



UNITED NATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Regional Workshop for African countries on Compilation of Basic Economic  
Statistics**

**Jointly organized by the United Nations Statistics Division and  
African Centre for Statistics at Economic Commission for Africa**

**16-19 October 2007, Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Report of the Workshop**

**United Nations, New York**

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## **I. Purpose and organization**

1. This second regional workshop on the compilation of basic economic statistics was jointly organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and was held on 16-19 October 2007 in Addis Ababa at the ECA's Headquarters. The workshop is a continuation of the UNSD efforts to enhance the knowledge and use of good practices in the compilation of basic economic statistics in African countries. The first workshop already took place in Pretoria, South Africa on 23-26 July 2007. It was organized in cooperation with Statistics South Africa and provided an opportunity for an initial exchange of views on the current practices of a rather limited number of countries, and was judged by its participants as a very useful and successful undertaking. By taking into account findings and conclusions of the first workshop, this second workshop was intended to provide a forum for continued exchange of views on country practices/needs and actions required for improving the compilation of economic statistics. The recommendations of the workshop will provide a valuable input to UNSD and UNECA as they review their work programmes in economic statistics, technical assistance and cooperation with other international and regional agencies.

2. The workshop was attended by 48 participants from seventeen countries (Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia), three regional organizations (African Development Bank, African Union and ECOWAS) and two international organizations (UNSD and ECA). Among the countries' participants, 16 were funded by UNSD and 7 were funded by their own country (including 3 local participants from Ethiopia). The remaining 25 participants were funded by their own organization (18 participants from ECA, 3 participants from UNSD and 4 participants from the three regional organizations). Logistical support was provided by ECA.

## **II. Summary of the opening statements**

3. The opening statement of Mr. Paul Cheung, Director of the UNSD was delivered by Mr. Vladimir Markhonko, Chief of Trade Statistics Branch of UNSD, who welcomed the participants and expressed his gratitude to the ECA for hosting the workshop and providing both substantive and logistical support. He outlined the UNSD strategy in assisting African countries to improve compilation of basic economic statistics. This assistance strategy is a part of a refocused work programme in which UNSD has decided to make special efforts to enhance the statistical capacity of African countries in compiling basic economic statistics. These efforts are in line with the implementation of ECOSOC resolution 2006/6 on statistical capacity building which calls on UNSD and regional commissions to provide additional support to developing countries.

4. The compilation of good quality basic economic statistics is essential to the ability of national statistical offices to meet the data needs of policy-makers, business community and to compile sound national accounts. However, in many countries,

including African countries, basic economic statistics are not complete or are of poor quality. In this connection, UNSD has decided to put significantly more attention to basic economic statistics. In the long term perspective, UNSD is committed to provide assistance to national statistical offices of African countries on the basis of principles of a strong national ownership.

5. In the context of this assistance programme, UNSD will cooperate closely with African Centre for Statistics in order to create as much synergy as possible and to use our resources in the most efficient way. There is a clear need to review ongoing activities of regional and international organizations and institutions in order to make them more coherent and complementary. In this regard UNSD is aware of this need and will initiate in near future a series of consultations with its partners in this respect.

6. Furthermore, UNSD is not only committed to a conduct of general coordination activities. In fact, UNSD plans to produce concrete outputs including a technical report on status of basic economic statistics in African countries containing description of good practices which are applicable under different country circumstances and resource availability. In order to deliver assistance and to monitor the implementation of the action plan, UNSD is committed to running annual meetings of the workshops in 2008-2010.

7. In his opening statement Mr. Ben Kiregyera, Director of the African Center for Statistics (ACS) welcomed the participants and expressed his gratitude to the UNSD for their contribution to the organization of the series of workshops in terms of technical support as well as provision of financial support. He also thanked Statistics South Africa for hosting the first workshop on basic economic statistics in Pretoria. He further expressed his delight to the presence of senior staff from national statistical offices (NSO) at this workshop and pointed out that it showed the importance their respective governments attach to the improvement of basic economic statistics in support of the compilation of national accounts statistics and statistical development in general.

8. The status of basic economic statistics in Africa is characterized by many difficulties and weaknesses such as: non compliance of economic censuses and surveys to the 1993 SNA concepts, non compliance to sound statistical techniques in sampling and processing, outdated business registers, inadequate frequency of data collection, low response rate, informal and services sectors not covered by surveys, etc. Also, there are some institutional problems such as inadequate resources at NSOs and insufficient level of collaboration, especially between Central Bank, Ministry of Finance and NSOs.

9. Accordingly, the objectives of the present workshop must be centered around the following three axes: i) to review current practices in the development of basic data sources and administrative records, to share best practices and to develop a clear strategy for updating business registers, to improve the quality of surveys and administrative records, to increase the compliance of survey methodology with the 1993 SNA concepts and to review the relevance and complementarities between administrative records and surveys; ii) to address the institutional issues hindering the efficient use of administrative data and explore possibilities for developing memorandum of understanding between

NSOs and key statistical producers in the National Statistical System, namely the Central Banks, Ministries of Finance and line ministries and; iii) to integrate the results of basic economic statistics into the national accounts statistics compilation and to extend the results of surveys to the national economy.

10. Africa is becoming an emerging region in terms of statistical development therefore the leading regional institutions have repositioned themselves to respond in a robust manner to the emerging statistical reawakening. As an example, the establishment this year (2007), by the Council of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Development of a Statistical Commission for Africa (Statcom-Africa) as the apex body for handling statistical development issues in Africa was pointed out. Mr. Kiregyera concluded by outlining his faith to these regional efforts, and advocated for a strong partnership between African countries and international and regional/sub-regional organizations in order to make significant progress in statistical development and by extension, national development outcomes in the African region.

### III. Evaluation

11. The participants of the second workshop on the compilation of BES in African countries expressed their appreciation of the conduct of the workshop. They also acknowledged the complexity of the task of organizing such meeting and congratulated UNSD and ACS for their efforts. It was a shared feeling of the group that similar workshops should be conducted more frequently and be extended to other African countries

12. All participants expressed their appreciation of the good preparation of the workshop and valued very positively its outcome as confirmed by their answers to the questions posed on the evaluation (please see the table below).

Did you acquire at this workshop any substantive knowledge involving technical on how:	Yes/No ratio
to produce statistical data?	88%
to analyze statistical data?	50%
to disseminate statistical data?	83%

13. Using a scale from 5 to 1 (where 5 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = adequate, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor) participants judged the achievement of workshop objectives and its overall value as follows:

Overall value of the workshop	4.0
Overall planning and organization of the workshop	4.0

#### **IV. Findings and conclusions of the workshop**

The workshop:

##### **A. General**

14. Endorses the conclusions of the Pretoria meeting.
15. Strongly supports the development of a concrete action plan aimed at the improvement of basic economic statistics in Africa and invites UNSD and ACS to take initiative in its preparation in consultation with national statistical offices, AFDB and other regional organizations.
16. Finds that while compilation of economy wide statistics reflecting market activities using economic census, economic surveys, statistical business register, administrative data should be in the focus of this plan, encourages UNSD and ACS to include in it, to the extent possible, other basic economic statistics such as labor statistics, foreign trade, price and volume indices.
17. Advises that countries work programmes in economic statistics, their practices and needs should be documented and made available on UNSD and ACS websites to ensure a better exchange of information and monitoring of progress in improvement of data compilation.
18. Welcomes the establishment of a close cooperation between UNSD and ACS and alignment of their work programmes in economic statistics.
19. Welcomes UNSD initiative to hold annual meetings of the workshop to deliver assistance and monitor progress and advises that future workshops be focused on specific topics and be result oriented in the context of an action plan.
20. Finds that Pretoria and Addis Ababa meetings provided an excellent opportunity for African countries to have an overview of a wide range of issues relevant to compilation of basic economic statistics, exchange both positive and negative experiences, review priorities and strategies and to set the stage for further work.

##### **B. Economic census**

21. Agrees that economic census can be an appropriate tool for some African countries for use in their efforts to obtain a better sampling frame/list as well as some basic economic statistics.
22. Welcomes UNSD intention to document country experiences, current challenges and good practices in organization and conduct of economic censuses in its planned

handbook on compilation of basic economic statistics in Africa; advises that such a handbook should be prepared as a joint UNSD/ACS effort and in a close consultation with countries.

23. Invites countries to actively cooperate with UNSD/ACS in preparation of the handbook by providing necessary information on their experiences, needs, priorities and planned activities.

*C. Administrative data and business register*

24. Agrees that a more extensive use of administrative data has to be a part of a long term strategy to improve quality of basic economic statistics and make data compilation more cost efficient; in this connection issues of quality and access to administrative data should be on top of the agenda of any inter-agency body responsible for cooperation on statistical matters.

25. Asks UNSD to consider documenting and disseminating good practices in the use of administrative data and related institutional arrangements to assist African national statistical offices both in terms of obtaining a practical advice and in sensitizing other governmental agencies on the importance of their administrative records for the national statistics.

26. Concludes that establishment of a statistical business register along with a systematic updating program forms a necessary precondition for an effective programme of economic surveys and invites UNSD and ACS to review and document practices of African countries in order to harmonize them on the basis of good experience accumulated in this area both in Africa and worldwide.

27. Concludes that establishment of a forum for a systematic exchange of African countries experiences on business register would be helpful and invites ACS to come up with a proposal.

28. Finds that an existence of a good business register is not a guarantee that births of important economic units can be always captured in a timely manner; in this connection advises that countries consider establishing of additional mechanisms for capturing emergence of such units.

29. Emphasizes that economies of developing countries are experiencing rapid changes and, therefore, national statistical offices should adopt a forward looking attitude and be creative in order to ensure relevance of the compiled statistics; this implies that experiences of countries with developed and more stable economies should not be simply copied but rather analyzed for applicability and be adapted to local circumstances.

***D. Economic Surveys***

30. Concludes that economic surveys remain a foundation for a successful compilation of economic statistics in the region and welcomes UNSD intention to continue identification of good practices applicable under the circumstances typical to the region.
31. Finds that lack of uniformity in design and insufficient coordination in carrying out various surveys are some of the main obstacles to achieving more effective data compilation; invites UNSD and ACS to assess available international experience in this respect and advise countries on how it can be adapted to African circumstances.
32. Finds that a simpler questionnaire design combined with a larger sample size can be a better practice than the use of overcomplicated design which runs the risk of not being properly understood by respondents and results therefore, in a low quality of the collected data.
33. Concludes that systematic profiling of large enterprises (including foreign owned) should be a permanent part of national survey programmes and provide input for their better reflection in statistical business register; invites UNSD to include description of international experience in this respect and its applicability in the African context into its assistance programme to African countries.
34. Reconfirms that agriculture, construction, manufacturing, retail trade and services sector in general remain the important economic activities and should be given more attention in any work geared towards the improvement of the compilation of basic economic statistics.

***E. Informal Sector***

35. Strongly supports further work on the clarification of the definition of informal sector in the context of African countries and concludes that the importance of this sector is to be assessed not only by its contribution to GDP but from a wider perspective reflecting its socio-economic role (e.g., in providing employment and income to a large part of population etc.).
36. Welcomes ACS initiative to conduct a regional workshop on informal sector and preparation of a manual on the subject; advises that the already accumulated experience both in the region and internationally should be taken into account and invites UNSD to participate in this work as well.
37. Finds that further assistance in identification/implementation of good data compilation practices applicable to the informal sector is required in view of importance of this sector in most of African countries.



***F. Training***

38. Stresses that staff training remains one of the priority areas which needs constant attention in view of the new challenges/tasks and high staff turnover; asks UNSD and ACS to review available training materials and develop a knowledge base which can be used by countries in their training activities.
39. Asks UNSD to take into account the needs of African countries in training their staff while planning its fellowship programmes.

***G. Basic economic statistics and national accounts***

40. Concludes that provision of a quality data to national accounts compilers remains one of the main tasks of basic economic statistics; in this connection, data requirements of SNA should be taken into account in data compilation policies as much as possible; at the same time needs of SNA should be balanced with needs of other users such as industry, socio-economic policy makers, etc.

***H. Data quality and metadata***

41. Emphasizes that measuring data quality should be an integral part of efforts to improve basic economic statistics; invites ACS to assist African countries in establishing their DQAF including indicators of quality in a manner which would be user friendly, transparent and cross country comparable.
42. Agrees that the availability of quality metadata is to be a part of DQAF; again, invites ACS to assist African countries in establishing good practices in compilation and dissemination of metadata.

***I. Strengthening national statistical infrastructure***

43. Finds that a good compilation practice depends, among other factors, on a kind of the statistical infrastructure that a country has.
44. Agrees that changes in statistical infrastructure should be driven by a clear understanding of the user community needs; the user community has to be defined broadly and include not only various governmental agencies but private sector, research institutions and citizens in general; sound assessment of a balance between opportunities and risks should be incorporated in planning of any changes.
45. Emphasizes that countries need to consider compilation basic economic statistics as one of the priority areas in their national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS) and plan concrete actions at the country level to improve it.

46. Finds that sustainability can be improved by conversion of donors into investors/partners as funding of statistical infrastructure leads to long term gains for all parties involved.

47. Agrees that the incorporation in the statistical law of the provision of autonomy of national statistical offices in their remuneration policy gives NSO a critical tool to improve staffing and its efficient work.

***J. Dissemination and work with users***

48. Concludes that considerably more attention should be given to work with the user community in order to mobilize its support in obtaining additional resources needed to ensure sustainability of work programmes of national statistical offices; invites UNSD to summarize existing international experience in this area.

49. Finds that making the public aware of the release dates of sensitive series of economic statistics, honoring those dates and making release of such statistics a public event, including invitation of mass media, is a good practice to improve visibility and profile of NSO.

***K. Role of international, regional and sub-regional organizations***

50. Encourages ACS to inform all regional organizations about the needs of African countries with respect to basic business statistics and asks those organizations to review their assistance proposals for 2008 and beyond in view of these needs and inform ACS accordingly.

51. Welcomes UNSD, AFDB and ECOWAS readiness to assist ACS in funding regional activities aimed at the improvement of economic statistics in Africa and containing concrete output commitments.

52. Welcomes the intention of the ADB, ECOWAS and AU statistical units to strengthen their cooperation with ACS and UNSD in order to seek more complementarities and efficiency.

53. Invites UNSD and ACS to develop a multi-year action plan to assist African countries in the area of basic economic statistics in consultation with countries, regional and international organizations and begin its implementation.

## ANNEX I

### **Regional Workshop for African countries on Compilation of Basic Economic Statistics**

#### **Jointly organized by:**

United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)  
African Centre for Statistics (ACS) at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

*16-19 October 2007, Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia*

## AGENDA

### **Tuesday, 16 October 2007**

- 9:00-9:30 [1] Registration
- 9:30-10:00 [2] Opening ceremony
- UNECA  
UNSD
- 10:00-10:55 [3] Administrative matters  
[4] Objectives of the meeting  
[5] Adoption of agenda  
[6] Challenges facing African countries in compilation basic economic statistics and UNSD assistance strategy
- Conclusions of the first meeting on compilation of basic economic statistics in African countries (23-26 July 2007, Pretoria, South Arica) – UNSD presentation
- 10:55-11:10 *Coffee break*
- 11:10-12:30 [6] cont.
- UNECA overview of economic statistics in African countries
- International experience in setting up an economic statistics compilation programme (UNSD, Mr. Leonard Cook, UNSD consultant)
- AFDB experience in the use of basic economic statistics and in assistance to regional member countries

General discussion

12:30-14:00 *Lunch break*

14:00-15:25 [7] How to establish reliable economic survey frames/lists and to keep them updated?

(a) Role of economic census: past experiences and future plans

UNSD  
Zambia  
Nigeria  
Kenya

General discussion

15:25-15:40 *Coffee break*

15:40-17:00 (b) Use of administrative data and business registers – a need for Strategic planning

South Africa  
Namibia  
Mozambique  
Sierra Leone

General discussion

**Wednesday, 17 October 2007**

9:30-10:55 [8] System of economic surveys: how to organize it in a more efficient way and to ensure a better quality of the collected data (*e.g., what types of surveys are needed and why? what are the good practices in survey design and organization as well as in data capture, editing and processing procedures? how to achieve a more integrated system of surveys; challenges in surveying the informal sector*)

UNSD  
Uganda  
South Africa  
Ethiopia  
Kenya  
Malawi

10:55-11:10 *Coffee break*

11:10-12:30 [8] cont.

UNECA  
Cameroon  
Senegal  
Madagascar

12:30-14:00 *Lunch break*

14:00-15:25 [8] cont.

Mali  
Tunisia  
Sierra Leone  
Nigeria

15:25-15:40 *Coffee break*

15:40-17:00 [8] cont.

Zambia  
Namibia  
Togo

**Thursday, 18 October 2007**

9:30-10:55 [8] cont.

Mozambique  
Egypt

General discussion

[9] Basic economic statistics as a foundation for sound national accounts

South Africa  
Uganda

General discussion

10:55-11:10 *Coffee break*

11:10-12:30 [10] Measuring data quality and compilation of metadata– international experiences and challenges in the African context

UNSD  
Zambia  
Egypt  
Togo  
Tunisia

General discussion

*12:30-14:00 Lunch break*

*14:00-15:25* [11] Approaches to strengthening national statistical infrastructure and interagency cooperation to support more effective compilation of economic statistics

UNSD, Mr. Leonard Cook, UNSD consultant  
South Africa  
Uganda  
Senegal  
Madagascar

General discussion

*15:25-15:40 Coffee break*

*15:40-17:00* [12] Data dissemination and work with users

UNECA  
Nigeria  
Malawi

General discussion

**Friday, 19 October 2007**

*9:30-10:55* [13] Role of international, regional and sub-regional organizations – ways to make assistance and cooperation programmes more coherent and focused

ECA  
AU  
AFDB  
ECOWAS

General discussion

*10:55-11:10 Coffee break*

*11:10-12:30* [14] Towards improved compilation of basic economic statistics in African countries: An outline of a mid-term action plan.

A round table discussion

*12:30-14:00 Lunch break*

*14:00-16:00* [15] Conclusion of the workshop

[16] Evaluation of the workshop

## ANNEX II

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