

# Statistics IN ACTION

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## Statistics as a tool against discrimination



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### Statistics IN ACTION

Newsletter from Statistics Sweden

Publisher: Cecilia Westström

Editor: AnnaCarin Paavo

Editorial Office:

Anna Gunterberg

Björn Richard

Cathy Krüger

Eva Tofvesson Redz

Johan Ovsianikov

email: [ius@scb.se](mailto:ius@scb.se)

International Cooperation Office

Statistics Sweden, Box 24300

S-104 51 Stockholm, Sweden

email: [ius@scb.se](mailto:ius@scb.se)

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# NEW ORGANISATION WITH THE SAME COMMITMENT

**THIS SUMMER**, I attended the 61st World Statistics Congress in Marrakech. The Congress offered many interesting sessions, on topics such as how to modernise official statistics and statistical legislation, the use of new data sources, and on new methods. With its mix of official statisticians, academia, international organisations and non-governmental organisations, the Congress provides a forum for new insights, and I came home filled with inspiration and new ideas.

It is my pleasure to welcome the International Cooperation Office, ICO, as a unit under the Regions and Environment Department at Statistics Sweden from 1 July. Former Director Pernilla Trägårdh recently left Statistics Sweden, and I wish her the best of luck in her new position at the Swedish Radio. Statistics Sweden's international cooperation efforts will remain focused on our ongoing project commitments and will provide strategic support through our well-established cooperation model.

This summer I also took part in Summer at Census research activities in Washington DC followed by the 7th Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management in New York.

Integration of statistical and geospatial information is promoted by the United Nations as an important element of modernising statistical production. The 2020 round of censuses and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are major drivers behind increased use of geospatial information.

Statistics Sweden is involved in getting national reporting on the 2030 Agenda to work globally; we do this through our presence in the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals and its Working Group on Geospatial Information. I am looking forward to receiving your ideas on how we can continue to improve capacity-building in connection to the 2030 Agenda.

In the next issue of Statistics in Action, you will meet Statistics Sweden's new head of unit for international cooperation!



Marie Haldorson  
Head of Department,  
Regions and Environment Department  
[marie.haldorson@scb.se](mailto:marie.haldorson@scb.se)

# Statistics as a tool against discrimination

Guatemala has a long history of discrimination of indigenous populations in general and of women in particular, according to UN Women. Statistics is a strong tool to start changing the problem, and the cooperation project between the statistical offices in Guatemala and Sweden is therefore emphasizing the improvement of gender statistics.

**A RECENT REPORT** from UN Women notes that, in 2011, the illiteracy rate among indigenous women was 48 per cent and men 25 per cent, compared to non-indigenous women 19 per cent and men 11 per cent. This is indicative of the high level of social exclusion of the indigenous population, despite the fact that this group represents 43 per cent of the entire national population.

UN Women also claims that, in Guatemala, “Exclusion and racism have produced structural, legal and institutionalized forms of violence and discrimination that deepen in the case of indigenous women, particularly in those who live in rural areas.” Furthermore, according to data from the National Institute of Forensic Sciences, Guatemala ranks among the highest in the world in terms of violent deaths among women.

## Gender-related issues in focus for the development project

Simultaneously, the ratification of Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality calls for “the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, the end of all forms of gender-based discrimination, and the elimination of harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM)”, as defined by UNFPA.

Consequently, gender-related issues are one of the most important aspects in the bilateral capacity development project between Guatemala and Statistics Sweden. One of the concrete outputs in this project is the development of a survey aimed at measuring violence against women in particular. As Statistics Sweden’s long-term-advisor stationed in Guatemala, Eliecen Gomez, notes: “As Guatemala suffers from high rates of violence,

particularly against women, such a survey is of grave importance in order to shine light upon the issue.” The need for conducting such a survey increases even further as the data currently available only consists of administrative data, that is reported cases.

The project between Statistics Sweden and Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Guatemala (INE) began in October 2016. Besides the survey on violence against women, the support in the area of gender statistics will assist in the production of a booklet “Women and men in Guatemala”. More widely, the project provides technical support to INE in the areas of management issues, economic statistics and environment statistics, as well as in statistical methodology and IT.



Guatemala is home to 24 principal ethnic groups.



Workshop on gender equality in Guatemala.

### More cooperation between independent statistical institutions

Thus far, INE's currently available data on gender statistics has been evaluated and, in the process, future needs have been identified. Another important step forward is that the 22 independent statistical institutions of Guatemala have embarked on a path towards collaboration and cooperation. Specific user needs have also been addressed by letting the users of official statistics provide input

*"As Guatemala suffers from high rates of violence, particularly against women, such a survey is of grave importance in order to shine light upon the issue."*

in future development. Swedish experts in gender statistics are working in close cooperation with the colleagues at INE, and the next step is to collect existing data for the booklet's statistical content.

During the two short-term missions that have been carried out so far, Statistics Sweden's experts in the area of gender statistics report that both the producers and the users of official gender statistics are incredibly committed and skilled.

However, specific needs related to gender statistics have also emerged. Needs that are not isolated to this particular bilateral project, but

on a more fundamental level while working with gender statistics in general.

### No "one-size-fits-all"

Statistics Sweden has its particular view and concept about how to work with and implement gender statistics. There is, however, no "one-size-fits-all". "We need to understand and look at each country's specific needs and prerequisites," says Anna Nyman, one of Statistics Sweden's short-term consultants in Guatemala. It is also of importance to acknowledge the need to engage and integrate gender awareness in each and every part of the organization instead of an approach where you separate it, and thereby isolate it, into one particular corner of the office.

But how can one achieve the necessary awareness? How can we initiate a change towards SDG #5, gender equality? First and foremost, we need official data about the issue and we need to understand what the data is telling us. We need accurate, impartial and high quality gender statistics, and this is the goal towards which the statistics cooperation in Guatemala is dedicated.

Johan Ovsiannikov  
johan.ovsiannikov@scb.se

# Gender statistics put equality on the political agenda



Gender statistics are now available in **Rwanda, Uganda, Palestine, Tanzania** and **Bangladesh**. This is the outcome of Statistics Sweden's International Training Programme in Gender Statistics, where statisticians and users of statistics have received training and support to develop this important field.

**STATISTICS SWEDEN** first published the booklet "Women and men in Sweden" in 1984. For more than three decades, the booklet has played an important role in the Swedish public debate on gender equality, and has been an important basis for decision-making among politicians.

With assistance from Statistics Sweden, the participants of the training programme have produced training materials and publications on statistics that describe the situation of men and women in their respective countries.

The material and publications were uniquely produced in national cooperation between representatives of the countries' statistical agencies and users of statistics at authorities and civil society organisations, with assistance from trainers at Statistics Sweden. This cooperation generated networks of users and producers of gender statistics that provide them with the opportunity to share statistical needs that will increase awareness of various gender equality problems.

## Gender equality statistics has given rise to debate

The country launches of gender equality statistics have involved national statistical agencies as well as other authorities, civil society and the news media. This has led to media coverage and debate about the conditions of women and men.

For example, the Bangladesh project group highlighted statistics on the connection between girls' education level and child marriage. The lower the level of education, the larger the risk of child marriage at an early age – important evidence in a country where the president recently decided to legalise child marriage in "special cases", despite massive criticism from the rest of the world.

The Rwanda project group drew attention to the female unemployment rates. For example, among holders of secondary level education, the unemployment rate of women is more than twice as high; 26.6 per cent among women versus 12.5 per cent among men, a news item that the media chose to highlight.

## Increased capacity to improve gender equality through statistics

Most importantly, through this training these countries have increased their capacity to independently improve gender equality with the use of statistics.

In connection with the launch of "Women and Men" in Rwanda, the deputy head of the Gender Monitoring office, Jean Paul Kabera, invited the Rwandan project group to hold training courses on gender statistics for its employees. If this should come to fruition, it is a major step forward for gender equality efforts monitoring in Rwanda; the agency's responsibility includes monitoring the effects of agency policy on the situation of women and men in the country.

Anna Gunterberg  
[anna.gunterberg@scb.se](mailto:anna.gunterberg@scb.se)

### KEY FACTS

- Statistics Sweden organised the International Training Programme in Gender Statistics, financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), for the first time in 2016.
- In 2017, the International Training Programme is under way for Ethiopia, Liberia, Zambia, Cambodia and Myanmar.
- The next International Training Programme will start in March 2018. Countries that have been invited are Bangladesh, Palestine, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania.
- The link to the application is available here: [www.scb.se/itp](http://www.scb.se/itp)



# Regional approaches to statistical cooperation

Taking a regional approach to statistical cooperation enables comparisons between countries. It can help in the monitoring of the Social Development Goals and in the harmonization of methods according to international standards. The examples below highlight the benefits of working in regional cooperation.

**A REGIONAL PROJECT** in the Balkans in the early 2000s between Statistics Sweden and the national statistical institutes of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Macedonia had successful results. It promoted the development of statistical systems in the region with focus on the harmonization of methods and practices in line with EU standards. This helped the national statistical institutes in the Balkans to prepare their respective countries for future EU membership by aligning their present methodologies and practices with the European Statistical System.

Following the successful approach in the Western Balkans, Statistics Sweden is intending to start a *regional project in Africa together with Regional Economic Communities of the African Union* with a focus on migration and labour statistics. According to the plans, and after agreement with key organisations in Africa, the project will work closely with four out of eight Regional Economic Communities. A fact-finding phase is planned to start at the beginning of 2018 and hopefully that will be followed by a project phase.



The project will support the respective African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities and Member States to promote harmonised methodologies. This includes supporting the appropriation and use by member states of international standards, methodologies and compatible operating procedures for migration and labour data collection and analysis.

Working with regional organisations can be a long and demanding process and has some challenges. To make all the National Statistical Institutes and organizations adopt the same plan and goals can prove to be difficult due to different views and priorities.

However, there are many advantages to working with a regional approach as it helps to:

- facilitate the harmonization of statistics,
- facilitate the exchange of experiences with neighboring countries,
- minimize the costs as few experts engaged can share their experience with many partners at the same time.

The European Union projects in the Western Balkans is now adopting the same regional approach as Statistics Sweden and the same trend is in other parts of the world.

With the experience from the Balkans, and as one of the key partners in the upcoming regional project in Africa, Statistics Sweden hopes to maximize the benefits of regional cooperations as well as to continue its twinning and bilateral cooperations, as successful ways to support countries to improve their statistics.

Jean-Pierre Ntezimana  
[jean-pierre.ntezimana@scb.se](mailto:jean-pierre.ntezimana@scb.se)

# Experiences from Mali

Regional organisations are important for the development of statistics at the national statistical agencies. **Mr. Issa Bouare**, deputy Director General at Mali's statistical bureau, INSTAT, describes the way it works in West Africa, from a national point of view.



Mr. Issa Bouare, deputy Director General at Mali's statistical bureau, INSTAT.

**“THE OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF** *l'Observatoire Economique et Statistique d'Afrique Subsaharienne* (AFRISTAT) is to support each Member State in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a national strategy for the development of statistics in harmony with other national development strategies. Regional cooperation in West Africa also exists within the framework of implementing the Regional Statistical Program through the institutional support from the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)."

As a member of these organizations, Mali benefits in this respect from the multifaceted support of AFRISTAT, AFRITAC and WAEMU in the development of statistics. The requested support includes the definition of production standards, the harmonization of survey methods and methodologies, concepts

and nomenclatures. Through regional or sub-regional programs, Mali benefits from expertise in the production of national accounts, business statistics and prices statistics.

All these activities contribute to the development of statistics in Mali and to a better guidance for public authority decisions. For Mali, regional cooperation represents an ideal framework for exchanging and sharing experiences with other countries in order to achieve the common development goals.

Regularity in the payment of financial contributions, difficulties in harmonizing methods, concepts and nomenclatures, compliance with Community standards and compliance with publication calendars are the main challenges."

# Towards improved GDP statistics in Cambodia

Reliable and impartial statistical data of good quality is vital for decision making in the public sector, the private sector as well as in the civil society. With that in mind, a project focusing on the improvement of the national accounts in Cambodia has started.

**T**he National Institute of Statistics (NIS) in Cambodia and Statistics Sweden are cooperating since 2016 on how to improve the national accounts. The most frequently used indicator in the national accounts is Gross domestic product (GDP). GDP is a broad measurement of a nation's overall economic activity, and provides very important information for decision-makers, both in the private and public sector.

The cooperation is an integral part of Cambodia's Public Financial Management Reform Programme, supported by the EU and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). For Sida, the purpose of this is to implement targeted capacity-building support to key institutions whose activities and responsibilities are of strategic relevance for the programme.

The main users of GDP in Cambodia are different government bodies, the national assembly, and international organisations. NIS is experiencing growing interest for statistics from businesses and enterprises. The Ministry of Finance and the Parliament frequently use the National accounts when



Photo: Rene Deanda

Agricultural activities remain the main source of income for many Cambodians living in rural areas.

planning, questioning and following up the state budget.

To improve the GDP calculations in Cambodia, the project is aiming to increase the coverage of many areas of GDP, such as private and public consumption, investments, inventories, and the foreign balance of trade, with quality data.

The ongoing work on producer price indices is important to improve the constant price estimates of GDP. The major data gap, which will need to be filled to improve estimates of GDP from the production approach, concerns regular statistics from establishments or enterprises on output and intermediate consumption. The project

is planning to develop an indicator on turnover, which is an important step to getting regular data on the production side of the economy.

Two challenges in the project are the lack of a register of establishments and lack of cooperation with other authorities, especially with the General Department of Taxation.

The desired outcome to improve National Accounts and GDP will give reliable information on Cambodia's overall economy activities for the decision makers to base their decision on.

Veronica Wikner  
veronica.wikner@scb.se



# Sweden - a national analysis towards Agenda 2030

In July 2017, the Swedish government presented a national report at the UN high-level political forum concerning Sweden's current situation and progress towards Agenda 2030. As part of this report, Statistics Sweden was given the responsibility to provide statistical analysis and follow-up.

**THE ASSIGNMENT** from the Swedish government stated that Statistics Sweden should provide and develop a list of national indicators, based on the 232 global indicators, for each of the 169 sub-targets of the SDGs.

The list that Statistics Sweden developed consists of 227 global indicators, established by UN's statistics division, complemented by 15 approximations of global indicators in need of assessment (proxy indicators) as well as 52 national indicators.

In total, 294 indicators were identified for statistical analysis, and these were then internally evaluated and classified into three different categories:

- Green – the indicator exists (148)
- Orange – data can be identified but needs to be further analysed (65)
- Red – lack of resources/methods to develop the indicator (60)
- White – indicator not relevant in the national context (21)

The national indicators were adjusted to suit the specific context of Sweden, in terms of relevance to the statistical analysis. The development of the list of national indicators was also based upon the existence and accessibility of data content from other Swedish administrative agencies, and on its significance to national sustainability goals and policies.

After identifying the indicators, data was collected and the statistical analysis could be carried out. In conclusion, the development of Statistics Sweden's national indicator list can be viewed as an example on how universal statistical toolboxes can be translated and transformed to a national context. It also highlights one of many important roles of statistics in terms of sustainable development goals.

## EXAMPLE – reducing poverty

### SUB-TARGET

1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

### TYPE

Global.

### INDICATOR

1.2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age.

### PRELIMINARY NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION

Orange.

### READ MORE

Statistical follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development, Statistics Sweden, November 2017.



# Innovative training in East Africa

The Somali National Statistical Departments' awareness of errors within the Consumer Price Index (CPI) has been addressed with an innovative and sustainable approach. Many of the errors in the data could be traced back to limited knowledge and experience in how to collect data in an adequate and accurate way.

**W**orking in developing Somali CPI can be found challenging, for several reasons, such as low security in certain areas, a limited budget, the lack of the necessary software, the lack of standardized CPI processes and methods, and weighting based on undocumented surveys or surveys from other countries.

These issues tend to lead to errors within CPI, and these errors can have a spillover effect on data that affects Somali inflations. However, after identifying these issues, an action plan on how to come to terms with the problem was put into practice.

Using video links, staff from the Directorate of national statistics of the Federal Government of Somalia, statistical departments in Garowe (Puntland) and Hargeisa (Somaliland), as well as staff from Stockholm and Örebro (Sweden), managed to successfully conduct virtual training sessions across the borders. By thorough coordination and the use of technology and software, Somali interviewers have



Somali participants from Mogadishu.

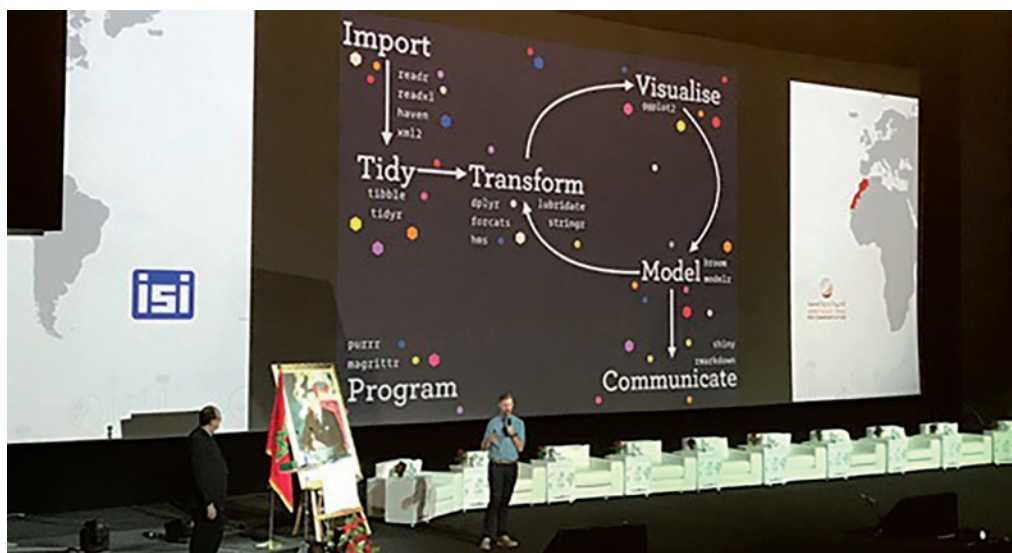
received online training by Statistics Sweden. In doing so, an exchange of knowledge could be performed in an efficient and rational way.

This time around, the focal point of the training was to enhance the knowledge and experience of how to properly utilize interviews as a method of collecting data. The training session therefore focused on guidance and examination of a manual on how to conduct an interview that Statistics Sweden and its Somali counterparts have

been developing. Two more training sessions will be coordinated and performed in the same manner in order for the project to reach its objectives during 2017/2018.

Jean-Pierre Ntezimana  
[jean-pierre.ntezimana@scb.se](mailto:jean-pierre.ntezimana@scb.se)





Publishing data in a user friendly way was a hot topic at the World Statistics Congress.

## Buzzing at the World Statistics Congress in Marrakech

**IN JULY 2017**, members representing National Institutes of Statistics, the academic world and other international organizations gathered at the 61st World Statistics Congress in Marrakech, Morocco. The agenda included topics of interest to everyone with an interest in statistics.

Among the items up for debate was “Big Data” as well as the similarities and differences between statistics and data science. Another hot topic was how statisticians, in times of “alternative facts”, can and need to untangle and visualize official statistics by publishing data in a user-friendly and relatable context.

International cooperation and knowledge exchange were ever-present, as shown in Statistics Sweden’s presentation about how to integrate statistics with geographies, sharing the floor with its Mexican, Australian and South African counterparts.

The next World Statistics Congress will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in August 2019.

Marie Haldorson & Yingfu Xie  
[marie.haldorson@scb.se](mailto:marie.haldorson@scb.se)  
[yingfu.xie@scb.se](mailto:yingfu.xie@scb.se)

## A “Roadmap for collaboration” – an exciting step forward

**IN AUGUST 2017**, a “Roadmap for collaboration” was agreed upon and signed by the World Bank and the United Nations Statistics Division. The roadmap consists of commitments from the partners aiming to support developing countries in “carrying out activities to bridge the geospatial digital divide to move towards e-economies, improve services to citizens, build

capacity for using geospatial technology, and enhance informed government decision making processes”.

The commitment, including the setting up of a special fund, is a very exciting step forward, in line with the goals of Agenda 2030 which will need to be assessed by reliable and up-to-date geospatial data.

# Planning for EFFECTIVE COOPERATION



International Cooperation Office had a meeting in Stockholm in September.

*"By coming together annually to exchange experiences and knowledge from different perspectives, invaluable synergies can be achieved in order to map out the road ahead."*

**USUALLY SCATTERED ACROSS** the world, staff working in Statistics Sweden's International Cooperation Office were brought together for a week of intense discussions, planning and evaluation. The main goal for this workshop was to further enhance and improve the ongoing international cooperation projects and the work that Statistics Sweden, through Sida, operates. By coming together annually to exchange experiences and knowledge from different perspectives, invaluable synergies can be achieved in order to map out the road ahead.

The issues on the agenda consisted, for example, of how to support project ownership in each country and how to merge the de facto statistical outputs with organizational change. Another session focused on how to develop results matrices for statistical development based on fixed indicators such as environmental factors or gender. The workshop also touched upon larger issues, such as broader visions of capacity development in the field of statistics with external input from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

The discussions highlighted the many challenges for developing standard project management tools when the context of each project varies so greatly. For instance, geographical and cultural differences between project countries but also internally within the projects as the specific needs of one NSI differ from another.

However, equally noteworthy during the workshop was the many similarities that each Long-Term Advisor (LTA) experiences in their day-to-day work. With challenges ranging from communication to how to handle cultural differences or how to promote and encourage local staff.

Joining forces and discussing issues in this way can also provide direct benefits for the individual cooperation projects. As one LTA expressed difficulties on how to handle a certain situation, another LTA could give the answer "Well, in this country we/they handled that problem by...". In this way, progress made in the various projects is not isolated to the specific bilateral agreement but interlinks and transfers on a larger scale, so that a positive change in Mali's statistical development can also be of benefit in Guatemala, and vice versa. Which in turn signifies the importance of international cooperation in order to achieve broader development goals and ambitions.

With that in mind, it is with great enthusiasm and optimism that Statistics Sweden prepares for yet another year of international cooperation within the field of statistics.

Johan Ovsiannikov  
[johan.ovsiannikov@scb.se](mailto:johan.ovsiannikov@scb.se)