REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON DATA DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION

9-12 September 2013

Amman, Jordan

REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP

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A. GOALS, ORGANIZATION AND ATTENDENCE

1. The Regional Workshop on Data Dissemination and Communication met at the Days Inn Hotel & Suites, from 9-12 September 2013. The meeting was organized by United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in collaboration with the Department of Statistics (DOS) Jordan.

2. The Workshop was part of a global series of workshops on data dissemination and communication, organized as part of a United Nations Development Account project. The purpose of the overall project is to provide a forum for sharing national practices and experiences in the dissemination of statistical data and metadata, an area often overlooked in previous capacity-building efforts

3. The Workshop intended to review emerging trends, innovative approaches and technological tools employed in the dissemination of data. The Workshop was designed to provide a basis for assessing existing national dissemination strategies as well as technologies used by National Statistical Offices and to take stock of national capacities and challenges for meeting the increasing requirements of users. Furthermore, the Workshop was expected to help in identifying good practices and lessons learned in the dissemination and communication of data.

4. Simultaneous interpretation English – Arabic was provided for the duration of the meeting.

5. The Workshop was attended by 46 participants from 28 countries coming from the ESCWA region as well as Anglophone African countries. The decision to combine these two groups of participants was due to the small number of participants from the ESCWA region, as well as the geographical proximity of Western Asia and Africa.

6. The following Member States attended the workshop: Angola, Bahrain, Cape Verde, Egypt, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Oman, State of Palestine, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A consultant from the United Kingdom and two staff of UNSD attended as resource persons.

7. All meetings were chaired by Mr. Zoltan Nagy (UNSD).

8. His Excellency Tathi Nsour, Director General of the Jordan Department of Statistics, welcomed the participants and Mr. Zoltan Nagy, Chief of the Office and Technology Management Section of the United Nations Statistics Division, gave a welcoming address

provided some opening remarks on behalf of the Acting Director of UNSD, Mr. Schweinfest.

B. AGENDA

9. The agenda for the workshop was originally planned around similar modules than previous workshops on dissemination under the same project (see annotated agenda available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Dissemination/workshops/Jordan/default.html). However, submissions for presentations were slow, so that presentations were ultimately not grouped under modules. It was rather decided to open each morning/afternoon session with a presentation by a resource person, then followed by country experiences.

10. The following countries shared their experience during the workshop in a presentation: Angola, Cape Verde, Egypt, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, State of Palestine, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. The three resource persons provided seven presentations.

11. The following chapter provides a synthesis of the presentations by different thematic issues:

C. SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

TOPIC 1: STRATEGIES FOR WEB-BASED DATA DISSEMINATION

12. When designing strategies for web-based data dissemination attention need to be paid to the audience and consider the traditional types of users – tourists, harvesters and miners – as well as a new type – the builders which are those who want to access the raw data to build their own interfaces to it. In addition, considerations such as the content, design, subscription models, the importance of user support and usage tracking (mostly with free tools), two-way communication with users, and properly estimating the Total Cost of Ownership of web-based systems in the long-run are also important.

13. Several of the participating countries shared their experiences in using data portals to facilitate the dissemination of the information from their databases as well as adaptations of DevInfo for the dissemination of their national indicators. There was also discussion of the African Information Highway, using SDMX for data submission to the African Development Bank's Open Data platform.

TOPIC 2: INTEGRATING STATISTICAL AND GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION

14. Cape Verde shared its experience in aggregating spatial information for dissemination of their population and housing census data and presented an App, developed with the support of Brazil's IBGE, which allows visualizations, navigation maps and the use of GPS.

15. Tanzania shared its experience with the 2012 Population and Housing Census, where Satellite Imagery was used to identify new settlements, timber, workers, informally established mining areas, roads etc.

Topic 3: Challenges in Promoting Data and Data Dissemination Policies

16. Angola described some challenges facing countries recovering from armed conflict, such as limited access to the national territory, shortage of experienced staff, and limited culture of using statistics. It presented its policy for protecting, anonymizing and disseminating micro data.

17. Uganda described the Sub-Saharan African Dilemma, comprising weak or obscure legal environments, technological imbalances, cultural impediments and social diversity, and a low prioritisation of investment in data infrastructure and initiatives. Some of the policies it pursued include partnerships with libraries/resource centres, database dissemination partnerships (e.g. IPUMS, Google), and the UNSD-DFID Data compilation and Dissemination project (to improve dissemination of development indicators through a central point with corresponding metadata).

Topic 4: Emerging User Needs and Visualization

18. Mozambique described its approach to users as catalysts of information systems, and provided examples of meeting diverse user needs such as statistics by SMS, an iPad version of its statistical yearbook, and a planned migration to social media. Sierra Leone shared its strategies in meeting the needs of users. These included institutional collaboration and political will, sensitization of data providers and users through meetings, seminars and workshops, increasing funding and staffing, conducting more frequent assessments, and reviewing standards and procedures of data compilation and reporting.

19. The consultant from the United Kingdom discussed emerging problem of an increased production of data and an increased demand for information on the one hand, but low levels of statistical literacy on the other hand. Given low levels of numeracy, content needs to be engaging in order to engage users. He also provided an introduction to data visualization, showcasing historical examples of maps, charts and graphs. It emphasized the need to be technology-enabled rather than technology-led and the importance of context. Some key issues discussed included the Gestalt principles of Perception, the use

of symbology, visualizing statistical relationships and change over time, and the effective use of color.

20. UNSD experts presented the benefits that could be reaped by the use of Infographics. These include overcoming people's short attention span and the information overload, being easy to understand, the fact that visual retention is better the reading retention, and higher appeal of images. Some example provided of applying infographics included advocating an issue, showing the status of an indicator, illustrating trends, comparing indicators, and demonstrating correlations. Finally, several tools for creating infographics were discussed as resources for NSOs.

D. SOME CONCLUSIONS

21. The Workshop worked well as a stocktaking exercise. However, capabilities and experiences in the area of dissemination vary widely between the countries represented at the workshop but also within regions. The workshop would have benefitted from a more homogenous group of participants which would have allowed for more relevant and focused discussions. If follow up activities to this workshop are planned, I would suggest that participants are grouped by relevant experiences.

22. Holding the workshop for ESCWA countries and Anglophone African countries together worked well. Interactions between the two groups took place during formal sessions as well as informally during breaks.

ANNEX I: WORKSHOP DOCUMENTS

The Workshop website includes the following documents:

- General information

- Annotated agenda

- List of participants

- Presentations

The URL for the Workshop website is below:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Dissemination/workshops/Jordan/default.html