

Securing Quality AND Quantity of Statistical Information in Suriname: Where do we stand?

CARIBBEAN THEMATIC CONFERENCE: MANAGING A STATISTICAL ORGANIZATION IN TIMES OF CHANGE

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Relevance, Impartiality and Equal Access	Professional Standards, Scientific Principles and Ethics	Accountability and Transparency	Prevention of Misuse
Sources of Official Statistics	Confidentiality	Legislation	National Coordination
	Use of International Standards	International Cooperation	

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OUTLINE of Presentation

- Introduction: some pertinent Statements and some pertinent Questions
- Quality Attributes – Quick recap
- **A Bird's eye view** of The Statistics Act, The NSO Bylaws and Suriname's National Statistical System
- Preliminaries of COMSTAT towards NQAF
- Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF
- Closing remarks (Challenges and Opportunities)
- Closing remarks (Where do we stand?)

Introduction: **Some pertinent Statements** and Some Pertinent Questions

- “Production of high quality statistics depends on the assessment of data quality. Without a systematic assessment of data quality, the statistical office will risk to lose control of the various statistical processes such as data collection, editing or weighting.” (“Handbook on Data Quality Assessment, Methods and Tools”, Eurostat, 2007, page 5, underscore added)
- The notion of data quality refers to three aspects: (1) the characteristics of the statistical product (2) the perception of the statistical product by the user and (3) some characteristics of the statistical production process (Idem, page 9)

Introduction: Some pertinent Statements and **Some Pertinent Questions**

- **Show of hands please**
- Who likes Bo?
- Who likes Ba?
- Who likes Wg?
- Who likes S?
- Who likes S?
- **What do Bo, Ba, Wg, S and S have in common?**

Introduction: Some pertinent Statements and Some Pertinent Questions

- **You need Quality AND Quantity to succeed!**
- I'm sure everybody will agree:
- 100% Quantity and 1% Quality is bad
- 100% Quality and 1% Quantity is (equally) bad
- What is a good compromise? In 2007 (38th session UN Stat. Comm): UK-ONS produces circa 19 % (250 series) of national statistics.
- Actually we are looking for the quantity of the NSS and not so much for the quantity of the NSO

Quality Attributes – Quick Recap

- **Relevance** reflects the degree to which statistical information meets the needs and priorities expressed by (current and potential) users
- The **accuracy** of statistical information is the degree to which the information correctly describes the phenomena it was designed to measure.
- The **timeliness** of statistical information refers to the delay between the end of the reference period to which the information pertains, and the date on which the information becomes available.
- **Punctuality** has to do with the difference between the date on which results actually become available and the date on which they should have been available, according to a pre-established timetable.
- Statistical data are **coherent** when they can be combined reliably in different ways and for different purposes, regardless of whether they originate from a single source or from different sources (doesn't mean full numerical consistency)
- **Comparability** has to do with measuring the impact of differences in the application of statistical concepts and definitions when data are compared across geographical regions, reference periods or domains.

Quality Attributes – Quick Recap

- The **accessibility** of statistical information refers to the ease with which it can be obtained from the NSO (or another producer)
- **Interpretability**, sometimes referred to as **clarity**, of statistical information reflects the availability of the supplementary information and metadata necessary to interpret and utilize it appropriately.
- Items in blue are regularly (formally, but also informally) considered by ABS/GBS. See for instance (Dutch, so accessibility is reduced):
“Labor Statistics of the General Bureau of Statistics, a description of their compilation and a comparison 2012-2017” (Statistical papers 18 - no. 340/ 2018-05, in which Employment information from three different sources, National Accounts, Enterprises Statistics and Household Surveys, were described and compared)

A Bird's eye view of the Statistics Act, the Bylaws and Suriname's NSS (1)

- In December 1946, the colonial Government (Dutch) took an important step and instated the General Bureau of Statistics (ABS/GBS), as of 1 January 1947.
- It took the Government 7 years to realize that it needed to enact legislation to enable the NSO to function properly, and in August 1954 the first Statistics Act (SB 1954, no. 67), limited to provisions for the collection of proper Economic data was passed. It was never amended only replaced.
- In December 2002 we got Statistics Act 2002 (SB 2002, no. 97), the Law regarding Provisions for the National Statistical System of Suriname

A Bird's eye view of the Statistics Act, the Bylaws and Suriname's NSS (2)

Law of 3 December 2002, Regarding Provisions Concerning the National Statistical System of Suriname (Statistics Act 2002)	
Article	DEALS WITH
1	Definitions
2	Change of Status of the NSO from a Government Department to a semi-autonomous body
3,4	Mission of NSO, Authorization to Collect data, Powers of the Director of the NSO
5	Responding is compulsory for companies, Tax officials cannot be exempted by appealing to their Income Tax Act
6	Access of the NSO to books, records and documents
7	Possible modes of Data collection and when conducting a Census The Director NSO is the National Census Officer
8	Confidentiality provisions
9	Commission for Statistics (Composition, Membership, Tenure)
10	Method of drafting guidelines for the NSS in general and the NSO in particular
11	Penal Provisions (for non-response, false response, breach of confidentiality, etc.)
12,13,14	Transitional and Final Provisions (status and treatment of staff, which laws no longer apply, proper citation of law)
Memorandum	Explanation for individual articles and clauses

A Bird's eye view of the Statistics Act, the Bylaws and Suriname's NSS (3)

Bylaws of the Foundation General Bureau of Statistics	
Article	DEALS WITH
1	Definitions
2	Name, Location and Duration
3	Detailed Mission and Schedule
4, 5,6	Governing Board and Guidelines to be provided to the NSO and the Director of the NSO, Authorizations of the Board
7	Board of Management, Composition, Mode of appointing and dismissing, Powers and Professional Independence
8	Personnel of the NSO, Establishment Plan, Applicable Regulations, Disciplinary Means, Appeal procedures
9	Transitional provisions (comparable to those in the Statistics Act)
10	Rules of Procedure
11	Capital and Cash of the NSO
12	Procedures to ammend the Bylaws
13	Possible dissolution of the Foundation
14	Final Provisions

A Bird's eye view of the Statistics Act, the Bylaws and Suriname's NSS (4)

Major players in NSS (Institution / Unit)	RESPONSIBLE FOR (inter alia)
General Bureau of Statistics	National Accounts, Price Indices, Labour Market Indicators, Merchandise Trade Statistics, Gender statistics, Environment Statistics, Traffic & Transport Statistics, Population & Housing Censuses, Establishment Censuses, Social-Cultural Statistics, Population Statistics & Projections
Civil Registration Office	Vital Statistics (Births, Deaths, Migration, Marriages,
Central Bank	Monetary Statistics, Balance of Payment, Trade in Services, Economic Projections (together with Planning Office)
Bureau for Public Health	Causes of Death Statistics and Epidemiological Data
Ministry of Health (Planning Unit)	Health Statistics
Ministry of Finance (various units)	Government Finance Statistics
Ministry of Education (Research & Planning Section)	Education Statistics (Enrolment, Schools, Teachers, Pupils, etc.)
Ministry of Labour (Statistics Section)	Wages, Occupational Injuries, Strikes and other indicators limited to establishments with a Collective Bargaining Agreement, Labour Exchange Statistics, Work Permits Statistics
Ministry of Agriculture (Statistics Section)	Agricultural Statistics
Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing	Social Statistics (Financial Support, Medical Support, Child Allowance, Old Age Pensions, etc.)
Ministry of Justice and Police (Police Force)	Crime Statistics, Traffic Accident Statistics, etc.
Government Debt Management Office	Government Debt Statistics

Preliminaries of COMSTAT towards NQAF

- After several requests from the NSO to initiate system-wide NSDS and NQAF activities, in August 2019 the Suriname Commission for Statistics (COMSTAT), finally sent out a Concept Note (“Challenges and the Strategy for Suriname’s NSS”) to all major producers of Official Statistics in Suriname

Preliminaries of COMSTAT towards NQAF

- **COMSTAT requested from each producer:**
- SWOT of the Producer and major subsidiaries
- SWOT of the NSS
- Inputs for a National Consensus building meeting and start up ideas for a long term strategy
- Expected Outcome: 10 Year Statistics Strategy

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (1)

- **Flashback**: Between December 2009 and May 2010, a commission headed by the NSO produced Suriname's first NSDS, i.e. NSDS 2010-2014. In May 2010, after general elections, there was a change of Government and regrettably NSDS 2010-2014 never gained legal status. The report was submitted to the authorities 3 times (last attempt: November 2010)

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (2)

STRATEGIC ISSUES to be considered

- **Know the stakeholders, especially the users**
- **Maintain / Expand relationship with users**
- Maintain / expand strategic alliances
- Know / Specify portfolio and conduct SWOT
- Strengthen all staff and adhere to regional and international standards and initiatives
- Secure funding for all activities

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (3a)

Know the stakeholders, especially the users

- **Stakeholders / Users can be:**

- Commission for Statistics
- NSO personnel
- Government of Suriname (All ministries, especially parent- i.e. Finance)
- Governments (Regional & International)
- Central Bank of Suriname
- National Planning Office
- Regional Organizations (CARICOM and Subsidiary organizations)
- International Organizations (UN+, IMF, World Bank, IADB, IsDB)
- Research institutions (analysts, researchers)
- Mass Media (Radio, TV, Newspaper)
- Businesses & Private Sector
- Trade Unions
- Educational institutions plus their students
- The public at large

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (3b)

Know the stakeholders, especially the users

- **Possible roles of stakeholders / users**
- Use the correct data and always take feedback from the NSO's at heart
- Evidence Based Policy & Planning
- Baseline Studies and Data Assessments
- Project proposals and implementations
- (Inter)national reporting
- Provide Funding for all kinds of projects
- Increase the engagement of Governments for Funding / Other assistance
- Workshops and Training for improving and promoting Data and Dissemination
- Communicate plans

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (4)

Maintain / Expand relationship with users

- Analyze information requests
- Use website analytics
- **User-Producer Seminars** (on hold because of bad economic conditions)
- **Conduct user satisfaction surveys** (NSO stopped doing this because of terrible response rates, but will resume)
- Improve website, especially access, coverage openness

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (5a)

Maintain / Expand relationship with users

- **Information requests and website analytics**
- What information is requested/ frequency?
- What do website visitors download most?
- Who are the website visitors?
- How many return visitors are there and how many first timers?

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (5b)

Maintain / Expand relationship with users

- Information requests 2016-2018

Type of Information requested (Phone, e-mail, in person)	2016	2017	2018
Census data	282	263	199
Other Demographic statistics	36	30	36
Traffic & Transport Statistics	74	45	41
Social & Cultural Statistics + Poverty Lines	83	72	53
Environment and Gender Statistics	44	56	45
Consumer Price Indices	201	124	120
Trade Statistics	126	130	89
National Accounts and Enterprises Statistics	133	106	80
Other NSO Statistics	142	130	178
NSO hard copy Publications	149	195	207
Data from other data producers (e.g. BOG, CBB)	169	190	147
Cartography / Maps	7	3	5
Total Information Requests	1,446	1,344	1,200
Totaal Requesters	1,342	1,260	1,122
Request per requester	1.08	1.07	1.07

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (6)

Maintain / Expand relationship with users

- **WEBSITE IMPROVEMENTS**
- Home page is user friendly, structured, there are more search options
- More downloads possible
- Bilingual (Dutch & English) website: Dutch part in April 2019 and English part in October 2019 (CSD)
- Key figures and links to highlights on the homepage
- Links to Social Media
- Website training for updating website conducted in November 2019

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (7)

Maintain / Expand Strategic Alliances

Strategic Alliance with	Output(s)	Current State of Affairs
Suriname Business Forum	Report: Improving Suriname's NSS	Dormant
Faculty of Medical Science	Suriname Health Survey	Dormant
Institute for Graduate Studies and Research	Databases to be used by MSc and PhD students	Very Active
National Planning Office	Monthly discussions regarding data consistency	Active
Central Bank of Suriname	Sponsoring of GBS staff to take part in overseas training, Monthly discussions regarding data consistency	Active
Faculty of Social Sciences	Special provisions for non-commercial surveys and for PhD Students	Flashing
Suriname Foundation for Tourism (STS)	Training by SESRIC; Visitor Exit Survey	Not Clear (STS exists De Jure but no longer De Facto)
Tax Office	No alliance, is on top of our wish list	No Alliance yet

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (8)

Know / Specify Portfolio and conduct SWOT

- From May to September 2019 several sessions and discussions were held:
- What do we have to /want to produce? (mission, other obligations – RSWP, SDG, CC-core sets)
- What can we actually produce? (resources, capacity, CC-core sets)
- Results
- **Have to + want to produce = 1038 (779+259)**
- **Actually produce = 626 (80% of have to and 60% of total)**
- All Divisions (Economic Statistics, Social Statistics, Research and Planning, HRM) produced divisional SWOTs and NSO SWOTs, which were thoroughly discussed

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (9a)

Strengthen all staff/ adhere to standards & initiatives

- Knowledge is power and the FPOS are the key(s)
- (1) Employees are expected to know FPOS (e.g. quiz on CSD)
- (2) From August 2016, Divisions have to Report on State of Affairs regarding the **CARICOM Action Plan for Statistics**
- (3) From June 2018 Divisional Heads and Sectional Heads get turns presenting on **GSBPM** as it applies to their unit
- (4) From April 2018 Divisional Heads and Sectional Heads have to report on the **CARICOM RSDS**
- **Note:** sometimes they know ahead who will present, sometimes we roll dice (that way I'm more or less sure everybody is prepared).

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (9b)

Strengthen all staff/ adhere to standards & initiatives

- Example of staff meeting convocation and agenda (in Dutch)

AAN: ALLE STAFLEDEN VAN HET ABS



UITNODIGING VOOR DE STAFVERGADERING VAN (31-10-2018 / 13.00-17.00)

Concept agenda voor de vergadering (let op start tijdstip!!!!)

- 1- Opening (Welkomstwoord ivm de **Negende** Grote Staf Vergadering voor 2018)
 - 2- Vaststelling van de Agenda (eventuele toevoeging dringende zaken)
 - 3- Mededelingen (en vragen / opmerkingen n.a.v. de mededelingen)
 - 4- Behandeling conceptnotulen GSV 29 augustus 2018
 - 5- Wat verder ter tafel komt
 - (a) Rapportage Sociale Divisie + mogelijke projecten 2018/2019 – (MSS)
 - (b) Rapportage Economische Divisie+ /PRASC St. v Zkn.+ ICP 2017 – (MES)
 - (c) Rapportage Censuskantoor (MCK)
 - (d) Rapportage WOP Divisie + Website (FODWOP en WOP staf / Extra rapportages: MICS door FODWOP en Youth Development Index door Mw. Lambert)
 - (e) Uitgebreide Rapportage van MES over GSBPM
 - (f) Uitgebreide rapportage MSS over RSDS
 - (g) Publicatiekalender en aanverwante zaken (DIRABS)
 - 6- Rondvraag (maximaal 1 vraag per persoon – niet overdraagbaar, HFD RW 2 vrg)
 - 7- Sluiting
-

Preliminaries of the NSO towards NQAF (9c)

Strengthen all staff/ adhere to standards & initiatives

- Examples of staff meeting convocation and agenda (in Dutch)

AAN: ALLE STAFLEDEN VAN HET ABS



UITNODIGING VOOR DE STAFVERGADERING VAN

(30-05-2018 / 12.00-16.00)

Concept agenda voor de vergadering:

- 1- Opening (Welkomstwoord ivm de **VIJFDE** Grote Staf Vergadering voor 2018)
- 2- Vaststelling van de Agenda (eventuele toevoeging dringende zaken)
- 3- Mededelingen (en vragen / opmerkingen n.a.v. de mededelingen)
- 4- Behandeling conceptnotulen GSV 25 april 2018
- 5- Wat verder ter tafel komt (Voor RSDS: mail van 25 april 2018 en 26 mei 2018 aan de managers)
 - (a) Rapportage Sociale Divisie + mogelijke projecten 2018/2019 – (MSS)
 - (b) Rapportage van twee (SRS gekozen) SOCDIV hoofden over CARICOM RSDS
 - (c) Rapportage Economische Divisie+ /PRASC St. v Zkn. + ICP2017 – (MES)
 - (d) Rapportage van twee (SRS gekozen) ECOCDIV hoofden over CARICOM RSDS
 - (e) Rapportage Censuskantoor (MCK)
 - (f) Rapportage WOP Divisie + Website (FODWOP en WOP staf / Extra rapportage MICS)
 - (g) Rapportage van twee (SRS gekozen) WOP stafleden over CARICOM RSDS
- 6- Rondvraag (maximaal 1 vraag per persoon – niet overdraagbaar, HFD RW 2 vrg)
- 7- Sluiting

AAN: ALLE STAFLEDEN VAN HET ABS



UITNODIGING VOOR DE STAFVERGADERING VAN

(30-01-2019 / 12.00- 16.30)

Concept agenda voor de vergadering

- 1- Opening (Welkomstwoord ivm de **EERSTE** Grote Staf Vergadering voor 2019)
- 2- Vaststelling van de Agenda (eventuele toevoeging dringende zaken)
- 3- Mededelingen (en vragen / opmerkingen n.a.v. de mededelingen)
- 4- Behandeling conceptnotulen GSV 19 december 2018
- 5- Wat verder ter tafel komt
 - (a) Rapportage Sociale Divisie + mogelijke projecten 2019 – (MSS)
 - (b) Rapportage Economische Divisie+ /PRASC St. v Zkn.+ ICP 2017 – (MES)
 - (c) Rapportage Censuskantoor (MCK)
 - (d) Rapportage WOP Divisie + Website (FODWOP en WOP staf / Extra rapportages: MICS6 door Mw. Caupain en Stand van Zaken Youth Development Index door Mw. Lambert)
 - (e) Publicatiekalender 2019 en aanverwante zaken (DIRABS)
 - (f) Stand van zaken Divisies betreffende CARICOM Action Plan for Statistics
- 6- Rondvraag (maximaal 1 vraag per persoon – niet overdraagbaar, HFD RW 2 vrg)
- 7- Sluiting

Secure Funding for all activities

(very difficult with a high and rising Government Debt)

Monies required/received by NSO	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019*
Submitted Budget	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Authorized Budget	78.8%	89.7%	79.9%	55.5%	73.4%
Received monies	78.8%	57.1%	71.2%	51.2%	52.3%
Received monies + "own" revenues	79.4%	57.9%	72.4%	54.1%	52.9%

Closing remarks - Challenges and Opportunities

- **Challenges** when securing quality & quantity
- Negative Politicians with low/no affinity for adequate Official Statistics
- **IDPs** sometimes misbehaving (see Statement of the 43rd SCCS)
- Some change in legislation and regulations required (re: new data sources and administrative data) but also entails danger
- Human Resources /Staff turnover and Capacities / Internal communication
- Financial resources / Late and reduced Transfers to the NSO
- Staff complaints about salaries (better than GOV. Dept. but still wanting)
- Funds to keep the website and other ICT requirements up-to-date
- DevInfo will soon stop. What's is next? Uncertainty is killing!
- Lots of data only available at National level – too little disaggregated data on the website / Workload to achieve proper level of Data openness
- Data gaps for all major frameworks, e.g. SDGs, FDES, UNGEI, CS Indicators
- Staff turnover at the major Stakeholders, means more, time consuming efforts to maintain relations
- Upcoming elections (2020) and most likely reorganizations of government departments
- Occasional negative media attention

Closing remarks - Challenges and Opportunities

- **Opportunities** when securing quality & quantity
- Elections 2020, may bring Statistics Champions
- RSWP execution, Regional Action Plan for Statistics, RSDS and all SDG related capacity building initiatives
- Improve relationships with IDPs to support NQAF and NSDS activities, especially in the light of Agenda 2030
- Chances to strengthen the PR Unit and the Library
- Internships provided by NSO to students and trainees of other partners
- South/South collaboration
- Upcoming projects to retain current staff and attract new staff (continuous ICP activities, 123 Survey 2020/2021, Population Census 2022)
- Generally positive media attention

Where do we stand in Suriname?

- NSO has done its homework, inclusive SWOT
- NSO is aware of the situation at some (not all) other major data producers
- NSO has good (albeit sometimes bumpy) relationships with all IDPs
- NSO is fully supportive of regional integration
- NSO is law-abiding, adheres to FPOS and CGSP
- **In short: NSO is in starting blocks for NQAF/NSDS**

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

- *Easy Questions for the Aging Director, Iwan Sno*

AND

- **Difficult Questions for Young & Strong Ms. Lambert**