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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

REPORT

WORKSHOP ON THE DESIGN OF NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF STATISTICS: MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN SECTORAL STATISTICS ISTANBUL, 24-26 MARCH 2008

Summary

The Workshop on the Design of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics: Mainstreaming Gender in Sectoral Statistics (Istanbul, 24-26 March 2008) was organized by ESCWA under the umbrella of the project, entitled “Development of National Gender Statistics in Iraq”, which is funded by the United Nations Development Group-Iraq Trust Fund (UNDG-ITF).

The Workshop aimed to enhance the knowledge and skills of participants in the following areas: (a) strategic planning for the development of a holistic and comprehensive national statistical system; (b) gender mainstreaming of strategic planning and sectoral statistics; and (c) design of national statistical strategies based on international guidelines and recommendations.

The following topics were discussed during the Workshop: (a) the importance of strategic planning for the development of national statistics; (b) phases in the design of a national strategy for the development of statistics; (c) the Statistical Strategy of Qatar as a country example; and (d) the integration of gender statistics in sectoral statistics and the design of national statistical strategies.

This report includes a review of the main topics, discussion points and outcomes of the Workshop.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) organized the Workshop on the Design of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics: Mainstreaming Gender in Sectoral Statistics in Istanbul from 24 to 26 March 2008. The Workshop was convened under the umbrella of the project for “The Development of National Gender Statistics in Iraq”, which is being funded by the United Nations Development Group-Iraq Trust Fund (UNDG-ITF) and implemented by ESCWA in cooperation with the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT) in Iraq. The project incorporates a number of capacity-building activities, including training on concepts and methods for mainstreaming gender in all statistical work, and the development of a national statistical strategy that mainstreams gender in sectoral statistics.

2. In addition to meeting the objectives of the above-mentioned project, the Workshop was organized as part of an international effort to assist Arab countries in meeting international goals and standards in the area of statistics, and in improving their national official statistics in line with the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS) and the recommendations of the Third Regional Forum on Statistical Capacity Building for the Arab Region (Sana’a, 17-19 April 2007). At the Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results (Marrakech, 4-6 February 2004), aid recipients and donor stakeholders recognized that statistics were crucial in terms of both supporting development policies in the countries and of measuring the impact of interventions. Within that context, MAPS recommends mainstreaming strategic planning of statistical systems in order to meet the monitoring and evaluation requirements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other national development plans. In particular, the aim is to integrate statistics within national development policy processes, thereby providing a nationally-owned and led strategic development plan for statistics, and covering all data sectors and users.

3. Participants were trained on the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) guidelines for the development of statistics and on ways to mainstream the gender perspective in sectoral statistics. The Qatar Statistical Strategy was presented as a case example, and representatives from other member countries exchanged their experiences, thereby sharing lessons learned and good practices. Participants were able to put to use the concepts introduced by partaking in a number of working group exercises that included undertaking strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis of the statistical systems of their respective countries and preparing national statistical visions, missions and priority areas. The presentations, working group exercises and background/reference materials of the Workshop are available online at: www.escwa.un.org/divisions/main.asp?division=sd.

4. This report outlines the main topics, discussion points and outcomes of the Workshop.

I. OUTCOMES

5. The Workshop resulted with the identification of a number of issues to be considered in the design of national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS). These issues are as follows:

(a) The design of NSDS needs to take into consideration the overall national development strategy and ensure that statistical priorities are commensurate with national development priorities and are well synchronized with the national development process;

(b) The statistical planning process must include ample deliberations on means of securing strong political commitment and support, with a role for the media aimed at promoting statistics as a public good;

(c) A careful review of existing legal provisions are to be made in order to arrange for any further provisions or amendments to statistical acts in support of statistical activities, in addition to a thorough review of the statistical organization and infrastructure;

(d) Various stakeholders need to be engaged in the design of NSDS, at appropriate stages, through the organization of dialogues between data users and producers, thereby placing emphasis on consultation and consensus along with understanding the needs of other parties. Moreover, it is important to create such structures as a national advisory committee on statistics in order to assist with planning, implementation and monitoring of statistical development;

(e) The design of NSDS must make close reference to the United Nations Principles of Official Statistics, and other international standards and recommendations. In addition, it is important to take into consideration national needs and international obligations and accordingly achieve a balance in the design process;

(f) It is essential to integrate the whole statistical system in NSDS design, which requires the identification of statistics and indicators needed at the national and international level for monitoring and reporting purposes. These statistics need to be included in the strategy, as part of mainstreaming sectoral statistics, along with the designation of the appropriate or responsible data-collecting agency (for example, horizontally across ministries; and vertically at central, provincial and local levels);

(g) Strategies need to be designed such that they incorporate result-based principles, including reference to the results of cost-benefit analysis of different scenarios;

(h) Advocacy campaigns that target various stakeholders across different sectors are necessary in order to gain support for the development of statistics as a public good. These stakeholders include politicians, development planning officials, line ministry officials, the business community, researchers and academicians, the general community, donors and international agencies. In addition, a good relationship with the media can strengthen the advocacy campaigns for statistical development;

(i) The design of NSDS needs to address the establishment and maintenance of a sound statistical infrastructure, including, among others, business registers, survey frames, statistical classifications and statistical clearing houses; and cater to the production of consistent and coherent data series across different statistical subject areas, including, for example, population, social, economic and environmental issues;

(j) NSDS must stipulate means of securing financial, human and other resources both for the short term and the long term. Funding is a fundamental issue, in addition to statistical capacity-building, particularly the training and retention of statistical personnel and covering users as well as producers of statistics;

(k) Good monitoring and evaluation are important for placing control mechanisms in order to invoke changes to NSDS where needed, ensure sustainability of an ongoing process and institute a knowledge-based culture, thereby learning from past experiences.

II. TOPICS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF STATISTICS (NSDS)

6. Ms. Jafar, of ESCWA Statistics Division, delivered the presentation on the “Importance of national strategies for the development of statistics”, which included prerequisites and components for NSDS design, thereby laying the foundations for the Workshop. She referred to MAPS and the various Arab forums that have been convened by PARIS21 aimed at promoting NSDS design. Her presentation reviewed existing weaknesses in national statistics and sited challenges. Ms. Jafar referred to the General Data Dissemination Standards (GDDS) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) as forerunners to NSDS and for which PARIS21 has established guidelines.

7. The presentation was followed by brief interventions from participants. The representative of Bahrain stated that the country had released its first draft of NSDS and is currently entering the implementation stage. Bahrain plans to accede to GDDS by 2010, and is set to undertake another needs assessment and plan for the second phase of NSDS design in 2011. A participant from Iraq also shared the country’s development in this area, namely, ongoing efforts aimed at finalizing the draft NSDS by September 2008.

B. DESIGN OF NATIONAL STATISTICAL STRATEGIES

8. The presentation on the “Design of national statistical strategies”, which was delivered by Ms. Jafar, outlined the guidelines and recommendations established by PARIS21. These pertain to various aspects and stages of the process, including the preliminary assessment, institutional prerequisites, funding requirements, development of the vision and mission, priority-setting and implementation.

9. It was noted that a review of national statistical acts is necessary in order to ensure synchronization with the country’s statistical strategy, given that some aspects of the law could be outdated. The representative of the United Arab Emirates stated that the country’s statistical law had been revised and submitted to the Parliament for approval. This revision bolsters the position of the central statistical office by providing it with increased authority in terms of undertaking a broader scope of activities. Additionally, discussions focused on the official sources of data and effective coordination mechanisms among the various national data producers, particularly where the process is decentralized. It was noted that the statistical law needs to designate clearly the official source of national data.

C. STAGES IN THE DESIGN OF NATIONAL STATISTICAL STRATEGIES

10. A total of six presentations, followed by working group exercises, were delivered by Mr. Hussein, Adviser with the Qatar Statistics Authority, in order to train participants on the underlying concepts, processes and good practices for planning, designing, budgeting, implementing and evaluating a national strategy for the development of statistics. These presentations were as follows:

(a) The presentation, entitled “Stage one: designing the work plan”, outlined the following aspects: (i) the importance of garnering political commitment and will for NSDS; (ii) the selection of a broad-based and inter-disciplinary committee for the design of NSDS; (iii) factors to be considered in the design of the road map; (iv) identification of partners and effective coordination mechanisms; and (v) design of a communication strategy;

(b) Participants were provided with an analytical framework for undertaking an assessment based on the SWOT structure in the presentation, entitled “Stage two: SWOT assessment of the statistical system”. The presentation highlighted the steps involved and criteria for assessing each of the following components: (i) capacities of data-producing entities; (ii) availability and quality of data based on the Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) and the Statistical Capacity Building Indicators (SCBI); (iii) data requirements; and (iv) legal and institutional frameworks;

(c) In the presentation on “Stage three: vision, mission and priority-setting”, participants were trained on the following: (i) developing a vision for national statistical work; (ii) setting priorities for the development of national statistics; and (iii) developing effective strategies for achieving visions and goals. The presentation established criteria for defining priorities, with reference to existing assessment tools, including DQAF and GDDS, in addition to a checklist of key issues to be integrated in the design of NSDS;

(d) The translation of the statistical vision, mission and strategic priorities into an effective plan of action was covered in the presentation, entitled “Stage four: plan of action and costing”. The presentation included specific activities to be undertaken, including human resource development, investment and development of the statistical infrastructure, statistical outputs and costing;

(e) The presentation, entitled “Stage five: implementation, monitoring and evaluation”, laid the framework for implementing the plan of action, monitoring and reporting on its implementation, and evaluating outcomes to plan for the next phase.

11. Discussions under these agenda items focused on a number of issues, including: (a) stakeholder participation; (b) coordination mechanisms among different data-producing entities; and (c) the role of the media in raising awareness on the importance of statistics as a public good. The representative of the United Arab Emirates reflected on the extent to which stakeholders needed to be involved and at what stages, and on the need to reach an optimal trade-off between broad-based participation and effective collaboration and coordination. A participant from Iraq underscored the importance of maintaining broad-based participation as a means of ensuring national ownership and sustainability. Representatives from each of the participating countries shared existing coordination mechanisms in their respective countries, and agreed that the principal and official source of national data should be the central statistical office. For example, the Ministry of Education in Iraq compiles all data related to education, which is then disseminated by the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology as the official source. In Qatar, line ministries produce data, which in turn are revised by the Qatar Statistics Authority. While it was agreed that the media needed to be engaged in order to promote statistics as a public good for accountability, such issues as accurate reporting and the correct interpretation of data could arise and had to be addressed accordingly.

D. CHECKLIST FOR THE REVISION OF THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NSDS

12. This presentation provided participants with a checklist of the essentials for the design of NSDS based on PARIS21 guidelines and recommendations in order to assist countries in assessing the current status of the strategic management of their statistical development. This checklist includes a number of themes and indicators and the main domains are as follows: (a) integration of NSDS in the overall national development policy processes and contents in line with regional and international commitments; (b) design of NSDS in a participatory fashion inclusive of results-based management principles; (c) coherence and comprehensiveness of NSDS as a basis for the sustainable development of national statistics; and (d) assessment of the current status of the statistical system, capacity-building needs and means of achieving the desired level of development.

E. INTEGRATING GENDER IN SECTORAL STATISTICS AND THE DESIGN OF NSDS

13. Ms. Jafar delivered a presentation on how to mainstream gender in sectoral statistics and the design of NSDS. The presentation underscored the importance of gender statistics and indicators, in addition to the basic concepts and processes that underlie gender analysis and integration of gender in statistical work. She also provided examples of how gender can be integrated in the production of sectoral statistics in the areas of agriculture, trade, transport and communication. Participants were introduced to ways in which to engender national statistical strategies, with case examples of NSDS in Jordan and Oman. Ms. Jafar introduced the newly-proposed framework of priority, region-specific and gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring and reporting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as an example on how to integrate gender in the development of statistics. Within that context, the “G Is In” Framework represents the first of its kind as a three-dimensional framework that links MDGs to the Priority Areas of Concern in the Arab Beijing Platform, with corresponding region-specific gender-sensitive indicators.

F. QATAR STATISTICAL STRATEGY

14. The presentation on the Qatar Statistics Strategy was delivered by Mr. Hussein as a country example for the design of NSDS. Mr. Hussein began his presentation by outlining the road map, time frame, vision and mission of the Qatar NSDS. He shared with participants the objectives of the strategy, which include the following six points: (a) meeting data requirements; (b) setting standards for quality data production; (c) building statistical capacities; (d) enhancing the user-producer dialogue; (e) improving statistical literacy; and (f) expanding the scope of data dissemination in Qatar. Additionally, Mr. Hussein highlighted parallel strategies that were undertaken aimed at addressing human resource development, communication/media, data quality and sectoral statistics. The composition and terms of reference of the technical committee established to oversee the design and implementation of the strategy was discussed. Mr. Hussein concluded with an overview of the expected accomplishments for the coming five-year period.

G. ADDITIONAL PRESENTATIONS

15. The following additional presentations were made: (a) designing a statistical strategy from the factory approach by COSIT; (b) GIS applications in statistics by the Qatar Statistics Authority; and (c) draft of the statistical strategy in Iraq by COSIT.

H. WORKING GROUP EXERCISES

16. Participants undertook a number of practical working group exercises to apply the concepts and guidelines that were introduced during the Workshop. These exercises and presentations, which are available at: www.escwa.un.org/divisions/main.asp?division=sd, are as follows:

- (a) Exercise 1: Introduction to the design of NSDS;
- (b) Exercise 2: SWOT analysis;
- (c) Exercise 3: Defining the vision and mission and priority-setting;
- (d) Exercise 5: Checklist of NSDS essentials;
- (e) Exercise 6: "G Is In" Framework.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. VENUE AND DATE

17. The Workshop on the Design of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics was held at the Armada Hotel in Istanbul from 24 to 26 March 2008.

B. OPENING

18. The Workshop was opened by Ms. Jafar, of ESCWA Statistics Division, who welcomed the participants and discussed the objectives of the training and its expected accomplishments. Ms. Jafar shared with participants the latest efforts undertaken by ESCWA aimed at supporting member countries in developing national statistics and the design of NSDS. These include the virtual library, which hosts international guidelines and recommendations, country experiences and good practices in various statistical themes or areas, in addition to the design of NSDS. Ms. Jafar highlighted the importance of designing NSDS in line with MAPS and the recommendations of the three relevant Arab forums aimed at finalizing the design of NSDS and initiating their implementation. She emphasized the importance of having rich diversity among the participating statistical systems that could broaden discussions and exchanges of experience, and share common challenges and good practices. Moreover, she noted that reference would be made, during the course of the Workshop, to national NSDS and their good practices and strength points in order to draw on regional experiences.

19. In his opening statement, Mr. Hussein, Adviser to the Qatar Statistics Authority and the primary resource person for the Workshop, invited participants to introduce themselves and share their expectations of the Workshop. Additionally, he introduced the Qatar Statistical Strategy by highlighting the importance of

user-producer dialogue and broad-based participation for the design of holistic and comprehensive national statistical strategy.

C. PARTICIPANTS

20. The Workshop was attended by 10 representatives of national statistical offices from Bahrain, Iraq, Qatar and United Arab Emirates, all of whom are actively involved in the preparation of the national statistical strategies of their respective countries. Two resource persons, namely, from ESCWA and Qatar Statistics Authority, delivered the Workshop materials based on PARIS21 documentation and guidelines, and regional and country experiences. The complete list of participants, resource persons and organizers is contained in annex II of this report.

D. AGENDA

21. The Workshop adopted the agenda as contained in annex IV of this report.

E. EVALUATION

22. In order to assess the training, an evaluation questionnaire was distributed, which was completed by nine out of the 10 participants. The outcome of the evaluation is contained in annex I of this report.

F. DOCUMENTS

23. A list of documents presented at the Workshop is contained in annex III of this report.

Annex I

EVALUATION

Out of the 10 participants in the Workshop, nine completed evaluation questionnaires rating the organizational and substantive/technical aspects of the meeting on a five-point scale ranging from very poor (1) to very good (5). The results of their evaluations are as follows:

- 89 per cent of the respondents gave the Workshop an overall rating of good or very good;
- Almost 90 per cent evaluated the quality of the training materials circulated in the Workshop as good or very good;
- 67 per cent of the respondents rated the quality of the working group exercises as good or very good;
- All the respondents agreed that the Workshop was a good or very good forum for sharing experiences;
- All the respondents agreed that the organizational arrangements for and during the Workshop were good or very good;
- More than 75 per cent agreed that they could make use of the knowledge obtained in their work or share it with their peers;
- Two-thirds or more of the respondents requested follow-up workshops.

Annex II*

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Title
The importance of Statistics and the National Strategy for Statistical Development - Mrs. Neda Jafar
The Process of Designing a National Strategy for Statistical Development - Mrs. Neda Jafar
Phases in Designing National Strategy for Statistical Development - Mrs. Neda Jafar
Phase 1: Designing the Roadmap - Dr. Ahmad Hussein
Phase 2: Assessment of the Current Status of the NSS - Dr. Ahmad Hussein
Design of a Statistical Master Plan with a “Factory Approach” - Mr. Emilio Matuk
Phase 3: Developing the Vision and Strategic Option - Dr. Ahmad Hussein
Phase 4: Plan of Action and Costing - Dr. Ahmad Hussein
Phase 5: Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation
GIS Applications in Qatar - Mr. Mansoor Al Malki
NSDS Checklist form
Gender Statistics: Mainstreaming Gender in National Sectoral Statistics - Mrs. Neda Jafar
Qatar’s Experience in Preparing a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics - Dr. Ahmad Hussein
Guide to Design NSDS (PARIS 21)
Design of a Statistical Master Plan with a “Factory Approach”
PARIS 21 Statistical Capacity-Building Indicators
Summary Analysis of the Status Quo in the Jordanian Statistics System
Vision, Mission, Objective: Jordan
PARIS 21 Use and Practice of SWOT Analysis
Draft of the Goals, Issues, and Indicators (“G IS IN”) Framework: Proposed Gender Issues and Gender Sensitive Indicators in the Arab Region
Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics
Fact Sheet on the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS)
Fact Sheet on the Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF)

Annex IV

AGENDA

Day 1: March 24, 2008

- 9:00 - 9:30 Opening
- Organization of work
- 9:30 - 10:30 1. The Importance of Statistics and the National Strategy for Statistical Development
 Mrs. Neda Jafar, ESCWA
2. The Process of Designing a National Strategy for Statistical Development
 Mrs. Neda Jafar, ESCWA
- Exercise 1: Process design strategy
- 10:30 - 11:00 3. Phases in Designing National Strategy for Statistical Development
 Mrs. Neda Jafar, ESCWA
- 11:00 - 11:30 Coffee break
- 11:30 - 1:00 4. Phase 1: Designing the Roadmap
 Dr. Ahmad Hussein, Statistical Advisor
5. Phase 2: Assessment of the Current Status of the NSS
 Dr. Ahmad Hussein, Statistical Advisor
- 1:00 - 2:00 Lunch break
- 2:00 - 4:00 Exercise 2: SWOT Analysis
 Dr. Ahmad Hussein, Statistical Advisor

Day 2: March 25, 2008

- 9:00 - 9:30 6. Design of a Statistical Master Plan with a “Factory Approach”
 Mr. Emilio Matuk, Statistical Advisor, Central Organization of Statistics and Information Technology
- 9:30 - 10:00 7. Phase 3: Developing the Vision and Strategic Option
 Dr. Ahmad Hussein, Statistical Advisor
- 10:00 - 11:00 Exercise 3: Defining the Vision and Mission and Priority Setting
- 11:00 - 11:30 Coffee break
- 11:30 - 12:00 8. Phase 4: Plan of Action and Costing
 Dr. Ahmad Hussein, Statistical Advisor
- 12:00 - 1:00 Exercise 4: Checklist of NSDS essentials
 Dr. Ahmad Hussein, Statistical Advisor
- 1:00 - 2:00 Lunch break

Day 2: March 25, 2008 (continued)

2:00 - 4:00 Phase 5: Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation
Dr. Ahmad Hussein, Statistical Advisor

GIS Applications in Qatar
Mr. Mansoor Al Malki, Director of the Department of Information Technology,
Planning Council, Department of Statistics

Day 3: March 26, 2008

9:00 - 10:00 10. NSDS Checklist form
Dr. Ahmad Hussein, Statistical Advisor

Phase 5: Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

10:00 - 11:00 Mainstreaming Gender in National Sectoral Statistics
Mrs. Neda Jafar, ESCWA

Exercise 5: G Is In Framework

11:00 - 11:30 Coffee break

11:30 - 1:00 12. Mainstreaming Sectoral Statistics in the National Statistical System
Dr. Ahmad Hussein, Statistical Advisor

13. Qatar's Experience in Preparing a National Strategy for the Development of
Statistics
Dr. Ahmad Hussein, Statistical Advisor

1:00 - 2:00 Lunch break

2:00 - 3:00 Closing session and evaluation