

The Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre

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Summary

The Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre is one of the few training institutions in Anglophone Africa providing practical statistical training at sub-professional level. From a humble beginning of serving the three East African Common Services member states, it now serves seventeen English speaking countries of Eastern and Southern Africa. Being an Executive Agency of Tanzania Government, it has the autonomy to quickly respond to changes in the training needs of the user countries. Its programmes are widely recognised and interested graduates can join reputable Universities for further education and career development.

Key words

Anglophone, Eastern and Southern Africa, Sub-professional, Practical, Responsive.

Résumé

Le Centre de formation en statistique de l'Afrique de l'Est est l'une des rares institutions de formation en Afrique anglophone qui offre une formation pratique en statistique au niveau technicien. Ayant commencé de façon modeste en couvrant les trois États membres des Services Communs de l'Afrique de l'Est, le Centre sert maintenant les dix-sept pays anglophones de l'Afrique de l'Est et australe. Tout en étant une institution de l'administration publique Tanzanienne, le centre dispose de l'autonomie nécessaire pour répondre rapidement aux changements des besoins en formation des pays utilisateurs. Ces programmes sont largement reconnus et les diplômés qui le désirent peuvent facilement accéder aux universités de renom pour une formation plus approfondie et le développement de leur carrière.

1. Background

In 1965 the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (EASTC) was set up in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, as a modest statistical training centre to serve Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. It was a joint project of the Eastern African Common Services, predecessor of the East African Community, and the United Nations Development Programme. In 1972 it became the sole responsibility of the East African Community. Upon the collapse of the East African Com-

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munity in 1977, the Statistical Training Programme for Africa allocated ten more countries to be served by the EASTC. They were Botswana, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, and Zambia. Over time, Eritrea, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe were added to the list, bringing the total of user countries to seventeen.

2. Governance

After some years of consultation between user countries, the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (EASTC) was established as a Tanzanian institution with a regional character in 1994 by an Act of Tanzania Parliament. Tanzania and user countries signed a protocol (memorandum of understanding), which allowed user countries access to the Centre. Under the ongoing public service reform programme, the EASTC was transformed into an executive agency with effect from May 2002. The Centre is governed by a Ministerial Advisory Board comprising public servants in Tanzania and chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the ministry responsible for statistics while a Regional Advisory Board, consisting of heads of statistical services in user countries and co-opted organisations, is mandated to provide technical and regional advice.

3. Vision

The vision of EASTC is to be a regional statistical resource centre of excellence providing statistical training, continuing professional development, research and consultancy in statistics.

4. Mission of the EASTC

The mission of the EASTC is to promote the production and use of high quality data for evidence-based decision making by training producers and users of statistics and providing statistical consultancy and research services to the region.

5. EASTC training program

The EASTC offers two regular courses in statistics at sub-professional levels: the certificate course takes ten months and the diploma course takes an additional ten months after the certificate course. Academic sessions run from October to July. Among the subjects taught are Statistical Theory and Methods. Mathematics is taught as a tool for studying Statistics. Statistical Computing is taught as a working tool for statisticians. Economics is taught as an area of application for Statistics

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The approach to training emphasises practical applications, using both individual and group work. It builds on trainees' own work experiences which they are encouraged to share. The centre handles its trainees as adults. The methods of delivery aim at assisting adult learners to achieve course objectives. Trainers are facilitators of the process.

While the bulk of trainees are nominees of National Statistical Offices, candidates from other institutions, public and private, are also accepted. The Centre provides statistical training to non-statistical professionals whose day-to-day activities require some knowledge of statistics. It also provides continuing education to practising statistical professionals to apprise them of ongoing developments. The courses allow for career development in diverse fields where a strong foundation of statistics is essential.

To date the regular courses has enrolled 1,238 certificate level trainees and 2,161 diploma level trainees from 19 countries. It has served all the user countries except Eritrea, Somalia and Mauritius. In addition to the user countries, trainees were also enrolled from Burundi, the Gambia, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Though enrolment levels fluctuate from year to year, there has been an upward trend since 2001/02 (Table below) The proportion of women has risen to above 30% and that of privately sponsored trainees has almost reached the 30% mark.

Table: Regular Course Enrollment 2001/02- 2004/05

Course	Year														
	2001/02			2002/03			2003/04			2004/05			2005/06		
	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T
Certificate	8	20	28	12	20	32	12	27	39	13	28	41	6	22	28
Diploma	2	7	9	6	21	27	6	18	24	10	21	31	9	20	29
Total	10	27	37	18	41	59	18	45	63	23	49	72	15	42	57

F = Female

M = Male

T = Total

6. Links with other Institutions

The Centre has a link with The Royal Statistical Society of the United Kingdom. The Certificate level graduates may get exemption from Higher Certificate in Statistics (formerly Stage I) of the Institute of Statisticians (U.K), currently the Royal Statistical Society (U.K). The Diploma level graduates may get exemption from the two Statistical Theory and Methods papers of the Graduate Diploma in Statistics (formerly Stage II and III).

EASTC also has collaborative working arrangements with institutions sharing common interests such as the Statistics Department of the University of Dar es Salaam, Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics, Makerere University, Uganda, InWent, Munich Centre for Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics, University of Kent, etc. Diploma holders from EASTC can be admitted at the University of Dar es Salaam to pursue B.A degree programs. They may also join the Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics, Makerere University, Kampala to pursue either B.Stat., or BSc (Statistics. and Economics) degree programs.

A number of United Kingdom universities also admit EASTC Diploma graduates into their Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma courses in Statistics. These together with those who qualify in the Graduate Diploma courses may then proceed to undertake postgraduate degree studies.

7. Trainers

The Centre has a small core group of competent resident trainers, with two holding Ph.Ds, four with masters degrees and two with first degrees. They work closely with the National Bureaux of Statistics in user countries to keep abreast with what is happening in the field. Individuals from collaborating institutions (national, regional and international) who have rare experiences are invited to the Centre to share their experiences when needed. The management ensures that trainers are highly competent in theoretical statistics as well as practical aspects and that the methods taught are in accordance with latest relevant standards.

8. Short and tailor-made courses

Besides regular courses, the Centre also offers commissioned local and regional courses. Commissioned regional courses conducted in the recent past include International Comparison of Prices (ICP-Africa) statistical tool pack at the request of SADC secretariat and AfDB, Adaptation of the System of National Accounts 1993 version (SNA93) for the Anglophone African region, Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) surveys for Anglophone Africa, Archiving of statistical surveys using compact diskettes at the request of the World Bank and Food and Agricultural Organisation. Commissioned local courses conducted in the recent past include Operation of the Local Government database at the request of the Local

Government Reform Programme, Basic statistics for users and producers of statistics at the request of a number of clients, Statistics of the Environment attended by a variety of clients, Statistical data analysis, report writing and dissemination at the request of the National Bureau of Statistics, Statistical computing attended by a variety of clients and Local Government Monitoring and Evaluation Database at the request of the Local Government Reform Program.

9. Challenges

During the preparation of the 2005/6-2007/08 strategic plan, the EASTC has identified four major challenges which it plans to address. These are:

- Old fashioned training programmes and old fashioned learning and living environment
- Non-recognition of EASTC potential by key stakeholders
- Weak link with similar institutions
- Scarcity of scholarships for participants.

A financial proposal has been prepared that is going to be used in soliciting funds from user countries and development partners to finance the upgrading of the infrastructure and a fellowship fund for sponsoring participants to the EASTC programmes. An institutional promotion and marketing drive is going to be launched to promote the visibility of EASTC and its links with similar institutions.