

Managing a Statistical Organisation in Times of Change

***Strengthening the Institutional and Organisational Frameworks of
National Statistical Systems – The Experience of Malawi***

By

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7th October 2019

Outline

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- NSS and the Legal Framework
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Background

- NSS was first launched in Malawi on 18th November 2006, during commemoration of the African Statistics Day, as a framework for coordination, harmonization, standardisation and integration of official statistics
- The NSS refers to public agencies responsible for producing, analysing, disseminating and using statistics, and encompasses the statistical outputs produced and the people involved, including both producers and users of statistics (2013 National Statistics Act)
- Ideally, NSS comprises: Producers of statistics (MDAs, private and public agencies), data users (key users such as policy and decision makers), data suppliers (including establishments and households), research and training institutions (including universities and Colleges)

Background (Cont'd)

- The Act obligates NSO to be the central depository of all official statistics produced and disseminated in Malawi; it further empowers the Commissioner of Statistics to endorse as official all statistical information produced in MDAs and by other producers upon certification of quality
- The Act also says that any public, private or foreign institution wishing to conduct any statistical survey on a national scale shall first seek the approval of the Commissioner of Statistics for the appropriateness of conducting such surveys and the methodology to be used
- The NSS seeks to provide high quality data for evidence-based policy design, monitoring and evaluation of national and international development frameworks (MGDS, SDGs) and decision making

NSS and the Institutional Framework

- **Statistical Common Service:** Establishment of statistical units in Planning Directorates of MDAs/secondment of NSO staff in government MDAs; SCS was touted as an excellent mechanism for coordination and development of statistics in Malawi (Independent end-term evaluation report of the 2013-17 NSS SP by UNECA, PARIS21 and AfDB, April 2018); requiring support, strengthening and monitoring
- **Upgrading of the Post of Commissioner:** Follows approval of the new NSO Functional Review; this will ensure sufficient high hierarchical standing with senior level access to political authorities and administrative public bodies
- **Statistical activities are guided by strategic planning**– First SP for 2008-12 after the national launch of NSSs in 2006; second for 2013-17; third for 2018-22 being finalised (launch expected in November 2019)

NSS and the Legal Framework

- **Revision of Statistics Act:** Act was revised from 1967; Passed by Parliament in 2013 (2013 National Statistics Act), giving more authority to NSO
- Legally, NSS in Malawi was first established in the 2013 National Statistics Act
- Although not explicit, MDAs draw mandate from the National Statistics Act for collection, processing and dissemination of data; they quote the Act in their data collection instruments (e.g. Ministries of Education and Health); the Act does recognise production of official statistics

NSS and Coordination on Official Statistics

- National Statistical Office is the coordinator of all statistical activities
- Post of spokesperson created at NSO; holder manages relations with press and the media
- To strengthen coordination of statistics, the following were undertaken:
 - **Establishment of NSS Coordination Unit**
Domiciled at NSO to coordinate statistical production and lead implementation of NSS activities
 - **Creation of NSS Steering Committee**
Comprises Directors of Planning in the MDAs; it meets quarterly to oversee implementation of the NSS Strategic Plan; It is responsible for decision making and provision of guidance on policy-related issues affecting implementation of SPs

NSS and Coordination on Official Statistics (Cont'd)

- **Establishment of TWG**

Comprises technical personnel from NSO and Statistical Units in the line ministries; They report to Directors of Planning in the MDAs; They meet quarterly to take stock, identify challenges and discuss pertinent issues in the implementation of the NSS Strategic Plan

- **Development of a Compendium of Statistical Concepts and Definitions:** as one way of standardizing and harmonizing terms, concepts and nomenclatures of statistics and thereby improve quality of statistics

NSS and Coordination on Official Statistics (Cont'd)

- **Development of a Data Quality Assurance Framework (DQAF):**
used to subject statistical products of NSO and Ministries of Education and Health for compliance with quality aspects; to enhance harmonisation and improve quality of statistics
- **Approval of a new NSO Functional Review**
Expected to improve coordination whereby NSS Coordination will be separate and a fully-fledged office; focus will mainly be on coordination, collaboration and partnership activities, and less on production activities

Other Achievements

- Establishment of Management Information Systems in some MDAs (e.g. Health, Education, Agriculture, Gender, among some)
- Enhanced human resource capacity across NSS through filling some posts at junior and senior management, following a Functional Review of NSO and NSS done in 2010; 18 statisticians recruited in preparation for 2018 PHC filled some gaps prevalent in NSO and MDAs
- Establishment of a statistical training school to serve statistical staff across the NSS

Challenges

- Data fragmentation/lack of data systems interoperability
- Statistical Units have not been established in Planning Directorates of some MDAs
- Staffing levels of existing Statistics Units in Planning Directorates of some MDAs are low
- Inadequate investment in statistical institutional environment and statistical production processes (statistical infrastructure)
- Limited or no statistics capacity building initiatives/support in the MDAs

Way Forward

- To ensure data systems interoperability in the data ecosystem (a Malawi Data Lab) at NSO as a Coordinator of NSS; partly satisfy the expectation from “Statistics at the fingertips of users for evidence-based decision-making” – focus of next SP
- To update the Compendium of Statistical Concepts and Methods with a full rollout to MDAs as a reference document; Compendium will be updated to take into account recent evolution in some concepts and to cover missing or mis-reported concepts – focus of next SP
- To update the Data Quality Assurance Framework (DQAF) and introduce it in MDAs – focus of next SP
- To establish a Data Auditing Team for assessment of compliance to quality aspects of data (to strengthen coordination); produce data audit reports which should be made public – focus of next SP

Way Forward (Cont'd)

- To prepare and enhance use of Statistics Code of Practice – focus of next SP
- To promote increased use of modern technology in collecting and processing data (migration from PAPI to CAPI) – focus of next SP
- To increase awareness of the Act for more compliance – focus of next SP
- Improve skills of statistical staff in the NSS – focus of next SP
- Improve statistical infrastructure in the NSS – focus of next SP
- Revision of the 2013 National Statistics Act to be in full accord with UNFPOS and AfCS – focus of the SP succeeding the next
- To continue to advocate for autonomy of NSO: to enhance the profile and visibility of statistics, their integrity and operational efficiency – focus of the SP succeeding the next

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION