

Preface

The need for more reliable and timely statistical information has taken on a higher profile in recent years in response to the increased emphasis placed on the results-based agenda which includes specific sectoral programs, the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPs) that countries are designing and implementing, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which countries have signed up to and other national development plans. This agenda requires clear, unambiguous and systematic measurement and reporting on achievement of outputs, outcomes and impact of development policies and programs. The results-based agenda which is data intensive has brought to bare longstanding statistical capacity and data quality issues, and created a new urgency for improving statistical systems in Africa.

Some of the issues that have hindered improvement of statistical systems in Africa include, inter alia, lack of or limited awareness about the role of statistics to society; weak links between data producers, users and policy makers; limited government commitment to and investment in statistical development; quick fix and piece-meal approaches to statistical development which have sacrificed long-term planning and capacity building for meeting short-term data needs; limited co-ordination and synergy in statistical production; limited management, data analysis and communication skills in statistical agencies; and inadequate teaching of official statistics in training institutions.

These inadequacies have translated into inability by national statistical systems to meet user needs for various purposes including evidence-based public policy analysis and design which requires that public policy decisions are informed by careful and rigorous analysis using sound and transparent statistics. This situation has also constrained decision-making at many levels and hindered informed public debate.

The *African Statistical Journal* is intended to foster improved communication and contact between analysts and policy makers and data producers in Africa. It is being established also to serve as a research outlet and information sharing publication among academic and practicing statisticians mainly in Africa.

The Journal aims to promote the understanding of statistical development in the African region and will, among other things publish:

- articles on statistical methodologies with special emphasis on applications,
- articles about best practices and lessons learned from the region,
- opinions on issues of general interest to the statistical community in the African region,
- notices and announcements on upcoming events, conferences, call for papers; recent statistical developments and anything that may be of interest to the statistical community.

The Journal is bi-lingual and will be published bi-annually. It is expected that it will serve as a convenient volume for statistical reference at home, in schools and in professional work.

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