

G. Strengthening regional capacities for statistical development (Department of Economic and Social Affairs)

Objectives

51. The project's objective is to develop a South-East Asian statistical information exchange network to strengthen capacities to respond to data needs in the subregion and to support regional training in the area of statistics. It will play a critical role in the region's statistical development and contribute to more standardized and comparable statistics in such areas as poverty, informal sector, national accounts, environment and gender issues. The network will link national statistical offices, regional research training institutions which deal with statistics; provide a forum for exchanging information and experiences in the development and application of concepts and methods for collection, analysis and dissemination of data; strengthen the capacity within the region to develop a common approach to basic data collection, analysis and dissemination; enhance the effectiveness of existing intercountry statistics programmes; strengthen regional capability to produce analytical reports on the state of the environment, trade, informal sector, employment,

social conditions and gender; build through training and collaborative work, a pool of experts in the region, comprised of actively functional expert groups, organized by domains or issues; upgrade technology to create a platform for communication for data exchange and dissemination, including joint analytical regional publications, in print and electronic media.

Background

52. There have been significant improvements in national statistical systems in recent years. While availability of data has generally increased, there are still significant gaps in data on such critical issues as poverty, environment, informal sector, national accounts, and gender equality. There is also substantial variation in the level of statistical development among countries and within regions and subregions in the developing world. This, however, provides opportunities for South-South cooperation whereby countries with more established systems provide technical support, in areas of their strength, to other interested countries.

53. The recent global United Nations conferences and the adoption of standards and definitions for collecting and analyzing statistics call for statistical systems to adopt new methods and topics for data collection and

estimations. In a recent informal session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), involving panel presentations and discussions, the meeting stressed the need to develop a common set of indicators for the review of the global conferences follow-up. The meeting acknowledged that it would be necessary to adopt a regional approach to defining the relevant set and called for the involvement of countries themselves to ensure ownership of the resulting output. The meeting further stressed the need to build statistical capacity of countries through technical cooperation, training, and south-south cooperation.

Relation to medium-term plan

54. The proposal is consistent with the scope and priorities of the medium-term plan under Programme 28 (Economic and social affairs), subprogramme 28.5 (Statistics).

Expected accomplishments

55. The implementation of the project will enhance the regional and subregional capacities of South-East Asia in the area of statistical development, particularly by building a critical mass of expertise in specific domains of statistics; ensure the development of a common

approach of countries of the region to data collection, analysis and dissemination; strengthen the region's capacity to produce analytical reports on major economic and social issues; and upgrade communication linkages among the region's national statistical offices.

Duration

56. The anticipated duration of the project is 2000-2002.

Activities

57. The project will be executed by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, jointly with the ASEAN Secretariat. The partners in the project will collaborate with ESCAP, other regional institutions, international agencies and bilateral donors supporting statistical development in the region.

58. The following activities will be carried out:

(a) Assessment of needs and concerns of countries and relevant capacities available in the region, existing synergies and main constraints. The results of the assessment will be discussed in a meeting to define

the strategy, scope and modalities in the development of the regional network. Another meeting is proposed to be held before the completion of the project to review progress in the implementation of the network and consider subsequent actions to enhance the regional cooperation in statistical development;

(b) Development and conduct of training programmes, including a series of workshops on production, analysis and dissemination of statistics and indicators, focusing on topics to be selected by countries themselves (such as measurement of poverty, informal sector, implementation of the 1993 system of national accounts, trade and environment statistics);

(c) Organization of expert groups on topics to be identified by countries with the view to exchanging experiences and updating Member States on recent developments at the national, regional and international levels in respective fields of statistical development. This will contribute to building a critical mass of experts in specific domains of statistics;

(d) Establishing communication linkages within the intra-regional network, through providing and/or upgrading information technology and related equipment, between staff of the regional community

Secretariat and national statistical offices, for more effective and user-friendly transmission of information, exchange of experiences and expertise;

(e) Undertaking specialised analysis on specific issues of concern to the region (e.g., poverty, informal sector, trade), highlighting common development experiences as well as differences; identifying weaknesses and suggesting areas for policy attention; determining good practices and ways to adapt them in other interested countries. Such analysis will contribute to a more efficient utilization of available data and help identify data gaps;

(f) Development of modules for basic statistical training programmes to be used by regional training institutions on a regular basis;

(g) Arranging for training fellowships for regional and national experts participating in a regional statistics training programme, and/or study tours for hands-on training in countries within the region;

(h) Provision of advisory services to interested countries in the field of basic data production and the related use of technology.

Resource requirements
(In US \$)

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General temporary assistance to provide technical support to the ASEAN Secretariat on statistical issue (estimated at 20 workmonths at \$8,750,per month). (In support of activities (a) to (h)).	175,000
Expert services, for assessment of needs, development of training materials and conducting training (estimated at 12 workmonths at \$9,170 per month). (In support of activity (a)).	110,000
Organization of two 3-day expert group meetings on strategy, plan of action and review of progress on the project (estimated 15-18 participants per meeting) at a cost of \$37,500 per meeting). (In support of activity (a)).	75,000
Organization of four 5-day expert group meetings (with 15 experts in each) including gender specialists for the development of methods, review of findings and regional reports (estimated at \$70,000 per meeting). (In support of activity (b)).	280,000
Travel of staff and technical advisers to provide technical and administrative support to the activities in the field (estimated at \$45,000 per year to support ten missions). (In support of activities (b), (c), and (g)).	90,000
General operating expenses for supplies, materials, printing of reports, reproduction and other miscellaneous services. (In support of activities (a) to (h)).	70,000
Acquisition of equipment, both hardware and software requirements, to update technology and improve the regional network with network servers, power supplies, desktop hardware components and Internet connectivity hardware. (In support of activity (d)).	200,000
Organization of four 2-week regional training workshops, of 20-22 participants each and 12 resource persons, to provide training in specific fields identified by countries (estimated at a	360,000

cost of \$90,000 per workshop). (In support of activity (f)).

Fellowships and study tours (one-month study courses or two-week study tours for the total of 20-22 experts). (In support of activity (g)). 140,000

Summary

General temporary assistance	175,000
Expert services	110,000
Ad hoc expert group meetings	355,000
Travel	90,000
General operating expenses	70,000
Equipment	200,000
Grants, fellowships and contributions	500,000
Total	1,500,000