

# Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa

## 1. Why a New Framework?

Poverty reduction and development require a great deal of information. How many people are literate? How many children are vaccinated? Is the level of employment improving? Obtaining such information in a timely and regular manner, however, has been a challenge in many development countries, especially in Africa.

Many national statistical systems, the source of the statistics needed to monitor development in Africa, are trapped in a vicious cycle of limited resources and poor performance. They lack the capacity to collect, compile and disseminate even the minimum data needed let alone respond to new challenges and to meet new demands for data.

At the beginning of the third millennium, African and other developing countries as well as their development partners, have committed themselves to managing for development results or a results agenda. This involves “focusing on performance and the achievement of outputs, outcomes and impact”. The results agenda includes Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) and other national development plans, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). **The central recommendation—adopted by all 191 member states of the United Nations at the 2005 Millennium Declaration review summit—is that countries should prepare and implement ambitious goal-based strategies anchored in the 2015 targets and time horizon.**

The Regional Reference Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa (RRSF) has been prepared to contribute to improved development outcomes and good governance in Africa by guiding and accelerating sustainable statistical capacity building activities. It is the response by African countries, with the support of the international community, to meet the data challenges of the results agenda by 2015.

## Results Agenda

Following the UN Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico in 2002, there is broad consensus that to be successful, development has to be country-driven, country-owned, and country-specific. There is also agreement that good results require good policies and institutions. Where these conditions are in place, development assistance can be highly effective.

Following Monterrey, at the Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results in Morocco in 2004, the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS) was developed. MAPS sets out a general agenda, with a limited number of actions designed to improve data availability and use in support of poverty reduction within an agreed budget and a specified time frame. MAPS sets out what is needed world-wide to meet the data challenges of the results agenda and the MDGs. The Regional Reference Strategic Framework provides the mechanism to implement MAPS in Africa

## 2. What is Proposed?

The RRSF is a broad framework rather than a specific set of activities and policy prescriptions, recognizing that most actions will need to take place at the national level and that countries face different problems and have different priorities. The RRSF, whose overall objective is to strengthen national statistical systems, is built around three themes: **meeting users needs; improving management of statistical systems;** and **ensuring the sustainability and irreversibility of statistical development.**

Key actions in support for the first theme include:

- Undertaking development in key data areas, with particular emphasis on monitoring poverty reduction strategies and the MDGs, with a focus on making better use of existing data sources
- Investing in the underlying statistical infrastructure needed to support efficient and effective statistical systems
- Making effective use of new technologies to support data collection, compilation and dissemination
- Strengthening the analysis of data by both producers and users to ensure that the results are relevant to the development process
- Improving data dissemination and ensuring compliance with frameworks such as the General Data Dissemination System

In support of the second theme, the RRSF emphasizes:

- Updating the legal and regulatory framework for statistics and ensuring that it is in line with the UN fundamental principles and good practice for official statistics
- Strengthening coordination and communication between all players, including data providers and users
- Placing emphasis on the development and more effective use of human resources in statistics

**In support of the third theme, the RRSF focuses on:**

- Mainstreaming statistics as a key support activity for the development process and as a cornerstone of the process of improving governance and accountability
- Improving the funding and sustainability of statistics, in particular in support of the implementation of NSDS

The RRSF encourages all countries to prepare and implement a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) in support of all the three themes.

**3. How Will it be Implemented?**

Primary responsibility for implementing the Framework lies with national statistical systems, with the key drivers being national statistical agencies. These agencies need to create awareness about and enlist support for the framework generally. National governments must ensure that the importance of statistics is recognized and that adequate resources are made available. Data users need to be aware of the importance of statistics to development outcomes; and make sure that their needs are heard and that available data are used effectively in improving policy and service delivery.

Sub-regional and regional organizations have as well to play important roles, especially in the area of promoting statistical development, monitoring implementation and providing forums for sharing knowledge, experience and expertise. If the Framework is to be effective, it will also be essential for international development agencies and donors to be fully involved in its implementation. There will be a need for a sustained program to ensure that the external support that is needed is made available, delivered on time and complements national funding in supporting a coherent programme of development of national statistical systems, in ways that minimize the load on already stressed statistical systems.

### **Building on What has Already Been Achieved**

Previous to the RSSF, Africa's statistical community and its partners have implemented a number of initiatives to boost statistical capacity on the continent, including the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s (AAPA). Evaluated at the end of the 1990s, the implementation of the AAPA was hindered by lack of ownership, poor leadership within national statistical systems, a lack of financial resources, and the inadequacy of institutional and human capacities. Subsequently, various intergovernmental forums - the Committee on Development Information (CODI), September 2001, and the Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV), in May 2004, identified the need for a new approach in line with the Marrakech Action Plan on Statistics, with coordination by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB).

To try to avoid the problems faced by previous initiatives, the RSSF is based on a detailed assessment of the current state of statistics in Africa and of key strengths and weaknesses. It also includes an assessment of all the main stakeholders, what they currently do and what is needed to improve the availability and use of better data in support of development and poverty reduction. It puts emphasis on improving accountability and transparency and recognition of the importance of better statistics within Africa generally.

### **4. What Will it Cost?**

There is a need for increased investment if the RSSF objectives are to be achieved. For all African countries, the incremental cost needed to implement the framework is estimated at \$75 million per year or for low income countries about \$60 million per year. This requires increasing national government's commitment for adequate and sustainable budgetary resources as well as support from development partners. However, many of the recommended actions do not need additional funding.

### **5. How Will it be Monitored and Reported?**

AfDB and UNECA, jointly, will coordinate the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the RSSF. Both organizations will agree on the appropriate coordination mechanisms. This should take into consideration the already existing mechanisms for monitoring progress and for reporting back to stakeholders, including the PARIS21 statistical capacity building indicators as well as the light reporting exercise for donor programs and projects. Regular reviews will be conducted, including bi-annual, mid-decade (in 2010) and main review (in 2015) reports, which will be presented to CODI, FASDEV, the UNECA Conference of Ministers for Finance and Planning, and the AfDB Board of Governors.