FINAL REPORT

Third Steering Committee Meeting of the Project on
Strengthening statistical capacity-building
In support of progress towards the Internationally Agreed Development Goals
In the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region
Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, 23 May 2007

Summary Report

Introduction

1. The SADC Committee met at the occasion of the 14th SADC Statistics Committee meeting held in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, from 22 to 24 May 2007 whose main objective was to provide strategic policy guidance to the implementation of the various statistics programmes and projects being undertaken in the SADC region. A session of the third Steering Committee of the project on strengthening statistical capacity building was on 23 September 2007. The UNSD representative gave brief background of the project for the benefit of those who might attend the steering committee meeting for the first time.

2. The meeting was further informed that UNSD was pleased to facilitate the participation of heads or high-level representatives of almost all SADC national statistical offices to the 38th Session of the 60th anniversary of the Nations United Statistical Commission. Their attendance promoted further interaction and networking among different heads of statistics worldwide. In addition, the second steering committee meeting was held during the occasion at which previous activities of the project were reviewed. For details refer to the report of the second steering committee meeting. A complete list of participants is attached as an annex.

The Committee discussed the following issues

1. **Recruitment of SADC Project Coordinator**

   3. The committee was informed that a candidate has been selected for the above mentioned position. Twenty (20) applications were received by UNSD. The applications were reviewed by representatives of UNSD, SADC secretariat and the Central Statistical Office of Botswana. An interview panel was constituted in Gaborone and five candidates were called for interviewed one was selected between the two who appeared for interviews. The recruitment process is in progress. In the discussions which ensued the committee urged for a speedy completion of the recruitment process so that the coordinator could be on board and start working on urgent assignments. The agreed, on the following activities to be priority areas for the coordinator:

i.   Developing and creating a SADCInfo. The coordinator will assist in the collection, compilation and dissemination of sub-regional statistics.   In addition, she/he is expected to maintain the designated databases at the SADC secretariat. Currently, some selected indictors, under SADC facts and figures collection programme. With the presence of a project coordinator at the SADC Secretariat it is expected that the collection will be regular and expanded with consistent follow-ups to countries.

ii.   Good practice database: In order to harmosise data series among the SADC countries, the coordinator should develop and maintain f a database of metadata and good practices at the SADC website. Such practices, among others,   will pertain to various statistical activities in the SADC region. Reference to internationally agreed statistical standards, principles and recommendations, in various statistical areas, will be an important component of the good practice database.

iii.   Software Access: Most member states of SADC observed that most statistical software packages were expensive and for some countries they lacked expertise to install some of them. The coordinator will be expected to assess the needs, preferences and constraints of national statistical offices with respect to the availability and use of statistical software packages in the sub-region. Such an assessment would provide the necessary background information for use in negotiating for more cost-effective access by NSOs to some software packages. Notwithstanding the above the committee sought guidance from UNSD on the appropriate statistical software packages.

iv.   SADC Website: SADC has a website which needs enhancement and improvement. The Coordinator will work with the SADC Secretariat towards the improvement of the website in terms of content of official statistics collected from member states and establishing links with member country websites wherever possible. The website is expected to maintain, among others, calendar of events related to statistical activities in the sub-region.

v.   Progress reports: The coordinator will be expected to produce progress reports on the improvement or lack of it of indicators stated in the Project Document, using as a source the data available on the MDGInfo 2006 as a baseline. Other sources of data will also be accessed.   Information from the reports will be fed into the periodic progress reports on the periodic progress reports of the project.

2. **Planned Workshops**:

5. **A workshop on Energy Statistics and sustainable energy indicators** is to be hosted by the Mauritius Central Statistical Office from 21 to 24 August 2007. It was learnt that Mauritius has agreeable to these dates, but t Mauritius was not represented in the meeting to reconfirm the dates.

6. There are plans to conduct **a workshop on household surveys and measurement of labour force** with a focus on the informal sector. Lesotho agreed to host the abovementioned workshop and the steering committee endorsed the proposal. ILO will collaborate in the organization and conduct of the above workshop. Lesotho suggested that the most suitable dates for the workshop should be either in August or early September 2007. The exact dates will be set after consultations with ILO and taking into account prior commitments of prospective staff from UNSD who will be designated to conduct the workshop.

3. **ICT Plan for SADC countries:**

7. The meeting observed that this activity has not taken off. Partly because of the absence of the project coordinator. However, the meeting recognized that this was an important aspect of statistical develop in the sub-region, therefore there was need to come up with strategy at the earliest possible time. It was recalled at the meeting that the Steering Committee had decided that in the context of enhancing the information and Communication Technology in the national statistical systems in SADC, one of the priorities of the project would be " *improvement of data dissemination infrastructure through the development of nation ICT plans in improvement of data dissemination infrastructure through the development of national ICT plans in support to the implementation of NSDS in each member state."*

8. It was requested to the Steering Committee come up with ideas and suggestions as to how the project could contribute to the ICT Strategic plan. In the discussions which ensued members of the committee felt that while there was urgency for the committee to come up with prompt suggestions, it was necessary for them to consult with their ICT specialists in their respective countries. Notwithstanding the above, the committee identified areas of archiving and back-up which needed attention with respect to ICT. The meeting also learnt that some member states such as Mozambique have ICT strategic plans that can be used as references. Some members of the committee felt that because of the proliferation of IT options there was need for UNSD to issue international guidelines that would help guide countries in developing national plans. Taking cognizance that ICT is critical to the development of statistics in the region the committee requested for a workshop on ICT.

Other business

9.   It was suggested that other cooperating partners in the sub-region should be well informed of the activities undertaken under the SADC Development Account Project in order to create synergy among other similar programmes.

Conclusion

10.   The meeting appreciated the efforts of UNSD to execute the project and support activities therein. As earlier stated the meeting requested that the appointment of the coordinator be done as quickly as possible as he/she would be cardinal to the realization of most of the goals and outputs of the project. Concern was expressed by members of the Steering Committee about the high costs of some of the useful statistical software packages. Countries in the sub-region were asked to submit their ideas about the ICT Strategy Plan, after consulting their IT specialists, as soon as possible. The SADC Secretariat will follow-up with countries and will consolidate the draft strategy for consideration by UNSD. There was also a call for a workshop on ICT.