



**Workshop
on
Organization and management
of statistical systems**

Addis Ababa, 8-12 Decembre 2003

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Core Functions of NSOs

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Summary

- Planning
- Executing and processing
- Analysis
- Dissemination
- Coordination and standardization

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WHAT?

- Is there an irreducible set of functions that, if not performed by the NSO, would invalidate its claim to the title of « National Statistical Office »?
- Which, if any, of the functions of a NSO can be performed by the private sector without compromising the credibility and integrity of government statistics?

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ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

The essential functions commonly attributed to a NSO are:

- Planning
- Executing and processing
- Analysis
- Dissemination
- Coordination and standardization

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Planning

- Planning is « the transformation of a policy question or other type of request for information in a series of steps that will result in the desired information being made available within the specified parameters of time, quality and budget . It includes decisions on models to be employed, use of over-sampling, stratification and coverage »

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Planning

(for discussion)

Trends

- Details of a survey plan are carried out by the private sector in many countries

Question

- What is outsourced in African countries?

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Analysis

Trends:

- Analysis is carried out by the NSO as well as by those outside the Government.
- It is important to the intellectual vitality of a NSO that members of its staff critique the process and models used to produce the data as well as discuss the strengths and weaknesses to produce the data.

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Analysis

- It is also important for those outside the Government to do their own analysis in order to inform public policy debates and provide critiques that the NSO can use to make improvements.

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Analysis

(for discussion)

New context:

- PRSPs
- MDGs
- NEPAD
- What kind of data are analysed by the NSOs?
- What kind of analysis is carried out by the NSOs?
- What kind of data are analysed by the private sector?
- Are there the analytical capabilities in the NSOs?

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Dissemination

Trends :

- Private sector is already engaged in the dissemination of statistical information in many countries.
- the products that are disseminated are basic statistical information, or with **a value added service** (further analysis of the data, integration of the data with other information) provided by the vendor.
- But the NSOs do have the obligation to ensure that fundamental statistical information is provided to all segments of the society on an equal basis

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Dissemination

(for discussion)

- What are the prerogatives of the NSOs in data dissemination?
- To what extent private sector is engaged in the dissemination of statistical information in African countries?
- What kind of agreements NSOs have with private sector?
- How African countries manage the GDSS?
- Relationships with NSOs and the media?
- Etc.

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Coordination and standardization

Trends :

- It is agreed that this is a Government function.
- Coordination between functional ministries or decentralized statistical agencies would simply not be possible for a non-governmental agency or the private sector to accomplish this kind of coordination .
- No one outside the statistical office could **lay claim to an unbiased position** or would have its credibility.

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Coordination and standardization (for discussion)

- Refer to the discussions on coordination
- However
 - How to adapt to the African context the international standards?
 - Quality Insurance still to be apply to statistics

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SURVEYS AND CENSUSES

- The expected pattern is for the NSO to be in charge of taking most or all surveys
- Three kinds of data collection:
 - Recurrent routine surveys
 - Ad hoc surveys of some complexity
 - censuses

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SURVEYS AND CENSUSES

- Project management
- Working with project staff
- Working with respondents
- Repository of statistical expertise
- Flexible survey-taking capability
- Administrative records

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Project management

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Working with project staff

Three different perspectives:

- Subject-matter staff who interact with users – their main concern is to meet the expectations of the users
- Survey statisticians who ensure that the measurement has the right quality attributes - the rewards come from a community, mostly of academic, primarily interested in methods
- Field staff that contact respondents and deal with any complaint arising from lack of clarity and excess burden

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Working with project staff

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Working with respondents

Establishing relationships with respondents

It is proposed to create a respondent relations department entrusted with the following duties:

- Handling the public relations
- Exercising special care and taking all the required precautions in cases where the survey is either unusually long or unusually intrusive
- Keeping a register of respondents
- Sharing information with respondents
- Having the presence of mind and the necessary information to find alternative respondents when there is strong resistance to the survey or when the original respondent can no longer be located

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Working with respondents (for discussion)

- Refer to discussions on field operation

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Repository of statistical expertise

To be recognized as the rightful custodian of the official national statistical infrastructure, the NSO must have the following capabilities:

- The capability to design a comprehensive survey (sample selection, survey design, estimator choice, estimation method, calculation of variances and sampling errors)
- The capability to design a questionnaire with properties that minimize the respondent burden, the cognitive error
- The capability to analyse the collected information
- The capability to make the collected information available to the users

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Repository of statistical expertise (for discussion)

- Situation varies from an office to another

An example:

- Technical capabilities scattered around several departments or units vs technical capabilities grouped in one organizational unit

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Flexible survey-taking capability

Issue:

To react quickly to requests for vitally important information

Proposal

- To create a unit that is able to mount a quick* survey, either as a first instalment on a more permanent effort, or as a one-time exercise.

* E.g. a maximum of sixty or ninety days

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Flexible survey-taking capability (for discussion)

- Budgetary constraints
- Flexibility in staff management
- Availability of required capabilities

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Administrative records

- The attractive feature of administrative records is that they are to be collected or have been collected anyway

Requirements :

- NSO should systematically explore how new demand for information might be satisfied using regular collected data and administrative records

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Administrative records

A unit should be in charge of « administrative records » with the following responsibilities:

- Keeping abreast of administratively collected data
- Evaluating each new request to determine the extent to which it can be met without resorting to a new or expanded survey
- Negotiating with the custodians of the relevant information to determine how it can be shared within the legal framework

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Administrative records (for discussion)

- Situation of the NSO in administrative structure
- Power of negotiation of the NSO with the custodians of the relevant information
- Coordination issues

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End

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