

DA Project AF – 5^{th+} Tranche

**Building Statistical Capacity in the Low Income
Countries of South East Asia**

Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Statistics Division

Extract from Project document

October 2008

Executive Summary

Project Title:	Building Statistical Capacity in the Low Income Countries of South East Asia.
Duration:	3 years (2008-2011)
Participating countries:	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Timor-Leste, Myanmar, and Vietnam
Executing Agency:	The project will be executed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division (DESA/SD) in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).
Co-operating Agencies:	DESA/SD and ESCAP
National Counterpart Institutions:	National Statistical Offices (NSOs)
Funding from Development Account:	US\$ 435,000
Approval by the General Assembly:	A/62/6 (Section 34) - 5 th tranche DA project G

Recognizing the importance of high quality statistics, and their effective use, in promoting the evidence-based socio-economic policies and achieving internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the overall objective of the project is to strengthen and sustain the capacity of the Low Income Countries (LICs) of South East Asia for the production, analysis and dissemination of benchmark statistics in support of said goals.

This project represents a new approach to capacity development activities by DESA focusing directly on LICs where assistance is more urgently needed; bringing in established regional and multi-lateral development partners with significant technical and financial resources; and encouraging the development of a South-South cooperation platform. For the five target countries, it will further develop the national statistical system, in particular with respect to collection and compilation of basic economic statistics; and will help increase statistical capacity in six critical areas, namely (i) tourism statistics; (ii) industrial statistics; (iii) distributive trade statistics, (iv) international trade statistics, (v) the national accounts framework and (vi) MDGs-related statistics.

This project will be executed in collaboration with the ESCAP regional commission, the ASEAN secretariat, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The activities have been discussed with the partner organizations.

3. Main project activities

1. The expected accomplishment will be achieved through the implementation of specific activities described below comprising (i) regional workshops involving the five target countries; (ii) provision of materials on practices in implementation of international standards; (iii) technical advisory mission; (iv) exchange of staff among statistical offices; and (v) improving Internet connectivity of NSOs and statistical units of line ministries. The activities were identified, at this stage, based on desk research, lessons learnt from previous similar projects and DESA/SD's and ESCAP's regular dialogue with national statisticians in the region.

3.5.1. Conducting workshops on practices in implementing international standards

2. The six regional workshops for staff of NSOs of the five targeted countries will identify and review relevant practices in implementation of international standards in order to improve their technical capabilities. The workshops may focus on:

- a) Tourism statistics;
- b) Industrial statistics;
- c) Distributive trade statistics;
- d) International trade statistics;
- e) National Accounting framework and its relation to the national statistical system
- f) MDGs-related statistics.

3. In the workshops on tourism, industry, distributive trade and international trade statistics, the common theme will be the implementation of the new international standards. The workshop on National Accounting framework and its relation to the national statistical system will focus on how to improve the existing systems for better collection, processing and dissemination of economic statistics consistent with the updated System of National Accounts.

4. Workshops may be alternatively organized in each participating country so that country practices can be shared.

3.5.2. Production of materials on best practices

5. The workshops mentioned in the previous paragraphs should lead to production by participating NSOs of national practices handbooks and/or guidelines specific for the region, mainly obtained through guided outlines prepared by UNSD. Other guidelines and best practices, which were outcomes of similar events which took place in recent years, should also be collected. All such materials should be presented in easy accessible form on the ESCAP and ASEAN websites.

3.5.3. Technical advisory missions

6. Targeted technical advisory services will be provided to countries, as required, by consultants or by staff of DESA/UNSD, ADB or ESCAP, to strengthen national institutions in the implementation of international statistical standards specifically in areas of governance, specific statistics fields, data collection, processing and dissemination, and database management.

3.5.4. Exchange of staff between statistical offices

7. The proposed project will promote the exchange of staff among statistical offices of these LICs to encourage the use of common statistical methodologies, to strengthen South-South cooperation and to facilitate exchange of information on international standards in the above listed thematic areas. In particular, it is envisioned that staff of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Timor-Leste will visit the General Statistical Office in Vietnam to receive hands-on instructions on data collection, processing and dissemination methods.

3.5.4. Increased use of ICT

8. Well functioning ICT facilities at the NSOs is a pre-requisite for statisticians to be more effective in the exchange and sharing of information with offices of other countries. It is for this reason that the project will assist those NSOs, in need, by providing them with the necessary computer equipments and software to connect to the internet.