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Improving Social Statistics in the Philippines through Effective Coordination

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1. INTRODUCTION

This country paper presents in brief the features of the Philippine Statistical System (PSS) and the roles, functions and activities of the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) in managing and coordinating statistics in the country and their application to social sectors. It also enumerates NSCB's major initiatives in responding to emerging demands of various stakeholders in the area of social statistics as well as the challenges and issues currently faced by the system.

The Philippines is one of many countries with a decentralized statistical system. The PSS is decentralized as upheld by the reorganization of the system in 1987 under Executive Order No. 121 which recognized the need to maintain a decentralized statistical system characterized by independence, objectivity, and integrity to make it more responsive to the requirements of national development. Its mission is to provide timely, accurate and useful statistics for the government and the public, especially for planning and decision-making.

By virtue of this order, the NSCB was created as the highest policymaking and coordinating body on statistical matters in the country. The Statistical Research and Training Center (SRTC) as the research and training arm of the PSS, was also established. The NCSO was renamed National Statistics Office (NSO) and was tasked to be the major statistical agency responsible for generating general-purpose statistics and undertaking such censuses and surveys as may be designated by the NSCB.

Another issuance in 1987, Executive Order No. 116, provided for the creation of the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) as one of the seven bureaus of the Department of Agriculture to take charge of the production of statistics on agriculture, fishery and related fields. It was also in the same year, when the Department of Labor was reorganized anew under Executive Order No. 126 and provided for the creation of the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES) as one of the six bureaus of the Department.

Other departments in the Philippine bureaucracy have maintained the statistical units within their respective offices. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) created its Department of Statistics on 20 March 2005 to assume the statistical functions lodged before at its Department of Economic Research.

1.1 The Components of the Philippine Statistical System

The PSS consists of statistical organizations at all administrative levels, its personnel and the national statistical program. Specifically, the organizations comprising the system include the following:

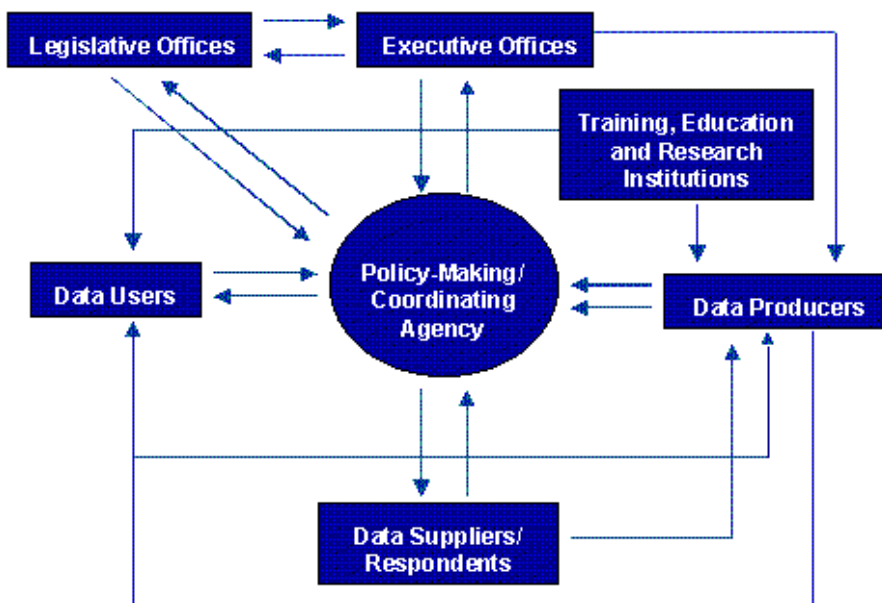
- A policy-making and coordinating body – the National Statistical Coordination Board

- A single general-purpose statistical agency – the National Statistics Office
- A research and training arm - the Statistical Research and Training Center
- Units of government engaged in statistical activities either as their primary function or as part of their administrative or regulatory functions – all departments, bureaus, offices, agencies, and instrumentalities of national and local governments and all government-owned and –controlled corporations and their subsidiaries

The major statistical agencies in the PSS include the NSCB, NSO, SRTC, the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS) of the Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES) of the Department of Labor and Employment, and the Department of Economic Statistics of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). Other data producers in the government include research and statistics divisions/units usually within the planning service of the various departments and bureaus, e.g. Office of Planning Service of the Department of Education (DepEd); National Epidemiology Center of the Department of Health (DOH), etc.

The chart below shows the linkages among the various institutions and players in the PSS.

Framework for the Management and Coordination of the PSS



1.2 The National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB)¹ - The policy-making and coordinating body in the PSS

The NSCB was created as the highest policy-making and coordinating body on statistical matters in the Philippines. It is under the administrative supervision of the National

¹ Executive Order No. 121 – Reorganizing and Strengthening the PSS and for Other Purposes issued on 30 January 1987; NSCB website – <http://www.nscb.gov.ph>

Economic and Development Authority. The NSCB formulates policies, delineates responsibilities, sets priorities and standards on statistics and administers the one-stop statistical information center. It also maintains multi-sectoral statistical frameworks and indicator systems, which serve as bases for the improvement of statistical coordination. It provides links and fora for coordination between and among these key players. It also serves as the statistical clearing-house and liaison for international statistical matters.

Foremost among the objectives of the NSCB is to develop an orderly PSS capable of providing timely, accurate, relevant, and useful data for the government and the public for planning and decision-making. The major goal of the NSCB is to promote the independence, objectivity, integrity, relevance and responsiveness of the PSS.

The powers and functions of the NSCB as defined under Section 5 of Executive Order No. 121 are as follows:

- Promote and maintain an efficient statistical system in the government;
- Formulate policies on all matters relating to government statistical operations;
- Recommend executive and legislative measures to enhance the development and efficiency of the system, including the internal structure of statistical agencies;
- Establish appropriate mechanism for statistical coordination at the regional, provincial and city levels;
- Approve the Philippine Statistical Development Program;
- Allocate statistical responsibilities among government agencies by designating the statistics to be collected by them, including their periodicity and content;
- Review budgetary proposals involving statistical operations and submit an integrated budget for the Philippine Statistical System (PSS) to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM);
- Review and clear, prior to release, all funds for statistical operations;
- Develop, prescribe and maintain appropriate framework for the improvement of statistical coordination; and
- Prescribe uniform standards and classification systems in government statistics.

The NSCB as coordinator is not engaged in primary data collection. The Executive Order further provides that the decisions of the NSCB on statistical matters shall be final and executory. At the helm of the NSCB is the NSCB Executive Board, which is composed of the undersecretaries of the different departments and heads of major statistical agencies and chaired by the Secretary of Socio-Economic Planning. The NSCB Executive Board holds quarterly meetings.

2. MECHANISMS FOR STATISTICAL PLANNING AND COORDINATION, COMMUNICATING STATISTICS, AND ADVOCACY

Coordination is a fundamental principle that is essential in a decentralized system like the PSS. Coordination mechanisms and strategies are continuously being undertaken by the NSCB to improve the organization and operations of the PSS, thereby enhancing the quality of the statistical products and services in the system.

2.1 Statistical Policies

Statistical policies are issued conducive to the delivery of high quality statistics and may be in the form of draft executive orders, presidential proclamations, and resolutions and circulars issued by the NSCB Executive Board which are intended to guide agencies and other stakeholders in terms of organization and implementation of concepts, definitions, enhance existing methodologies, new systems, best practices and others. The implementation of and compliance with these statistical policies are being monitored by the NSCB Technical Staff.

On social statistics, various resolutions previously issued dealt with their improvement and generation such as: a) Approving the proposed methodology for the computation of provincial poverty statistics; b) Approving the proposed methodology for the computation of poverty statistics for the basic sectors; c) standard concepts on population, health, education, labor, poverty, etc.; d) approving the methodology for the generation of the Philippine Labor Index; e) adopting the methodology used in generating the 2000 Census of Population and Housing-based national, regional and provincial population projections; f) approving the refinements in the official estimation methodology for the 2003 final poverty estimates; g) approving the core population and development (POPDEV) indicators for adoption in planning and policy making at the local level; etc. These resolutions can be viewed at <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/resolutions/default.asp>.

2.2 Philippine Statistical Development Program (PSDP)

The PSDP articulates the vision, direction, strategies and priority statistical programs and activities to be undertaken in the PSS for the medium term in order to meet current and emerging needs of the national and local planners, policy-makers and data producers. The formulation of the sector statistical development programs is spearheaded by the NSCB through the various inter-agency committees, task forces and working groups composed of the key players and stakeholders in the PSS. Indicative budget requirements for the programs and activities are also included. A Presidential proclamation approves the adoption of the PSDP as an integral part of the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) and in the prioritization of the funding requirements of the program.

The PSDP, which is prepared every six years, is designed to provide vital information support to the MTPDP and to promote efficiency of statistical operations through optimum use of available resources and adoption of cost effective measures. It envisions a PSS with greater capacity to provide excellent service and high quality statistical information for better use in policy analysis and decision-making to meet the changing needs of the stakeholders, data users, society and the international community. Several PSDPs were formulated in the past and the current one is the PSDP 2005-2010, which is the 7th PSDP developed by the PSS. This is the Philippine version of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) being advocated by PARIS21 or Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century.²

² NSCB, "The Evolution of the Philippine Statistical System, Country Paper", Seminar on the Evolution of National Statistical Systems, February 2007, New York, USA.

In the current PSDP, statistical programs for the social sectors are provided in the following chapters: a) poverty; b) population and housing; c) labor, income and productivity; d) health and nutrition; e) education, culture and arts; f) social needs, gender and development; g) peace and order; and h) anti-corruption and good governance. Among the major programs incorporated are: 1) Conduct of the 2010 Census of Population and Housing; 2) Strengthening of local government's capacity in implementing the community-based monitoring system; 3) Improvement of the provincial poverty estimation methodology; 4) Capacity building of data producers and users; 5) Regular generation of sex-disaggregated data support to monitor the goals and priorities of the MTPDP, Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the Philippine Platform for Action on Gender, etc.; 6) Generation of new and improvement of indicators/statistics to objectively monitor the quality of education; 7) Development and implementation of a coordinated and comprehensive Philippine Health and Nutrition Information System; 8) Improvement of existing methodology for estimating housing demands/needs; 9) Generation of indicators on informal sector employment; 10) Reengineering the National Crime Information System; and 11) Development of a cohesive statistical framework on governance.

2.3 System of Designated Statistics (SDS) and Advance Release Calendar

The System of Designated Statistics (SDS) was issued in 1996 through Executive order No. 352 as a mechanism for the identification and generation of the most crucial and essential statistics for administrators, planners, policy makers, and decision makers in the government and private sectors. It is also an important tool in addressing problems, such as data gaps, duplication, delayed release and inaccessibility of important sets of statistics, and as a framework for setting priorities in data production.

The designation includes the implementing agency, frequency of collection, geographic disaggregation and schedule of data dissemination. While at present, there are 60 activities/statistics designated to 19 government agencies, the SDS as a dynamic system, allows modifications to respond to changing needs and priorities and to emerging capabilities of statistical offices.

The statistics under the SDS form the core of official statistics that constitute a set of public good that the designated data producers must be accountable for. These include censuses, surveys, administrative data systems, derived data systems and statistical indicators. As a result, these designated statistics receive priority attention in the preparation of the national budget and duplication of statistical efforts is minimized, if not eliminated. More information can be viewed at: <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/pss/designated/default.asp>

Designated statistics for the social sectors include among others, the following: a) Census of Population and Housing- NSO; b) Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES)- NSO, c) National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS)- NSO, d) Poverty Statistics- NSCB, e) Generation of Basic Education Statistics- DepEd, f) Labor Force Survey (LFS) - NSO; g) Survey on Overseas Filipinos (SOF)- NSO; h) Generation of Health Statistics through the Field Health Service Information System- DOH; i) Functional

Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey-NSO; j) Mid-decade Census of Population - NSO; k) Occupational Wages Survey – BLES; l) Employment, Hours, and Earnings Survey – BLES; and m) National Nutrition Survey of the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) .

A main component of the SDS is the Advance Release Calendars (ARC) indicating the date of release of the results of the designated statistics. With this mechanism, users and the general public are made aware, when the statistics will be officially released. The producers, on the other hand are committed to make available the results on the promised dates. The 2008 ARC can be viewed at <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/pss/cal/default.asp>

2.4 Statistical Survey Review and Clearance System (SSRCS)

The SSRCS is a coordination mechanism institutionalized by the NSCB which involves the process of substantive review and evaluating the design and instruments of statistical surveys or censuses sponsored and/or to be conducted by government agencies including government corporations at the national and/or subnational level. The system also aims to ensure the quality of the data to be generated from the inquiry, to avoid unnecessary duplication in data collection and to elicit the cooperation of data providers and respondents. Some of the review criteria adopted include (1) essentiality and appropriateness; (2) reporting burden; (3) adequacy of survey and forms design; (4) clarity of questions and instructions; (5) use of standard classifications and definitions; (6) completeness and adequacy of tabulation plans; and (7) schedule and manner of disseminating results. More information on the SSRCS is available at <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/ssrcs/default.asp>.

On the average, the NSCB clears around 14 surveys annually, which include regular, periodic and one-shot surveys with individuals, households or establishments as respondents. Among the surveys on social sectors reviewed by the NSCB includes: a) FIES; b) LFS; c) SOF; d) CPH; e) Annual Poverty Indicators Survey; f) Community Based Monitoring System; g) NDHS; h) National Nutrition Survey. Press releases are issued by the NSCB each time a survey is cleared to inform the public and elicit the cooperation of respondents.

2.5 Statistical Frameworks and Indicator Systems

One other main function of the NSCB is to develop and maintain appropriate frameworks and indicator systems to serve as tools for statistical coordination. This includes the System of National Accounts (SNA) with data inputs coming from various agencies including private institutions. The compilation of the SNA by the NSCB has given it a powerful tool for statistical coordination that allows the identification of data gaps that need to be addressed by the PSS. Other frameworks/indicator systems on social statistics that are maintained by the NSCB include Gender and Development Indicators, Philippine National Health Accounts, Poverty Statistics, etc. Another instrument formulated by the NSCB is the Statistics for Philippine Development (STATDEV), which serves as a tool for monitoring the achievements of the economic and social development goals set forth in the MTPDP and the MDGs. The NSCB also serves as the

repository of the MDG database for the Philippines. Among the social chapters included in the STATDEV are: a) Anti-corruption; b) Culture; c) Education; d) Health Services; e) Labor; f) Peace and order; and g) Poverty, protection of vulnerable and empowerment. More information can be viewed at: <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/stats/statdev/default.asp>

2.6 Statistical Standards and Classification Systems

Standard classification systems serve as instruments for promoting the comparability and consistency of statistics generated by data producers. These standard classification systems are also used in the organization of databases and information systems that enable meaningful analyses of economic and social events in the country. The NSCB develops, prescribes, maintains and implements for adoption in the PSS, various standard classification systems. Among others, these include: a) Philippine Standard Occupational Classification; b) Philippine Standard Classification of Education; and c) Philippine Standard Industrial Classification. An inter-agency Technical Committee on Statistical Standards as created by the NSCB, serves as the venue to discuss the formulation of standard classification systems in the PSS.

Other standards include the prescription of standard concepts and definitions in the various sectors to ensure harmonization and comparability of statistics generated. In the area of social statistics, these terms include: population; labor and employment; health and nutrition; education; etc. Official concepts and definitions for statistical purposes are approved for adoption by all concerned by the Board. This section can be viewed at <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/glossary/terms/default.asp>.

2.7 Technical and Inter-Agency Committees on Statistics (TCs/IACs) and Task Forces (TFs)

The TCs/IACs/TFs are created by the NSCB (1) to assess and evaluate the quality, usefulness and timeliness of sectoral data and determine areas of duplication, discrepancies and gaps; (2) to review the concepts, techniques and methodologies used in the collection, processing and reporting of data; and (3) to recommend an efficient and workable scheme for the allocation of agency responsibilities in the production of statistics. Thru these committees, weaknesses in sectoral statistics including those affecting data quality can be addressed. The committees recommend policy measures to the NSCB Executive Board. The TCs/IACs/TFs are composed of both data producers and users including the private sector and members of the academic and research communities. At present, the various committees for the social sectors, are as follows: a) TC on Population and Housing; b) IAC on Health and Nutrition Statistics; c) IAC on Education Statistics; d) TC on Poverty Statistics; e) IAC on Gender Statistics; and f) IAC on Labor, Income and Productivity Statistics. The composition and functions of these inter-agency committees are created through memorandum orders, which can be viewed at: <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/aboutus/board/memoOrders/default.asp>

2.8 Statistical Budget Review

One of the functions of the NSCB is to review budgetary proposals for statistical activities of agencies. For many years now, the annual Budget Call issued by the Department of

Budget and Management provides that the NSCB endorse agency budget proposals involving the System of Designated Statistics. Budgetary thrusts are formulated for the guidance of the major statistical agencies and other data producers to serve as the common framework and direction for the PSS. In the review of statistical budget proposals, the PSDP as well as the approved budgetary thrusts by the NSCB plus a number of minimum targets/measures aimed at enhancing/ensuring the quality of data and capability- building of agencies, serve as the criteria. Major thrusts for 2009 for the social sectors include: 1) Generation of relevant statistics and information on: i) critical and emerging concerns such as on tourism and infrastructure, ICT, health and education, hunger, governance, environment, children and gender; and ii) sectors/areas of concern that affect and impact on the country's socio-economic development, including those relevant in tracking achievement of MDG targets and other international commitments; and 2) More intensive planning for the conduct of the 2010 Census of Population and Housing. These thrusts can be viewed at: <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/resolutions/2008/3.asp>

2.9 Hosting of International Conferences/Meetings

The NSCB spearheads the hosting of international statistical conferences/meetings by the Philippine government. Topics discussed include developmental/emerging concerns in the field of statistics. This is being done in coordination with international organizations. In October 2004, the PSS in cooperation with the UN Statistics Division and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, hosted the International Conference on Poverty Statistics: Methodology and Comparability aimed at establishing a convergence mechanism for discussing and assessing the preparedness of national statistical agencies in generating official poverty statistics. In October 2007, The PSS hosted the International Conference on MDG Statistics to serve as a forum for sharing of good practices and methodologies, current and new trends, and challenges in the generation, dissemination, and analysis of MDG data both at the country and regional/international levels. This year, the NSCB spearheads the hosting of the 8th Meeting of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics in Manila in October.

2.10 Communicating Statistics through the National Statistical Information Center

The National Statistical Information Center (NSIC) operates on a one-stop shop concept as a public service for statistical information in the country, and is lodged at the NSCB. To date, several branches of NSIC have been established in selected regions where there are NSCB Regional Divisions. The centers were established to make statistical information more accessible to data users on a wider scale. Services provided include frontline and library services, on line services through the NSCB website at <http://www.nscb.gov.ph>, bookshoppe and technical services. More information on the products and services of the PSS can be viewed at <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/services/nsic.asp>. Various Factsheets, Statistics Series, etc. on social statistics are released by the NSCB showcasing relevant data/indicators through brief or more in-depth analyses and graphical representations which are not commonly

known or readily available to users <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/factsheet/default.asp> or <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/statseries/default.asp>

2.11 Government Statistics Accessibility Program (GSAP)

The GSAP paved the implementation in 1999 of the General Standards for Statistical Information Dissemination (GSSID) in the PSS. The GSSID was designed as a mechanism of the government in setting appropriate and acceptable standards of reliability, integrity, timeliness, transparency, and accessibility of government statistics. Specifically, it promotes adherence to these standards in the dissemination of statistical information and greater utilization of data, fosters adoption of generally accepted data dissemination practices, and involves active participation of users in making statistics more accessible and useful. The creation of NSICs, ARC and the provision of metadata are some of the mechanisms and strategies being implemented by the PSS in the adoption of the GSAP. More details are found at <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/pss/gsap.asp>

2.12 National Statistics Month

The NSM is being observed annually during the month of October, following a Presidential Proclamation, as a vehicle for soliciting the support of the public at large in improving and enhancing the quality and standards of statistics in the country. The NSM, now on its 19th year this October, has become an effective venue for strengthening and unifying the Philippine statistical community and in instilling nationwide awareness and appreciation of the importance of statistics. Every year, the NSM focuses on a particular theme to underscore the importance of the sectoral statistics from subject-matter departments/agencies who are the hosts for the NSM. The major activities undertaken by government agencies and some private institutions include symposia and training/seminars/lectures, information dissemination using print and broadcast media and statistical contests. The DOH, DepEd, and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, have all sponsored the NSM celebration in the past with the following themes: a) Statistics in the 100th Year of Independence: Towards a Meaningful Governance, Health and Peace in the Community; b) Statistics Towards Excellence in Education; and c) Empowering Filipino Women through Gender Statistics.

2.13 Statistical Conferences/Conventions

The National Convention on Statistics (NCS) is held every three years to provide a forum for exchanging ideas and experiences in the field of statistics, in both theoretical and practical applications, and for discussing recent statistical developments and prevailing issues and problems of the PSS. It further aims to elicit the cooperation and support of statisticians and professionals in related fields from the government, academe and private sector towards a more responsive statistical system. The 9th NCS was held in October 2007 with the theme: "Statistics and Action: A Road to a Better Life through the MDGs". Nine invited paper sessions and 6 contributed paper sessions were devoted to the discussion of recent issues and methodologies on social statistics such as: Statistics on Decent Work; Generation of Local Poverty Statistics; Improving Gender Statistics; Re-

tooling the Quality of Education; Addressing Concerns on Health and Nutrition; Population and Development; etc.

2.14 Statistical Capacity Building

The importance of statistical capacity building is well recognized in the PSS and points to the need to continually build the human capacity of the agencies in order to be more effective and efficient in responding to the ever-increasing demand for statistical data by planners and decision makers from all sectors. Capacity building is mostly done through non-degree training, which aims to develop statistical expertise at various levels of competencies. Participation in training programs/courses is funded from own agency budget or by availing of training grants/programs sponsored/conducted by local or international institutions. Basic training programs were done in the past under the NSCB grants-in-Aid Program for subject matter departments/agencies, e.g., Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Health, and National Police Commission. At present, special training programs on statistics are being packaged by the SRTC for the Supreme Court specifically, the “Court Administration Management Information System” and for the Philippine Health Insurance System on health support statistics.

3 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND INITIATIVES OF THE PSS ON SOCIAL STATISTICS

To continuously improve its products and services, the PSS has embarked on a number of developmental activities to address the emerging/growing statistical requirements for the country’s programs as well as globalization concerns. These initiatives are aimed at making current systems more cost effective, exploring new technologies, developing methodologies, and promoting PSS products and services and making these accessible in support of the needs of stakeholders. These recent initiatives of the PSS, are mostly undertaken through technical and financial assistance from international donor agencies and organizations:

3.1 Development of Methodology to Generate Hunger Index

Through technical and funding assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, a framework and methodology for the development of a hunger index as a measure of the severity of hunger situation in the country based on existing data have been developed. The benchmark hunger index is meant to provide data support for more focused interventions to address hunger.

3.2 Small Area Estimation of Poverty Statistics

The official poverty statistics in the Philippines are generated by the NSCB. National and regional poverty thresholds, incidences, and gaps are estimated every three years coinciding with the reference year of the FIES. Annual estimates of poverty and food thresholds are likewise computed in-between FIES years.

In order to address the need for more timely and relevant poverty thresholds, the NSCB developed a methodology for the model-based estimation of annual food and poverty thresholds. For the first time in the history of the PSS, the NSCB released project-based poverty estimates for all cities and municipalities in the country for 2000. The estimates were part of the outputs of a special study to generate poverty statistics using the small area estimation techniques based on a methodology developed by the World Bank. For completion this year, is the intercensal updating of the municipal poverty estimates for 2003, based on more recent surveys and models.

3.3 Improvement of Estimates for Private Sector Financing Agents for the Philippine National Health Accounts (PNHA)

This newly completed project with funding assistance from the World Health Organization was aimed at improving the estimates of health care expenditures paid by the private sector as presented in the PNHA including providing more details of health care functions and health care providers based on the OECD System of Health Accounts Framework. Thus, present sources, as well as potential sources of data were reviewed and explored to institute improvements in the compilation system for the private sector using administrative and regulatory data.

3.4 Happiness Index

The formulation of the Philippine Happiness Index (PHI) was encouraged by the Istanbul Declaration, which highlighted the need to undertake the measurement of societal progress in every country, going beyond conventional economic measures. The PHI was thus conceptualized guided by the following premises: economic progress and happiness are not synonymous, Philippine progress should be captured by the happiness of the (individual) Filipinos, the PHI should not be normative and should recognize individual differences in terms of sources or domains of happiness and the importance attached to each domain.³

3.5 Model-Based Estimation of Annual Income and Expenditure based on the FIES 1st Round Results Towards Improving the Timeliness of Poverty Statistics

This project with funding assistance from the UNDP aims to improve the timeliness of official poverty statistics by producing model-based annual income and expenditure using the results of the FIES 1st round and the July round of the Labor Force Survey. The outputs are deemed useful for targeting and planning purposes such as determination of minimum wage, negotiations for collective bargaining agreements, etc.

4. ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

³ Romulo A. Virola, "Measuring Progress of Societies: Would You Rather be Rich or Would You Rather Be Happy?" Statistically Speaking, NSCB, http://ns_websserver/headlines/StatsSpeak/2007/081307_rav_happiness.asp

While different mechanisms and initiatives in coordination, data generation and dissemination, training and researches are in place in the country, there are still current concerns and emerging challenges that need to be dealt with appropriately in order for the PSS to respond more effectively to its mandate of providing data users and stakeholders with quality statistical information.

4.1. Need to further enhance and strengthen statistical planning and coordination

With the current developments in the field of statistics, statistical planning and coordination needs to be further strengthened, especially in the areas of monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning and policy formulation. Emphasis should be put in the monitoring of the system of designated statistics and the implementation of the PSDP.

4.2. Need for higher budgetary resources and investments in statistics

Current concerns, such as the need to improve timeliness in the release of data as well as the methodologies used in data gathering activities require additional financial resources. This also involves upgrading of information and communications technology facilities. With the inadequate government appropriations for statistical activities, particularly for periodic activities and for developmental activities and emerging concerns, several measures and strategies should be considered such as cost-sharing with local government units, cost-sharing with users of statistics, tapping the private sector to share the cost of statistics, drawing eminent persons as champions of statistics, and mustering political will on the part of government to invest in statistics.

4.3. Need for more consultations with stakeholders and data users

Consultations with stakeholders and data users are currently being done in the PSS if there are new concepts, new methodologies or new frameworks and indicator systems. For better understanding and appreciation of the new statistical concerns, more consultations have to be undertaken. Such is the case when the NSCB approved the new definition of unemployment.

4.4 Need to promote transparency of methodologies

The documentation of survey methodologies and metadata are good practices in the production and dissemination of results. Some users find existing documentation deficient; hence, documentation will be promoted for greater transparency and to provide adequate bases for undertaking improvements. Measures of sampling errors will also be required as part of the documentation and the release of survey results to inform users on the accuracy and precision of estimates generated from the survey. Relatedly, the dissemination of metadata by the data producers should be strongly advocated as a good practice in data dissemination.

4.5 Need to address emerging concerns and local data needs

Official statistics should be relevant to all stakeholders. In the economic front, available statistics at the national level are already adequate to meet the needs of users. However, the social sector needs serious efforts to enable the provision of quality data and indicators. Another major demand for data, concerns the subnational disaggregation of data. This has been the pressure from data users due to the devolution of basic services to the LGUs, poverty alleviation and countryside development programs of the government. However, there is a need to evaluate the users' demand for the generation of lower/specific disaggregation of data to consider resource requirements and constraints.

4.6 Need to enhance dissemination of social statistics

Given the various data being produced by the agencies, there is a need for pricing policy on statistical products and services. Statistics have limited media coverage. The PSS should place great importance on communicating with the media as they serve as the bridges between statistics and our public. There is likewise a need for statisticians to present statistics in a laymanized manner.

4.7 Need to inculcate a statistics-culture in departments

To ensure priority to statistical activities by management of the other departments in government, internal advocacy on the importance of statistics is necessary. This will ensure strong support to be provided for statistical outputs and services in terms of resources. This can be achieved through dialogues, presentation of outputs, training, etc. This could also improve their provision of data needed in the compilation of the various frameworks and indicator systems maintained and being developed.

4.8 Need for continuous building of statistical knowledge and capability of the major statistical agencies, other data producers and the local government units

Faced with divergent and new concerns, the continuous building of capacities of the major statistical agencies, other data producers as well as the local government units through statistical training is necessary. There is also a need to strengthen the capability of the agencies to undertake statistical researches.

5. Final Note

With the inadequate resources and other constraints, the PSS continues to seek for alternative measures and strategies toward responding to the current and emerging demands of the various clientele and stakeholders. The PSS through the NSCB continues to effect improvements in its capacity to provide quality statistical products and services. Likewise, it recognizes the need to conform to international standards, comparisons and practices, and it provides support and cooperation to the statistical endeavors of the international community.

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