

Update of the World Bank's Report on the International Comparison Program February 2002

Summary

1. This report highlights the progress that has been made by the World Bank and other agencies to launch a new round of the International Comparison Program (ICP) in developing countries between 2002 and 2005. It provides an update of the information provided to the Commission in November 2001 (in document E/CN.3/2002/11).

Regional Work Programs

2. Since November, work has concentrated on developing regional proposals and work programs and significant progress has been made. Each of the regional implementing agencies has drafted detailed programs with budgets setting what has to be done and when.
 - **Africa** – The African Development Bank (AfDB), in close collaboration with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), has prepared a plan to maximize the synergy between the ICP and national statistical programs under a comprehensive strategy of national statistical capacity building. The African program builds on and deepens the statistical capacity-building component of the new ICP strategic framework. The regional program aims to raise substantial additional resources.
 - **Asia and the Pacific** – A plan is underway to adopt ICP as a flagship regional statistical capacity-building initiative in Asia and the Pacific. The region has established an interim committee to move the regional proposal forward until a regional governing body can be established. The ad hoc committee consists of delegates from five NSOs (China, India, Indonesia, Australia and Japan) and five delegates from regional and international institutions (ESCAP, ADB, SIAP, ASEAN, and the World Bank). The Australian Bureau of Statistics has offered to provide substantial technical assistance.
 - **The Middle East** – The UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is making preparations to hold a special regional meeting for price and national accounts experts in August 2002 to discuss the regional program, establish a regional governing body, and plan the implementation of the regional exercise. The region plans to adopt the ICP as a regional capacity-building vehicle.
 - **Latin America and the Caribbean** – The UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has drafted a regional proposal and work plan for Latin America and the Caribbean region. A plan is underway to mobilize additional resources and to establish partnerships with the broad community of stakeholders, including regional and sub-regional organizations.
 - **Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)** – The work in the CIS region is jointly coordinated by the CIS Statistical Committee and by the Russian Goskomstat. A regional proposal and detailed work plan has been drafted.

Research and Development

3. As noted in document E/CN.3/2002/11, a number of research papers and pilot studies have been undertaken to conduct thorough and wide-ranging reviews of key issues related to survey framework, compilation of expenditure weights, and alternative regional linking procedures. In addition, price capture software has been developed and a web site built (www.worldbank.org/data/icp).
4. Immediately following the UNSC meeting, an International Conference will be held in Washington to discuss and comment on the findings of recent papers and pilot studies, with a view to establishing clarity and consensus. Twenty-two papers and pilot studies will be presented. Participants of the conference include staff from international organizations, regional agencies, national statistical offices, and from academia. The ultimate objective is to publish an ICP guidebook that will provide a set of principles and operational procedures that can guide data collection and processing, document best practices, and serve as comprehensive reference material and a step-by-step compilation guidebook.
5. The conference will be followed by an expert group meeting. The expert group meeting has two objectives. The first objective is to discuss organizational issues, including the establishment of technical advisory group and a global and regional management structure, and the coordination of regional and global work plans. This will be attended by regional coordinators, international agencies and interested NSOs. The second objective is to take stock of the discussion at the conference in order to prepare recommendations on outstanding technical issues regarding the planning and implementation of the proposed round of ICP surveys.

Financing

6. Progress has been made on the fund-raising front as well. Since November 2001, \$1.3 million has been pledged by regional agencies, and an additional \$390,000 has been provided by the World Bank for research-related activities. This brings the amount pledged or committed so far to \$8.2 million, 59% of the target. The World Bank has also submitted an application for \$3 million funding from the Development Grant Facility. This is currently under review, but has already received high-level support within the Bank. If this is approved as expected, it would bring the total pledge to \$11.2 million, 81% of the target. Promising discussions are underway with international organizations and bilateral donors. The World Bank believes that there is now adequate support and sufficient likelihood of the remaining funds being found to proceed with launching a new round of the ICP in 2002.

Governance Arrangements

7. A draft outline for governance arrangements has been prepared by the World Bank. The draft will be discussed with regional and international agencies at an expert group meeting scheduled for 14-15 March 2002 in Washington, immediately following the International Conference on ICP. Given the responses received, the document should be finalized by the end of April and shared with the Friends of the Chair for their views and comments. It is anticipated that the global governing body will be established by the end of May.