

Seventh Management Seminar
For the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific
13 – 15 October 2008, Shanghai, China

**MANAGING ISSUES ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES
OF USING ADMINISTRATIVE DATA FOR STATISTICAL PURPOSES**

Country Paper

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October 2008

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1. Introduction

Extending the use of administrative registers

Data from administrative registers are widely used as input to the statistical process as a cheaper alternative to special data collection. Depending on the preconditions in the society the possibilities to make use of a register approach differs very much.

For many years Vietnam has developed a reporting system. The quality of the data has been questioned – among other things because the statistics have been influenced by what should have been achieved and does not reflect what really was achieved. However, the reporting system is extremely useful because it (unlike sample surveys) provides detailed information on local areas.

The main cost of the reporting system is the *response burden* to communes and the enterprises. This response burden could be reduced considerably by less frequent reporting. Monthly reporting made sense in a centrally planned economy, when authorities could intervene in enterprises. In a market economy, frequent reporting makes less sense. In many cases biannual or annual reporting would be sufficient. In addition to diminishing the response burden less frequent reporting would also allow DSB, PSO and GSO to improve the data quality

In the last some years, the use of administrative data within the GSO system has been extended for statistical purpose. This paper aims at issues related to management of this activity in Vietnam statistical system.

2. Current situation

Legal framework

During the last some years, the GSO has taken significant steps towards becoming a modern and internationally recognized statistical institution. Yet there is need to reform and improve the GSO institutions on all levels, both to adapt to new conditions created by administrative reforms of the Government and a new Statistical Law and to improve capabilities needed for analysis of statistical data for monitoring poverty reduction and national development.

The administrative reform, PAR, which is currently in its second phase, will simplify the rules of government, clarify roles of government bodies and decentralize powers to provinces and districts. A new Statistical Law, in line with the reform, went into effect by 2004, giving GSO a more precise role and vast powers concerning all statistics collected by government. The reforms affect GSO, both by changed and more diversified needs of statistics from other government bodies, and by underlining the needs to become a cost efficient independent service institution for government on all levels and also other users. The Law identified that administrative data is one of the main resources of statistical information and GSO plays the coordination role in use of administrative data for statistical purposes. In the time when the demand of statistical information day by day increased and diversified, use of administrative data for statistical purposes is the only way to reduce the cost for statistics but can be satisfied the demand of society.

Activities

The Prime Minister of Vietnam has approved just called System of National Statistical Indicators submitted by the General Statistics Office. The System included 274 major indicators that data have to be collected for. From these 274 indicators the GSO collects data for 116 itself through system of statistical censuses and surveys, the other 158 will be collected from ministries and government agencies. More or less, that is a very large part of data GSO collected from administrative registers.

The advantage side of using these administrative data is their availability. They are already available and the main task for statisticians is how to explore and use them. And the second, it always cheaper than survey data statistical offices collected by themselves. However, administrative data are still have a serious problems and limitations in term of use for statistical pueposes. First and foremost, the data can be not in good quality because the data were gathered for another purpose. In many cases, they did not meet requirements in timelines, coverage and some other methodological issues.

Currently, the use of administrative data in Vietnam is not the same in different areas. While in social statistics most of data collected from administrative registers such as in education, health care, ... there is still problem for such activity in other areas, especially in economic statistics.

In general GSO of Vietnam uses administrative data mostly for tabulation of some quantitative indicators. In other cases, administrative data can be used also for updating frames for surveys or for checking, evaluating results of surveys conducted.. of Vietnam uses administrative data mostly for tabulation of some quantitative indicators.

Management

Within the past decade new management tools have been developed to make organizations focus on their core functions. The key areas would be improved management skills (strategy management, change management, human resources management, quality management, modernization management process, motivation). In this concern, management of the use of administrative data has been also discussed. The GSO organizes annual meetings with line ministries and government agencies to review implementation of the work plan of GSO with the government bodies. In the meetings, discussions were aimed at:

- Quality of GSO's output,
- Data dissemination policy
- Data flow between GSO and other government bodies, including collection of administrative data from line ministries and government agencies for statistical purposes.
- Demand on statistical data published by the GSO.
- Issues related to better relationship between GSO and government bodies in data collection and dissemination.

Annual Data collection Plan of GSO and its subject matter departments include both surveys conducted by GSO and data got from administrative registers. However, systematic training program in the topics of the use of administrative data still was not created except some courses conducted with assistance of international organizations, the last course on use of administrative data for statistical purposes was conducted in September 2008 with assistance of ADB and SIAP with participation of representatives from GSO and some ministries.

Weakness

The GSO has through the new Statistical Law been given more power and responsibilities, among other things, to have a supervisory role in respect to other public statistics producers in Vietnam. However, there were still many problems

related to management of collecting data from administrative registers for statistical purposes.

There is a problem of decentralized administrative registers in the country. The most limitation of using administrative data for statistical purposes in Vietnam is in the administrative organization, while the local authorities are independent from the central government. Administrative registers of line ministries in many cases did not cover local (provincial) ones. Because of this, for compiling data in some areas, the GSO has to collect data both from ministries itself and from local authorities via local statistical offices. This process of data collection more or less inflected to the quality of collected data.

In other aspect, administrative data still did not meet requirements of statistical offices in timeliness, accuracy, coverage and relevance. Moreover, in some cases there is a place of differences in definition and classification.

Challenges

GSO has experienced an impressively positive development during the past decade. However, problems or challenges remain:

The first, Methodological and Structural Challenges.

Establishment of administrative registers that also serve statistical purposes is a major challenge. The main problem is structural: namely to institute cooperation between line ministries and GSO. In the field of business statistics the challenge is to establish a well functioning single business register that serves the tax authorities as well as GSO. In the field of trade statistics the challenge is to establish a register that serves the customs authorities as well as GSO.

And the second, Management challenge

GSO faces the challenge of a more general reform of the organization as part of the Public Administrative Reform process driven by the Ministry of Home Affairs. As an outcome of this process GSO could become a service organization more detached from government. This might be combined with introduction of newer management tools within the organization.

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3. Conclusion

Future vision

To further investigate the possibilities to use data from administrative register as input to the statistical process it needs to establish a good cooperation mechanism between statistical agency with ministries, government bodies and other owners of administrative owners. Since with growing use of administrative data, the statistical offices became more and more dependent on those who are the owners of these data. Because of this very important to establish a clear legislative environment for operation of statistical offices in term of collecting data from administrative registers.

In most countries statistical data are collected from administrative sources as well as from surveys. In some developed countries the major source of statistical data are administrative records or registers, only few surveys are conducted. Vietnam might develop in the same direction if administrative registers are systematically developed.