

Statistics IN ACTION

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Statistics for change

SCB

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Data for change and development

WHAT IS THE POINT of producing statistics if they are not being used?

Providing society with useful statistics that can be trusted is key to democratic development and change for the better. This issue of Statistics in Action focuses on the use of statistics in society and how statistics can help bring about change and development.

In 2014, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted its resolution on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission already in 1994.

This resolution sets forth that “official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens’ entitlement to public information.” Disseminating statistics and making them available are objectives included in every development cooperation endeavour that Statistics Sweden embarks on together with its partners.

Sweden’s support to Cambodia’s Public Financial Management Reform (PFMR) is a case in point.

Statistics Sweden works closely with the Swedish Tax Authority and the National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia (NIS) to help enhance the capacity of the National Statistical System in Cambodia. There is a great

deal of untapped potential within the system; large volumes of data are produced that could be used more effectively in policymaking and could also serve as a basis for transparency and increased accountability. Read more about this on page 10.

Among all the projects in Statistics Sweden’s project portfolio, the focus on the use of statistics as a tool for change is most pronounced in the International Training Programme (ITP) on Gender Statistics. This programme is geared towards drawing on existing gender statistics. By training participants to better understand, use and communicate gender statistics, the programme aims to promote data-driven policy change. Read more in “Gender equality ambassadors” on page 6.

This issue also contains the perspectives of a few colleagues from other Swedish government agencies engaged in development cooperation. Read their own words on statistics as a tool for monitoring, steering and driving change in “Reaching development goals with statistics” (page 8).



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New start in the Western Balkans

After a two-year break, a new regional cooperation project in the Western Balkans started in March 2019. Its main focus is to develop statistical capacity, so that countries in the region can produce statistics more efficiently and can meet European standards.

S

tatistics Sweden has been cooperating with the Western Balkan countries since the early 2000s – first bilaterally, then from 2004, in a regional cooperation. The cooperating countries are Albania,

Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia. They are all so-called “enlargement countries”, aspiring for European Union membership as candidate or potential candidate countries. This is important for the intervention, as there are certain European standards in statistics that candidate countries must meet before becoming members. Therefore, this new cooperation contributes to developing capacity in this respect.

THE PROJECT HAS THREE intervention areas: survey methodology, the Balkan Summer School and the use of registers for statistical purposes. Survey methodology is important, as there is no higher education programme in the Western Balkans devoted solely to statistics. This means that most people do not have a degree in statistics when they are recruited to a National Statistical Institute (NSI) in the region. The training courses on survey methodology aim to bridge this gap.

THE SUMMER SCHOOL is the flagship of the cooperation project. Here, participants learn how to write, defend and oppose scientific papers in order to prepare them to actively participate in international conferences on statistics. The support on the use of registers for statistical purposes aims to reduce the use of expensive traditional surveys, and instead use register data from different data providers. One challenge is to retain data quality in the full or partial changeover from survey to register data, and another is to convince data providers to share their data. This project tackles both challenges.

A successful feature over the years has been the use of local experts as teachers together with Swedish experts on various training activities. This will continue in the new cooperation project but, this time, a higher share of local experts will be used. The aim is for the NSIs to have the capability to fulfil their own training needs in the future.

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Somali statistical system stronger through coordination

Good capacity-development coordination affects the production and quality of statistics in a positive way. In Somalia, development partners have formed a task force with the aim of achieving a more efficient National Statistical System.

When more than one organisation or person is involved, coordination becomes an important aspect of capacity development to ensure that the intended objectives and goals are met. However, the importance of this aspect has not always been clear. In many cases, a lack of coordination among donor groups or efforts has been counterproductive for the development of National Statistical System (NSS) in developing countries.

“The key to success has been the formation of a task force to develop statistical capacity and to produce urgently needed indicators in Somalia.”

In Somalia, unfortunately, the last two decades’ support to statistics has been scattered among various development partners. During this period, the Somali statistical authorities produced a very limited amount of statistics. Now, the situation is changing, as different Somali statistical authorities collect data in different parts of the country with the aim of meeting national needs and international requirements, such as those in the 2030 Agenda and the African 2063 Goals.

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THE KEY TO SUCCESS has been the formation of a task force to develop statistical capacity and to produce urgently needed indicators in Somalia.

This task force comprises representatives of Statistics Sweden, the World Bank, UNFPA-

Somalia and other key development partners, as well as Somali authorities. The aim is to strengthen the donor and donor/country coordination mechanism on statistics through the Joint High Level Statistics Forum (JHLSF). The first working group meeting was held in September 2016, and since then, the group has met on several occasions, together with various key stakeholders.

In March 2019, a JHLSF meeting was held in Mogadishu with a view to:

- discussing the coordination of statistical programs;
- creating a pool of funds for surveys; and
- identifying national statistical needs and potential solutions.

THE MEETING WAS SUCCESSFUL and was a step towards reaching the main objective of the JHLSF, to strengthen the NSS by implementing the National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS). The meeting also agreed on the organisation of important surveys, such as the Somali Health and Demographic Survey (2018–2019), the High Frequency Survey (2018), and the Labour Force Survey (2019).

With the support of this group, Somalia aims to develop a functioning national statistical system, one step at a time.

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Advancing gender equality and women's employment with the help of statistics

There is substantial statistical evidence of a positive correlation between the empowerment of women and economic development. At the same time, there is an obvious gap in opportunities between women and men in the world. To address this gender gap and identify where changes are most urgently needed, statistics can be used as an effective tool for mapping, monitoring and analysing the situation of women today.



Evidence suggests that optimising the world's human capital would improve the future of individuals and societies. Several studies published in recent years have shown that gender inequality hinders economic development through lost productivity and a stalled growth rate. Statistics Sweden's development cooperation focuses on addressing these issues, which is also in line with the Beijing Platform for Action prepared at the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women in 1995 and Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

GENDER-BASED STATISTICS can help highlight how progress impacts women and men in different ways. These differences can be brought to light through statistics. Access to high-quality data and metadata also enables legislators, civil society, media and other stakeholders to take affirmative actions to combat gender inequality.

Other ways to ensure that women and girls can enjoy their fundamental human rights include increasing use of statistics in policy- and decision-making and planning actions for growth and innovation.

THERE IS A GREAT DEAL of gender-based statistics available to the public at national statistical institutes and more active use of these statistics could help lead to change. The Beijing Platform for Action actually states that governments shall ensure regular production of a statistical publication on gender that presents and interprets topical data on women and men in a form suitable for a wide range of non-technical users. Statistics Sweden's cooperation with its partner National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) often contain such an element.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED in operationalising gender equality in the workplace and in society, various development partners have useful information available. For instance, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has developed an easy-to-use gender toolkit that provides guidelines, tools and inspiration for how to address these issues.

www.sida.se/english/partners/methods-materials/gender-tool-box/

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Gender equality ambassadors – from all over the world

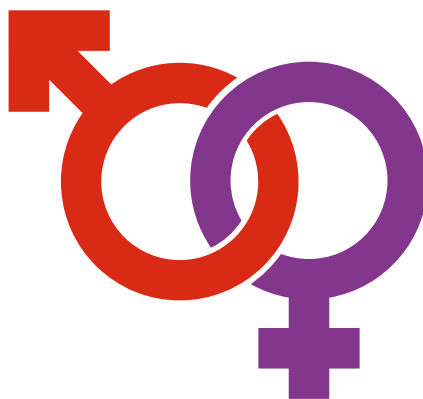


Participants and mentors in the ITP programme in Stockholm in May.

Since 2016, Statistics Sweden has organised an international training programme (ITP) in Gender Statistics. This training programme gives people working in various organisations and authorities around the world the opportunity to develop their competence in gender issues and gender statistics.

“The problem isn’t an absence of data – we have the data – we just don’t know how to use it.” This is how many participants in the programme express it. The statistics are often available, but the participants lack the knowledge of how to analyse and disseminate the statistics to meet user needs. In some cases, there is also a poor understanding of why statistics are important for decision-making.

THE PARTICIPANTS in the programme undergo one year of extensive training in processing, analysis and communication of gender statistics. This year’s participants came from Ethiopia, Zambia, Liberia, Myanmar and Cambodia. Apart from representatives of statistical agencies, participants represented a variety of other authorities and organisations that also use gender statistics.



Asnakech Tamene, Senior Statistician at the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, says that producers of statistics can provide you with the data, but the users are the ones who need to know how to use the statistics. “This is why we need both producers and users to achieve effective gender statistics,” Ms Tamene states.

STELLA MLEWA NKHOMA, Gender Mainstreaming Specialist at the Bank of Zambia, explains that women seldom visit the bank. Her vision is to include more women in the formal financial sector.

“Women often use informal mechanisms that are not safe, because they don’t have access to bank services. Banks in Zambia cater mostly to men; men run the banks and are the ones in positions of power. We need sex-disaggregated data to target women and to make the financial sector responsive to women’s needs. If you can’t see the perspective of a woman, you won’t know what they need,” says Ms Nkhoma.

LEEROY MAPULANGA, lecturer and researcher at the University of Zambia, wants to spread statistics about women in higher education.

“There is little or almost no sex-disaggregated data when it comes to women in higher education. We do not know how many women are enrolled in different courses and which gender dominates. For example, we do not know how many women graduate.”

He says that the statistics are available, but are not being published or presented to the general public. The Academic Affairs Office at the university simply keeps them for their records. The problem is compounded by the fact that nobody

asks for such information – people do not see the need.

Leeroy is planning to demonstrate the

significance of analysing and communicating this data in order to inspire the responsible agencies to publish and disseminate it. Through his participation in the ITP, he hopes to gain more respect and that the Academic Affairs Office will be more accepting of his work.

“We need sex-disaggregated data to target women and to make the financial sector responsive to women’s needs.”

Programme participants Ms Nkhoma and Mr Mapulanga, and others, come from different workplaces with a common vision – to work towards an equal world through gender statistics.

GENDER STATISTICS ARE also fundamental for following up the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. For Stella and Leeroy, in addition to Gender Equality, the key SDGs are No Poverty and Quality Education.

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Reaching development goals with statistics

Good, reliable statistics are essential for measuring progress in reaching development goals. Building capacity in statistics is therefore crucial for a wide range of government agencies around the world. We spoke to three Swedish government agencies about their views on developing capacity in statistics.

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Swedish Environmental Protection Agency

Mats Kullberg, Programme Manager

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency is the public agency responsible for environmental issues in Sweden. One of its global capacity-building programmes supports the development of robust transparency systems (Monitoring, Reporting and Verification). The programme aims to support the implementation of partner countries' national plans and to contribute to the implementation of National Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, as well as the SDGs:

“Building capacity in this field is essential for executing on the national commitment under the Paris Agreement. The ability to produce, analyse and use relevant climate data



is vital, both in terms of developing measures to reduce emissions, and adapting to their effects,” comments Mats Kullberg.

The National Board of Trade

Anna Hallam, Senior Adviser

Anna Hallam works at the National Board of Trade, the Swedish government agency for international trade, the EU Internal Market and trade policy. With its mission to improve international trade opportunities, the agency engages in collaborative development cooperation initiatives:

“In order to help countries integrate in the global trading system, trade analysis based on trade statistics is key. In many of our projects, we often find it challenging to rely on trade statistics since they are either absent or unreliable. Therefore, enhancing capacity in collecting trade statistics and improving methods to transfer data to relevant institutions is very



important. Statistics and analyses also need to go beyond ‘traditional’ economic trade statistics and also cover the social and environmental aspects of trade.”

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

Annika Palo, Senior Adviser

According to Annika Palo, the 2030 Agenda turned all countries into developing countries in 2016, and opened new and better opportunities for multi-country learning and partnerships:

“The great challenges that lie ahead, in terms of having to meet the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), demand a lot from us. Eliminating hunger cannot be achieved by destroying ecosystems or polluting seas. All the goals are interlinked and interdependent, and statistics are a key factor in understanding this. Many countries around the world lack either the data, or the systems to collect the



data. Building the capacity of staff at national statistical institutes is therefore fundamental to the ability of countries to report on how they implement the SDGs.”

Partnership for Accountability and Transparency (PAT) in Cambodia



The issue of the GDT sharing specific data with the NIS was raised with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Dr. Aun Pornmoniroth, when Swedish Ambassador Maria Sargren met him in August.

cal data in the budgetary process, a higher level of transparency, accountability and collaboration could be attained. This would also enable the government to monitor public finances more efficiently and make more informed decisions for the country.

Reluctance to share data within the government is also a challenge. If data exchange improved, the budget spent on collecting data, as well as the response burden of data submitters, could be reduced. Most likely, the quality of the data would also be improved by sharing data within the government.

The public financial management system Cambodia is undergoing extensive reform. Statistics Sweden and the Swedish Tax Authority have partnered up to support their Cambodian counterparts in this process.

Support in developing statistics and the tax system play a key role in the overall support provided by Sweden in implementing Public Financial Reform (PFM) in Cambodia.

Statistics Sweden's support to the National Statistical Institute (NIS) aims to increase capacity in the national statistical system, as well as awareness on how to use statistics in the planning and budgetary process in the ministries.

Today, a large volume of data is produced in the national statistical system in Cambodia, but reaching users such as the private sector, civil society and the government is still challenging. If the government used the statisti-

Collaboration to the benefit of both parties

Collaboration between the National Statistical Institute (NIS) and the General Department of Taxation (GDT) will benefit both parties in the work on public financial management reform. Building systems that send and receive information benefits the NIS since more data with high relevance will be available for statistical production. Also, the quality of economic statistics for better planning and follow-up in government finances will be improved.

The cooperation between Statistics Sweden and the Swedish Tax Authority has been crucial to supporting the collaboration between their counterparts in Cambodia. Until now, their cooperation has supported and facilitated learning across the organisations to better understand how to use National Accounts and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for decision-making. Furthermore, an established and ongoing dialogue on how to share information about revenue to improve the quality of GDP has also been supported. The next step is a joint study visit from the NIS and the GDT to Sweden to learn more about how data is shared between the two Swedish authorities.

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National Accounts in Africa – working towards ownership and sustainability

NADABAS (National Account DATA BASE) is a user-friendly and flexible system for compiling national accounts. It was developed in a Nordic project in Mozambique, and is becoming increasingly popular in Africa. In a new governance model, the user countries will take over ownership of the system.

NADABAS IS AN ADD-IN to Excel that replaces links between workbooks with a database solution. This enables the construction of national accounts systems that are more robust and easier to maintain compared to just using Excel. NADABAS also has the benefit of no additional cost for users, since all the statistical offices already have and use Microsoft Office. NADABAS can also be used to improve existing systems and does not require a major change in how the accounts are compiled.

The development of NADABAS started in Mozambique in 2004 in a Nordic project run jointly by the national statistical agencies in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The system has become increasingly popular among national statistical agencies in Southern and Eastern Africa. It is used in Lesotho, Kenya, Eswatini, Namibia, and Botswana, and is currently being set up in South Africa. NADABAS has also been introduced in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The African Development Bank took an interest in NADABAS in 2015 and has since supported the introduction of the system. Outside Africa, NADABAS is used in Palau and the Marshall Islands, and there are plans to introduce it in other Pacific nations.

User countries to take over ownership

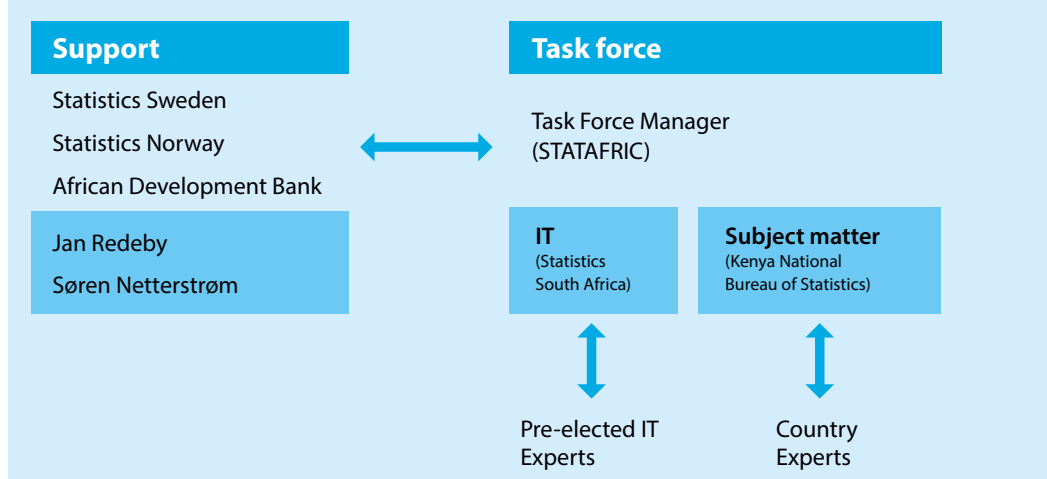
The Nordic statistical agencies have continued to support NADABAS, but most of the expertise remains with the two key experts who developed the system, Mr. Jan Redeby and Mr. Søren Netterstrøm. As more countries are starting to use NADABAS, it is becoming increasingly important to ensure its sustainability. Statistics Sweden has therefore initiated the process of setting up a new governance structure for NADABAS aimed at transferring system ownership to the user countries.

In the new structure, the Pan-African Institute for Statistics (STATAFRIC) will be the leader and driver of the work together with the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (subject matter expertise) and Statistics South Africa (IT expertise). The African Development Bank, Statistics Sweden and Statistics Norway will support capacity development to ensure long-term sustainable governance of NADABAS.

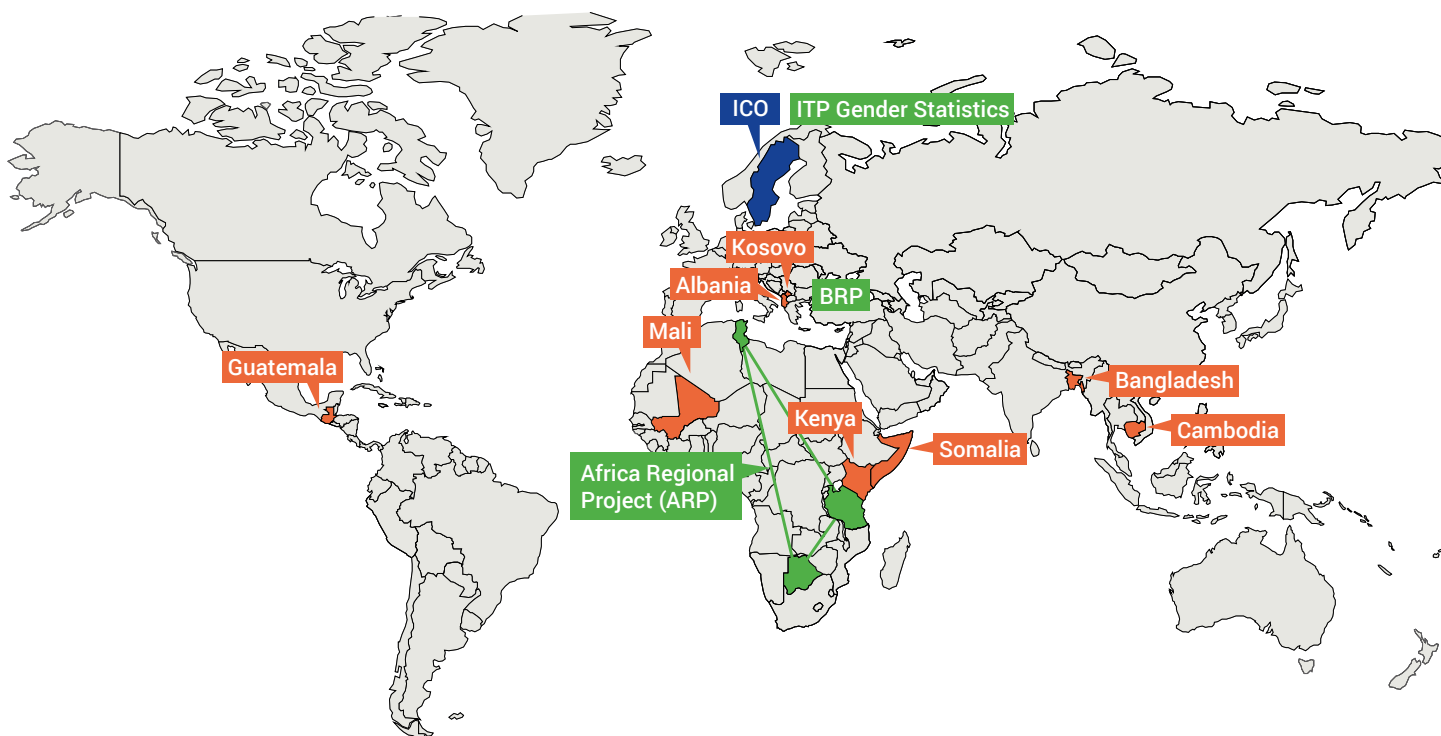
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Conceptual model for governance of NADABAS



Statistics Sweden's international cooperation projects



Reach out for more statistics!

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