

Statistics IN ACTION

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**Statistical capacity development
DOING IT STEP BY STEP**

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JUST IMAGINE...

IT IS EASY TO be filled with new energy when important topics such as communication of statistics, user-friendly statistics, user needs are discussed. If the setting for such a discussion happens to be a much anticipated user-producer dialogue, then all the better. I recently attended just such a user-producer forum organised by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. The agenda included topics such as accessibility, quality, and strengths and weaknesses in the relationship between different user groups and the producers of official statistics. Not least, the importance of using communication to highlight how official statistics benefits social progress was brought up at the forum.

Questions posed by producers, such as: “when we communicate statistics, do we, as producers, tend to overestimate understanding in different user groups?” were linked with questions asked by users, such as: “how do you, as producers, concretely strive to make statistics more accessible and easy to use?”

A common challenge for many statistical institutes is ensuring that national statistical systems are set up and organised in a way that will enable communication to flourish between producers and users. Will the national statistical system facilitate communication as well as coordination? Is there room for professional discussion on the statistical quality of specific products, on user needs, and efficiency issues? Are these discussions held on a regular basis? Today, when the need for evidence-based decision-making is more important than ever, communication between

producers and users of statistics is also key to statistical development as such.

During the Bangladeshi forum, one particular question that merits a strategic seminar of its own was raised by one of the participants. What if we, as statistical producers, would rethink our prioritisation of resources to the different parts of the statistical production process? Today, we tend to use about 70 percent of our financial and human resources on data collection (of which surveys constitute the main part) and data processing, 20 percent on statistical analysis and no more than 10 percent on ensuring that the statistics can be understood and utilised. Is this sufficient in today's highly digital, high-tech era? What if the proportions were reversed, and we would instead devote the major part of our resources for statistics to communication? Imagine that this is possible: that there were more administrative data and registers that could be used for statistical purposes, and thereby there would be less need for expensive, survey-based data. More administrative data would mean opportunities for greater commitment to develop and make use of new and innovative methods to retrieve data as a basis for official statistics. Communication of statistics would naturally take centre stage in such a development process. Just imagine.

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International workshop in Stockholm on the Sustainable Development Goals and statistics

National statistical institutes play a key role in measuring and following up the global sustainable development goals set out in the 2030 Agenda. On 5 to 7 December 2016, a workshop was held in Stockholm to promote knowledge on how this work is to be carried out.

“THE 17 GLOBAL GOALS requires data and statistics, as well as cooperation, education and training. This is why we invited statisticians and other public officials from Kenya and Cambodia to exchange experiences,” says Thomas Bjurenvall at Statistics Sweden.

Representatives of the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), the delegation for Sweden’s implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs also took part in the meeting.

The 2030 Agenda has led to greater focus on new and better data. While the former Millennium Development Goals were followed up by international organisations, responsibility to follow up the new Sustainable Development Goals lies with each country. This implies new challenges for statistical authorities and national statistical systems.

Ms Mary Wanyonyi, Director of strategy and development, at Kenya National Statistics Bureau, was very pleased with the meeting:

“We have had a very productive meeting here in Stockholm, and addressed many issues. We shared experiences with our colleagues from Cambodia and Sweden, in particular on the distribution platform of the 2030 Agenda. Although we face the same challenges, we solve them in slightly different ways.

We have had many ideas that we will bring home with us. In particular on how to present and visualise statistics. Statistics Sweden really knows how to present statistics well. We have also learned a lot about what is going on at the global level, and this will make it easier for us to stay updated on these issues.”

The Cambodian representatives were also very content with the meeting.

“Even if we work hard on the 2030 Agenda, a lot of work remains. We hope to be able to develop cooperation with Statistics Sweden to strengthen skills on coordination of the statistical system for data collection and exchange of data. Not just at the statistics agency, but also at other agencies that produce statistics in Cambodia”, says Ms Hang Lina, Director general of the National Institute of Statistics.

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Hang Lina DG (to the left), and Lay Chhan.



Mary Wanyonyi (to the left), and Mathews Collins Omondi Oduor.

Step by step towards a new statistical system

After two decades of civil war and armed conflict, the Somali statistical authorities are rebuilding and strengthening their statistical capacity. This work is supported financially by The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, with Statistics Sweden as a partner, and involves step-by-step planning, coordination and support.

Building a functioning national statistical system takes time and perseverance, especially in the case of a conflict-affected state like Somalia. In the past years, statistical assistance has been carried out more on an ad hoc than long-term basis, and has been scattered among development partners. Somali statistical authorities produced statistics, but only to a limited extent. The situation is now improving, as different Somali statistical authorities collect, or plan to collect, data in different parts of the country, with the aim of fulfilling national needs and international requirements, such as the 2030 Agenda.

Somali development partners have formed task forces to coordinate assistance to statistical capacity, and assist to develop indicators that are urgently needed in Somalia. There are two international coordination and information sharing groups on Somali statistics: the UN Somali Statistical Working Group and the High-Level Task Force (HLTF) on Statistics. The UN group gathers the UN family on technical issues. The

HLTF on Statistics was initiated by the World Bank in 2014, together with the Somali authorities, as a result of the emphasis on statistics placed by the international community as a result of the need for data expressed at the Somalia New Deal Conference in 2013.

To avoid duplication of support and to strengthen the coordination mechanism, Statistics Sweden (on behalf of the Swedish Embassy), together with the World Bank and after agreement with Somali statistical authorities, took the lead in an initiative to introduce and coordinate a Joint Technical Statistics Working Group. The aim of the group is to facilitate technical support to government departments of statistics and to harmonise planning aspects among donors. Concretely, the aim of the initiative is to:

- harmonise and standardise statistics activities;
- track progress in the development of statistics; and
- inform the donor group about statistical needs for funding or potential solutions.



In August last year, representatives of the Somali statistical authorities, together with representatives of Statistics Sweden, made a study visit to the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR). The main purpose of the visit was to draw inspiration from the Rwandan experience in its coordination of the national statistical system, and to discuss cooperation between Somali statistical authorities and NISR under the auspices of the cooperation project financed by Sweden.



Photo: iStock

The first working group meeting was organised in September 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya with the participation of different key stakeholders. The main conclusion of the meeting was the decision to create a single Somali statistical coordination group, the Joint High Level Statistics Forum (JHLSF), under the leadership of Somali departments. It was proposed that Statistics Sweden, the World Bank and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) take the secretariat role in the group. The group will meet three or four times a year.

Most of the activities under the cooperation project between Somali statistical authorities and Statistics Sweden are planned to be organised outside Somali territory for security reasons. For this reason, and for the purpose of facilitating implementation of the project, Statistics Sweden has established strong ties to other national statistical institutes in Africa that, directly or indirectly, take part in the cooperation.

Statistics Sweden has initiated cooperation with Direction de la Statistique du Djibouti (DISED), Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) and Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). Thanks to the cooperation with these institutes, activities under the auspices of the project have been conducted in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Rwanda and in Kenya.

Statistics South Africa, as a direct partner in the project, will host Somali statisticians in 2017 and 2018 for on-the-job trainings at the institute in Pretoria.

The on-the-job trainings are within Consumer price index (CPI) and Gross domestic product (GDP) areas. The trainings will take the participants through all steps of production of the CPI and the GDP, from the planning phase to the final presentation of results and dissemination.

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Progress for Somali statistics

Statistics plays a key role in the establishment of a functioning state. The statistical authorities face many challenges, but significant progress is also being made.

“The Federal Government of Somalia recognises the importance of data for sustainable development, both in the local and international context. Nonetheless, there is still a long way to go. Somalia still needs to put in place the legal frameworks and national strategies for the development of statistics,” says Director General Mohamed Moalim.

“Our greatest challenges are the availability and retention of skilled labour, inadequate equipment and training, limited space and limited awareness of the importance of data,” says Puntland’s Director General Hussein Abdi.

“The main challenges are the lack of financial resources and a scarcity of well-skilled human resources,” adds Hassan Abdillahi Jama, Director of the Central Statistics Department in Somaliland.

The Federal Government of Somalia has started domesticating the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“As the Directorate of National Statistics (DNS), we have already identified over 60 indicators that could be aligned with the SDGs. The DNS will be an entity responsible for monitoring



Murangwa Yusuf, Director General, National Institute of Statistics Rwanda (on the left) and Mohamed Moalim, Director General, Directorate of National Statistics, Federal Government of Somalia.

the progress of the SDGs in Somalia through the use of data,” says Mr Moalim.

Another area where progress has been made is gender statistics.

“Our social statistics division has special focus on gender statistics, as we have a special mandate to use disaggregated data that includes gender, age and disability,” says Mr Moalim.

“It promotes an understanding of the actual situation of women and men in society. It is also

important for reducing misrepresentation and promotes gender balance,” adds Mr Abdi.

In cooperation with Statistics Sweden, a gender working group has been created within the Central Statistics Department in Hargeisa. “Gender inequality is seen as a major obstacle to socio-economic and political development,” says Director General Hassan O. Horri.

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Registers – a goldmine for statisticians

The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) cooperates with Statistics Sweden on registered-based statistics. One of the goals is to establish a total population register.

“OUR MOTIVATION for the cooperation with Statistics Sweden was twofold: our realisation that a lot of data is stored in various registers, waiting to be used in the production of official statistics, as well as an initiative by the Serbian Government to make public administration cheaper, more efficient and service-minded”, says Dragica Obradovic, Head of Statistical Business Registers and Standards Unit at SORS.

Which events are the highlights in this cooperation?

“First of all, the study visit to Statistics Sweden. Two colleagues and myself from SORS were joined by representatives of some of the institutions that maintain registers. It was an opportunity to grasp the full potential of using the administrative data for statistical purposes. Presentations by Ulf Durnell from Statistics Sweden and Coen Hendriks from Statistics Norway were eye-openers. This was followed by a conference on the use of registers that was co-organised by SORS and the national Chamber of Commerce and was facilitated through our

cooperation with Sweden. The conference gathered over 200 representatives from around 50 institutions, which is the best turnout ever for an event related to official statistics.”

What has the outcome of your work been so far?

“The most important outcome is an understanding, shared by everyone, that regular and systematic exchange of data can be beneficial for all parties. Also, a proposal for an intergovernmental task team for data exchange across the public sector.”

What is SORS’ long-term objective in connection with register-based statistics?

“The long-term objective is to progressively increase the use of administrative data for statistical purposes. Ultimately, we should aim to establish a total population register and a register-based population census by 2021, at least in part.”

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The delegation from SORS during the study visit in Stockholm in November 2015. Ms Obradovic is second from the right.

“Internal communication has improved”

In June last year, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in Moldova launched their intranet. “We needed a tool that would improve internal communication within the organisation,” say **Maria Godiac** and **Lilia Racu** of the NBS.

EMPLOYEES AT THE NBS

wished there was a system where they quickly could find information or documents they needed for their work. There was also a need for a channel that could spread institutional news. “In addition, we needed the intranet to improve transparency, and decrease the distance between employees and top management, the central office and regional offices,” say Maria Godiac, Head of Synthesis and Dissemination of Statistical Information Division, and Lilia Racu, Deputy Head of Synthesis and Dissemination of Statistical Information Division.



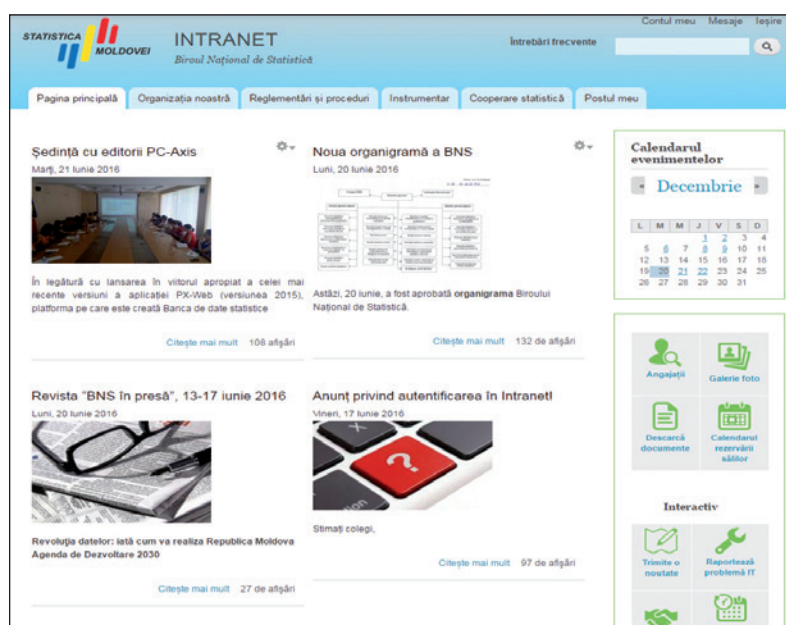
Lilia Racu (on the left) and Maria Godiac.

The intranet was developed with technical assistance from the project Improvement of regional statistics (STATREG), and in cooperation with Statistics Sweden.

“We would like to mention the key role that Anna Molander, at Statistics Sweden, played. She identified the NBS’ need to improve internal communication, and suggested setting up an intranet platform. Statistics Sweden assisted and helped us to organise the activity, establish a road map and action plan, arrange interviews and workshops, define the content of the intranet and the design, distribute roles and tasks among editors, and finally, helped us prepare the launch,” say Ms Godiac and Ms Racu.

The NBS intranet is used daily for various purposes, but its main purpose serves to keep staff informed about the latest news regarding the NBS.

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Screenshot of the NBS intranet.

“We can confirm that internal communication has improved since we launched the intranet, especially at the central office. Now everyone can be involved, share their news, express their own opinion, comment and participate in forums, or in different surveys. Activities are more transparent, documents are shared in a single place and information about ongoing projects is available to everyone,” say Ms Godiac and Ms Racu.

What advice would you give to other statistical agencies that are considering developing an intranet?

“Start developing an intranet as soon as possible. We can affirm with conviction that it is a very useful and necessary tool for an institution. A tip is to start with a good team that will be responsible for the organisation, and for the editorial and coordination activity of the intranet. Also, from our experience, collaboration with other statistical offices that already have an intranet is very important,” say Ms Godiac and Ms Racu.

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“NOW WE WORK AS A TEAM”

Kosovo Agency of Statistics’ (KAS) new website represents a big step forward in the dissemination and communication of statistics. Its success is based on an entirely new approach, with daily interaction between the IT and publishing functions.

The new website was launched in October last year and was the outcome of a cooperation between KAS and Statistics Sweden. “Statistics Sweden shared valuable experiences with us on building a new website. Until then, the different functions worked separately, and the IT staff had full responsibility for the website. Now we have started to work as a team, in which both IT and non-IT staff have different responsibilities,” says Hazbije Qeriqi, Senior Public Relations Officer, and Burim Limolli, Head of Information Systems.

The KAS website gets about 60 000 visitors every year. Target group users include government institutions, international and local organisations, academic institutions, students and media.

“The website is the main channel to communicate with users. KAS’ aim is to disseminate official statistics in an easy way. Any number of

statistical tables, press releases, statistical publications and other information are available,” says Ms Qeriqi and Mr Limolli.

The website contains plenty of information on different themes, such as socio-economic indicators, agriculture and environment indicators, quality reports, as well as all regulations concerning KAS.

What’s the next step in the development of your website?

“KAS is developing some visualisation tools to improve user friendliness and accessibility of data. A metadata system is also under construction and will be updated according to the Eurostat Format ESMS,” said Ms Qeriqi and Mr Limolli.

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Hazbije Qeriqi and Burim Limolli.



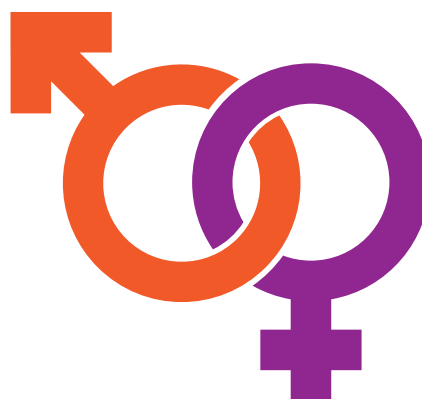
Photo: iStock

NEW COOPERATION WITH GUATEMALA ON STATISTICS

The main objective of the new cooperation between Statistics Sweden and the National Institute of Statistics (INE) is to strengthen Guatemala's national statistical system, facilitate access to statistics and support the INE's role as the main coordinator of official statistics. In other words, the project aims to increase the credibility of the statistics produced as well as to increase the dissemination of data. Focus for the cooperation are environmental statistics, price statistics, IT, management, methodology, and gender statistics.

INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME IN GENDER STATISTICS

Statistics Sweden in cooperation with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) have invited statistical producers and strategic users of statistics to a training programme in the area of gender statistics. Cambodia, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Zambia and Liberia are the focus of the programme, which will begin in 2017. More information about the programme is available at www.scb.se/itp/



INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN CAMBODIA

Statistics Sweden has been working together with Cambodia's National Institute of Statistics, NIS, for more than ten years and has supported the Cambodia Social Economic Survey. In July 2016, a new donor-financed programme, the Partnership for Transparency and Accountability in Cambodia (PAT), was initiated.

The programme is designed to complement EU sector budget support to the Public Financial Management Reform Programme (PFMRP) in Cambodia. In the preparation of the sector budget support, it was discovered that weaknesses in the institutional PFM set-up also tend to be located outside of the Ministry of Economics and Finance. Five key bodies with influence on areas that are important for an effective outcome of the PFM reform have been identified to receive support, and they are:

- the National Institute of Statistics
- the National Audit Authority
- the General Department of Taxation
- the Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia, and
- Transparency International Cambodia.

Preliminary themes that will be addressed include the national accounts, domestic revenue mobilisation, the national audit, parliamentary budget oversight, and budget transparency. Statistics Sweden and NIS are cooperating in the context of strengthening statistics under the PFMRP, in which the national accounts area is one of the priorities.



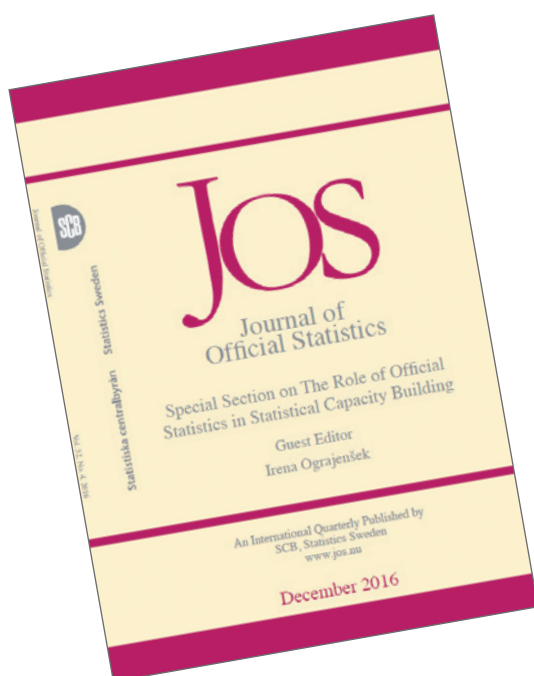


Photo: iStock

NEW COURSE ON HOW TO CONDUCT BUSINESS SURVEYS

In 2015 and 2016, Statistics Sweden set up a new introductory course on how to conduct business surveys. Representatives of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of Moldova were the first ones to attend the course. Inspiration for the course comes from the long-running Statistics in Action (STAc) course, developed by Statistics Sweden which focuses on how to conduct surveys directed at individuals.

Although related, there are naturally several differences between the new course and the STAc course concept, as they apply, for example, different methods for sample selection and data collection. The business survey course covers questionnaire design, sampling design and sample selection, data collection methods and data editing.



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Making everyday statistics visible

In social media, Statistics Sweden uses infographics to present statistics visually in an accessible and appealing way. The infographics are much appreciated by users and are often widely circulated.

