



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS

**Global Consultation
Draft Guidelines on
Integrated Economic
Statistics**

Comment Form

Draft Guidelines on Integrated Economic Statistics

Send responses to: sna@un.org

Deadline: 10 January 2011

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To submit responses please save the completed form and send it as an attachment to the following e-mail address: sna@un.org by Monday, 10 January 2011. You are encouraged to submit a short response to the questions (yes/no/no comment) even if you have no further comments to offer in the comment boxes. Please focus your comments on substantive issues since a final edit of the Guidelines will be conducted after the February 2011 Statistical Commission meeting.

Relevant documents

The draft publication is available on the global consultation website:
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/ies/>

Questions

1. Do you agree that the *Guidelines* covers well the practical aspects and experiences of the integration of economic statistics?

Yes ☒ No ☐ No comment ☐

Comment:

This has the potential to be a very useful initiative at the international level and a welcome step for UN to take the lead. This exercise can immensely help improving cross-country comparison of statistics, provided the concepts and standards are developed (benchmarks) and agreed upon by the countries (NSOs, for example). While this is a challenge, it is an opportunity too. From a user point of view, a major challenge in official statistics systems lies in meeting the multiple objectives of a variety of data users while dealing with constraints faced by statistics offices, including capacity, funding and independence issues.

We also feel that the Guidelines could have more of a focus on developing countries. In their present form, the Guidelines miss out on the specific circumstance and challenges facing developing countries, and in that light does not cover to the full extent the practical aspects and experiences of the integration of statistics.

In addition, while integration and coordination are certainly useful and should be supported

for a minimum "core" of indicators, local "satellite" indicators and data can also be recommended allowing for localized specificity and needs, with examples.

2. Do you consider that the *Guidelines* takes due note of the difficulties faced by countries in the integrated collection, compilation and dissemination of economic statistics?

Yes ☐ **Partly** ☒ No ☐ **No comment** ☐

Comment:

The guidelines do consider some key difficulties faced by countries, in both centralised and decentralised statistics systems. However, the following also needs to be considered:

Objectives are different: Objectives of governments and the briefs of national and sub-national statics offices, on the one hand and needs of international data differ. Similarly, objectives of statistics offices and data users differ. Traditionally, data producers were required to serve the needs of economic ministries / agriculture ministries, for macro policies. MDG-type social statistics, increased differentiation in population/demographic data are more recent demands from users.

Capacities vary: Technical, financial and institutional capacities of national statistics offices vary considerably across countries. Some of the issues relate to building consensus around definitions and terminology. While some countries are ahead in setting up advanced statistical systems for production and dissemination of data, such as using computer and internet based mechanisms, such capacity need to be strengthened for other countries, especially the smaller countries. Competing budgetary priorities often result in underfunding or uncertainties regarding funding continuity.

Independence and sensitivity: This is also an issue faced by data producers. Political sensitivity of data remains a concern in many countries which can restrict tabulations, disaggregation, etc., even when there is agreement on indicators and definitions. What is sensitive varies by local contexts.

3. Were there any aspects of integration which you feel have not been sufficiently well-covered?

Yes ☒ **X** ☐ No ☐ **No comment** ☐

Comment:

Meeting data needs in emerging areas:

There is a need to address the requirements of data in areas like climate change, migration, urbanization (people without an address), and gender-based data on empowerment? Moreover, priorities of users versus producers of data in emerging areas need to be integrated. For example, (a) statistics offices provide population data or national accounts data by sectors/provinces, but these are not by climate zones; (b) urbanization and migration are contributing to large-scale population movements and individuals without an address or citizenship. Local CSOs and programme offices have information that can be valuable but these are not validated through official systems. Better integration would help assessing people's sensitivity to climate change impact and capture valuable information in other emerging areas. While planning to integrate different statistics sources, we hope that enough consideration is given to develop databases from a user's perspective.

Normalizing / adjusting data:

Any adjustment to source data (e.g., through modelling or using deflators) while integrating statistics should be presented in annexes and/or referred to clearly. This will help better understanding the utility of data and also makes it more credible depending on the purpose.

Another issue that is not explicitly addressed relates to backward revision of data in the presence of new census or survey data. For instance when household surveys generate new CPI weights, these new weights are often inconsistently used for the revision of time series.

4. Do you find the case studies useful and practical?

Yes ☒X_____ No _____ No comment _____

Comment:

The case studies are useful, such as the one on integrating agriculture into national statistics system in chapter 3. Advocacy and capacity development initiatives could make this effective across countries.

However, it may be quite a challenge for countries to agree to such an approach as it can involve substantial resources to implement. Are international organisations going to help the countries in such an initiative?

One practical suggestion for case studies is to include specifically “who should do what” so expected roles are clearly articulated. This needs to be elaborated in assessing national statistical systems on a case-by-case basis.

5. Would you like to make or seek any specific elaborations in Chapter 1 to Chapter 7 or in the Annexes?

Yes ☒X_____ No _____ No comment _____

Comment:

Chapter 1: Summary

Chapter 2: Introduction

Chapter 3:

1. “The functions and responsibilities of the lead statistical agency in the country can be carried out more efficiently if it is supported in this role by institutional arrangements such as advisory committees, relationship meetings, memorandums of understanding, service level agreements and through technical cooperation.”

Comment: We hope that the advisory committee proposed will include people who are data users, including planning unit, finance unit, sectoral units, external users, etc. It would also be worth including dissemination unit, having IT and technical expertise right through the planning and conceptual process.

2. Countries with Decentralized systems

“Under this arrangement, a particular agency is usually charged with the responsibility of coordinating the statistical activities of the various departments.”

Comment: It is indeed a challenge to synchronize statistics activities of various government departments into one particular standard. Please provide examples of good practices of this, which may encourage others to follow.

3. *Case study 1:*

“Remote-sensing products could be used to create an area frame consisting of a digitized data layer divided into land cover or land use data layers, such as cropland, pastureland, forests, built-up areas, villages and other agreed upon classifications...”

Comment: Could it be presented by climate-sensitive zones? The idea is to make data useful for various domains of research and policy analysis.

4. “Unless concepts and classifications applying to several subject-matter areas of statistics are standardized within a coherent logical system, statistical data cannot be structured to meet the needs of users for aggregated data or for compatible data from various fields.”

Comment: This is a key challenge for integrating statistics; greater advocacy and capacity development of national statistics is required.

Chapter 4:

1. NSOs - “The changes required towards such integrated systems are not only technical, but also organizational.”

Comment: This is well recognized in the guidelines. Institutional arrangements are critical for implementation.

2. *International arrangements for the integration of economic statistics*

“The development of international statistical standards or recommendations is the necessary first step and requires wide international consultation to ensure universality in terms of relevance, applicability and feasibility of implementation.”

Comment: International benchmarking is critical. Good practices from across the region could be compiled and assessed. It is often possible that one reporting practice in one country could be considered as a good practice, but the similar practice may not be considered as a good practice in another country. Therefore, interaction, communication and coordination among countries are required to document, assess and come up with benchmarks. Recently, in December 2010, ESCAP, ADB and UNDP joint initiative held a high level consultation on similar theme, which aims at systematically documenting and disseminating good practices on the use of statistical data for policy analysis and advocacy.

Chapter 5:

Statistical production processes

Chapter 6:

Dissemination and communication

Chapter 7:

Principles into practice

Annexes: Click here and start typing