with the system and its operations, quality also improves. Improved quality also comes with use of the system by policymakers, statisticians and officials at province and district levels. There have been concerns about timeliness of information from administrative sources. Again, use tends to improve the timeliness of information. As mentioned earlier, the use of

administrative data that complements survey data to produce key statistics, and a cross-agency dissemination strategy for those statistics would be important.

Other Administrative Data

A civil registration system records the occurrence of the events of birth, death and marriage in accordance with the legal requirements of a country. Data on births and deaths obtained through the civil registration system can be used with population census data to prepare population estimates and projections for different areas of a country.

In Cambodia there is no satisfactory system of civil registration to obtain data on fertility and mortality. The information now available on these aspects is based only on indirect estimates from the census and sample surveys like the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS).

Recognizing the importance of accurate statistics for planning purposes, the Cambodia Government has, during the last few years made a commitment to birth registration and a functioning civil registration system. Civil registration is one of the four components of the Commune Council Development Project being implemented by the Government of Cambodia with the support of the ADB. The project is aimed at building capacity of the elected local bodies – Commune Councils.

RGC in the Ministry of Interior introduced a uniform civil registration system in 2002. A deadline was set by the Government that by the end of August 2005 all persons should be registered under the new registration system. The responsibility for registering births, deaths and marriages was assigned to the Commune Councils. However the target was not achieved due to lack of awareness among the population and other reasons. Only five percent was registered. The Plan International Cambodia, an international NGO, is therefore supporting the Ministry of Interior in launching a mobile campaign to register 13 million people. As of now about 62 percent of population has been registered. The campaign will be continuing until December 2005. UNICEF is also assisting the Ministry of Interior in the matter of child registration.

Table 1 indicates the main sources of administrative, census and survey data used in the compilation and production of statistics.

Table 1: Sources of the Key Statistical Outputs

	Source		Notes
	Administrative records	Surveys and Censuses	
Economic Statistics			
Real Sector Statistics			
National Accounts			
Household expenditure		•	
Government expenditure	•		
Employment and income		•	
Agricultural production	•		
Industrial production		•	
Retail sales		•	
Tourism	•	•	
Price deflators		•	Agricultural commodity, producer, consumer
Production indexes		•	
Prices Statistics			
Consumer Price Index (CPI)		•	
Producer Price Index (PPI)		•	
Labour Market Indicators			Need Province level; informal sector
Employment		•	
Unemployment		•	
Wages and earnings		•	
Fiscal Sector Statistics			
Government finance	•		
Government debt	•		
Monetary and Financial Statistics	•	•	
External Sector Statistics			Also some sources above
Balance of Payments	•	•	
Merchandise trade	•		
International trade in services	•	•	
External debt	•	•	
International investment position	•	•	
International reserves	•		
Exchange rates		•	
Social and Demographic Statistics			
Demography			
Population		•	Census and updates from surveys
Births, deaths	•	•	
Mortality		•	
Education			Extend to private sector
Enrolments	•		
Literacy		•	
Health	•	•	Extend to private sector
Nutrition (e.g. underweight)		•	

Poverty measures		•	
Access to basic facilities (water, sanitation, housing)		•	

4- Strengthening the Capacity Building of NIS and Line Ministries

At the start of Cambodia's reform program in 1993, the statistical base and the capacity and infrastructure to support official statistics was largely non-existent. The coverage and quality of economic, environment and socio-demographic statistics has gradually improved over recent years. National accounts and prices statistics are available and have been improved with the significant technical assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Similarly, improvements have been made for balance of payments, monetary and financial, and government finance statistics, with technical assistance being provided by the IMF. Significant improvements have also been made in statistics legislation, population, socio-economics and demographic statistics, with financial and technical assistance provided by the UNDP, UNFPA, SIDA, World Bank and other UN agencies. Significant improvements in statistics capacity and infrastructure are also evident, with substantial support from JICA and other development partners.

In May 2005, JICA reached an agreement with NIS on implementing the first phase of the project on improving official statistics in the RGC, which was to improve statistical capacity by providing training program for staff in NIS, the statistical staff in the provincial offices of Ministry of Planning and the statistical staff in other line ministries. In August 2005, short-term official experts were dispatched from the Statistics Bureau and the Statistical Research and Training Institute of the Ministry for Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan, and "The Project on Improving Official Statistics in Cambodia (Phase 1)" was also started by the JICA experts from October 2005. Since the implementation of the 2008 Population Census were not fixed when the Project (Phase 1) started, in the first year of the first phase (October 2005 - March 2007) of Phase 1, major activity was the basic trainings for official statistics for staff in NIS, the statistical staff in the provincial offices of Ministry of Planning and the statistical staff in other line ministries. The training program also held a course "Use of Statistical Results" for staff in line ministries.

The statistical capacity of Cambodia was improved, but it is still limited.

However, one of the activities of the Project Phase 2 (April 2007 – September 2010) has been providing several statistical trainings to NIS and line ministries.

5- Major Weaknesses and Obstacles Faced on the Use of Administrative Data

Many reports have indicated data gap in Cambodia. All the development-oriented ministries have a Department of Planning mandated to keep records and maintain data on their ministries activities. Due to incapacity and lack of resources, many ministries have not been able to maintain administrative data. Very little efforts have been made to compile the available administrative data. National Institute of Statistics is attempting to compile all the available administrative related data while preparing the statistics. In some line ministries, the administrative methods are not properly worked out and the monitoring system is practically non-existent.

In the future, the some line ministries have to develop guidelines for administrative activities. It is believed that administrative operations would recommend appropriate mitigation measures and develop mechanism to strictly implement these measures. The mitigation measures or administrative enhancement activities would include revalidation of statistics units affected by resources development. It is hoped that the administrative management systems will be integrated within the ministry's activities.
