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**Workshop on the Organization of National Statistical Systems and User-Producer  
Relations for Countries in South Asia**

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**Country Paper on the Organization of National Statistical Systems  
and  
User-Producer Relations  
Nepal**

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## **A. Improving Co-ordination in National Statistical System**

### **A.1. The Current State and Major Achievements**

Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) a central statistical agency of Nepal was established in 1959 as per the Statistical Act of Nepal. Main responsibilities as mandated by the act are to conduct censuses, surveys and compile administrative data, assume lead role in standardization of statistical activities and coordinate agencies involved in statistical activities. The act visualizes of a more centralized statistical system in Nepal. However, CBS was not able to meet growing demand for social and economic statistics and as a result, various ministries and departments gradually started collecting data on their own to meet their demand. Ministry of Agriculture collects and compiles many of current agricultural data; Ministry of Education compiles data on education; Ministry of Health compiles and brings out service statistics and central bank as per the mandate of its own act collects and compiles economic and financial data. Also, vital registration act mandates registrar's office to conduct registration of vital events which at present is not adequately registered to bring out meaningful data. CBS has been conducting censuses of population, agriculture, manufacturing establishment, major household surveys such as living standard survey, labour force survey etc.) and compiles national accounts statistics. So, the current statistical system is more of decentralized nature.

As the statistical system gradually became more decentralized, problems appeared which usually arise due to inadequate coordination. Conflicting statistics are being produced owing to the weak statistical capability, inadequate statistical manpower, lack of necessary survey capability and also due to lack of knowledge on standard concepts, definitions, classifications and methodology as well. Duplication of activities exists also due to the lack of data sharing culture and that naturally wastes resources and also brings out inconsistent data. On the other hand, there still lacks statistics on many important areas and one of the reasons for not being able to conduct new activities is certainly a resource constraint.

Though CBS is mandated by the Act to function independently, the bureau is currently under National Planning Commission Secretariat and in practice, approval of NPC on technical and administrative matters is required.

Attempts were made in the past to strengthen statistical system of Nepal by improving coordination mechanism, developing statistical manpower, and restructuring CBS organization as well.

#### **Achievements:**

In past 50 years, there were at least three major structural changes in CBS organization and no doubt, some progress was made so far. Organization has been expanded, an independent statistical service under Civil Service Act is created, substantial statistical manpower has been developed, National Statistical Council (NSC) was created with a purpose of coordinating agencies involved in statistical activities, standardizing statistical operations and ultimately, to develop an integrated statistical system. Recently, with the ADB's technical assistance (TA 3451 NEP: Strengthening the National Statistical System) a comprehensive national statistical plan (CNSP) has been prepared aiming to develop a designated statistical system, improve coordination

mechanism by upgrading CBS to secretariat level and to enable CBS to assume a lead role and to restructure CBS and other statistical agencies as well. However, the achievements were limited in every aspect of the system. Coordination was limited because, NSC was functioning more as an advisory body, CBS's status was not high enough to coordinate ministries and the Statistical Act has not been enough actually to cover the growing scope as such of the national statistical system.

#### A.2. Future plans

The future plan is virtually to implement the CNSP honestly. The spirit of CNSP are to upgrade CBS, develop the co-ordination mechanism among data producers, producers and users, restructure CBS as well as statistical wing of other organization, promote designated statistics system and survey clearance system. Amendment of the existing statistical act or bring a new one is underway which foresees also to bring National Coordination Council (National Statistical Council) under the act. The new act would visualize the leading role of CBS in coordinating agencies, standardizing statistical activities of the country and ultimately to further empower the bureau in overall statistical development the country.

#### A.3. Key Issues

- a. Organizational arrangement of an upgraded CBS, should it be under NPC or NPC secretariat or Prime Minister's Office?
- b. Converting National Statistical Council into an executive body (contrary to the existing advisory body);
- c. Managing coordination among producers and users at local level;
- d. Amendment of Statistics Act 1958 incorporating upgraded CBS and bringing NSC under;
- e. The statistics service group of statistical service under civil service act is not functioning fully in order to encompass other line ministries, departments and agencies;
- f. Above all, support from and commitment of political level and also of higher level in the bureaucracy is crucial to bring about the changes in the statistical system of Nepal.

### **B. Autonomy of National Statistics Offices**

#### B.1. Current State and Major Achievements

Autonomy is key to the neutrality and independence of statistical activities and thereby to gain trust of the users upon the statistics produced. In the context of Nepal, the spirit of the statistical act implies the full autonomy of CBS in administrative as well as technical matters. However, CBS in practice is not fully autonomous in deciding on the statistical activities to be undertaken and managing the required fund as well. As CBS is under the organizational hierarchy of the National Planning Commission Secretariat and hence, is treated as a division of the secretariat. Annual programme and budget of the bureau is first to be approved by the NPC secretariat before submission to the Ministry of Finance for final approval.

At present, various government, semi government and non government or private research agencies are conducting data collection under small, medium or even at large scale survey operations independently and CBS is seldom consulted for technical inputs. CBS being under NPC secretariat is not authorized to inquire directly those organization or needs to inquire through NPC secretariat.

A major achievement in this regard is the formation of a high level committee under the chairmanship of the NPC member to study and to provide recommendations on how CBS could be upgraded and strengthened to enable itself to lead the overall statistical system. Also, the committee had prepared draft of the amended statistical act and restructuring of the CBS and statistical wing of other organizations. An important achievement of the recent attempt is the realization of the autonomy of CBS and its upgrading at least by NPC members.

In the context of autonomy also, implementation of CNSP would be instrumental since that envisage designated statistical system, implementation of survey clearance system, designation of CBS head as Chief Government Statistician and amendment of the statistical act as prerequisites of the implementation of the CNSP.

## B.2. Future plans

CBS would take a lead role in the existing decentralized system of statistics. The head of CBS as a Chief Statistician would advise the government on official statistics. Statistical service would be operated by CBS in contrast to the present system where ministry of general administration handles the personnel administration of the service. As one of the major roles of Chief Statistician is to coordinate the statistical system, CS should take up the authority of setting priority and statistical agenda of the country. After implementation of CNSP, upgraded CBS would be fully functional &, convert itself into NSO as a professional nodal statistical agency. In addition to this, some of the other areas identified in the CNSP and as a future plans are as follows:

- a. Create a system of designated statistics in the National Statistics System.
- b. Survey clearance system should be in place in the Bureau.
- c. Improvement of statistical units in different ministries and departments.
- d. Human resource development of statistics cadre.
- e. Full implementation of Statistical Service

## B.3. Key Issues

The following are the key issues in this area.

- a. Organizational arrangement of the CBS, which organization should CBS be under?
- b. Delayed endorsement of the Consolidated National Statistical Plan (2003-2007 jointly prepared by CBS & other line Ministries with the support of ADB);
- c. Full functioning of the CBS is impeded due to delay in amendment of statistical act and CBS restructuring;
- d. Imprecise political commitment and uncertain decisions of the bureaucracy.

## **C. How can we increase User Engagement**

### **C.1. The Current State and Major Achievements**

Users engagement in statistical activities enhances the trust over the statistics produced. In the past, relations with users were limited to the meetings during questionnaire designing. Another contacts with users happen during the release of the census / survey results. So, the relations have been limited, user's need is not precisely identified and very few feedback used to be received. As a result, some CBS publications go out of stock very quickly whereas some are piled up in the store for decades. So, user's engagement in the statistical operations is important to make meaningful outputs. Censuses usually involves users to a greater extent particularly during the designing of the questionnaire. In the last census, interactions with users were done at the centre and in districts on use of statistical tables produced. Similar practice were done on the results of living standard surveys and labor force surveys.

At present there is a great demand of census and surveys data from various users. These demand from the users varies both in length and breadth. Once data were more demanding from the users in hard copies. With the development of electronic tools and techniques now the user demand have been changed towards the electronic version of the data. With the pace of the time and user demand the CBS has also attempted to provide the census and survey data and reports in electronic format.

### **C.2. Future Plans**

CBS foresees greater involvement of users in CBS activities in future by means of participation in the coordination bodies, technical committees. Not only at the centre, coordination at district level is also foreseen by creating district statistical coordination committees. Some of the strategies of users engagement in the future could be as follows:

- a. Inviting users in the meetings of National Statistical Council, Steering Committees, Technical Committees;
- b. Brainstorming and interactions with the users during inception of the project;
- c. Conduct users seminar in different parts of the country;
- d. Dissemination of data timely in a wider scale with varieties of publications e.g. hard copies, CD's and in the publication in Website;
- e. Campaign for statistical literacy;
- f. Make data more accessible;
- g. Increase use of data for policy and public advocacy;
- h. Make a permanent and authentic desk to cater the FAQ;

### **C.3. Key Issues**

The key issues here are the

- a. Governments low priority in statistics
- b. Less budgetary allocation
- c. To develop mechanism for proper Monitoring and evaluation of all statistical activities
- d. To conduct users survey

## **D. How useful are Administrative Data for Statistical Purposes**

### **D.1. The Current State and Major Achievements**

Administrative records if well planned and managed could be converted to a good source of reliable, timely and low cost information without adding burden to the respondents. In the context of Nepal, Data on import and export, earnings from abroad, government revenue, and foreign exchange earnings are generated from administrative records. Also, some of the important social statistics such as information on education e.g. students enrolment, number of teachers, health information based on health services are brought out regularly without conducting surveys. Likewise, information on tourist arrival, private construction, data provided by cadastral survey etc. are compiled from the administrative records. In fact, vital registration system also exists in the country though the registration rate is very low and thus registration data has not been used for meaningful statistical purpose.

Problems exist in the administrative records in Nepal. First, the coverage is quite limited. For example, health information is simply a service statistics, (e.g. no. of children immunized, number of persons visited in the health institutions, number of cases reported in the health institutions. Secondly, administrative data are biased upward or downward because the information is very often supplied with interests other than statistical purpose (e.g. custom data could be underreported, enrollment data could be overreported to show progress.). No periodic updating of administrative data such as data on land area.

### **D.2. Future Plans**

No specific future plan has been developed regarding the improvement of administrative data. However, participation in MDG program has urged the government to improve administrative data, particularly on health, education, Information technology, gender empowerment etc. Also, CNRP has briefly emphasized the use of administrative data as well. There has been interest shown by donors in improving vital registration system. So, here also the strengthened coordination mechanism would certainly help improve administrative records.

- a. Government should develop plan and policies for the promotion of administrative data,
- b. A high level technical committee would guide management of administrative documents and enhance data sharing culture,
- c. Allocation of sufficient funds for administrative data management.

### **D.3. Key Issues**

Key issues on the administrative data in the context of Nepal are as follows:

- a. Improvement in the administrative proforma based on standard concepts, definition, classifications
- b. Data management of the administrative records
- c. Training non-statistical staff on record management
- d. Timely processing, analysis and processing of administrative data

#### **E. Role of National Statistical Offices in Analysis, including the provision of microdata**

CBS, (the then Department of Population) from the very beginning when it first scientifically conducted census in 1952/54, has been engaged in analysis of the data collected. The bureau is still a major agency to analyse census data (population, agriculture, and manufacturing establishment) in social and economic aspects. Besides censuses, it conducts major surveys and also prepares analytical reports based on the survey data. For example, the bureau did poverty analysis based on the data provided by Nepal Living Standard Surveys.

Some of the analytical reports published by CBS are as follows:

1. Population Census Results and analytical interpretations 1952/54.
2. Population Census Results and analytical interpretations 1961.
3. Population Census Results and analytical reports 1971-2001.
4. Population Monographs of Nepal 1976, 1978, 1987, 1995 & 2003.
5. Monograph of Agriculture Census of Nepal, 2001/02
6. Poverty trends in Nepal (1995/96 – 2003/04)

In the context of micro data, CBS has tried to preserve historical data in electronic format in an e-library where available micro data of censuses has been preserved. Also, the Bureau has been disseminating microdata of the household surveys and censuses. In addition to this, CBS has also archived all census reports of the past censuses from 1952/54 to 2001. Microdata available in CBS at present are as follows:

1. Nepal Living Standards Survey 1995/96
2. Nepal Living Standards Survey 2003/04
3. Nepal Labour Force Survey 1998
4. BCHIMES Survey 1998
5. Population Census 2001 ( Sample Raw Data 12 %).

1. The Bureau has also an agreement with the IPUMS for hosting the microdata of the Population Census 2001 (Sample Data ) in the web.

#### **E.2. Future Plans**

Publication of analytical reports as soon as possible is still an activity among others of every statistical operation. As the demand for electronic version is growing day by day, electronic publication side by side of hard copies has become regular. Also the publications are made available in its website [www.cbs.gov.np](http://www.cbs.gov.np).

Similarly, attempt has been made to bring out meta data as per the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS). The first attempt was made on agricultural data.

#### **E.3. Key Issues**

- a. It has been a problem to convert data (census data of past censuses) saved in cassettes into present days CDs;
- b. What would be the proper organization to keep back up of the historical series of data ?
- c. Limited budget allocated in the publication and dissemination of the survey/census results:
- d. More priority is given for the pre survey/ census activities than the post activities;
- e. What should be the pricing policy of the micro data?

## **F. Role of National Statistical Offices in supporting analysis of climate change**

CBS involvement in climate data has been limited to the compilation of data on temperature and precipitation. The data is compiled from Department of Meteorology and published in the Statistical Year and Pocket Book with time series. CBS has for the first time compiled and published an Environmental Compendium in 1996 with the help of the different experts contributed papers. Actually it was supported by UNEP with some funding at that time. Some national and international seminar was also conducted during that time. After the seminar this compendium was finalized with some comments and limited copies was published for dissemination. After the completion of the project the government owned it and publishes *Environment Statistics of Nepal*.

In recent past, various private sectors, especially private TV channels have expanded collection of weather information from various parts of the country.

### **F.1. Future Plans**

1. Regularize the publication of the Environment Statistics with regular updates;
2. Conduct a national level interaction program on Environmental Statistics.
3. Identify key emerging issues and areas of user's interest.

### **F.2. Key Issues**

The major problem & issues observed in this field are :

1. Lack of subject matter specialist in the bureau,
2. Lack of manpower to be engaged in climatology/statistics,
3. Budget constraints,
4. Low priority of the Government,
5. Coordination with private sectors