THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF
STATISTICAL CAPACITY
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The relevance of NSSs

- Reliable data are central to public administration
- Recent recognition that National Statistical Systems are integral to the achievement of new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- “Data are the lifeblood of decision-making”
Political Economy Challenges of NSO Capacity-Building

WHY NOT CREATE CAPABLE NSOS?

- Resource scarcity
- Contingency
- Misaligned incentives
- Accountability

WHY CREATE CAPABLE NSOS?

- Constrain future incumbents
- Monitor future incumbents
- Short x long-term
- External pressure
- Past agreements among members of regime
- Signal policy credibility
Towards autonomous NSOs?

- United Nations (2003): “A special circumstance affects statistics: the results of the activities of statistical agencies must be replicable to be believable, but realistically the user cannot replicate them.”

- De jure protections
  - Collegiate tenure
  - Budget
  - Review

- De facto protections
  - Agency credibility
    - Expertise
  - Popular legitimacy and diffuse support
The challenge of measuring NSO capacity and autonomy

- Bureaucratic capacity +
  - Data on *esprit de corps* + education + specialization
- Technical capacity
  - Internal surveys of NSOs
  - Procedural soundness
- Statutory protections
Thank you.

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