AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP
GROUPE DE LA BANQUE AFRICAINE
DE DÉVELOPPEMENT

The 54th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission

Title of Event	A Network of Data Innovation Labs in Africa
Date	02/03/2023
Time	8:15 - 9:30 am
Venue	TBC
Chair	**Mr. KOUAKOU, Koua Louis** Acting Director, AfDB Statistics Department

At the 54th Session of the United Nations Statistics Commission, Africa will hold a side event that aims to make a contribution to the Fourth Edition of the United Nations Handbook on Management and Organization of National Statistical Systems which currently under construction. In this context we observe the transition from earlier versions of the Handbook of Statistical Organization series. The 3rd edition of this series like its predecessor versions is titled A Study of the Organisation of National Statistical Services and Related Management Issues. The fourth edition makes a distinct departure from its three predecessors.

This departure is not only significant, but it is monumental. It reflects the massive and sudden impact that information technology has had on statistical operations. Statistical however, are no strangers to information technology. In fact, they led the technological advancements. They propelled large scale data processing innovations such as in scanning technologies which have now expanded into more complex imaging technologies with applications in intelligent character recognition and machine learning. They also innovated in a special way in geographic information systems that has now spawned remote sensing and sophisticated navigation systems. The context of big data by far dwarfs the earlier slow paced incremental changes and has catapulted official statistics into a fast paced lane of technology and data. The transition is significant and just the nomenclature in the fourth edition explains the transition.

Chapter four of the handbook introduces the concept of a national statistics system. This concept was never referred to in the first and second edition of the Handbook series of official

statistics. Even the predecessor edition of this the fourth edition referred to the national statistical system only three times in its 205 pages whilst national statistics office or offices have a mention of nineteen times. In the fourth Edition however, the national statistical system or systems are mentioned 408 times which is 136 times more, compared to its earlier predecessor, the third edition. The national statistics office or offices is mentioned 200 times in this nine hundred odd paged document. There is no doubt that the preponderance of the word systems or system suggests that we are in a different space where the *office tribe* has had to die in order for the *systems collaborative* to live. And the mention of office which has been preponderant in this the fourth edition is made in a subsidiary context to the system.

The first edition, however, did take account of the national statistics office and its role in the management of statistical units in different departments. These were under the supervision of a national statistician. There is little doubt therefore that the notion of a system existed but this context suggests that there ought to have been a constraint in making this an explicit attribute in language and in the respective statistics laws of countries. In time, especially in English speaking Africa, the role of the National Statistics Office diminished relative to the statistical units in line departments, and the office depended on the host departments to pay the statistics staff. Thus, contributing to a precipitous decline of the authority of the national statistics office.

What then is Africa bringing to the world? Africa through the Africa Information Highway (AIH), which has been led by the African Development Bank (AfDB), has embarked on a programme, the aim of which should culminate into a network of Data Innovation Labs (DIL). The DIL should constitute an institutional framework and ecosystem out of which a cadre of data innovation leaders will be borne. The DIL is focused on three areas namely, address friction, capture once use and reuse and augment. This three-pronged approach is aimed at resolving three major challenges related to leaving many behind. In order therefore to leave no one behind the DIL will place its energies in the short to medium term on addressing a triple D-Challenge of Distance, Disempowerment and Disaster. In our estimation, this approach should define and yield a Data Maturity Model of choice for Africa.

In constructing and framing the DIL framework, the research benefited immensely from the Fourth Edition itself. And more importantly discussions were held and sought experiences from others. In this regard we gained important insights from the World Bank, UNICEF and WHO.

The under construction DIL, has gone through some iterations. The first iteration has been with the research team itself with the African Development Bank in September. The second iteration was with a select of heads of National Statistics Offices in February in Addis. This is the third iteration, and this will assist immensely in testing the validity and veracity or otherwise of the content, form and direction the DIL is taking and contribute to the overall discussion of the UNSC especially in as far as the construction of the fourth edition.

	A Network of Data Innovation Labs in Africa Chair: Koua Louis KOUAKOU, Acting Director, AfDB Statistics Department	
8.15 – 8.20	**Introduction from the Chair**	
8.20 – 8.35	**Presentations from the African Development Bank**	**Presenters**
		Mr. Rafik MAHJOUBI
		Mr. Pali LEHOHLA
		Mr. Mohamed Ali Haj TAIEB
8.35 – 9.00	**Discussants**	**Mr. Boureima OUEDRAOGO**, Director General of Statistics Burkina Faso
		Mr. Risenga MALULEKE, Statistician-General and Head of Statistics South Africa
		Ms. Haishan Fu, Chief Statistician of the World Bank and Director of the Development Data Group, Development Economics
		Mr. Mark Hereward, Chief Data Officer, Associate Director, Division of Data, Analysis, Planning and Monitoring
		Mr. Steve MacFeely, Director of Data and Analytics at the World Health Organization (WHO)
9.00 – 09.25	**Questions and Answers**	
9.25 – 09.30	**Closing remarks from the Chair**	