

# Statistics for Transparency, Accountability, and Results

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## Executive summary

Reliable and accessible statistics provide the evidence needed to increase the transparency of policy making, to document results, and to enforce public accountability. The Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS), endorsed at the Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results in 2004, has fostered improvements in national statistical systems and increased the quality and availability of statistics for monitoring global initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals. The Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness is an opportunity to extend the progress made by developing countries in improving their statistical systems and developing their capacity over the last decade and to provide direction for the decade ahead.

A six point action plan is recommended in support of three principal objectives: (1) Fully integrating statistics in decision making; (2) Promoting open access to statistics; (3) Increasing resources for statistical systems. While maintaining the partner country-led approach of MAPS, the renewed action plan goes beyond MAPS in important ways. It adopts a system-wide approach to capacity development to integrate national statistical activities with the requirements of planning, budgeting, monitoring, and results. It recognizes the important synergies between survey and census-based data, administrative data, and vital statistics. It explicitly supports greater transparency and encourages the use of new methods and technologies to increase the reliability and accessibility of official statistics.

The action plan will require substantial effort and investment across the range of development actors. The action plan establishes priorities, but it must still be translated into a set of time-bound and monitorable tasks. Implementation should be “bureaucracy light,” relying on existing partnerships, agencies, and institutions. Financial support will come primarily from domestic revenues, but donor support remains essential and new sources of financial assistance will be sought to supplement existing ones. The full engagement of international bodies will be crucial, especially forums that bring together national and international experts to exchange knowledge and solve problems.

## Introduction

The Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness will address the key themes of transparency, accountability, and results. Statistics – quantified, organized, reproducible information – are the necessary basis for measuring results, appraising public accountability, and increasing the transparency of policy making. The Busan Forum is an opportunity to extend the progress made by developing countries in improving their statistical systems and developing their capacity over the last decade and to provide direction for the decade ahead.

The need for better statistics to monitor and assess development programs was recognized at the First International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results in 2002. The Second Roundtable held at

Marrakech in 2004 endorsed the *Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics* (MAPS), establishing an international agenda for support of statistics in developing countries. The following year, the *Paris Declaration* adopted the “the core principles put forward at the Marrakech Roundtable on Managing for Development Results.”<sup>i</sup> Subsequently the *Accra Agenda for Action* made broad commitments on behalf of donors and developing countries to strengthen national statistical systems; provide more data disaggregated by sex, region, and economic status; and “to invest in strengthening developing countries’ national statistical capacity and information systems, including those for managing aid.”<sup>ii</sup> More recently, the 2009 *Dakar Declaration on the Development of Statistics* reaffirmed that “concerted and coordinated actions are required to make more effective use of statistical data to support poverty reduction policies and programs and to strengthen and sustain the capacity of statistical systems especially in developing countries.”

### Progress since Marrakech

MAPS recommended six “short- and medium-term actions consistent with long-term, sustainable improvements in national and international statistical capacity.”<sup>iii</sup> Recognizing the essential partnership between national and international institutions, the actions were divided into those addressing national needs and a second set of actions addressing international responsibilities. Resources to support implementation of the MAPS agenda came from bilateral and multilateral donors and from national budgets.

***Much progress has been made.*** Out of the 79 low-income IDA countries, only eight countries do not have a national strategy for the development of statistics (NSDS) and are not planning to prepare one. Implementing these strategies is well underway in many countries. After the 2010 census round concludes, 98 percent of the world’s population will have been counted. Since donors began reporting support for statistical capacity building in 2008, financial commitments to statistics have increased by 60 percent to \$1.6 billion over the period 2008-10. Working with the International Household Survey Network, over 55 developing countries have improved their practices in data collection, management, and dissemination of household surveys. The Interagency and Expert Group on the MDGs has conducted a series of regional workshops aimed at improving the monitoring of the MDGs and has reported annually on progress. Over this period, the quality of statistics as measured by the World Bank’s statistical capacity indicator has improved from its benchmark level of 52 in 1999 to 68 in 2009. And there has been significant progress in developing results-oriented monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

***Evaluations have confirmed the effectiveness of MAPS.*** The “Progress Since Paris” report found “substantial progress” reflected in “More partner countries have sound national development strategies in place, and these tend to be more clearly prioritized than in 2005” along “with evidence suggesting that MDG-related statistics are becoming increasingly available at the country level.”<sup>iv</sup> An evaluation of MAPS carried out in 2008 found that “MAPS focused on topics that remain of highest priority in the development of statistics in the developing countries ... to create a strong framework for dealing with the multifaceted problems of statistical development in developing countries.”<sup>v</sup> MAPS was also included in a global program review conducted by the World Bank’s Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) in 2010.

The main findings of the 2010 IEG evaluation concluded, “Significant progress has been achieved in the primary objective of encouraging and supporting developing countries to design National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDSs), but only some progress has been made in NSDS implementation.” The report also noted that statistical development has begun to receive a higher priority in national development programs. But it cautioned that “Statistical capacity building programs need to involve the users of statistics more actively.”<sup>vi</sup>

Experience since 2004 suggests the following lessons:

- Rapid progress is possible and there is strong uptake by developing countries for capacity development programs. But implementing national strategies is not always straightforward and the plans are often too ambitious. Maintaining core, regular statistical activities while responding to the wider results agenda and new, emerging data needs of decision-makers remains a challenge. Additional support is needed, especially in fragile states and small island developing states. Furthermore, the capacity to use statistical information remains weak and should be addressed as part of a larger, system-wide approach to capacity development.
- Important gaps remain in the core statistical activities of developing countries, especially in low-income, fragile, conflict-affected, and small island developing states:
  - In Sub-Saharan Africa, 47 percent of countries have not carried out a household income or expenditure survey in more than five years, and only 4 countries have complete vital registration systems. No measure of poverty is available for some 21 of the 150 World Bank member countries for which monitoring of poverty is deemed important, and an additional 9 countries have not measured poverty since 2000. Data on the share of women in non-agriculture wage work, an MDG indicator, are available for only 53 countries (2005–2009). According to the FAO, the quantity and quality of agricultural statistics coming from national statistical offices have been on a steady decline since the early 1980s, particularly in Africa, and official submissions from countries in Africa are at their lowest level since before 1961, with only one in four African countries reporting basic crop production data.
  - In 2009 the births of 50 million children went unrecorded. They entered the world with no proof of age, citizenship, or parentage. That same year 40 million people died unnoted except by family or friends. There are no records of where they died, when they died, and more importantly how they died. In most high-income countries these vital events (births and deaths) are recorded by civil registration systems, which also record marriages, adoptions, and divorces. But in many developing countries registration systems are incomplete or absent. In South Asia only 1 percent of the population is covered by complete vital registration records, and in Sub-Saharan Africa only 2 percent (UN, *Population and Vital Statistics Report*, 2011). Lacking effective registration systems, countries must rely on infrequent and expensive surveys to estimate the vital statistics needed to support the core functions of government and to plan for the future.
- There is growing demand for disaggregated statistics and for geo-coded data needed to monitor and evaluate programs at the local level. But sex disaggregated statistics, needed to measure results and

ensure that programs and public expenditures are appropriately targeted, are not systematically compiled or used; and essential statistics on agricultural inputs and production are missing or outdated in a majority of developing countries; and few developing countries are equipped to manage large geo-spatial information systems.

- At the international level, coordination of donor support for statistical capacity development programs remains imperfect. Despite the increased emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, many donor-financed projects fail to collect or preserve important statistical indicators. At the same time, new technologies and the advent of geographic information systems are making possible innovative methods of collecting, storing, and analyzing data, requiring additional efforts toward creating international standards and methods for managing and disseminating large datasets.

### A Renewed Commitment to Improving Statistics

Reliable statistics are needed to support results, accountability, and transparency. The Busan Forum provides an opportunity to extend the progress made under MAPS and to initiate further improvements in developing countries' statistical capacity and in the quality and availability of the data their statistical systems produce. The action plan has three principal objectives:

**Fully integrate statistics in decision making.** Improvements in the production of statistics are essential, but policy makers and program managers must also understand how to use statistics effectively. Poor quality statistics lead to their under use, which in turn leads to neglect and under funding of statistical activities. Statistical offices should be routinely engaged in planning, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation processes so the statistics they produce are relevant and meet user priorities.

**Promote open access to statistics:** The hallmark of transparent and accountable governments is open access to information. Making timely and reliable statistics widely available to the public as well as to policy makers and other stakeholders increases government effectiveness and public confidence.

**Increase resources for statistical systems:** Continued investment is a key to breaking the vicious cycle of neglect and disuse of statistics. Financial support to national statistical systems should be integrated in development assistance programs with developing countries providing in-country leadership. Donors should adopt system-wide approaches, coordinating their assistance strategies to ensure they are consistent with national priorities.

### A Renewed Action Plan for Statistics

The action plan described below has benefited from a thorough consultation process and has been endorsed by the members of the PARIS21 partnership and other key development partners. It draws from experience since the launch of MAPS and an assessment of the major factors shaping the evolution of statistical systems. It builds on past successes and addresses outstanding gaps, going well beyond current approaches.

Like MAPS it recognizes the interdependent roles of donors, partner countries, and international agencies and encourages a system-wide approach: improvements in country systems will improve

international statistics; while a more effective international system will provide more consistent advice and better support for national activities.

Also like MAPS, this plan will rely on indicators to track progress under each action. The following section describes how and when specific implementation steps – as well as indicators that track implementation progress - will be completed once this plan receives endorsement. Although a work in progress, some possible progress indicators are provided under each of the six actions.

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**Action 1** - Strengthen and re-focus national and regional statistical strategies with a particular emphasis on improving statistical systems that support country-level development priorities. Strategies should be updated to reflect new challenges and opportunities. A key aim is to increase in-country capacity – including through training - to respond to emerging and unforeseen needs.

- Building on existing national plans, prioritize implementation to ensure that crucial domestic policy priorities are addressed first. Early small successes achieved through gradual implementation will help build up to larger successes at a later stage.
- Establish partnerships of national users and producers of data as well as representatives from the donor community in order to (i) enhance communication between departments in countries in the spirit of the system-wide approach and (ii) ensure that technical and financial support of statistical and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems remains aligned with national policy priorities and that statistical producers are closer to discussions on policy priorities.
- Address weaknesses in vital registration systems and data critical for monitoring program performance – including administrative data, sex disaggregated data, and geospatial information.
- Ensure that the development of sectoral data (such as agriculture, health, education, environment, and labour) is fully integrated into and synchronised with national and regional statistical strategies, not only to contribute to stronger statistical systems but also to rationalise resources and reduce the duplication of efforts across ministries at country level.
- *Possible indicators to track progress:* i) Number of NSDSs with clear limited number (less than 10) "top" priorities and costing for implementation; ii) Level of "alignment" of statistical capacity development actions with NSDSs; iii) Increase in number of countries participating in the Accelerated Data Program (ADP) and conducting Multi Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICs) or Demographic and Health Surveys, and Vital Registration in last five years.

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**Action 2** - Ensure that outcomes of global summits and high-level forums specifically recognize the need for statistical capacity development, including technical assistance, training, and financial support. Implementing and monitoring global initiatives requires collaboration between national and international statistical organizations.

- Resolutions of global summits and high-level forums should clearly state the policy issue being addressed and the key set of indicators to be developed and provide an implementation strategy for sequencing technical assistance, training, and financing.
- Statistical activities required by global initiatives should be implemented with developing country leadership, consistent with their national strategies and at a pace in keeping with other priority needs.
- Monitoring and follow-up reports should include assessments of statistical progress.
- Through the Interagency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics and working closely with national statistical offices and other stakeholders, produce a core set of indicators for monitoring the progress of gender initiatives.
- Examples of other global commitments include the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics; and the newly proposed Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.
- *Possible indicator to track progress:* i) Share of summits and high level meetings which specifically mention statistics/indicators; ii) share of summits which agree on a set of common indicators to measure goals and commitments.

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**Action 3** - Implement standards for data preservation, documentation, and dissemination that permit full public access to official statistics.

- Initial efforts should be directed towards instances where statistics exist, but have not been published. Building on the success of efforts to improve access to household surveys, expand in-country capacity for data documentation and preservation, anonymization, and dissemination of enterprise statistics, vital statistics, and administrative data.
- Support the development of legal frameworks to encourage open access to data.
- Facilitate the dissemination of data standards and common survey methodologies for enterprise and administrative data. Exchange of best practices in dissemination.
- Support the implementation of global geospatial information management systems.
- *Possible indicators to track progress:* i) Share of National Statistical Institutes' websites (or linked ministry sites) making data accessible; ii) Share of national websites with free data; iii) Number of international organizations' sites with free data; iv) Track development of a "Survey catalogue" for enterprise statistics and administrative data;; v) Number of countries publishing recent census data and documentation thereof on their national websites.

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**Action 4** - Develop programs to increase the knowledge and skills needed to use statistics effectively for planning, analysis, monitoring, and evaluation, thus increasing transparency and accountability.

- Use new technologies and innovative methods of e-learning to share knowledge between producers and users of statistics.
  - Develop programs to increase public awareness of the role of data in policy development and tracking outcomes to empower users to more effectively use statistics.
  - *Possible indicators to track progress:* i) Number of registered users of globally endorsed e-learning tools (such as those included on the Virtual Statistical System); ii) Levels of advocacy material published; iii) Number of "statistical days" or similar events; iv) Number of NSI websites which are updated at least weekly.
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**Action 5** -Improve accessibility of statistics and research produced by international organizations and bilateral development agencies.

- Adopt common curation standards for and publish information collected by development organizations through their research activities and development projects.
  - Support and participate in international initiatives to share research data and related outputs.
  - Implement the data standard of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).
  - *Possible indicators to track progress:* i) Number of agencies adopting the IATI standards; ii) Counts of datasets made available from international and bilateral agencies.
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**Action 6** - Ensure financing for statistical information is robust and that funding instruments and approaches reflect the new modalities and actors in development finance.

- International organizations and bilateral agencies should ensure financial support is sufficient, flexible, adaptive to rapidly changing in-country requirements, and aligned with the priorities agreed in national and regional statistical strategies.
- Recognize statistical capacity development and M&E frameworks as priorities in bilateral and multi-lateral institutional work programs.
- Governance arrangements should be inclusive, reflecting the changing mix of development actors.
- In the same way that M&E is now seen to be a necessary part of project financing, international organizations should incorporate support for statistics in all development assistance programs.
- *Possible indicators to track progress:* i) Trends in donor capacity development funding allocations including levels of concentration and fragmentation; ii) Share of NSDS activities financed through domestic contributions; iii) Number of donor/government in-country coordination groups, instances of pooled resources, basket funds.

## Implementation

Putting these actions into effect will require substantial effort and investment across the range of development actors with developing countries playing an important leadership role. Although the action plan establishes priorities, it must be translated into a set of time-bound implementation steps. These steps will recognize that fragile states and small island developing states have special needs and may require different, perhaps phased, approaches to capacity development and institution building. Implementation will also reflect the increasing diversity of the development partnership in terms of financial support, knowledge exchange, and sources of technical advice. Implementation will adhere to the following criteria:

- Broad international support exists and a lead agency/partnership/institution can be identified.
- In-country capacity development is the primary focus (not building international bureaucracies)
- Outcomes are identifiable, monitorable, and time-bound (indicative indicators to track implementation progress are provided above)
- Implementation is “bureaucracy light” and will rely on existing partnerships, agencies, and institutions

Financial support for statistics will come primarily from domestic revenues, but donor support will remain essential. It will be important to seek new sources of financial assistance - from new and prospective donor governments, international companies, and foundations - to supplement existing sources of finance. Funding instruments of bilateral agencies and multilateral institutions are sufficiently flexible and robust to channel both existing and new financing to improve in-country statistical capacity.

Governance structures overseeing implementation will draw from existing institutions and frameworks. At the national level, national strategies for the development of statistics have become established practice, helping to ensure country ownership in setting improvements and provides a coordination mechanism for donor programs and projects. These strategies will be updated to provide a framework for effective and results-oriented strategic management of the national statistical system and for mobilizing, harnessing, and leveraging both national and international resources.

Full engagement by international bodies will be crucial. The UN Statistical Commission is the highest decision making body for international statistical activities, especially the setting of statistical standards, the development of concepts and methods, and their implementation at the national and international level. Implementation of the action plan and results will be regularly reported to the UNSC. The PARIS21 partnership has established itself as an effective forum of donors and development partners and network to promote, influence, and facilitate statistical capacity development and the better use of statistics at the national and international level<sup>1</sup>. International agency and expert groups such as those established by the United Nations to monitor the MDGs or to guide the development of gender statistics provide effective mechanisms for bringing together national and international experts to exchange

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on PARIS21 activities, visit [www.paris21.org](http://www.paris21.org)



knowledge and solve problems. These and other expert groups will play important roles in the implementation of the action plan.

## Conclusions

While maintaining the developing country-led approach of MAPS, the Action Plan for Statistics goes beyond MAPS in important ways:

- It adopts a system-wide approach to capacity development to integrate national statistical activities with the requirements of planning, budgeting, monitoring, and results.
- It recognizes the important synergies between survey and census-based data, administrative data, and vital statistics.
- It explicitly supports greater transparency and encourages the use of new methods and technologies to increase the reliability and accessibility of official statistics.

As such, participants in the Busan Forum should acknowledge the plan as an important building block supporting results, transparency, and accountability.

## ANNEX 1: Statistical Programs Responding to Global Initiatives

Initiative	Issues to address	Lead Agency	Key Outputs and Delivery Dates
<b>Gender Statistics Initiative</b>	Gender data supporting the broader initiative that aims at developing a toolkit of policies to promote gender equality and empower women, focusing on education, employment and entrepreneurship	UN, WB, OECD	Twenty-two Indicators to be developed and an implementation plan to collect these statistics to be discussed at an October 2011 meeting of the Inter-agency expert group on gender statistics.
<b>Global Strategy for Agriculture Statistics</b>	Critical gaps in data limit policy making regarding nutrition, food security, and rural development.	FAO	Core set of indicators to be generated by National Statistical systems over the next five to ten years. Implementation strategy to be discussed by donors in October 2011.
<b>HMN MOVE-IT</b> (Monitoring of Vital Events, including use of Information Technology)	Vital statistics underpin demographic estimates; vital statistics systems provide documentation of citizenship and legal status of individuals.	WHO	Strengthen country information systems to ensure recording and reporting of every birth and death, with a cause of death.
<b>Programme on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM)</b>	Further development of global geospatial information and promote its use to address key global challenges.	UNSD	Integrating statistical information with spatial framework so that detailed information becomes available at local level for development planning.
<b>G20 Initiative to address Gaps in Financial Indicators</b>	Critical information gaps revealed by the global financial crisis.	IMF	See report on <a href="http://www.imf.org/external/np/g20/">http://www.imf.org/external/np/g20/</a> and <a href="http://www.imf.org/external/data.htm">http://www.imf.org/external/data.htm</a>
<b>G20 Financial Inclusion Action Plan – Action 4: Improve Data</b>	Improve measurement for the purpose of promoting financial inclusion, increasing awareness of the issue, and strengthening and informing national financial inclusion strategies.	Mexico, WBG	Propose a core set / framework of financial inclusion indicators.
<b>Open Data Initiative</b>	Expand activities to develop standardized concepts and methods for statistical data and facilitate curation, storage, and accessibility of these data.	WB	Continuous expansion; near term objectives include additional microdata holdings, climate change data, and helping countries make their data more accessible.
<b>Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators</b>	Preparation of data and analysis to monitor progress towards the MDGs. Review and define methodologies and technical issues in relation to the indicators, produce guidelines, and support countries in data collection, analysis and reporting on MDGs.	UNSD	MDG Report, July 2010
<b>The Monrovia Roadmap on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding</b>	Development of a set peacebuilding and statebuilding indicators, combining both objective measures and measures to understand the views and perceptions of people on results achieved.	International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding	Work in progress

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<sup>i</sup> *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action*, Paris: OECD, 2008, page 7.  
Downloaded from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid, pages 19-20.

<sup>iii</sup> *Better Data for Better Results An Action Plan for Improving Development Statistics*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004, page 1.

<sup>iv</sup> *Aid Effectiveness 2005-2010: Progress in Implementing the Paris Declaration*, OECD, draft 15 August 2011.

<sup>v</sup> As reported in IEG 2010, page 56.

<sup>vi</sup> See IEG 2010 page 58.