



## Users and their Needs

Sabine Warschburger  
United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)  
Addis Ababa, 10 Dec 2003

## Fundamental Principle of Official Statistics #1

“Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information society, serving the government, the economy, the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honor citizens’ entitlement to public information.”

## Who are the users?

- The general public
- The government
- The business community
- The research community
- International organizations

## The general public

- Right of the population to be informed
- Direct dissemination (Numberland in Figures)
- Indirect dissemination
  - The role of the media
  - The role of schools (Statistics Quiz)

## In more detail: Dealing with the press

- Press releases: clear and simple structure
- Press conferences: for important statistics
- Release calendar (30% in Africa)
- Press office/spokesman (one voice)
- User education/improving statistical literacy (57% in Africa)
- Monitoring dissemination through the media

## The Government

- Statistics is essential for planning (e.g. expected annual school enrollment)
- Statistics to evaluate government performance
- Line ministries
- Regional and local authorities

## The Government (cont'd)

- Many of the measures needed/wanted are difficult to compile and often need controversial assumptions (e.g. any forecasts)
- NSO should establish close partnership with experts within and outside the government

## The business community

- Data on their competitors
- Data on the market
- Finding the right attributes:
  - number of employed per unit of profit
  - composition of market (home vs. abroad)

## The business community (cont'd)

- Large businesses:  
needs similar to Ministry of Finance
- Small businesses:  
Usually need more detailed information
  - more work
  - confidentiality issues
- Special unit for small/large businesses

## The research community

- More interested in metadata than other users:  
Methodology, data manipulation, errors, etc.
- Anonymized micro data – a new challenge:
  - great potential for research
  - confidentiality issues
  - who pays?
- Cooperation is of mutual benefit

## International organizations

- Provide methodological guidance
- Possibly provides funds
- Needs of this user should not dictate the national plan
- Usually a special unit for international relations

## The private market: Why bother?

- Official statistics as a public good
- Increased usage of official statistics leads to better development
- Potential revenues

## Marketing principles

- Relevance, timeliness
- Reliability
- Transparency
- Confidentiality
- Responsiveness to new demands

## How to best liaise with/serve users

- User council (different shapes and sizes)
- Planning: annual and multi-annual work plans
- Reliability: Release calendar
- Dissemination policy (target users)
- Seeking regular user feedback (user satisfaction survey)
- Specialized units for each user?
- Flexibility to address ad hoc requests

## Meeting user needs – a challenge

*“In general, statistical agencies must resist the temptation to compile information that is understandable and amenable to count but uninteresting from the point of view of the policy and decision makers.”*

## For discussion:

- Are the user needs mentioned the needs that you find in your country?
- Who are your most important users?
- How do you find out about their needs?
- How do you address their needs?
  
- Do you offer/are you planning to offer anonymized microdata sets to researchers?