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Statistical Coordination Among Various Producers
of Social Statistics in China *

by

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I. Statistical system in China

1. There are two main channels for data collection in China's official statistical system:
 - a. Statistical bureaux under governments at all levels. National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBS) under the State Council is responsible for organizing, directing and coordinating the statistical work throughout the country. NBS is in charge of constituting statistical standards and systems of nationally unified questionnaires for basic statistical reporting. The statistical bureaux at levels of provinces, prefectures and counties bear responsibilities for the government at same level and the statistical bureaux of upper level. They carry out tasks allocated by superior statistical bureaux, and organize statistical investigations according to local needs.
 - b. Statistical institutions in government sectors and in other functional sectors at national level. The two sectors are in charge of planning and carrying out statistical investigations according to their executive jurisdiction under management and guidance of NBS in terms of statistical methodologies and survey organizations and so on. It is provided by Statistics Law of China that they report their data to NBS on a regular bases.

There is close cooperation between these two statistical channels in the fields of statistics.
2. Within NBS, statistical projects are divided by fields as: industry and transportation statistics, agriculture and rural issues statistics, trade and external economic relations statistics, investment and construction statistics, population statistics, labor and employment statistics, social statistics, scientific statistics, environment statistics, rural and urban household surveys, enterprises survey and national accounts. Some of these projects are carried out by NBS, and others are implemented by government agencies concerned.
3. Within NBS, the scope of social statistics is considered generally to consist of statistical aspects that directly reflect status of social development and the quality of people's living. Thus the scope mainly includes population statistics, labor and employment statistics, scientific statistics and household survey, as well as environment statistics, which the NBS is about to establish.

II. Statistical coordination among various producers of social statistics

4. There is a close cooperative relationship between NBS and concerned agencies in the fields of statistics, especially in social statistics. In accordance with the division of responsibilities in statistics, statistics in education, public health, culture, sport, judicature and social insurance are implemented by government agencies and organizations concerned. Therefore, the Social Statistics Division of Department of Population, Social, Scientific and Technological Statistics of NBS, is in charge of inter-sector coordination. The concrete jobs of the Division are to gather data from relative agencies and to organize and guide them to complete other comprehensive statistics. That means social statistics are taken through the way of inter-sector coordination persistently. Users can acquire data not only from NBS, but from relative agencies as well.
5. For instance, the Ministry of Education of China is in charge of educational statistics and there is a Statistical Division within the Ministry. Most data is derived from administrative registration. The Ministry aggregates the data by statistical reports, and compiles and publishes a statistical yearbook on education. According to Statistical Law, the statistical indicators worked out by the Ministry are to be reported to the National Bureau of Statistics for examination and approval. Thus they take a legal obligation upon all kinds of educational agencies to implement it. The Ministry provides a set of aggregate data to NBS each year. They also provide other information to meet the demand of NBS. In addition, NBS produces data on educational status of the general population from censuses and surveys, the indicators include proportion of literates, length of education, enrollment, etc. One more source for educational statistics is data on vocational training from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. In this way, data from these sources are complementary and comparable to each other.
6. Social statistics in other fields are of similar situation, for example, statistics concerning healthcare are mainly carried out by the Ministry of Health, and statistics concerning public security are mainly carried out by the Ministry of Public Security, etc. Data from population censuses and household surveys are also important sources for social statistics.
7. In China's statistical system portrayed above, the main problems on the efficient utilization of statistics from different sources are:
 - a. Because indicators are designed to meet the needs of different purposes, data from different sources are not harmonized in concepts, definitions and classifications; hence, they cannot be compiled directly.
 - b. Censuses and regular reports will produce different data for same indicator.

III. Methods for improvement

8. Since 2001, NBS has been considering to establish an indicator framework of social statistics. The aim is to harmonize the concepts, definitions and classifications of social indicators collected in different investigations for different purposes.
9. China now adopts more and more international statistical standards.
10. Statisticians in China get a notable progress that we tend to consider more users' needs. More and more data are promulgated in user-friendly form through various media. Users also get more knowledge about statistics while they get more statistics. This has improved greatly the understanding between users and producers of statistics. Of course, more efforts need to be done.
11. Another remarkable event is that capability building in statistics is thought much in our social development plan. One side that is the measure for the process of development is embodied by as much statistical indicators as possible. The other side is that the construction of statistical capability is taken account of as a goal of development directly. These improvements are reflected in many National Development Programs issued in the recent years.