

## **H. Strengthening statistical capacity in support of progress towards the internationally agreed development goals in the countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation**

**Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (\$683,900)**

### **Background**

29. The availability of good-quality statistics and the capacity of Governments, donors and international organizations to systematically measure, monitor and report reliable statistics and indicators lies at the heart of development policy and the achievement of the internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. In recent years, the Millennium Development Goals have succeeded in raising awareness of the importance of statistics for evidence-based policymaking. However, the current situation of statistical services constrains the effectiveness and achievement of national development planning and policy in many countries, especially in the poorest ones, where effective development policy interventions matter most. A substantial gap still exists between the need for statistics and monitoring tools and the ability of most countries in the SAARC region to routinely provide them.
30. SAARC aims to accelerate the process of economic and social development in its member States. This project is designed to improve the availability and reliability of basic data required for development planning in the SAARC region, with special emphasis on data requirements relating to the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The project is also aimed at facilitating networking within the region through interactive sharing and management of knowledge and at strengthening links between producers and users of statistics. The project builds upon lessons learned from five statistical development projects implemented or being implemented by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the CARICOM, ASEAN, ESCWA, ECOWAS and SADC regions. All of those

projects have been successful in strengthening the regional network of statisticians, increasing intraregional statistical cooperation and raising the regional profile of statistics. They have also provided those regions with an impetus in statistical capacity-building as shown by the number of region-led follow-up projects.

<p><b>Objective of the Organization:</b> To strengthen the capacity of countries and relevant regional institutions in the SAARC region for the production and analysis, on a regular basis, of benchmark statistics required for national development planning and for monitoring progress towards the internationally agreed development goals.</p>	<p><b>Summary budget</b> (Thousands of United States dollars)</p> <table> <tr> <td>Consultants</td> <td style="text-align: right;">69.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Travel</td> <td style="text-align: right;">139.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contractual services</td> <td style="text-align: right;">30.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Equipment</td> <td style="text-align: right;">87.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Operating expenses</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Study tours</td> <td style="text-align: right;">48.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Workshops</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>300.0</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><b>683.9</b></td> </tr> </table>	Consultants	69.0	Travel	139.5	Contractual services	30.4	Equipment	87.0	Operating expenses	10.0	Study tours	48.0	Workshops	<u>300.0</u>	<b>Total</b>	<b>683.9</b>
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<p><b>Relationship to the biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2008-2009 and the Millennium Development Goals:</b> Department of Economic and Social Affairs subprogramme 5 (Statistics); ESCAP subprogramme 2 (Statistics).</p>																	

Expected accomplishments of the Secretariat	Indicators of achievement
(a) Improved organization of statistical systems and user-producer relationships, resulting in quality, timely and relevant data on internationally agreed development goals	(a) Increased volume of official statistical data for tracking progress towards the internationally agreed development goals used by statistical systems
(b) Increased adoption of international statistical methods and standards for knowledge management in relation to the measurement of progress towards the internationally agreed development goals	(b) Increased number of national statistical offices using common statistical definitions and methodologies and platforms for data and metadata exchange and dissemination

### Main activities

31. The main activities of the project will include:
- (a) Organizing four training workshops for staff of national statistical offices to improve their technical capabilities in the collection of demographic, social and economic statistics and the harmonization of development indicators; in the organization of statistical systems; and in user-producer relationships;
  - (b) Establishing a network of experts in statistics-related information technology to promote knowledge management in the region in the form of common platforms for data and metadata exchange and the sharing of information on methodologies and statistical analysis;
  - (c) Providing technical assistance to strengthen national and regional institutions in the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics and the use and maintenance of technology;
  - (d) Organizing intraregional study tours to draw on the strengths and achievements of countries in the region. This will allow staff from statistically less developed countries to learn from other countries' experiences and see examples of best practices in selected statistical fields.