

**Report of the Sub-regional
Seminar for selected Southern African Countries on

Developing a Programme for the Implementation of the
2008 SNA and Supporting Statistics,
17 to 19 October 2012, Pretoria South Africa**

Introduction

1. The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN-ECA), the Southern African Custom Union (SACU), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), arranged a seminar on Developing a Programme for the Implementation of the 2008 SNA and Supporting Statistics for Southern African Countries from 17 to 19 October 2012 in Pretoria, South Africa. The seminar is part of the technical assistance provided by the UNSD to increase statistical capacity building in the region to alleviate the difficulties faced by countries in the implementation of some recommendations of the 2008 SNA. The objective of this seminar was to assist the countries with developing a programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics as encouraged by the Statistical Commission with a gradual changeover to the 2008 SNA starting in 2014.

2. The seminar was attended by participants from Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition two staff members from UNSD and one each from UN-ECA, SACU and the African Development Bank (AfDB) were also present.

3. For this technical assistance intervention, a sub-regional and strategic approach was initiated by inviting a limited number of countries that share a common economic integration objective with participation of senior representatives in economic statistics from national statistical offices and national central banks. With their common integration objective, it is expected that a common roadmap can be formulated for the changeover to the 2008 SNA, because harmonised economic statistics is at the heart of their common economic integration objective. Among the countries, one country is selected in the sub-region to be the pilot country, because of its lead in the preparations for the changeover. The experience of the pilot country in the preparation of the changes in institutional arrangements and statistical production process required for the changeover to the 2008 SNA formed the basis for discussion at a national seminar/consultation and a major input in the discussion at the sub-regional seminar. A follow-up is scheduled in February 2013 based on the preparation of the first drafts of the national statements of strategy for the change over to the 2008 SNA that will form the basis for the formulation of the national and sub-regional roadmap.

4. The seminar discussed a number of themes introduced with presentations followed by discussions. UNSD presented the institutional process, assessment and reporting tools for the development of a programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics. Particular attention was given to the stages in undertaking a system wide consultation, outreach and involvement of the major data producers and users, the coordinating role of the national statistical offices (NSO), the required resource mobilisation for the programme and the possible external technical assistance required. UN-ECA presented the African plan for the implementation of the 2008 SNA, which is fully aligned

with the global initiative. SACU presented the need for harmonising the compilation of national accounts data.

Need for appropriate human resource programme

5. The participants accorded particular attention to the need to develop an appropriate human resource programme given the limited amount of skilled staff and high turnover. Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) is addressing these human resource needs by preparing a detailed training programme on economic statistics. Upon request, StatsSA will invite countries to participate in these training programmes and will make the training modules available to other countries for their own national training programmes.

Shared vision with partners for addressing budgetary issues

6. Some participants indicated that the budgetary issues for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics can be addressed at national level by establishing a common vision in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders of the national statistical system, such as the NSO, the central bank and other relevant ministries on their respective roles in the production of economic statistics. Stakeholders should collectively make the case to the Ministry of Finance based on the common strategic approach. The need for assistance at national level from international and regional agencies to advocate the case for collaboration was reiterated. Also existing bilateral collaborations in the sub-region should be further pursued where possible, because of the increasing evidence of positive feedback from sharing bilateral experience in strengthening institutional arrangements, statistical infrastructure and statistical operations.

Present country practices

7. Each participating country presented an overview of the main policy issues and their relationship with the scope and detail of the national accounts framework, as well as an overview of current compilation practices, new requirements by economic activity and institutional sector, and statistical and institutional actions to remedy shortcomings. From these presentations, it was clear that most of the countries participating in the seminar are still a long way from actually implementing the concepts of the 2008 SNA. Meanwhile, the main gaps for the changeover to 2008 SNA and the aspired detail and scope of the national accounts were identified.

Mobilisation of ongoing donor initiative at country level

8. The formulation of the SNA strategy could draw on existing donor initiatives in economic statistics (Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia) and bilateral collaborations (South Africa-Namibia, and Zambia-Swaziland). Also SACU expressed its full institutional and financial support in the harmonization of the GDP, GNI estimates for its member states.

Integrated economic statistics approach

9. The discussions on the statistical production process were facilitated by presentations by UNSD, StatsSA and the South African Reserve bank (SARB) on the application of the integrated economic statistics approach to the statistical production process. This approach takes into account the institutional environment and the main elements of the statistical

production process such as the statistical business registers, surveys and administrative sources, dissemination and communication methods. It was recommended that this integrated statistical approach and the assessment of the components and sub-components should be an integral part of the formulation of the statement of strategy for the gradual change over to the 2008 SNA starting 2014.

Policy use and scope and detail of MRDS

10. The progressive multiple policy uses of the statistics, accounts and tables of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics with the extended scope and detail as required by the Minimum Required Data Set (MRDS) was discussed in a session on the scope and detail of the national accounts required for effective policy purposes. The discussions allowed participants to gain further insight in developing a more articulate outreach programme for the senior policy makers and analysts in their countries.

Conclusions for sub-regional seminar

11. The sub-regional seminar showed that the participating countries are still a long way from actually implementing the 2008 SNA and would need continuing support for developing and implementing a programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics. It was also evident that the Global initiative and African plan for the implementation of the 2008 SNA is not put in practice at the national level.

12. The participants recognised that for preparing an implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, it is necessary to take into consideration the national and sub-regional policy needs to determine the scope and detail of the national accounts required to inform policy makers. These goals are also guided by the requirements set by the Statistical Commission on the scope and detail of the national accounts. The chosen scope and detail of the national accounts also determine the data sources needed for timely and accurate estimates of the national accounts aggregates. By mapping the statistical requirements – where you want to go, and the outcome of the assessment of the statistical system – where you are, it is possible to determine the required actions – how to get there. These required actions can then be translated into an implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, providing key features and deliverables that are specific, measurable, relevant and can be carried out within a specific time frame.

13. As a first step to develop an implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics at the country level participants committed to **establish a statement of strategy for this purpose by February 2013**. This commitment is recognition that the statement of strategy is a necessary step to a multi-year statistical programme to move over to the 2008 SNA and to establish a minimum common data set of annual and high frequency statistics.

Other considerations

- Continued engagement by all international and regional organisations to follow-up on country commitments to drafting national implementation programmes in a phased changeover to the 2008 SNA starting in 2014

This renewed sub regional approach launched by UNSD, UN-ECA and AfDB in collaboration with relevant sub-regional organizations holds promise, but requires continued

engagement by all international and regional organisations with the individual countries. It has led to country commitments to drafting national implementation programmes on national accounts and economic statistics in a phased changeover to the 2008 SNA starting in 2014, which warrant action at the country level coordinated by the NSOs and central banks.

- Agreed outline of the statement of strategy

An agreed outline of the statement of strategy (see Annex) will form the basis for the drafting the programme and will cover both the statistical and institutional elements to improve the scope detail and quality of their national accounts.

- Regional agencies should provide in-country assistance to meet the February milestone.

UNSD, UN-ECA and AfDB in collaboration with relevant sub-regional organizations (SADC, SACU and COMESA) should follow up and contacting the individual participating countries to ensure that they prepare the draft statement of strategy for the implementation of the 2008 SNA by February 2013. Where relevant and requested, regional agencies should provide in-country assistance to meet the February milestone.

- Launch similar initiatives in North and West Africa and in other sub regions of the Africa in 2013

This initiative also served as an initial catalyst for intra regional cooperation aimed at curbing variation in approaches among countries in the African region and to further the consistent implementation of the 2008 SNA for the African continent. UN-ECA and AfDB are keen to launch similar initiatives in North and West Africa and in other sub regions of the Africa in 2013 starting Q1 2013 in collaboration with UNSD and regional agencies, as relevant.

- Develop global strategy on national accounts and economic statistics

UN-ECA proposed that a strategy for raising funds at the global level to support countries with the implementation of the 2008 SNA be explored. A good example of this is the global strategy on improving agricultural and rural statistics. This proposal will be discussed at the Coordination Meeting with Regional Commissions and ISWGNA in a scheduled meeting during the Statistical Commission in 2013.

- Initiatives in other regions

Apart from organizing similar seminars at the sub-regional level in North and West Africa and elsewhere in Africa, UNSD should also explore a similar approach in collaboration with the other United Nations regional commissions. Concrete requests have been received for the ECLAC and ESCWA regions that warrant early action.

Annex

National statement of strategy

1. Strategic planning is a key principle in mobilizing political and financial support for investment in statistics for which strategic planning frameworks could be used to connect national development objectives with a programme of work for statistical capacity-building. Strategic planning can identify the current strengths and weaknesses of statistical capacity to produce key economic indicators and basic source data. This approach could also lay out a schedule of tasks to mitigate weaknesses.
2. Countries are encouraged to develop their implementation programmes for the 2008 SNA and supporting economic statistics within the framework of national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS). A statement of strategy, taking into account the national and regional policy needs, is an important step to establish a road map for developing the required scope, detail and quality of national accounts needed for assessing economic progress. For this purpose it is proposed that countries establish a statement of strategy for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics at the national level and to incorporate this statement of strategy in the review of their NSDS. The statement of strategy aims to establish the set of actions to accomplish statistical and institutional goals for the sustainable improvement of the economic statistics programmes, while ensuring adherence to best practices in official statistics.
3. In developing the statement of strategy, consultations are needed, preferably in a national seminar, with all stakeholders, policy planners and other users including the academia and business community. Such a discussion is expected to help the national statistical office to prioritize the problem areas and ultimately write a plan for the improvement of the supporting economic statistics with a view to compile national accounts within the framework of the 2008 SNA.
4. The basic elements of a statement of strategy include a mandate, a mission statement, values, high level goals, specific goals and required activities. Table 1 provides an outline for a statement of strategy. For the purpose of an implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, a statement of strategy could, for example, be: *The development of an economic statistics programme for compiling national accounts with the required scope and detail to meet data needs of policy makers in a global socio-economic environment.* The statement of strategy represents the overall objective for the successful implementation of the 2008 SNA to enable the evaluation of economic performance and the national and regional economic policy objectives.
5. The **mandate** for the statement of strategy is determined by national and regional policy objectives and underpinned by the regulatory and institutional framework through a statistical act and international statistical standards such as, the United Nations principles of official statistics, 2008 SNA, BPM6, GFSM, ISICrev4, etc.
6. The **mission statement** describes the purpose, users, outputs, markets, philosophy and basic technology used to realize the strategy. In other words, what needs to be accomplished, for example, *The efficient and timely dissemination of high quality national accounts and supporting economic statistics.*

7. The set of *values* needs to reflect the values and principles portrayed by the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics to produce useful high-quality data that will have the confidence of users of statistics. Values include, for example, statistical professionalism, independence and integrity, excellent service to customers, respect and understanding for data suppliers, value for money, etc.

8. *High-level goals* represent the overall accomplishments to be achieved. These goals aim to address important issues, which are identified during the assessment phase. The goals should be creative and forward-looking by being specific, measurable, relevant and time-bound. High-level goals could include improvement in the scope, quality and timeliness of economic statistics, minimizing the burden on respondents, increasing the use of administrative data for statistical purposes, achieving greater efficiencies using best practices, raising public awareness and use of national accounts, etc.

9. The *specific goals* describe the ultimate results that need to be accomplished for fulfilling the vision described in the statement of strategy. The specific goals for the 2008 SNA implementation programme could be: *To compile national accounts according to milestone two of the SNA implementation, comprising the minimum required data set and to develop a national central data hub for short term economic statistics to facilitate the early detection of changes in economic activity as reflected by the national accounts.*

10. The *required activities* are determined by mapping the results from an assessment of the national statistical system to determine the adequacy of the national statistical production process to support implementation of the 2008 SNA and the data needed to compile the scope detail and quality of the national accounts required to inform policy makers. These activities can be grouped in three categories:

- **Regulatory and institutional framework** – strengthening the functioning of NSS, its programming, management and performance
- **Statistical infrastructure** – strengthening of use of standards (2008 SNA), classifications (ISIC Rev 4), registers and frames
- **Statistical operations** – strengthening of data collection, compilation, dissemination and analysis

Suggested outline for a national statement of strategy for Southern African countries

11. An outline of a generic statement of strategy is presented in the table below. Using this generic outline participants have preliminarily identified the required activities, which are listed in the next paragraphs.

12. Modernisation of the national regulatory and institutional framework

- Formulate statement of strategy
- Training – human development
- Other as relevant

13. Statistical infrastructure

- 2008 SNA compliant-
- Scope – net lending/borrowing
- Detail SUT
- Periodicity
 - Quarterly GDP,
 - Annual sector accounts
- Classification compliant – ISIC rev4, CPC2,
- Registers and frames
- Exhaustive measure of GDP
- Others as relevant

14. Statistical operations

- 2008 SNA compliance adjustments to business and household surveys
- Harmonisation of quarterly and annual GDP
 - Detailing sources and methods
 - Capital stock and consumption of fixed capital
 - Taxes on products
- Integration of monthly and quarterly production and turnover surveys
- Monthly price statistics (CPI and PPI)
- Informal sector surveys
- Labour force surveys
- Use of administrative data
- Others as relevant

Outline for a statement of strategy

Mandate		
<p style="text-align: center;">Policy needs</p> <p>Regional and national policy objectives</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Legal Mandate</p> <p>Statistics Act</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">International Standards</p> <p>UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics; Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF); 2008 SNA, BMP6, GFSM, ISIC Rev.4</p>
Mission statement		
<p>The efficient and timely dissemination of high quality national accounts and supporting economic statistics</p>		
Values		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical professionalism • Independence and integrity • Excellent service to our customers • Respect and understanding for our data suppliers • Value for money 		
High-level goals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in the scope, quality and timeliness of economic statistics • Minimising the burden on respondents • Increasing the use of administrative data for statistical purposes • Achieving greater efficiencies using best practices • Raising public awareness and use of national accounts 		
Specific goals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile national accounts according to milestone two of the SNA implementation, comprising the minimum required data set • Develop a national central data hub for short term economic statistics to facilitate the early detection of changes in economic activity 		
Required activities		
<p>Modernisation of the national regulatory and institutional framework by strengthening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The functioning of the NSS • Statistical regulation • Management practises • Personnel • Information and Communication Technology <p>The upgrading of statistical infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2008 SNA compliance • Classifications, • Registers and frames 	<p>The upgrading or development of statistical operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Price statistics • Monthly and quarterly production and turnover surveys • Economic activity surveys (structural business statistics and short term business statistics) • Household income and expenditure surveys • Informal sector surveys • Employment surveys • Administrative data 	