UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION SIDE EVENT ON "ENHANCING FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT DATA" ….12 FEBRUARY 2021

EXPERIENCES AND VIEWS ON "NEW NEEDS FOR MORE AND EFFICIENT FUNDING"

Mercy Kanyuka, Commissioner of Statistics, Malawi

"…High quality data is the lynchpin and hallmark of every policy decision…"

A. Specific challenges encountered as a result of Covid-19

- **Funding:** Statistics continues to suffer from low funding both from Government budget and Donors
    - o This has worsened with Covid-19 where resources are reprogrammed towards the pandemic despite the need to establish an effective data reporting mechanism on the prevalence as well as impact of Covid-19
- **Statistics Operations**: Disruption of Survey programs leading to delays in provision of data
    - o For Household Surveys data collection Covid-19 has posed a new challenge of additional funding for protecting the data collector and respondent by providing them with PPEs
    - o Virtual/electronic interfaces with respondents have not been as effective as physical ones, impacting on quality of data, specifically economic statistics.
    - o Delivery of virtual technical assistance has been a challenge. The impact has not been the same
    - o Working from home has negatively impacted deliverables; generally, more home hours than office hours.
- **Administrative data;** The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the lack and emphasized the need for reliable administrative data.
    - o Special surveys are implemented to monitor economic and social impact of Covid-19 when reliable and robust administrative data on health and labour, mobile finance use etc would have provided real-time information
    - o The pandemic has also shown the need for data at lower geographical levels, districts and even lower. States should be able to track 'hot spots' for a pandemic and other phenonema.
- **Collaboration/Coordination:** This has been mostly ineffective among data producing entities of Covid-19.
    - o Demand for COVID-19 data attracted a number of data producing players who need to be coordinated (and managed to avoid misleading the public).

B. Responding to the challenges

- **Reduced funding:** The NSO has had to prioritise core activities such as Price data collection for Price Indices and Inflation Rate
  - Use of online survey data collection
  - Prioritised online data dissemination: media, emails, and website
- **Ineffective virtual/electronic interfaces with respondents:**
  - Intervention undertaken was to accelerate follow-up through telephone calls to improve data quality.
- **Ineffective collaboration/coordination on Covid-19 matters:**
  - To meet the increased demand for data on COVID19 prevalence and Social and Economic Impact
    - NSO/ World Bank jointly introduced a High-Frequency Phone survey on Covid-19- in July, 2020 to monitor the economic impacts of the pandemic and other shocks
- **Capacity for real-time Covid-19 prevalence statistics:**
  - Integration of NSO in the national committee of Covid-19 data generation.
  - NSO officers within Ministry of Health provide support

C. Recommendations/suggestions to enable NSOs to meet the evolving needs for support and resources

- **Ring-fence funding** (from both Government and Development Partners) for statistical development to ensure sustainable development.
- **Modernisation and Strengthening** of NSS in terms of physical and statistical infrastructure.
- **Coordinated** financial and technical support to the National Statistical System by Development Partners to build Capacity to produce **quality administrative data** for timely policy and program inteventions
- **Capacity transfer** in utilization of **big data** to inform timely policy and program direction
- **Enhance capacity** transfer through technical and financial assistance in the design of online surveys, including phone surveys
- **Capacity building** in the effective use of statistics in **policy making** institutions
- **Capacity building** of the **media** in interpretation of statistics for effective publicity