

Statistics for Managing for Results: Challenges, New Initiatives and Prospects for Improving Statistical Systems in Africa

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Abstract:

African countries have signed up to managing for results, a global development effort to reduce poverty, support sustainable and equitable economic growth and better define, measure and report on development outcomes/results. The paper outlines this development effort and the critical role of statistics to the development processes and especially in managing for development results. It highlights statistical requirements for Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); shows that in general, countries are not meeting these requirements; underlines major initiatives and actions taken in Africa at regional, sub regional as well as at country levels to improve statistical systems; and finally shows that prospects for improving production and use of statistics in the African region are much better now than they have ever been.

Key words: *Managing for results, national statistical system, Poverty Reduction Strategy, Millennium Development Goals, indicators, targets, “vicious circle” countries, “virtuous circle” countries, Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, National Strategy for the Development of Statistics, International Comparison Programme, Statistical Commission for Africa and African Statistical Coordination Committee.*

Résumé:

Les pays africains se sont engagés à mettre en place une gestion axée sur les résultats. Il s'agit d'un effort de développement mondial visant à réduire la pauvreté, à faciliter une croissance économique durable et équitable et à mieux définir, mesurer et rendre compte des résultats du développement. Le présent article décrit cet effort de développement et le rôle important que jouent les statistiques dans les processus de développement et particulièrement dans la gestion axée sur les résultats du développement. Il met en relief les exigences statistiques des

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stratégies de réduction de la pauvreté (SRP) et des objectifs du millénaire pour le développement (OMD). Il montre que, en général, les pays ne satisfont pas à ces exigences et il souligne les initiatives principales et les mesures prises en Afrique aux niveaux régional, sous-régional et des pays, pour améliorer les systèmes statistiques. Enfin, il démontre finalement que les perspectives d'amélioration de la production et de l'utilisation des statistiques dans la région africaine sont bien meilleures maintenant qu'elles ne l'ont jamais été auparavant.

Mots clés: *Gestion axée sur les résultats, système statistique national, stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté, objectifs du millénaire pour le développement, indicateurs, cibles, pays engagés dans un "cycle vicieux", pays engagés dans un "cycle vertueux", plan d'action de Marrakech pour la statistique, stratégie nationale de développement de la statistique, programme de comparaison internationale, Commission statistique pour l'Afrique et le Comité de coordination statistique africain.*

1. New development focus: commitment to managing for results

Largely out of failure of development processes to achieve desired results across the developing world, there has been a new development focus and commitment to managing for results. Managing for results has evolved as a global effort by both developing countries and development agencies to reduce poverty, support sustainable and equitable economic growth and better define and measure development outcomes/results. Development results mean sustained improvement in the lives of people in developing countries: more children educated, fewer infants dying, more families lifted out of poverty etc.

This paper outlines the new development paradigm of managing for results and the critical role of statistics to the development processes and especially in managing for development results. It highlights statistical requirements for Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); shows that in general, countries are not meeting these requirements; underlines major initiatives and actions taken at regional, sub regional as well as at country levels to improve statistical systems; and finally the paper shows that prospects for improving production and use of statistics in the African region are much better now than they have ever been.

Developing countries are focusing on development results so that they can make better policy decisions and design better strategies for achieving

development goals; development agencies are focusing on development results to ensure that their support contributes to improving the lives of people in developing countries, hence the global partnership and effort at managing for results. Managing for results has also become a means for promoting good governance. It helps to improve effectiveness and efficiency of development policies and programmes and fulfills accountability obligations through performance reporting. It enhances organizational learning and integrates lessons learnt into management decisions. Managing for results also focuses on measurement, monitoring and reporting on progress i.e. achievement of outputs and outcomes/impact and in particular, tracking and reporting on progress towards national and international development goals.

What are national development goals? The main national development goals are elaborated in national PRSs which have been prepared by governments through a participatory process involving key stakeholder constituencies such as public sector, private sector, civil society sector and development partners (sub-regional, regional and international organizations as well as donor agencies). A PRS describes a country's macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs to promote growth and reduce poverty, as well as associated external financing needs. At the 2000 Millennium Summit, 189 Member States of the United Nations pledged to achieve progress in international development goals, codified in eight (8) MDGs. The goals provide a focus for international development efforts and a "road map" for achieving the said goals (most of them by 2015), with concrete measures for judging performance through a set of inter-related commitments, goals and targets on development, governance, peace, security and human rights.

The following are the 8 MDGs and targets²:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty	
<i>Target 1</i>	<i>Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day</i> <i>Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people</i>
<i>Target 2</i>	<i>Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</i>

²The revised MDG monitoring framework as recommended by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators and agreed upon at the recent meeting of UN principles in Torino includes four new targets. The four new targets are shaded in the table

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	
<i>Target 3</i>	<i>Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary school</i>
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	
<i>Target 4</i>	<i>Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015</i>
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality	
<i>Target 5</i>	<i>Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under f</i>
Goal 5: Improve maternal health	
<i>Target 6</i>	<i>Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio</i>
	<i>Achieve by 2015, universal access to reproductive health</i>
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	
<i>Target 7</i>	<i>Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS</i>
	<i>Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for those who need it</i>
<i>Target 8</i>	<i>Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases</i>
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	
<i>Target 9</i>	<i>Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources</i>
<i>Target 10</i>	<i>Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water</i>
	<i>Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss</i>
<i>Target 11</i>	<i>Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020</i>

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development	
Target 12	<i>Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. Includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction - both nationally and internationally</i>
Target 13	<i>Address the special needs of the least developed countries Includes: tariff and quota free access for least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for HIPC and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction</i>
Target 14	<i>Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing States</i>
Target 15	<i>Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term</i>
Target 16	<i>In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth</i>
Target 17	<i>In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries</i>
Target 18	<i>In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications</i>

A well-developed and articulated monitoring system is essential for measuring and monitoring implementation of the PRS and progress towards the MDGs. The monitoring system requires that we: set a baseline or benchmark year which is 1990 for MDGs but varies for various country PRSs; set a target date which is 2015 for MDGs but also varies for various country PRSs; agree a set of indicators to measure progress or lack of it; establish a system for collecting data on agreed indicators in between the two dates to measure progress or lack of it; and reporting progress nationally, regionally and internationally.

As part of each country's PRS process, consensus is invariably built on indicators which are broadly developed following internationally agreed criteria but also taking into account the country circumstances and con-

ditions. For each of the eight MDGs, there are different targets and for each target, there are different indicators. Until recently (see 2nd footnote), there were 18 MDG targets and 48 indicators. Selection of PRS and MDG indicators has been guided by a number of criteria including to: provide relevant and robust measures of progress towards the targets; be clear and straightforward to interpret and provide a basis for international comparison; be broadly consistent with other global lists and avoid imposing an unnecessary burden on country teams, governments and other partners; be based to the greatest extent possible on international standards, recommendations and best practices; and to be constructed from well-established data sources, be quantifiable and be consistent to enable measurement over time.

It is, however, important to mention that some MDG specific indicators (such as malaria) are not entirely relevant to some countries in the region and a few others (such as condom use at last sex among high risk groups) are particularly difficult to measure in household surveys because of cultural sensitivities.

The MDGs also represent a partnership between developing and developed countries to create an environment - at the national and global levels alike - which is conducive to development and the elimination of poverty. The MDGs are long-term poverty reduction goals adopted by the international community. As such, they are relevant to medium-term poverty reduction strategies in all low-income countries. Although there is no required set of MDG indicators or goals that must be included in PRSs, the PRSs are expected to be framed against the backdrop of the MDGs while taking into account initial conditions and national priorities. It is, therefore, important for PRSs to set out credible plans and policies to help make progress towards the MDGs that can be supported by the provision of increased financial resources on appropriately concessional terms by development partners³. African leaders are signatories to the Outcome Document of the 2005 UN World Summit, which resolved that countries with extreme poverty adopt, and implement MDG-based PRSs or MDG-based national development plans, by the end of 2006.

³Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers - Detailed Analysis of Progress in Implementation Prepared by the Staffs of the IMF and World Bank, September 15, 2003.

Some examples of integrating the MDGs into national plans include the following⁴:

- In Rwanda, MDGs have become targets for an interim PRSP. In addition, Government and civil society groups, taking the MDGs as common ground, discussed issues related to post-conflict recovery;
- In Tanzania, MDGs have provided a framework for long-term planning, with a PRSP that operates on a three-year cycle;
- In Senegal, the MDG report in 2001 stimulated greater participation in the PRSP process at a local level;
- Zimbabwe had a UN-supported consultative meeting with stakeholders who included private organizations, in an effort to contextualize MDGs at the national and local level and identify the most relevant goals for the country;
- In Ethiopia, the country's Sustainable Development Poverty Reduction Paper (SDPRP) refers to MDG-relevant sector development programs in education, health, water, and Roads. Most SDPRP targets are in line with the MDGs.

2. Statistics in Support of the PRS Process and MDG Monitoring

2.1 Statistics as a Critical Measurement and Monitoring Tool

Critical to achievement of development results is the ability to measure and closely monitor them for *"If you can't measure it, you can't manage it"*⁵. It is, therefore, the case that statistics are needed *"to drive the outcomes that policies are aiming to achieve, and not just to measure progress towards those outcomes"*. Statistics are essential *"to count down poverty"*⁶. Indeed statistics are now recognized internationally as part of an enabling environment for achieving development outcomes. The roundtable held in Washington in 2002 and the one held in Marrakech in 2004 also recognized that good statistical information is crucial not only to support development policies but also to measure the impact of interventions. They thus identified better statistics as a priority of the results agenda.

⁴The Millennium Development Goals in Africa: Progress and Challenges, Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, August 2005.

⁵The Strategy-focused Organization by Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton, Harvard Business School Press, Massachusetts, 2001.

⁶Counting down poverty: The role of statistics in world development, PARIS21 and OECD, Paris, 2006.

In order to produce better statistics, countries need to improve national statistical capacity to increase availability and use of national and sub-national data on PRSs and MDGs, and to improve coordination within national statistical systems and between national and international agencies to ensure consistency between national and international data. The National Statistical Office (NSO) should play a central role in PRS and MDG monitoring. The NSO should coordinate production of national data and should become a “focal point” for each country, collecting and verifying MDG data from different sources in the country and acting as the main source of data for international agencies. This will help not only to strengthen country level coordination but also contribute to improving coordination between national and international statistical systems. While this reinforces the need for many NSOs to improve their technical capacities to ensure that national and MDG data are internationally comparable, it also requires that the central coordination role of NSOs be formally established⁷.

2.2 Statistical Requirements for PRSs and MDG Monitoring

Both quantitative data and qualitative information are required for the monitoring of PRSs and MDGs. Quantitative data are used for constructing indicators when: quantitative data are easily available; we are trying to measure trend - which is almost impossible to do with qualitative data; there is little ambiguity in concepts being measured; the indicator being measured is a ratio or proportion or percentage or rate or quantile; and when the objective is to generalize over a larger (rather than the sampled) group of observations. On the other hand, qualitative data are used for constructing indicators when there is little or no quantitative data on the topic; there is lack of certainty about the unit of measurement – individual, household or organization; we are exploring reasons why people do or believe something; concepts are assessed on a nominal scale with no clear demarcation points; and the objective is to form some conclusions about a particular group of people.

The monitoring system uses as sources of quantitative data: administrative records which are particularly useful in generating indicators on annual basis and at low levels of aggregation such as e.g. vital registration systems; population censuses which are regularly conducted every ten years and results are published within 1-3 years after the population count; and house-

⁷ Statistical support to MDGs and PRSPs, Document: 1-1-E, Launching meeting of the International Comparison Program for Africa (ICP-Africa), Addis Ababa, 2-4 December 2002.

holds surveys, such as the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), which are in general undertaken every 2-5 years with results published within a year of field data collection. Data can also be obtained from International sources such as data published by UN bodies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), etc.; regional Organizations such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); and global organizations such as The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, etc. Such data are derived from national sources or estimated (modeled) on the basis of projections/extrapolation using data from countries with a similar profile. The data in the Millennium Indicators Database maintained by the United Nations are from international sources (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mil/mi_goals.asp). As much as possible, however, national data should be used where they are available and are of reasonable quality. International data sources should be used for validation and/or if no country data are available. One of the main problems is that usually data are available in countries but because they are scattered and are not well organized, the impression is often created internationally that the data are not available.

Qualitative information is collected using participatory techniques involving direct observation, interviews and/or focus group discussions. Use of these techniques also gives more opportunity for civil society to participate in the generation of data than in some other forms of data collection. Qualitative information is likely to be of particular significance for planning at low levels of administration (district and sub-district). Monitoring is improved when qualitative information are used to complement the quantitative data collected through surveys and routine administrative records for policy making at different levels. In particular, participatory techniques are used to improve questionnaire design by re-phrasing questions and using local units of measurement (area, volume, weight), while the results of participatory assessments are useful in the interpretation of econometric results derived from household surveys. It is, however, crucial that the two sets of techniques use the same definition of 'poverty' so that they can measure the same things and not give contradictory signals as to the direction and/or magnitude of changes in poverty as happened in Uganda some time back. Qualitative assessments have since been built into the Uganda National Household Survey Programme (UNHSP). Statisticians have been trained to collect qualitative information from a sub-sample of the main sample used in the UNHSP.

It is crucial to make the case for greater investment in statistical production and in particular for MDG monitoring. It is also important to make the case for advocating for the use of MDG indicators in national policy and planning processes. It may help if the broad cost of achieving MDGs and the costs for effective monitoring and evaluation are worked out to guide policy makers in allocating needed resources to data production and use. Development agencies should be urged to scale up their efforts to collect disaggregated data on MDGs for tracking disparities within countries and contribute to the work of compiling the MDG regional reports.

In addition to the above and with regard to MDG monitoring, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on MDGs indicators has identified the following as some of the solutions for MDG monitoring⁸:

- There is a need for more information on how the global MDG indicators are calculated (better metadata);
- Agencies need to improve transparency on how they adjust country data;
- Reporting mechanisms from national statistical systems to international agencies need to be improved and that implies also improving coordination within national statistical systems;
- The calculation of indicators at the national level should be driven by national policy priorities;
- There is still a need for further training national statisticians on the production of the indicators.

3. Data Challenges

It has been reported that while progress is being made towards poverty reduction and the MGDs, the pace is slow. Providing improved data for monitoring and tracking progress, and for decision-making has been identified as one of the main challenges in planning, policy environment, monitoring and tracking performance. An Issues Paper on Accelerating Africa's Growth and Development to meet the MDGs presented at the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in April 2007 summarizes the data challenge well when it identifies as part of Africa's weak planning framework,

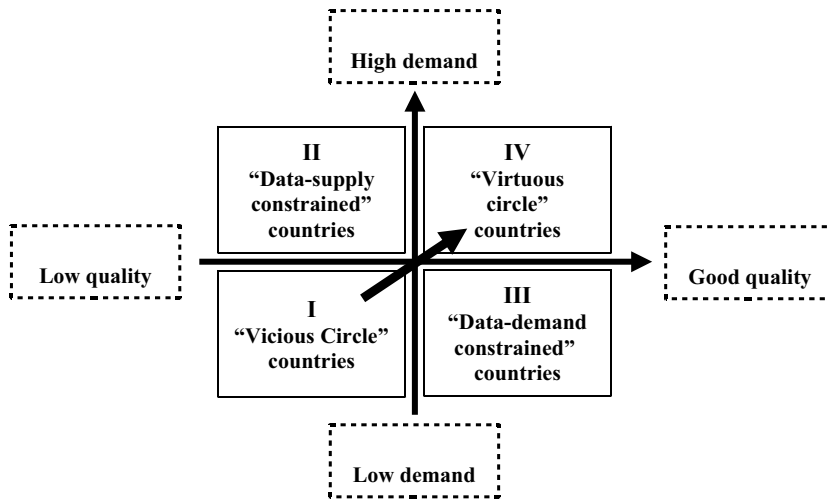
⁸Report of the Inter-agency and Expert Meeting on Millennium Development Goals Indicators held in Geneva, 10-13 November 2003.

⁹Accelerating Africa's Growth and Development to meet the MDGs: Emerging Challenges and the way forward: An Issues paper, E/UNECA/COE/26/6, Economic Commission for Africa, 1 March 2007.

“poor quality statistics, weak statistical capacity and institutions – exacerbated by poor funding – and lack of harmonization of statistical standards”.

Data challenges revolve around the twin problem of data demand and supply, which is depicted in the following figure.

Figure 1: Depicting the twin problem of data demand and supply



The figure depicts a continuum of data demand and supply, which are mutually reinforcing. Quadrant I represents the “vicious circle” of statistical under-development and under-performance in which many developing countries have been trapped. In these countries, limited awareness about the importance of statistics has led to low demand and use of data for policy and decision-making. As result, statistics are given low priority and fewer resources leading to under-performance (low data quality), even less demand and fewer resources for statistics. The situation has not been helped by piecemeal, uncoordinated and project-focused assistance from development partners aimed at data production now rather building sustainable capacity for data production in future or the low priority given to statistics in policy dialogue between development partners and countries. In pathological cases, priorities of development partners have conflicted and/or have not been aligned with the priorities of recipient countries. Many but not all countries in this quadrant are post-conflict countries (fragile states). Quadrant II represents countries where more and more

data are being used especially for policy and decision-making but supply of good data is falling behind demand. Quadrant III represents countries where supply of better statistics is increasing but for a number of reasons, demand remains low i.e. available statistics are not being put to full use to inform national development processes. There is a need for a big push or scaling-up to strategically move all countries towards Quadrant IV, the “virtuous circle” quadrant, where statistics are improving and are increasingly being used to inform development processes.

The data challenges become apparent when we try to answer the following questions: Are development processes - policy, planning, budgeting and decision-making - in countries evidence-based (supported by better statistics)? If not, why? If yes, what data are available and how often are they made available (frequency)? For how many years are data available (time series)? Which agency or agencies and what activities produce such data? What disaggregations/classifications are being used? Are data available in a form that makes them understandable and renders them usable?

The following are some of the data challenges facing many African countries:

3.1 Data Availability

In some countries, data are not available for some core indicators. In particular, some indicators have no baseline values. For some indicators, there is lack of data for 1990 (benchmark year for MDGs). In the absence of a baseline value, it is difficult to assess the feasibility of a target. Another problem related to baselines is that sometimes the precise date to which the baseline value refers is never given. In some countries, data have been collected intermittently on some indicators, so there are no data series to assist in determining trends or measuring progress over time. Also in many countries, education and health data are incomplete as basic education data cover only public schools, basic health data do not cover private clinics and there is under-reporting on HIV/AIDS cases and other diseases. Global MDG monitoring is undertaken through the IAEG on MDG Indicators, coordinated by the UN Statistics Division. The Division maintains the website of the IAEG (<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Default.aspx>) which is the official UN site for the MDG Indicators. Looking at the database, one sees data gaps on several indicators for different countries in Africa.

3.2 Data Comparability

The value of statistical data is greatly enhanced if indicators and other statistics can be compared, for example, between sources, over time, or between locations. This requires considerable coordination in the way that data are collected, compiled and disseminated¹⁰. In some countries, there are inconsistencies in poverty data from different sources/activities because definitions usually vary across time and sources (due to efforts to improve definitions). This makes it difficult to do in-country temporal and spatial comparability. For instance, where data are available for benchmark year (1990), they are difficult to compare with current data due to difference in concepts and methods in data collection. It has been reported that in health indicators, there are inconsistencies across years of under-five mortality rate (U5MR), Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) due to differences in estimation procedures. Lack of uniform definitions across countries poses a challenge towards comparing progress on a particular goal. It also makes data aggregation at regional or global level difficult. There are efforts by the global statistical system through the UN Statistical Commission to establish and promote standards and uniform concepts to allow comparison across countries. Finally, it should be mentioned that inconsistencies between national and international estimates, particularly on population statistics, have tended to undermine national statistics especially where the reasons for the differences are not known or explained.

3.3 Data Disaggregation

Data disaggregation is crucial for identifying sub-population groups that need to be targeted for development. There is, therefore, a great need to generate and provide disaggregated data on a number of indicators. In particular, there is a need to provide population-, sex- and sector-specific disaggregated poverty data. In addition, there is a need to identify and locate the poor at the sub-regional level. However, a lot of survey-based data are not sufficiently disaggregated to levels where targeting of interventions and resources take place. It is also important to mention, for instance, that while nutrition issues are better illuminated if data are produced and provided on intra-household distribution of food consumption, data on such distribution is usually not collected.

¹⁰Mainstreaming sectoral statistical systems: A draft guide to planning a coordinated national statistical system, African Development Bank and PARIS21, 2007.

3.4 Data Periodicity and Timeliness

There is a large variation in the frequency with which data relating to different indicators are collected. It would be useful to indicate the frequency of each indicator together with the data source and institution responsible. It helps a lot also to draw up an annual calendar which indicates when data for which targets will become available and how this information will be used in policy making. The bottom line though is that in many countries, there is a misalignment between time lag and frequency on the one hand and the desired frequency of release of data on the other. It is desirable that data collections and reporting should be aligned with PRS results and policy monitoring and review processes.

3.5 Data Quality

“Better statistics for better policies and development outcomes” has become a catch phrase in managing for results. This phrase underscores the need for production, management and use of quality statistical data and information in support of development processes – statistics that are trustworthy and portray public interest; statistics that allow us to assess the state of the nation and judge the performance of government; statistics in which users and society have confidence. It cannot be emphasized enough that lack of data quality impairs their credibility and reduces their potential use and the benefits that can be derived from them.

However, many countries still lack the requisite capacity to produce, manage and use the range and quality of statistics required to support effective development processes¹¹. This is best illustrated by administrative data sources from which a lot of data and information required for monitoring development are obtained, including data on operations of education, health and other social services; external trade, balance of payments, government accounts and prices; agriculture and other economic and social fields. While administrative sources generate a lot of data rather cheaply, they tend to be deficient in many ways including the following:

- administrative data are subject-specific and restricted in coverage and content by legal and administrative considerations. This makes it difficult to link together data on a variety of subjects for the same individual unit,

¹¹Counting down poverty: The role of statistics in world development, PARIS21 and OECD, 2006.

- administrative data tend to be mutually inconsistent as they are compiled by different institutions independent of each other and using different methodologies, definitions, classifications, etc. Data series from this source are generally not comparable or compatible,
- the sources leave yawning gaps in provision of basic data on such important areas as poverty, under-employment, accessibility to social services, quality of housing, vital events, etc. For instance, few countries in the African region have fully developed civil registration systems for recording, on a continuous basis, births, deaths and other vital events. This has often made it necessary to estimate levels and patterns of mortality and fertility by indirect methods using statistics obtained from censuses and surveys,
- data from these source are generally perceived to be inaccurate with no mechanisms to estimate the degree of inaccuracy in the data, and
- generally, administrative data are planned and collected in the African region by non-statisticians and often for non-statistical purposes.

For these and other reasons, the quality of administrative data is often poor. Administrative data are also not well managed and a lot of them remain on files for internal use and are often not accessible to stakeholder outside the institutions collecting/compiling them. All this has been attributed to lack of or limited resources, limited human capacity (both statistical and IT personnel), high staff turnover, weak incentives and the absence of a discriminating demand for information by policy-makers. Another difficulty is the existence in some countries of parallel data collecting and recording systems within the same sectoral Ministries, which rarely interact. Attempts over the years to improve administrative data in the countries has had mixed results. Health and education can be singled out of the pack for mention as the sectors where good progress has been made - the Health Management Information Systems (HMISs) and Education Management Systems (EMSs) are providing good and usable data both for the sector development programmes and for monitoring the PRSs as well as MDGs in many countries.

Other challenges limiting data quality include inadequate consultation with data users which makes a lot of data not so relevant; some data are limited in scope e.g. in many countries, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) covers only some major cities; some data are not collected using internationally recommended methodologies and guidelines; and finally a lot of data including survey and census data, are not produced in a timely manner.

3.6 Lack of Effective National Statistical Plans

One factor, which has contributed to capacity and data limitations in many countries in Africa, is lack of effective national statistical plans to provide a comprehensive and coherent framework for accelerating and guiding the development of national statistics. There are still countries that do not have a national statistical plan; for some countries, the plans are out of date and need to be updated. In most countries, however, the tendency has been to design statistical plans that are NSO-centric. Such plans have failed to take on board sectoral issues and concerns. Indeed, generally much attention has been focused on capacity needs of the NSOs and little attention has been paid to the needs of sectors so that where there has been progress in statistical development, it has, by and large, been unbalanced. It has been observed, for instance, that statisticians in sectoral ministries have largely been isolated and are inadequately involved in discussions on statistical capacity building. Also the sectoral component of the National Statistical System (NSS) has tended to be under-resourced and is in need of more voice in sectors and in the NSS¹². No wonder that administrative data on many sectors are of limited quality as has been mentioned above.

3.7 Other Data Challenges

With specific regard to MDG monitoring, a report for the 37th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (March 2006) prepared by the UN Statistics Division together with the “Friends of the Chair”, summarizes major shortcomings with indicators, data and reporting as follows¹³:

- Countries found the mechanism of reporting to international agencies not to be always effective and adequate;
- Problems with reporting to international agencies are linked to the lack of coordination within countries among the various statistical agencies (administrative data from line ministries, national statistical offices, etc.);
- In some cases, international experts visit countries with the main intent of gathering data and no real preoccupation with providing technical assistance.
- Indicators often differ in countries, from what is available in international sources, because of different national policy priorities;

¹²Mainstreaming sectoral statistical systems: A draft guide to planning a coordinated national statistical system, African Development Bank and PARIS21, 2007.

¹³Report of the Friends of the Chair on Millennium Development Goals indicators, Thirty-seventh session, UN Statistical Commission, 7-10 March 2006, N.Y.

- For most of the goals, more data are generally available at the national level and used in MDG country reports than those presented in UNSD database;
- The poor quality of metadata for some MDG indicators; and
- The use of imputations to fill in data gaps.

4. Initiatives for Improving Data Quality, Availability and Reporting

Managing for results has led to unprecedented increase in demand for better statistics from a wide range of sources to support national and international development effort, to design appropriate policies and programmes, and to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness and impacts. This increase in demand for data has put severe pressure on already fragile and under-performing NSSs in many developing countries and exposed the “vicious cycle” of statistical under-development and under-performance as has been explained above.

4.1 Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics and the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa

The Marrakech roundtable mentioned above, endorsed a time-bound and costed action plan, The Marrakech Action Plan (MAPS), for improving development statistics. MAPS has six key actions for improving statistics nationally and internationally, namely:

- Mainstream strategic planning of statistical systems, especially through the implementation of a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS);
- Prepare for the 2010 global round of population censuses;
- Increase the finances for statistical capacity building;
- Set up an International Household Survey Network;
- Undertake urgent improvements for MDG monitoring; and
- Increase the accountability of the international statistical system.

A Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa (RRSF) was designed as a regional variant of the MAPS. It was designed in line with recommendations in MAPS and incorporates many of the ideas from the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s (AAPA). The RRSF aims to contribute to improved development outcomes and good governance in Africa by

guiding and accelerating sustainable statistical capacity building activities. It is built around three themes: meeting user needs, improving the management of statistical systems and ensuring the sustainability and irreversibility of statistical development. Its goal is to raise societal awareness about the role of statistical information, increase user satisfaction by enhancing the quality and usability of statistical information, promote greater use of statistical information, and achieve synergy, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability in statistical information systems.

The RRSF was endorsed by the meeting of Directors of NSOs in Africa and the second Forum on African Statistical Development (FASVEV II)¹⁴ both held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2006.

4.2 National Strategy for the Development of Statistics

The NSDS is the overarching action point of the MAPS and the overarching strategy of the RRSF. MAPS urged all poor developing countries to design their NSDS by the end of 2006 and to have started implementing it the following year with a view to producing better statistics for national and international use by the time of the next Millennium Review in 2010. The NSDS is seen as an approach that has a greater chance of improving national statistics. *“Properly designed national strategies which address priority data needs and provide a plan for investing in the institutions and infrastructure needed for a well functioning statistical system, have been shown to be the most effective way to guide statistical development”*¹⁵. Indeed if properly designed and implemented following the NSDS principles, which have been developed by PARIS21 and partners, the NSDS can fundamentally change the statistical landscape and enhance the fortunes of the statistical profession in countries.

The NSDS provides a framework for:

- statistical advocacy to create greater awareness about the role of statistics and to mainstream statistics in national policy, planning and budget processes;
- statistical reforms (cutting-edge reforms where possible) that are essential for a step increase in statistical capacity building and statistical development to meet the huge demand for data;

¹⁴FASDEV is a forum of national, sub-regional, regional, and international organizations that seek to strengthen cooperation for statistical development in Africa.

¹⁵A dialogue on country statistics: scaling up our efforts to help countries improve their statistical capacity, the World Bank, 14 April 2007.

- continual and more effective assessment of ever-changing user needs for statistics at sub-national, national (e.g. for PRSP), sub-regional, regional (e.g. for NEPAD) and international (e.g. for MDGs) and for building needed capacity to meet these needs in a more coordinated, synergic and efficient manner;
- forging and/or strengthening partnerships for statistical development among producers and users of statistics as well as for donor harmonization;
- visioning where the NSS should be in the medium to long term;
- establishing a “road map” and “milestones” for getting there and a base from which progress can be measured; and
- for establishment of a mechanism for informed change when needed.

The NSDS does not only support production and use of better statistics now but also it aims to accelerate sustainable statistical capacity building for the future. It also provides a framework for good communication, feedback and lesson learning all of which are essential for organizational growth and performance enhancement; for mobilizing, harnessing and leveraging resources (both national and international); galvanizing individual energies into total effort; the creation of quality awareness and enhancement of national statistics; and for introduction of modern and proven strategic planning and management principles and practices in the handling of official statistics.

The following are the NSDS principles, which should guide its design¹⁶:

- be integrated (mainstreamed) into national development policy processes and context, taking account of regional and international commitment,
- cover all sectors and all key stakeholders including data users at different levels in the public (typically these include policy and decision makers, legislators, programme managers, etc.), private and civil society sectors, and development partners; data producers including the NSO, line ministries, central bank, other public bodies, research institutions; data suppliers including households, establishments and institutions; and training institutions e.g. Universities. By taking into account the concerns and interests of all key stakeholders, the NSDS can be very empowering and liberating tool,

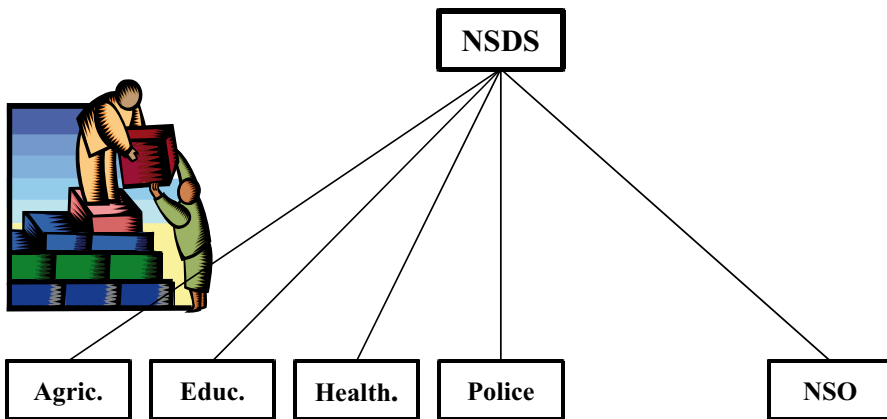
¹⁶National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) Documentation, PARIS21 Secretariat, 2004 Version, Paris, France.

¹⁷Mainstreaming sectoral statistical systems: A draft guide to planning a coordinated national statistical system, African Development Bank, PARIS21 and Intersect, 2007.

- be developed in an inclusive way, incorporating results-based management,
- be comprehensive and coherent and provide the basis for the sustainable development of statistics with quality (i.e., “fit for purpose”), and
- show where the statistical system is now, how it needs to be developed and how to accomplish this.

In order to make the NSDS a plan for the NSS rather than for the NSO, a guide has been developed for mainstreaming sectoral statistics in the planning of a coordinated national statistical system¹⁷. The guide supports a bottom-up approach to the design of the NSDS where sector strategic plans for statistics (SSPS) are designed (e.g. for agriculture, health, education, police, immigration, central bank, NSO, water, etc.) and used as building blocks for the design of the overall plan, the NSDS (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Bottom-up approach to the design of the NSDS



This approach which has worked well in the design of the Uganda’s NSDS (2006 –2010) is currently being used to design the NSDS for Tanzania and Ghana. For the effective design of the NSDS, countries may want to use this approach. PARIS21 and the World Bank are promoting the sector-wide approach (SWAp) to the development of statistics.

With assistance mainly from the African Development Bank, PARIS21 and the World Bank, many countries have developed their NSDSs or are in the process of doing so. Experience so far shows that the process of designing the NSDS requires great effort, patience and strategic leadership at country level to get it right and to see it through. It has also been shown

that although generally the pace of implementation of the NSDSs, which have been designed has been slow, more resources (both national and international) have become available for statistical development as a result of the NSDS.

5. Prospects for improving production, management and use of statistics

While managing for development results has presented major challenges for data supply, it has also presented opportunities for building statistical capacity and improving NSSs in developing countries. Indeed momentum towards improving NSSs in these countries has built up since 2004, the year MAPS was endorsed to spur the world into action.

There is much hope that various initiatives including those mentioned above and various developments that have taken place in Africa in support of statistical development in recent past should go a long way in improving the production, management and use of statistics in Africa in support of national development. The developments include the following, among others:

- UNECA established an Advisory Board for Statistical Development in Africa (ABSA) which advises on the coordination of statistical activities at the national, sub-regional, and regional levels and started a new Forum on African Statistics Development (FASDEV) to keep an overview of statistics activities in Africa, set up a permanent system for monitoring statistical development in Africa, and strengthen cooperation by taking advantage of each partners comparative advantage;
- As part of its drive to reposition itself to better respond to Africa's priorities, UNECA established an African Centre for Statistics with division status in 2006 to promote African statistical development;
- The Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in April 2007 endorsed the establishment of the African Statistical Commission (Statcom Africa) as a subsidiary body of the UN Economic Commission for Africa as the apex body on matters of statistical development in Africa. Statcom Africa will be reporting to the conference of Ministers as well as to the UN Statistical Commission;
- UNECA has re-established the African Statistical Newsletter to increase sharing of information about statistical development activities and practices across Africa;

- Since 2002, the African Development Bank (AfDB) has been coordinating the implementation of the International Comparison Programme for Africa (ICP-Africa). As part of this programme, AfDB launched a continent-wide program involving 51 African countries aimed at strengthening the capacity of the countries to provide timely and reliable data for policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. The capacity building initiative has included providing technical assistance to countries to design their NSDS;
- The AfDB has been expanding its statistical activities to better support its mandate and in 2006, it up-graded its statistical function by establishing a fully fledged Statistics Department;
- The IMF through its special project on General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) for Anglophone countries has been assisting countries in capacity building. So too have PARIS21 (Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century), the World Bank and other partners (multi-lateral and bilateral);
- In 2005, an African Statistical Journal was launched to promote the understanding of statistical development in the African region. This is a refereed journal, which focuses on issues related to official statistics as well as application of statistical methodologies to solve practical problems of general interest to applied statisticians. The publication of the journal is fully funded by the AfDB;
- The RRSF tasked the African Union Commission (AUC) to advocate for statistics at the highest level of government. In this connection, the Commission recently established a Statistics Unit within the Department of Economic Affairs and has drafted an African Charter on Statistics, in close collaboration with UNECA and the AfDB, to be endorsed by the Heads of State of member countries;
- In January 2006 and on the initiative of Statistics South Africa, the first African Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD) was held in Cape Town. A second ASSD was held in Kigali, Rwanda in January 2007. The third ASSD is scheduled for early December 2007 and will take place in Accra, Ghana. The symposia are now focusing discussions on the needs of the 2010 round of the Population and Housing Census, the second major action point of MAPS;
- In September 2007, the main regional players in statistical development in Africa, namely the AfDB, AUC, UNECA and the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) established an African Statistical Coordination Committee to oversee the coordination and

¹⁸Ministerial Statement, Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Fortieth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2-3 April 2007, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

harmonization of statistics in Africa. The Committee will be reporting to the Statcom Africa;

- Finally, more African countries than ever before are now celebrating the African Statistics Day, 18 November, as recommended by the AAPA in 1990, to increase more awareness about the role and importance of statistics to society.

The aforementioned April 2007 Conference of African Ministers endorsed the above initiatives and resolved, *“to improve availability, timeliness and quality of data in conformity with international standards”*¹⁸. The reports presented to the third international roundtable on Managing for Development Results held in Hanoi, Vietnam in February 2007 also show that progress has been made especially in the last three years since Marrakech. The reports show that: 88 countries (a good number of them in Africa) have undertaken the NSDS to guide development of their statistical systems and many are also subscribing to the IMF’s General Data Dissemination System (GDDS), work on the next Population and Housing Census is well under way in many countries, the World Bank and PARIS21 established in 2005 an International Household Survey Network and are piloting the Accelerated Data Program in six African countries. One of the main conclusions reached at the roundtable in Hanoi was that, *“although many developing countries still face great difficulties in providing the information needed to measure development results, the experience of the last three years – since MAPS was adopted – provides strong evidence that progress is possible”*¹⁹ and one of the messages from Hanoi was that *“many countries want to improve their statistical systems and the use of statistics in development process, and that they want to integrate planning for their statistical systems in their national development strategies”*²⁰. Another strong message from Hanoi was the need for scaling-up support for statistics by national governments and development partners.

6. Conclusions

The new focus on managing for development results has presented challenges to fledgling and, by all accounts, weak and under-performing NSSs to meet new demands for development data and information. Many of

¹⁸Ministerial Statement, Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Fortieth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2-3 April 2007, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

¹⁹Communiqué on Third Roundtable on Managing for Development Results: Better Statistics for better Results, Statistical Commission, The World Bank, March 2007.

²⁰Ibid.

these systems are still trapped in a “vicious cycle” of statistical under-development and under-performance, and there are many data challenges including: lack of data on some indicators leading to imputations (modeling) to fill in data gaps, in-country data incomparability, inadequate data disaggregation, problems of data periodicity and timeliness, inadequate data quality especially from administrative sources, inadequate data use for policy and decision-making. There are some countries which do not have statistical plans to guide development of national statistics; for those countries which have them, the plans are either out of date and/or do not cover all sectors. There are also shortcomings in MDG monitoring including ineffective and inadequate mechanism for reporting progress including to international agencies, lack of coordination within countries among the various statistical sources, inadequate and generally uncoordinated partner assistance to countries, differences in indicators among countries, more data availability for some indicators at the national level than those presented in UNSD database and the poor quality of metadata for some MDG indicators.

However, managing for results has also presented unprecedented opportunities for developing statistics. More and more resources are being made available by national governments and donors for data collection and statistical capacity building. There are also improved partnerships for statistical development at national and international level. The NSDS is providing a good framework for capacity building and investment in statistics, and for systematized assessment of demand and supplying data in a coordinated and synergic manner to meet this demand. Other solutions that have been identified include having more information on how the global MDG indicators are calculated (better metadata), agencies improving transparency on how they adjust country data, improving reporting mechanisms from countries to international agencies, ensuring that the calculation of indicators at the national level is driven by national policy priorities, and further training national statisticians on the production of the indicators.

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