

**System of Official Statistics in Egypt:
Situation Assessment and
Strategic Objectives**

By
Abobkre El gendy
President
Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
Cairo, Egypt

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I-Introduction

Official Statistics in Egypt is not totally centralized or totally decentralized, it lies somewhere in the middle between the indicated endpoints. Being the Governmental body responsible for official Statistics in Egypt, The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), takes full responsibility for carrying out population and economic censuses and producing current statistics in various social and economic fields. Nonetheless, several ministries assume prime responsibilities for producing statistics portraying their own activities and achievements, amongst are Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, and Ministry of Health and Population. In addition, The Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) affiliated to the Cabinet has gradually been taking the function of publishing statistics and information whether produced by itself or by other governmental bodies including CAPMAS.

In an environment like this full coordination between different data producers would have been maintained in order to overcome any possible discrepancies in applied concepts and definitions. Differences, and sometimes contradictions, in the same data published by different organizations are observed.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an assessment of the present statistical system in Egypt and to outline some strategic objectives that CAPMAS will take all concerted efforts in order to create consensus among various stakeholders about them. Then, it would be possible to gain the political support needed to strengthen the official Statistical System in Egypt.

The paper is organized in such a way that, Section 2 highlights CAPMAS organization and mandate; section 3 deals with the situation assessment of the Official Statistical System; and Section 4 is devoted to the strategy for statistical development in Egypt.

II-Organization and Mandate of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS)

CAPMAS, with its human resources, technical expertise and advanced equipment is considered one of the most important agencies in Egypt. The official statistics produced by CAPMAS are inevitable for successful planning aiming at achieving social and economic development of the country. In addition, the progress towards the realization of Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) can only be traced and monitored through different sectoral statistics produced by CAPMAS. The structural composition of CAPMAS along with the mandate of each constituent sector are outlined next.

1- Sector of Statistics

The sector is responsible for:

- a- Producing regular statistics on various social, demographic and economic fields.
- b- Conducting different types of censuses (population, building, housing, establishment and economic).
- c- Carrying out periodic national surveys (e.g., Labor force Survey, Family Income and Expenditure Survey) and other adhoc surveys conducted as per the request of national or international organizations.
- d- Carrying out population research and studies.
- e- Implementing regular training programs on applied statistics to CAPMAS staff. Training programs are also administered to employees of other governmental organizations.

2- Sector of Public Mobilization.

The sector is responsible for:

- a- Collecting data on human resources and scientifically qualified persons nationwide.
- b- Assessing the nation's human, material and production capabilities for the sake of setting up and monitoring public mobilization plans in case of wars or natural crises.
- c- Issuing orders for public mobilization that can set in motion public mobilization plans.

3- Sector of Information Technology.

The sector is responsible for:

- a- Designing integrated information systems and creating statistical and geographic databases.
- b- Processing data of all statistical surveys and censuses carried out by CAPMAS and other organizations.
- c- Drawing up and implementing data warehousing and data mining plans to create linkages among statistical data bases.
- d- Conducting training programs on Information Technology to CAPMAS staff. IT short training programs are also administered to newly university graduates all over the year.

4- Sector of regional offices.

This sector is responsible for collecting statistical data from different governorates of Egypt.

In addition to above sectors, CAPMAS encompasses a sector for General Secretariat which is responsible for all administrative and financial activities; and a Central Administration for CAPMAS President Office that takes care of public relations, annual statistical abstract, quality control of statistical projects, and technical auditing of statistical products.

III Assessment of National Statistical System of official Statistics in Egypt

The National system of Official statistics in Egypt refers to all statistical programs applied in various governmental agencies and the statistics they produce on a regular basis. Being the principal statistical agency of the government of Egypt, CAPMAS is entrusted with carrying out population and economic censuses along with regular surveys in various economic and social fields. In addition, CAPMAS has the legal mandate of interagency coordination and setting up standards of statistical activities practiced by all other governmental agencies. As a matter of fact, the later legal role of CAPMAS is not yet fully materialized. As a result, duplications and inconsistencies of official statistics produced by different agencies are not unusual, but they are decreasing.

1. Coordination

The statistical entities of various governmental agencies in Egypt are strengthening what used to be weak coordination among each other on one side, and with the principal statistical agency of the government (CAPMAS) on the other side. This situation used to cause some inconsistencies and even contradictions among statistics produced by different governmental agencies due to either applying different definitions and standards, or having varying coverage levels but there are great efforts being exerted to correct it. Also, there are efforts being exerted to bridge the information gaps that may exist with regard to the economic data of the informal sector. These efforts include building a consensus about the definition of such definitions and standards.

2. International Statistical Standards

The national statistical organizations of different countries are the only agencies that strictly keep abreast of the international standards, definitions and concepts due to their close relationships with the UN Statistical Department as well as the statistical divisions of different international organizations. Other governmental agencies producing official statistics in the country may not comply with the international standards applied by the national statistical organizations of their respective countries. In Egypt this situation may exist. An example of such inconsistency is the different estimates of unemployment produced by different agencies or research institutions which may create confusion among policy makers and the public as well. To correct this situation, efforts are being exerted in Egypt to increase the awareness of other governmental agencies of the international standards applied by the national statistical organizations

3. Interaction between users and producers of official statistics.

There is no doubt that official statistics are produced to be used by different users. Resources devoted to produce a certain statistical product can be merely a kind of

misuse of available limited resources if this product is not widely used by its potential users. For this reason, it is necessary to get all relevant stakeholders involved in the process of producing official statistics. In other words, official statistics must respond to the user needs in terms of the topics to be covered, format of the data dissemination , periodicity, etc... In Egypt, interaction is between the users and the producers of official statistics is being strengthened.

4. Respondent burden

In general, lack of inter-agency coordination leads to collecting the same data by different agencies. In most cases, CAPMAS is one of these agencies. A matter which results in not only inconsistent statistics and misuse of resources but also an undue heavy burden on the respondents. As an example of that, vital statistics (births and deaths) are collected and compiled by The Ministry of Health and Population and by CAPMAS. Other administrative statistics are collected by both IDSC and CAPMAS. In Egypt, coordination is being strengthened among the different agencies that collect the same data to avoid inconsistency and misuse of resources and also to lessen the respondent burden

5. Transparency

With the exception of CAPMAS, some other governmental agencies producing official statistics do not abide by the principles of metadata especially transparency, i.e. a full exposition of the methodology followed in producing such official statistics. Since Egypt has become a member of the IMF Special Data Dissemination System (SDDS) in 2005, metadata principles have been accounted for in the official statistics produced by CAPMAS. As for the other governmental agencies, efforts are being exerted to train them to abide by these principles.

6. Statistical awareness.

This is a common problem in developing countries. CAPMAS is striving to promote the awareness of data providers emphasizing the confidentiality of individual information and stressing on the fact that collected individual information is only released in aggregated format and used for statistical purposes. Although there is a long way to go in order to get the public convinced that their individual information will not be disclosed to any other governmental or non-governmental organization, great strides have been taken to convince the public and they are showing good results.