

Dear Paul ,

Greetings from Malaysia.

I applaud UNSD for undertaking a timely and interesting initiative on Statistical Quality Assurance.

First of all, the nomenclature of the framework possibly can be renamed as National Statistical Quality Assurance Framework to differentiate from other subject matters.

Secondly, the framework provided looks like "inward" relating more of statistical processes rather than "holistic" which can relate the various levels of user communities. National statistical agencies produce statistical data but at the end of the data users have to endorse its acceptability. In this contemporary world, the users can not be only confined to mainstream government agencies like Economic Planning Unit (EPU) or Central Bank or Treasury (in the case of Malaysia as you are fully aware) but also should include key industry players or representatives. The industry representatives should be engaged from onset of planning a statistical activity. This is based on my current working experience where the National ICT Association of Malaysia doubted the validity and reliability of some of the statistics published locally and more so, there are numerous statistics of interest to not only for public policy work but also for market and industry developments are needed.

Thirdly, in the proposed framework an explicit role for Statistical Quality Governance (SQG) is needed at the national statistical offices. The primary role of this organizational governance is to review and endorse as well as to make a press release on each official statistics production activity. Possibly the SQG can include members from mainstream policy makers, key development practitioners, academics and key industry representatives. In the current practice it is the role and responsibility of a particular division, perhaps with the endorsement of Deputy and Chief Statistician is included.

Fourthly, it is high time that efforts are needed to make statistical practitioners be accorded "Professional Status" like medical or engineering or accountant or computer or real estate association do. I am not sure in other countries, which you may know better but back in Malaysia Statistical service has evolved into a "support service" opposed to regarded as a "strategic service" when started in the fifties or sixties.

Fifthly, in the absence of official statistics the mainstream compelled to use privately produced statistics. Like in the case of ICT statistics, more often data from IDC, Gartner, Frost & Sullivan et cetera are being quoted. As you are fully aware, quality of statistics produced by these agencies are market driven; they differ greatly from one another; methodologies used are not validated nor verified especially sampling, questionnaire design and canvassing techniques used. Such things happened when national statistical office not proactive in producing the kind of statistics needed by various users in both public and private sectors unless directed by the agency they are placed under. With regard to this issue, my suggestion is to the role of NSQAF need to be expanded even to cover production of private sector

statistics especially those used by the policy makers in the mainstream.

In summary, the NSQAF proposed needs to reflect the elements on engagement of various types of producers and users in the public and private sectors, need to have a SQG at organizational level, professional standing of statistical profession and quality controller for all mainstream statistics.

Regards

R. Ramachandran  
Head of Policy, Capability and Research  
PIKOM (The National ICT Association of Malaysia)