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Social Statistics in China

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In China, governmental departments are responsible for statistics corresponding to their function respectively. Social statistics is conducted with close coordination and cooperation of National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBS) and related departments.

I. The official statistical system in China

(1) Main channels of official statistics in China

The system of official statistics in China mainly consists of two channels:

- *Statistical bureaus at all levels*

Statistical bureau is established at all levels of governments in China.

As an agency directly under the State Council, the main function of NBS is to organize, instruct and coordinate statistical work in national context, and provide unified statistical standards for national statistical report system.

The statistical bureaus at provincial, prefecture and county level are under obligation to report statistical work to local governments and higher statistical bureaus, to finish statistical work assigned by higher statistical bureaus and to conduct surveys to satisfy requirements of local governments specially. Statistical bureaus are responsible for most economic statistics, such as industry statistics, agriculture statistics, commerce and trade statistics, price statistics and national accounts, and also engaging in population statistics, employment statistics and household survey.

- *Department statistical system*

Statistical organs have been established in related department authorities, including administrative departments, institutions, organizations etc., to design and carry out statistics according to their administrative functions and limits. These statistical organs need to accept management and instruction from NBS when conducting a statistical survey, and also provide statistical data to NBS.

Most data of department statistics sources are from administrative records, and special survey is another data source. In general, the two channels mentioned above carry out surveys and get statistical data from bottom to top, and keep close relation with each other. So some statistics is completed through the cooperation of NBS and other governmental departments.

(2) Statistical coordination mechanism between NBS and related governmental departments

- *Directing department statistics*

NBS holds statistical work conference annually, for summarizing the statistical work in the preceding year, identifying outline of statistical work and informing focal work of NBS in the

coming year. Staff responsible for statistics in departments will also participate in the conference. Secondly, NBS is responsible for approving and recording the statistical report systems brought out by departments. In terms of this work, NBS mainly focus on examining statistical items, objectives of survey, explanatory notes of indicators, and whether the report system is overlapped or coordinated with others. At last, NBS inspects the statistical work of related departments regularly, attend the statistical work meetings held by departments, instruct department statistical work, and train department statistical staff.

- ***Coordinating department statistics***

- NBS compiles publications such as China Statistical Yearbook, utilizing self-produced data from national statistical report system and surveys in combination with data from department statistics;

- Related governmental departments often involve in vital surveys conducted by NBS in the form of participating in work group;

- Statistical staff of related departments take part in discussion and research when NBS is drafting important statistical regulations or policies;

- NBS participates in research of important survey conducted by departments, or coordinate different departments to develop research on statistical methods.

- The Department of Social, Science and Technology Statistics of NBS is under obligation to coordinate governmental departments related to social statistics in accordance with the statistical coordination mechanism.

II. Social statistics in China—coordination and cooperation of different producers

The process of social statistics in China reflects the close relation between NBS and related governmental departments. Currently, statistics in different social fields, such as education, health, culture, sports, social relief, crime and justice is conducted by respective department authority or related institutions in China.

Major fields of social statistics and the departments in charge are as the following:

Population statistics – NBS;

Education statistics – Ministry of Education;

Health statistics – Ministry of Health;

Social security statistics – Ministry of Civil Affairs;

Employment and social insurance statistics – Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security;

Culture statistics – Ministry of Culture, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, General Administration of Press and Publication etc.;

Crime and Justice statistics – Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Justice etc.;

Gender and children statistics – A combination of statistical data and information from different departments;

NBS keeps close cooperation with the governmental departments mentioned above, instructing and coordinating their statistical work, getting data from these departments, organizing and guiding

other general statistical work of these departments. Users could get data and information on social statistics from NBS or related governmental departments.

III. NBS' achievement on coordinating department statistics

(1) Setting up indicator system on social statistics.

NBS has set up an indicator system on social statistics in the early 1980s, referring to the indicator handbook on social statistics compiled by UN and coordinating relevant governmental departments. Since 1985, NBS has collected statistical information from multi-sources in accordance with the indicator system. The main contribution of this work is to collect and process statistical information from different producers and sources according to a general frame and emphasize the organic connection between these information while providing convenience for users of social statistics.

(2) Promoting statistical research on culture industry.

NBS has organized related departments to carry out statistical research on culture industry, clarifying the definition and scope of culture industry, establishing a framework of indicator system, and identifying value added accounts of culture industry in China. More than ten governmental departments have been involved in the research, such as Ministry of Culture, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, General Administration of Press and Publication, and State Administration of Cultural Heritage.

The achievement of this research is:

- Measuring and calculating the overall size and structure of culture industry in China, utilizing statistical information from departments and Economic Census;
- Revising the statistical report of departments to strengthen the comparability of indicators.

(3) Improving statistics for monitoring the development of women and children

Since the Chinese government promulgated the Chinese Women's Development Plan and Chinese Children's Development Plan, NBS has built up regular mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the two development plans. The main fields under monitoring include education, health, employment, social security and participation in social activities, and departments relevant with these fields are members of monitoring workgroup. NBS communicates with these departments to establish indicator frame, data collection mechanism, monitoring report system and training mechanism. The efforts mentioned above have strengthened the consciousness of statisticians in departments to conduct gender statistics, reinforced the connection and cooperation of governmental departments, improved and promoted department statistics.

(4) Data collection on millennium development goals.

Indicators of the millennium development goals include multi-fields, and need the cooperation of different departments. Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for reporting the implementation of millennium development goals in China and NBS also involved in the work to identify related statistical indicators. The Department of Social, Science and Technology Statistics coordinates with

relevant departments to verify and update indicators and also focus on information requirements and data collection of millennium development goals.

(5) General evaluation on social development

General evaluation on social development started from the middle of 1980s. The work aims at applying the research achievements of indicator system on social statistics to practice as to reflect the coordination of social development at national and provincial level, and also the gap of social development between different provinces.

The evaluation method of social development is similar to Human Development Index of UNDP, identifying necessary social statistical indicators, assigning these indicators with different weights and calculating a composite index to compare social development by province and year. This work aims to strengthen data analysis on social issues and present general information of social development to policy-makers.

The achievements referred to above reflect the efforts of NBS on coordinating and instructing department statistics. And basing on this, NBS has reinforced the cooperation of different data producers and data integration of different sources to make social statistics in China more efficient. In addition, the efforts of NBS also promote social statistics at provincial level. Referring to the experiences and practice of NBS, provincial statistical bureaus also make great progress in conducting gender and children statistics, culture industry statistics and general evaluation on social development.

IV. International experiences and cooperation promoting development of social statistics in China

(1) International experiences for reference

In the early of 1980s, achievement on indicators of social statistics completed by UNSD helped the development of social statistics of China greatly. NBS reinforced international cooperation from the middle of 1980s, and social statistics in China has made a big step since then. Department of Social, Science and Technology Statistics has been paying attention to social statistical progress and development abroad. Social statistics in China is also improved through attendance of meetings, seminars or workshops organized by UNSD, other international and regional organizations. For instance, research of culture industry in China has studied good experiences of some international organizations and countries.

(2) International cooperation

- Cooperating with UNICEF to conduct children survey and monitoring of indicators on children development in China in the middle of 1980s.

- Cooperating with UNIFEM to carry out gender statistics research and compilation Report on Improving Gender Statistics in China and a pamphlet on gender statistics in China in the early part of 1990s. Since then, gender statistics has been paid more attention in China and become an important part of social statistics. And now, monitoring on goals of development plans on women and children has been become a focal point for all level of governments and society.

- Currently, UNICEF and UNFPA also keep close cooperation with NBS, and help to train staff of statistical bureaus in prefecture level to develop gender and children statistics further.

- Carrying out some bilateral cooperative projects on social statistics. Department of Social, Science and Technology Statistics has developed some bilateral cooperative projects with corresponding departments in other countries, such as cooperative projects on social statistics between NBS and FSO of Germany, cooperative projects on gender statistics and time use survey with Statistics Sweden etc. Using experiences of international organizations and countries for reference, NBS has conducted time use survey in national context firstly in 2008, and now data processing is on-going.

NBS often invites some statistical staff from other departments to take part in international cooperation mentioned above and international experiences have been utilized in a broad sense. Additionally, the Department of Social, Science and Technology Statistics also participates in bilateral and international cooperation on technology and environment statistics.

V. Weak links, efforts and perspectives on social statistics in China

(1) Weak links of social statistics in China

- Some statistical surveys are conducted according to different requirements with varying investigation methods, concepts, definitions or classifications. And then data from different surveys lack comparability. This results in data user's difficulties and reduces the efficiency on data development and utilization;

- Most data on social statistics in China is from administrative records, and special surveys for meeting the requirements of social statistics are much less. Hence, data and information of social statistics in China focus on provision of public service, and is weak on reflecting efficiency of public service and evaluating efficiency of policy implementation.

(2) Efforts and perspectives for social statistics in China

NBS is considering building up a frame of social indicators as to coordinate the use of concepts, definitions and classifications in different surveys:

- International standards and classifications are used more and more in statistical surveys to improve the comparability of data from different surveys or departments;

- Statisticians of China are progressing in satisfying the demands of users. Statistical data and information is disseminated through mass media to make users get them easily. The public also learn and understand statistics while getting information. This plays an important role in promoting data utilization of different producers and communication with users;

- Building of statistical ability is referred to more often in national and local level social development plans. Firstly, the process of development is measured using statistical indicators; secondly, strengthening statistical ability has become a goal of development directly. This could be found in many national development plans and outlines in recent years.