

Panel on Measuring Critical Social Issues Experiences and Challenges (Ghana)

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The presentation....

- Focuses on two major challenges that the Ghana Statistical Service faces in the production of social statistics in a decentralized system
 - Responding to the ever changing policy needs for district level data
 - Increasing its sphere of influence in decentralized statistical and political systems of administration
- Discusses how some of these challenges are being addressed

Statistical system in Ghana

- The Statistical Service has the mandate to coordinate statistical activities in the country
- Government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) are required by law to establish statistics and research units in their institution
 - Several MDAs are yet to establish these units
- These statistics units operate independent of each other and of the Statistical Service
- Under the Government's decentralization policy, MDAs, including the Ghana Statistical Service have to maintain offices at the district level
- Data collection and compilation by the sector ministries are decentralized to the districts

The decentralization process

- The number of districts has changed from 65 originally, to 110 at the time of the 2000 population census, to 138 in 2004, and 168 this year
- The creation of district statistical offices has not kept pace with the creation of new districts; there are to date only about 60 district statistical offices
- There are no data on the population size and characteristics of the newly created districts. As the new districts resulted from the partitioning of the old, about two-thirds of the districts do not have basic population (demographic and social) statistics on them
- Acts governing the work of sector ministries do not oblige them to consider GSS data requirements (marriage and divorce statistics, crime and justice statistics)

Coping in a decentralized system

- Two dimensions of decentralization each poses a challenge
 - Operating a decentralized statistical system
 - GSS has neither administrative nor technical association with the statistical units of the MDAs
 - Data collection from the MDAs not effective (the little data provided are subject to long delays)
 - Statistical information dispersed across the system, and not easily/readily accessible to users
 - Contrasts the more centralized system of the sixties and seventies, when staff of GSS were posted to the statistics units of the MDAs

Production of social statistics a major challenge in many respects

- Social statistics deals with a vast range of subjects some traditional but many are new topics
- Many of the fields fall within policy areas covered by sector ministries
- Quantitative data routinely collected by sector ministries, not generally valued as relevant sources of statistics
- When compiled, the statistics are primarily to meet internal (institution's) needs/mandates
- The Statistical Service of Ghana has little control or influence on how the data are collected, compiled and made available to other producers such as the NSO or users

Effectiveness of the GSS in the decentralized system

- The administrative system of government was previously decentralized to the regional level (10 regions) and GSS has therefore maintained well functioning offices in all ten districts.
- At the regional level, GSS has strong links to the governmental administrative system
 - With the Regional Statistician a member of the Regional Planning Coordinating Units
- Decentralization to the district level is a more recent phenomenon
 - Statistical offices at the district level not fully functional, while many are not yet staffed
 - District offices not strong enough to play a significant role in districts
- Ultimately all district officers of the MDAs are to be administratively under the District Assemblies

Disaggregation to the lowest geographical level a big challenge

- Supporting Government' decentralization policy requires making data available at the minimum, at the district level
- There are various geographical classifications for which data are required
 - from the standard (national, regional, localities), to
 - administrative domains (districts), and
 - political domains (electoral areas)
- Yet the system not really set up to provide basic data routinely enough, and certainly not easily at the district level
 - So far only the population census could provide the necessary data, but is every ten years
 - Sample surveys would have to be extremely large to get district level estimates, and has been done for only one such survey, the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ)
 - In any case, there is a limited range of statistics available from the sample population/household surveys
 - There is growing interest in small area estimation
- The regular production of statistics at the district level hampered by the continuous creation of new districts

First main area of concern

- Influencing the sector ministries in their production of statistics, with respect to:
 - Maximizing the value of their administrative systems by generating statistics from the routine information that are collected (crime and justice statistics, land registration, savings, credit and loans)
 - Modifying the way administrative data are compiled to yield maximum benefit
 - Harmonizing standards on concepts, definitions and classification
 - Establishing data sharing protocols to make administrative data more easily accessible to users

Increasing GSS influence in the national statistical system

- Setting up of the National Advisory Committee of Producers and Users of Statistics (NACPUS)
- Establishment of Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to support and contribute to the compilation of statistics for the maintenance of the GhanaInfo database
- Preparation of a national plan for the development of statistics which GSS is coordinating (covers the entire statistical system)

Second main area of concern

- Responding to the policy needs in statistics in a decentralized system of administration
 - Compiling data at the lowest level of administration (districts)
 - Provision of trend data for districts (as the number of districts and their boundaries keep changing)
 - With the creation of new districts the main challenge is not only to provide current data on the 168 districts, but also to estimate some basic indicators for these district for previous years (at least from the 2000 population census)
 - Requirement changes significantly the scope of the 2010 census mapping. In addition to the regular demarcation of the enumeration areas, GSS has to take the lead (working with the Ministry of Local Government and Survey Department) to delineate the new district boundaries.
 - This puts GSS in the middle of potentially contentious situations

Next steps

- Focus on dissemination and responding to policy needs
- System-wide strategic plan is key to GSS gaining back some influence
- GSS would need to provide technical leadership to regain its central role
- Reconcile differences in laws and acts governing the collection of statistical information
- Strengthen inter-ministerial mechanism for better coordination and data sharing