

A Case and Some Actions for Improving Statistical Advocacy in Poor Developing Countries

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Summary

Many poor developing countries are trapped in a vicious cycle of statistical under-development broadly characterized by weak production of statistics matched with little use of statistics by national policy-makers. Specific characteristics of the National Statistical Systems in these countries are presented. It is argued that this vicious cycle has constrained policy analysis and design as well as achievement of development outcomes. A case is made for scaling up statistical advocacy (which is elaborated) to break this cycle and to provide good statistics which are increasingly recognized as a core component of good governance and as part of the enabling environment for national development.

A number of actions are proposed to enhance statistical advocacy including integrating statistics in national development policy; raising the profile of statistics; establishment of more effective leadership of the National Statistical System and Office; mainstreaming users in statistical processes; use of newsmakers and cultivation of high level policy and decision-makers as champions for statistical processes; establishing effective news media relations; improving data analysis, presentation and reporting; scaling up Africa Statistics Day celebrations; appropriately designing the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS); making statistical training more relevant; and continued and enhanced engagement of the international community in statistical development in the countries. It is also shown that tremendous opportunities now exist for advocating for statistics including the new culture of evidence-based policy-making and the results agenda; the international environment that is more receptive and supportive of statistical capacity development efforts; availability of a wide knowledge base with appropriate advocacy tools, materials and best practices; and advances in information technology.

Key words:

Statistical under-development, National Statistical System, National Statistical Office, results agenda, statistical awareness/ numeracy, National Strategy for the Development of Statistics

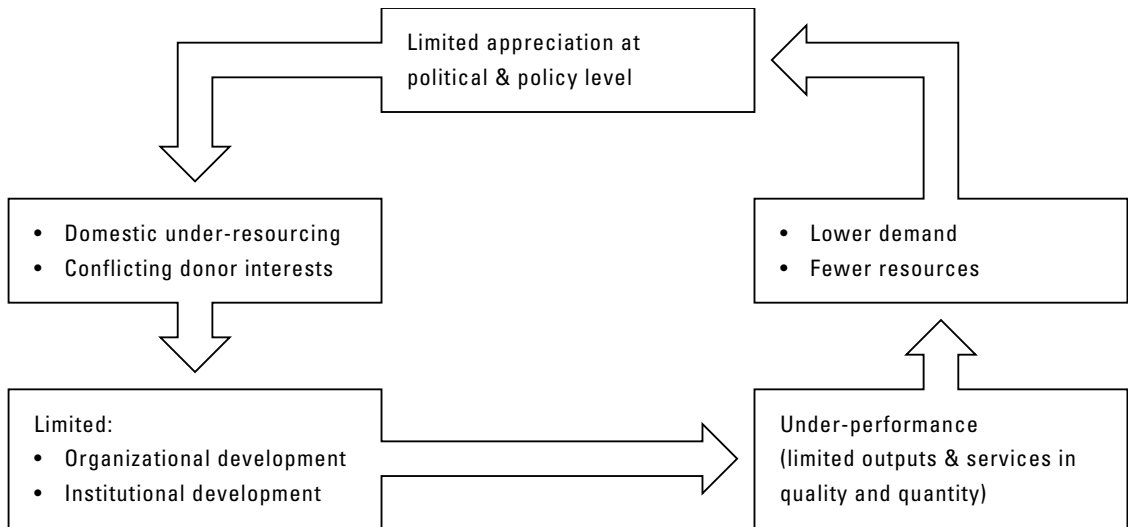
1. Introduction

Poor developing countries, many of them in Africa, are trapped in a vicious cycle of statistical under-development. Little or lack of appreciation at political and policy level of the role and importance of statistics as a strategic resource for planning, decision-making, good governance, accountability and management, has led to low priority being attached to statistical

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Figure: The vicious cycle of statistical under-development depicted



production, domestic under-funding of statistical production, which in turn has led to limited organizational and institutional development leading to limited quantity and quality of statistical data and services which in turn, has led to lower demand for data and further under-funding of statistical production. This is depicted in the following figure.

It is paradoxical that these countries which are in most need for data are the same ones with the weakest National Statistical Systems (NSSs). The NSSs in these countries can be characterized by a combination of the following:

- weak relationships or disconnect between producers and users of statistics,
- donor rather than country-driven systems sometimes with conflicting donor interests,
- inadequate linkage between data systems and national policy work,
- an imbalance between data supply and demand, with demand for good data by far outstripping supply,
- inadequate coordination of statistical capacity building and data collection efforts, both nationally (e.g. between the NSO and Statistical Units in sector ministries) and internationally,
- ad hoc and piecemeal statistical development, intended to meet short-term data needs rather than for long-term statistical capacity building,
- low status of the National Statistical Office (NSO),
- demoralized and despondent statistical staff with high staff turnover in many institutions,
- oversupply of data at some levels and unmet needs for data at others,
- serious gaps in statistical systems and data series (data gaps on indicators of gender, environment, poverty, food security at household level, etc),

- poor quality data (usually inaccurate and conflicting) which are often insufficiently processed and analyzed, insufficiently disaggregated (e.g. by sex, age and geographical divisions) and not easily accessible, and
- insufficiently analyzed data to illuminate policy issues and less than satisfactory data dissemination.

The NSSs in these countries are also characterized by the paradox that on the one hand, there are data gaps and on the other hand, existing data are not being effectively used. This paradox is best illustrated by a senior official in the Government of Mali, West Africa, who was quoted lamenting thus: *“on the one hand, we somehow or other, with limited resources, produce statistical data which are scarcely usable and on the other hand we suffer badly from lack of relevant data to satisfy the basic requirements of most users”* (Cisse, 1990).

Some of the reasons for failure to effectively use existing data include the following, among others:

- (a) a number of NSSs are supply rather than demand driven. As a result, a lot of data which are not demanded are routinely collected and data which are demanded are not always collected.
- (b) A number of NSSs lack the capacity to adequately identify, synthesize and prioritize user needs including the merging ones.
- (c) Some potential users lack information about available data sets.
- (d) Often, data are scattered in different forms in different institutions that produce them thereby making it inconvenient or difficult to access them.
- (e) In some cases, data are not made available to users in a timely manner or in a usable form (e.g. disaggregated to sub-national levels when required at these levels) or users feel that available data are not sufficiently accurate.
- (f) There are cases where would-be data users are not empowered and lack knowledge of how to effectively use data in their operations.

The consequences of the aforementioned include: poor issue identification, policy analysis and design; uninformed and occasionally costly decision-making; inability to properly monitor implementation of policies, projects and programmes as well as inability to evaluate their success. The results agenda includes the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) that countries are designing and implementing, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which countries have signed up to and other national development plans. This agenda is “data intensive” and involves focusing on performance and reporting on the achievement of outputs, outcomes and impact, using information to improve decision-making and steer country-led development processes towards clearly defined development goals. The results agenda has not only created unprecedented demand for “good statistics” and exposed the above vicious cycle but it has also ushered in unprecedented opportunities for statistical development in the countries. This paper argues for sustained statistical advocacy targeted at governments, senior civil servants (policy and decision-makers) and politicians including parliamentarians to speed up the process of breaking the said vicious cycle. These groups of people who initiate development programmes and allocate resources should be convinced to create greater political will to develop statistics (take necessary decisions to reform and restructure the NSS, revise the legal framework, create coordination arrangements and invest in statistics) and to use statistics for evidence-based policy and decision-making. In his citation during the P.C Mahalanobis International Award ceremony in Sydney, Australia in 2005, the Indian Minister for Statistics and Programme Implementation aptly called the latter establishing the “authority of facts” in a world where, at times, attempts are made to establish “the fact of authority” (Fernandes, 2005). The paper outlines what is involved in statistical advocacy and proposes a number of actions to enhance this advocacy in African countries.

2. What is involved in statistical advocacy?

Statistical advocacy is about proactively creating statistical awareness, demand for or use statistics and promoting investment in statistical production. It entails the following, among others:

- creating greater statistical awareness or numeracy in society. This means *“having a feel for numbers, an appreciation of appropriate levels of accuracy, the making of sensible estimates, a common sense approach to the use of data in supporting an argument, the awareness of the variety of interpretations of figures, and a judicious understanding of widely used concepts such as means and percentages. All these are part of everyday living”* (Cockcroft, 1982),
- creating a knowledge-based information society as part of the African Information Society Initiative that *“envisages an information society in Africa where: “every man, woman, student, village and government office and business will be able to access information through computers and telecommunications; information and decision support systems will be used to support decision-making in all major sectors of the nation’s economy; access will be made available throughout the region to international, regional and national “information highway”; a vibrant information sector will exhibit strong leadership in growing information-based economies; African information resources will be globally accessible and will provide content on a range of topics including tourism, trade, education, culture, energy, health, transport, and natural resources management; and information and knowledge will empower all sectors of society”* (Executive Secretary of ECA, 1996),
- making the general case for statistics as a necessary part of the enabling environment for improving development outcomes i.e. that statistics are needed to inform the process of government (e.g. supporting decentralization, accountability and good governance), facilitate better policy and decision-making and hence more effective use of resources for development and poverty reduction,
- demonstrating the use of statistical data for decision-making at sectoral level by presenting examples of how policy-makers can use available data from a range of sources to improve both policy and day-to-day management,
- emphasizing the role of statistics in supporting private sector investment and in promoting the development of effective and efficient markets,
- making a case for specific statistical activities e.g. the Population and Housing Census, drawing attention to the range of uses census data could be put to and highlighting the costs and benefits of the census compared to other information sources,
- mobilizing and properly using national and international resources for statistics, and
- promoting coordinated investment in developing statistical capacity.

The nature and complexity of statistical advocacy demands that it should be carried out in an inter-disciplinary manner and in partnership, involving statisticians, policy-makers and development partners.

3. Some actions to enhance statistical advocacy

The aforementioned underscore the need for and a commitment to a huge, dynamic and sustained statistical advocacy agenda to break the aforementioned vicious cycle and to take full advantage of opportunities which have come on the lap of the results agenda to improve the supply and use of statistics in the countries. As part of this agenda, the following actions are proposed:

3.1 Actions by government

Integrating statistics in national development policy

While it is increasingly recognized that statistics are essential to the achievement of development outcomes, they remain to be mainstreamed in national development policy. In many countries, there is still a visible imbalance in the use of statistics in the development process. The tendency has been to use statistics in monitoring and evaluation – “down stream” stages of the development process and not at “up-stream” stages. It is important to appreciate that *“policy outcomes are crucially affected by the use of statistics and statistical procedures in “upstream” stages of policy making, such as issue recognition, programme design, policy choice and accurate forecasting....”* (PARIS21, 2005).

There is, therefore, a strong case for governments to integrate statistics in the national development policy and to promote evidence-based decision-making using sound and transparent statistics. One way of doing this is to regard statistics as a cross-cutting issue, very much like gender and environment, to be mainstreamed as part of national development policy, including for the design, monitoring and evaluation of PRSPs, other national development plans and assessing progress toward the MDGs.

Raising the profile and status of statistics

Government can also advocate for statistics by raising the profile and status of statistics in government and society. This can be done in different ways depending on the political and administrative set up in each country. In broad terms, however, the profile of statistics will be raised if:

- (a) statistics are used extensively in policy analysis and design as well as in the national planning cycle;
- (b) political leadership appreciates and talks more about statistics;
- (c) the NSO is given special departmental status in government with its Head at the level of the highest civil servant in a Ministry (Permanent Secretary in some countries);
- (b) the NSO leadership is appointed to key government committees e.g. Presidential Economic Council;
- (c) the NSO is made a semi-autonomous government agency with its own governing Board, very much like the Central Bank, and with a budget approved separately by the National Parliament, as has been done in countries like Uganda;
- (d) statistics is believed to be so important as to be included in the school curriculum.

Providing more effective leadership

It is well recognized that the success or failure of organizations largely depends on the quality of their leaders. Leadership has, therefore, become one of the most significant items on the agenda of organizations in modern age. Effective leadership is required to meet organizational challenges and deliver results. These challenges include globalization, fast-paced technological change, rising expectations of citizens and customers, increasing diversity in societies, need for performance-focused organizations and the need for managing networked organizations.

Effective leadership of the NSS can enhance statistical advocacy. This leadership should be provided at two levels. At the

level of the NSS, leadership should be provided by a well resourced, cultured and structured NSO, able to manage effective relationships with other systemic players and have both the technical expertise and organisational systems and capability to perform these roles. Governments should reform the NSSs, ensuring that the Statistics Acts strengthen the NSO's coordinating and leadership role.

The NSOs also require effective leadership to, among other things:

- develop, support and promote a user-focused and performance culture;
- promote a new vision and strategies for and champion changes necessary to make the NSS more responsive to user needs;
- embody the status and the professionalism of the NSO;
- set performance goals, standards and paradigms;
- passionately articulate the indispensability of statistics to society;
- identify opportunities engendered by the results agenda and capitalize on them;
- generally work towards raising the profile of statistics in the country.

It behooves national governments to provide effective leadership of the NSOs. This could be done by instituting more meritocratic and competitive selection processes for Heads of and other leaders in NSOs in contradistinction with automatic promotions and succession currently practiced in many countries.

3.2 Actions by data producers

Developing effective leadership

The point was made earlier that governments need to provide NSOs with effective leadership. It is important to point out that leadership can be cultivated, developed and nurtured through continuing processes of self-study, education, training, experience and emulation of good leaders. Therefore, capacity building programmes should include training in leadership and management for all personnel in leadership and management positions.

Mainstreaming users in national statistical processes

In many countries, users are not yet mainstreamed in national statistical processes. In these countries, it is common for data users to play fringe and "down-stream" roles – invited to one-off workshops sometimes to discuss already drafted questionnaires or to discuss reports from some data collection activities (censuses or surveys), to receive and use data, etc. It should be mentioned that it is not best practice to use user-producer workshops to determine user needs as is being done in many countries. Identification of user needs is best done through a process of ongoing dialogue between data users and producers.

There is a need to reposition data users i.e. bring them from the margins of the data production processes to the centre so that they can take ownership of data processes and play more proactive and "up-stream" roles in the development of national statistics. This will enhance the relevance of national statistics and make it easier for data systems to more adequately

assess user needs, generate more demand for data, attract more funding for data production and respond more adequately to user needs. In particular, policy and decision-makers should be kept in the loop and engaged to make data policy-relevant and their production sufficiently funded. Thus we should have a situation where statisticians are talking more about development policy and policy-makers talking more about statistics.

In some countries, data user-producer committees have been formed as recommended by the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for the Development of Statistics in Africa in the 1990s to provide a forum for dialogue between the two groups of stakeholders. Such dialogue is necessary to *"advance a common understanding of policy issues and related data requirements, set data priorities, clarify the objectives for data collection and agree on the best methods for data collection"* (UN, 1992). It will also assist in the development of new products and promote use of statistical information by government and non-government. It has been observed, however, that while user-producer committees formed in relation to specific issues e.g. Early Warning Systems, Population and Housing Censuses and Trade Statistics appear to have functioned well, attempts to establish more general statistical committees have been largely unsuccessful. This has been attributed to failure by some data users to see the relevance of some topics handled by the Committees to their work, the practice of some users sending to meetings low-ranking officials who may not always be aware of the data needs of their institutions, failure by the NSOs to prepare interesting agendas, etc. It is, therefore, important that due care is exercised in forming the committees and working out their business. In addition to the user-producer committees, regular national stakeholders' workshops should be held.

Use of newsmakers and cultivation of champions

Use of news makers can be an effective mechanism for advocating for statistics. News makers include top government officials e.g. government Ministers and Permanent Secretaries. When these officials are invited to launch a statistics report or open a stakeholders' workshop, the event is extensively reported in the media. For instance, when the President of Uganda launched the 2002 Main Population and Housing Census Report at a colourful ceremony, not only was the event headline news on national radio and television that evening and for the next few days, but also the census results were reported in newspapers every day for two weeks running. On the other hand when a head of an NSO performs such a function, it becomes a "non-event" to the extent that it receives little publicity, if at all. Unfortunately, news makers are not being used as much as they could. It is, therefore, very important that as much as possible, newsmakers is used and that the right messages are embedded in their speeches.

Experience in a number of countries has also shown that better results are achieved if statistics are championed by a high-level policy or decision-maker. It is, therefore, important to cultivate such champions for the statistical processes at high levels of government in the countries so that the case for statistics is made not only by statisticians but also by policy and decision-makers. There is also a need to cultivate champions of statistical processes among donors who will also act as focal points anchoring inter-donor coordination (PARIS21, 2004).

Establishing effective news media relations

Increasingly, NSOs are recognizing the important role the news media can play in the development of national statistics. This role has been well articulated by John Wright, former Head of Media Relations for the UK Central Statistical Office and senior media advisor to Eurostat, as follows: *"Official statistics record matters of great significance to the nation and to in-*

dividuals. They are one way ordinary citizens can judge the state of their nation and how well (or badly) the government is running things, because statistics are objective. Politicians are wary of statistics, which is a good thing. This is why they often seek to suppress or manipulate them. Politicians' unease about official statistics underlines their importance for the public good, but the public often finds them boring or difficult to understand. The media tend to reflect their attitude. Newspapers don't sell by boring people. This can make it easier for politicians to avoid publicity for difficult statistics".

The above stated role underscores the need for NSOs to establish effective relations with news media. News media can be a great partner in statistical advocacy as well as wider dissemination of statistical products. Relations with the media can be enhanced in a variety of ways including NSOs holding periodic workshops for media practitioners as has been done periodically in Nigeria and Uganda to great effect, NSOs employing former journalists to conduct their media relations, making the NSOs and their staff accessible and approachable to journalists and NSOs issuing appropriate news releases and holding periodic press conferences. The media can teach NSOs how to prepare appropriate news releases. Also crucial to news media relations is the advance publication of release dates and timing of releases and who answers questions – there should be prompt response and ease of contact with NSOs (PARIS21 web site).

Improved data analysis, presentation and reporting

Perhaps the best way to advocate for statistics is to produce the statistics users need when they need them, how they need them and can be understood and used by them. It has been observed that non-effective use of statistics in a number of poor developing countries has partly been attributed to poor data analysis, presentation and reporting. Generally, data are collected, analyzed and reported in a routine manner, with broad analysis and no differentiation among users. Typically, NSOs and other data producers do basic data analysis which involves (a) checking the quality of the data, (b) modifying the data (e.g. transforming one or more of the variables) or adding sample weights to the data, and (c) obtaining simple descriptive summaries using summary statistics (e.g. totals), plotting graphs and constructing tables. The results of such analysis are usually presented in statistical reports. Quite often, these reports are too big on account of too many tables being attached to them as annexes, tell the reader "what is" and usually not "why". Also, results are often insufficiently disaggregated by important domains such as geographical breakdown. This, of course, makes effective targeting interventions and resources difficult. One other problem with analyses undertaken by data producers is that often, results are not compared with national development targets such as those in the PRSPs or sectoral development plans and programmes. This "water is wet" kind of analysis often leaves readers asking "so what" after reading the reports. It is important to stress the need for statistics to go beyond figures and tell a story; data should be turned into information, insight, knowledge and actions.

Basic data analysis and survey reports are good but not enough. More detailed data analysis and especially policy-related analysis is required to establish relationships among various variables and to illuminate policy issues. Whether this type of analysis should be done by the NSO or some other institution has been a subject of great debate. Perhaps this debate has been misplaced. What is important, we would like to argue, is that detailed and policy-relevant data analysis should be undertaken by those people with intense subject-matter knowledge e.g. on gender, poverty, environment, agronomy, crop husbandry, trade, etc. as well as good knowledge of policy issues and direction. If the NSO does not have staff with such knowledge as is often the case, it should seek the collaboration of researchers, policy analysts and institutions endowed with capacity for this kind of analysis such as Economic Policy Research Centres (in many countries such centres are supported by the African Capacity Building Foundation – ACBF), Poverty and Gender Analysis Units in government ministries and at Universities. This kind of collaboration has a number of advantages including:

- value addition to data by bringing subject-matter knowledge to bear on the analysis thereby increasing chances of making right interpretation of the data,
- raising demand for data and spreading ownership of the process and the resulting analytical products among different stakeholders,
- Improvements in data quality. The process of scrutinizing data during detailed analysis can provide very useful insights into data quality. Usually such scrutiny identifies weaknesses in the data (*as the saying goes, the devil lies in the detail*) and when these weaknesses are fed back to data producers and acted upon, there can be improvements in future data collections. For instance, the analysts may advise changes in questionnaire design and/or data collection methods.

Data analysis can also be improved by producing more innovative products e.g. poverty maps which show, among other things, (a) the distribution of poverty across sub-regional administrative units e.g. districts and help to capture heterogeneity within them, (b) identify geographical factors affecting poverty, (c) improve targeting of resources and interventions; for instance, the Kenya government is now using poverty maps to allocate poverty funds to constituencies, and (d) improve communication about poverty conditions. It is believed that poverty profiles are incomplete without poverty maps.

In addition to improving data analysis, there is a need to improve data presentation and reporting in a way that helps decision-making. In particular, there is a need to use pictorial presentations and production of specialized and thematic reports e.g. on poverty, gender, environment, etc. targeted at policy makers, pressure groups, leaders of public opinions, etc. Given the problem of producing reports in untimely manner, there is a need for the statistical community to begin to appreciate that statistical products do also expire.

Africa Statistics Day celebrations

In 1992, the 16th Meeting of African Ministers responsible for Economic Planning and Development adopted the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s. The Plan whose purpose was to reverse the decline in statistical production witnessed in the 1970s and 1980s, set aside the 18th November each year to be celebrated as Africa Statistics Day in order to *"increase public awareness about the important role which statistics play in all aspects of social and economic life"* (UNECA, 1991). By and large, celebration of this day in many countries has been intermittent and wholly unsatisfactory. There is, therefore, a need to take the Africa Statistics Day more seriously and to scale up celebrations of this day in the countries.

Experience in some African countries which have consistently celebrated the day shows that a lot can be achieved by a well structured and comprehensive celebration programme. In Uganda, a decision was taken in 2000 to celebrate for a week ending on 18th November rather than for a day. The celebration programme each year usually includes feature articles in daily newspapers, radio discussions and television talk shows, a media workshop, stakeholder workshops covering various subjects, procession through the streets of Kampala, demonstration of GIS database and products, screening the OECD-PARIS21 Film: Measuring Change in World Poverty on national television and hosting a top government official (President, Vice President or prime Minister) as Guest of Honour on 18th November. The programme for the 2003 Uganda Africa Statistics Week Celebrations is presented in the Annex for illustration purposes.

National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS)

It is now well recognized that strategic approaches including appropriately designed National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) can break the vicious cycle of weak production of statistics matched with little use of statistics by national policy and decision-makers. The International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results held in Marrakech, Morocco, in February 2004, agreed on a target for all low income countries to have a NSDS by 2006 and to have started implementing it by the following year, with a view towards having better data to monitor progress towards national and international development goals by 2010. PARIS21 (Partnerships in statistics for development in the 21st Century), African Development Bank (AfDB) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) are working together with sub-regional organizations, training centres and countries themselves to achieve this goal.

The design of the NSDS uses a participatory, inclusive and consensus-building approach to produce country-specific strategies that are both country and stakeholder-owned. The process which is highly consultative and empowering, broadens and deepens both intra-institutional and inter-institutional communication, and is a golden opportunity for across-the-board statistical advocacy. PARIS21 has produced NSDS documentation and materials that will advance the statistical advocacy agenda. These include (PARIS21, 2004):

- NSDS essentials which summarize the more detailed materials, drawing out the main messages to inform the NSDS design process and serve as an agreed set of criteria against which the quality of NSDS and their processes can be judged;
- Making the case for an NSDS (advocacy document) which sets out to encourage broader recognition by national and international policy makers and funders of the role of statistics in development and poverty reduction and of the necessity of strategic planning;
- Guide to designing an NSDS (for managers of statistical offices) which covers a broad range of issues to explain the rationale behind the NSDS and sets out the principles of strategic planning, assessment, consultations, costing, funding and implementation;
- NSDS knowledge base as a virtual library with general background documents especially those held by PARIS21 partners, notes to support the design process with case study materials, strategy implementation and national strategy documents.

3.3 Actions by training institutions

Training institutions have a special role in taking forward the statistical advocacy agenda. The 2000 evaluation of the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action showed that training institutions, mainly Regional Statistical Training Centres and Departments of Statistics at national Universities, have contributed immensely to human resources development by producing statistical personnel to manage the NSSs. However, the demand for statisticians in African countries still outstrips the supply (UNECA, 2000).

The evaluation also showed that current programmes especially in Departments of Statistics at national Universities have tended to be theoretical. Little official statistics (if any) is taught in these Departments, and yet the greater demand is for graduates with training in official statistics. The main regional statistical training centres in Africa include: Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Statistiques et d'Economie Appliquée (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire), ISSEA (Yaounde, Cameroon), Department of

Statistics at the University of Ibadan (Nigeria), Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics at Makerere University (Uganda), Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (Tanzania) and the Institut de Formation Démographique (Yaounde, Cameroon). While these centres largely teach official statistics, this is done from the supply side. However, without familiarity with demand for statistics, the supply solutions may not be adequate or appropriate. It is, therefore, important that supply solutions should be informed by the use to which the data supplied will be put.

It is, therefore, high time the curricular of these centres were revised to cover the demand aspects including national and international development agenda such as Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Millennium Development Goals as well as the implications for monitoring progress towards achievement of the goals and targets set in these agenda. Training centres should begin to turn out more and more statisticians who appreciate better and talk more about development issues. The revision should also take care of the need for more training in data analysis, interpretation and reporting; communication and other soft skills such as report writing; etc. Statistical advocacy should be part of the new curricular in these centres and the already available advocacy materials should be customized for use in the African region.

3.4 Actions by the international community

In recent years, the international community has increasingly focused on managing for development results and on evidence-based policy-making as a way of improving human development. The results agenda is data intensive and availability and use of better statistics have been identified by the international community as a priority of the results agenda. The international community is already playing a critical role in the development of statistics in Africa including statistical advocacy. This role can best be illustrated by the efforts of PARIS21 in catalyzing statistical development in developing countries. PARIS21 is a consortium comprising policy makers, analysts and statisticians from donor and developing countries, international organizations, professional bodies and academic institutions. These members have practical experience and wish to collaborate to improve policy making through good statistics. Established in November 1999 in response to the UN Economic and Social Council resolution on the goals of the UN Conference on Development, PARIS21 was set up to act as a catalyst for promoting a culture of evidence-based policy-making and monitoring in all countries and especially in developing countries.

PARIS21 has been able to lead and catalyze the global statistical advocacy agenda. Realizing constraints imposed by lack of statistical advocacy materials, PARIS21 has specially developed resource materials, targeting different audiences including planners and decision-makers, other users such as civil society organizations, the private sector, politicians, the media, donor agencies and international organizations. The resource materials have been developed as "global public goods" which countries can appropriate and adapt/tailor to their needs to: (a) show how greater availability and use of good statistics can improve development outcomes, (b) make a case for increased investment in statistics and statistical capacity building, and (c) make a case for greater use of statistics in policy-making. These materials include:

- A pamphlet: Why governments need good statistics:
- A poster on: Why statistics are crucial:
- Advocacy film: making the case for the importance of the use of statistics in policy-making
- Video clips: with senior politicians, policy-makers and statisticians speaking about the importance of using statistical information in policy-making processes. Many clips also appear in the advocacy film.
- Measuring up to the measurement problem: The role of statistics in evidence-based policy-making which shows that better use of better statistics leads to better policy and better development outcomes.

- Website: with a wealth of information on statistical development and use of statistics with links to reference materials and good practices from national statistical agencies, international organizations and research organizations. The web site is also a forum for exchange of views by statisticians and others, to share information and to identify additional requests for help and information.

These resource materials can be used in many ways including production of briefs, articles and pamphlets, posters, radio and television information – all adapted to national needs. They can also be used to improve the style of press releases and other methods of dissemination, in training staff to provide them with effective arguments to explain the nature of a good statistical system and why it is necessary, in preparation of annual dissemination plan to check all the different fields of action and the improvements required, and to benchmark a particular statistical organization against good practices elsewhere (PARIS21 web site).

Donors should live up to the Paris Declaration on donor coordination by making sure that they use countries' own institutions and systems to monitor development outcomes. They will, however, need to be convinced that countries have the capacity to monitor and to interpret reliably the results. Where the institutions and systems are weak, the declaration calls for their strengthening rather than undermining them by setting up new systems or using data that are not generated by countries.

4. Opportunities for statistical advocacy

There are now more opportunities for statistical advocacy than ever before. It is important that these opportunities are taken full advantage of by NSOs. These opportunities include, among others:

- The new culture of evidence-based policy-making and the results agenda at different levels – national, regional and international level. Evidence-based policy-making and the results agenda have created unprecedented demand for data and provided an important opportunity not only to raise the political profile and status of statistics but also to identify the data needed and to highlight areas where investment and improvement are needed. It has also opened opportunities for mobilizing additional resources for capacity building.
- The international environment that is more receptive and supportive of statistical capacity development efforts. Indeed in the last few years, there has been an increase in international cooperation and partnerships for statistical development to respond to the unprecedented demand for statistics and development indicators in developing countries. The need for such international cooperation was emphasized in 2002 by Ms. Clare Short, the then Secretary for International Development in the United Kingdom. In her speech at the London launch of that year's Human Development Report (HDR), she said: *"One of the striking things about the HDR's MDG assessment is the lack of data for many countries. Statistical capacity in many developing countries is weak as a result of lack of demand for this type of information and adequate resources, both local and donor. What we need is coherent global action to address this. Multilateral agencies and other donors need to work in a coordinated way with developing countries to build the information systems needed to support their own poverty reduction strategies"*.
- The existence of a wide knowledge base with appropriate tools, materials and best practices which countries can easily access and use to empower and equip statisticians to better communicate with their clients and the public. Much of this knowledge base can be found on the PARIS21 web site, www.PARIS21.org.

- Advances in information technology (IT) (hardware, application systems, communications networks and skilled staff) which have provided great opportunities for improving the way data are collected, processed, stored and disseminated to users. In particular:
 - (a) these advances have made IT hardware more powerful, relatively inexpensive and accessible;
 - (b) computer applications have become more user-friendly;
 - (c) the advances have led to the possibility to network to improve internal access to data and metadata;
 - (d) data processing has been speeded up to improve on timeliness;
 - (e) large datasets can be stored, databases can be created;
 - (f) platforms and networks can be created for sharing equipment and information;
 - (g) more imaginative and attractive statistical products can now be produced; and
 - (h) Internet and web-based technologies have made it possible to disseminate and access information from the outside world in real time.

It is important that the NSS harnesses these advances in IT to improve the statistical processes and delivery of data and information to the users.

5. Conclusions

In some African countries, failure to appreciate the role and importance of statistics has led to a vicious circle of statistical under-development that has led to poor policy design, uninformed decisions, inability to monitor implementation of policies, projects and programmes as well as inability to evaluate the same. Statisticians and statistical organizations have in the past not done much to advocate for statistics in part because they have not been empowered and equipped to do so and also because there have been no specially designed advocacy materials.

There is a need for a huge, dynamic and sustained statistical advocacy agenda to break the vicious cycle of statistical under-development. This agenda should include disparate actions to be undertaken in concert by government, data producers, training institutions, and the international community. The advocacy agenda should take full advantage of opportunities ushered in by the new culture of evidence-based policy-making and the results agenda, the international environment that is more receptive and supportive of statistical capacity development efforts, and a wide knowledge-base with appropriate tools, materials and best practices

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