



The Fundamental Pillars necessary for a Modern National Statistical Service

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In the excitement of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, big data and the 'Data Revolution' there is a danger that the statistical community is trying to run before everyone has learned to walk. The development of national and regional statistical systems is uneven and many basic challenges persist around the world. While it is proper, that developed countries forge ahead and take on the new challenges of big data and the more exotic aspects of the 'Data Revolution', it is important to remember that many NSIs cannot yet utilise basic data from their own national administrative systems to compile official statistics. Ironically, for many Least Developed Countries where information on progress towards the development goals is most needed the data are not available. This is not necessarily because of limitations in skills or even resources, but because some or all of what I have termed the 'fundamental pillars', required for a modern National Statistical System are not in place.

The data demands arising from the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals are likely to be sizeable and complex. It is also likely that many national statistical institutes will struggle to deliver. In this paper I argue that national statistical institutes cannot possibly or efficiently meet these demands alone, and therefore it would be sensible for international organisations to actively promote and help develop coordinated national statistical systems or services. I argue that there are three fundamental requirements or pillars necessary for a modern national statistical service, namely: a sound legal framework, a functioning and coordinated institutional environment and a national data infrastructure in support.

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