

Repositioning the National Statistical Systems of African Countries within the Framework of International Best Practices: The Case of Nigeria

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Summary:

The National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of many African Countries had failed in the past, to provide adequate, timely and credible statistics to support evidence-based policy-making. There is however a number of countries, such as, Nigeria, now starting to re-engineer their NSOs to meet the challenges posted by poor statistics. The areas of focus include institutional reforms and the application of ICT tools to data production management and dissemination. At present the reform in Nigeria's NSO is largely funded by Development Partners. For sustainability, efforts are being made to establish a National Statistics Fund (NSF) into which resources will be pooled from large revenue generating public establishments, private sector organisations and donor agencies for statistical operations; an outreach programme is being organised for the political class, particularly, parliamentarians to make them understand the relevance of statistics to their debates and give more money for statistics operations; and many activities in the office are now being outsourced to service providers. The reform in Nigeria has resulted in some positive results and it is expected that other African Countries will have some ideas to learn from the Nigerian experience.

Keys words: *Statistics, Policy, ICT, Outreach, Outsourcing*

Résumé:

Dans plusieurs pays africains, les Instituts Nationaux de Statistique (INS) ont échoué par le passé, dans leur mission de fournir des statistiques appropriées, opportunes et crédibles permettant de définir la politique basée sur les résultats. Il y a cependant un certain nombre de pays, comme, le Nigeria, qui commencent maintenant à restructurer leurs INS pour relever les défis liés aux statistiques de mauvaise qualité. Les secteurs concernés comprennent les réformes institutionnelles et l'application des NTIC à la gestion de la production et à la diffusion de données. Actuellement la réforme dans l'INS du Nigeria est en grande partie financée par les partenaires au développement. Pour assurer la durabilité du

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processus, des efforts pour établir un fonds national de statistiques (NSF) dans lesquels des ressources seront mises en commun à partir des revenus générés par les établissements publics, des organismes du secteur privé et des bailleurs de fonds pour les opérations statistiques; un programme de plaidoyer est organisé pour cibler la classe politique, en particulier, les parlementaires afin de les inciter à comprendre la pertinence des statistiques dans leurs débats et à donner plus d'argent pour les opérations statistiques. Plusieurs activités de l'INS sont maintenant financées pour répondre à la demande de services. La réforme au Nigeria a eu comme conséquence quelques résultats positifs et on s'attend à ce que d'autres pays africains pourront apprendre de l'expérience nigériane.

Mots clés: *Statistiques, politique, TIC, assistance, Financement externe*

1. Introduction

Every country of the world has its own share of human and material resources and it is the effective management of these resources and those attracted or imported from other countries that separate developed or rich nations from backward, poor and underdeveloped ones. The latter are now generally referred to as 'emerging nations' because of efforts at individual country level and assistance from development partners to improve their economies, alleviate poverty and build infrastructure to enhance the well-being of their peoples. Driving these efforts is the current understanding amongst policy makers, private and institutional investors, researchers, academicians and development partners that, while rich nations are good producers and users of statistical information for development programming, the emerging nations, particularly, those in Africa have weak and ineffective National Statistical Systems (NSSs). Development economists have long stressed the essence of statistical information in development programming; hence the absence of strong NSSs poses a major challenge to the Continent (Tinbergen, 1958).

The economies of African countries are badly managed because policies and programmes are not well-designed and implemented with the support of sufficient statistical information; and when such information are available, they are not adequate, timely and credible (Scott, 2005). The consequence is that the economies of most African countries either grow very slowly and not as fast as the population growth, or remain stagnant and held down in a trap. In some cases the economies descend into an abyss of hopelessness. Many African countries are in this quagmire of hopelessness as evidenced in the UNDP Human Development Reports of the last

5 years. In the 2005 Report, for example, of the 32 countries with low Human Development Index (HDI) of less than 0.5, only two, Yemen and Haiti, were outside Africa, with Sierra Leone and Niger having the lowest HDIs of 0.298 and 0.281 respectively. These countries compared very unfavourably with Norway and Iceland with the highest HDIs of 0.963 and 0.956 respectively.

In African countries, production of goods and services do not meet the demands of the people. For example, food is generally in short supply and the same is true for energy and communications. The transportation system (roads, railways, waterways and airways) is in very bad state. In the area of social infrastructure, existing primary, secondary and tertiary educational and health facilities are far from being sufficient. Water supplies are grossly inadequate, contributing significantly to incidences of water-borne diseases. Poverty is a common phenomenon, particularly in the rural areas, and absolute reliance on rain-fed agriculture contributes to food shortages and seasonal food price gyrations. The institutional infrastructure of African countries makes life difficult for the average citizen. The public institutions such as the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) are inefficiently run and plagued by excessive bureaucracy, over-bloated work force, poorly skilled and educated personnel and corruption. There is also little evidence of accountability and transparency in governance. Furthermore, the security situation is precarious and manifests in high crime rates, limited crime detection ability, weak policing and poor dispensation of justice. Unfortunately, statistics on these undesirable phenomena are not captured for planning in African countries.

The afore-mentioned challenges in African countries are difficult to handle because of the existing data production and management systems in use. The existing System of Administrative Statistics (SAS) in the MDAs of African countries is very poorly managed. Statistical support in primary data collection, processing, management and analysis, which is expected to complement administrative statistics, is also very weak. Furthermore, the dissemination of the right quality, quantity and type of statistics on a timely basis is completely absent. Data in the MDAs, which are managed manually through files, are susceptible to misplacement, outright loss, manipulation and theft. In many institutions, there are no functional statistical units to manage data emanating from regular operations. Modern computer-based information management systems with full complements of operational data bases, local area networks, wide area networks, Intranet and Internet connections hardly exist. The complete absence of an effective data and information management system in the Governments

of African countries, therefore, makes the management of these countries problematic.

Public sector managers in African countries find it difficult to recognize societal problems ahead of observed disequilibrium situations because of lack of data. They do not use statistics to inform policy designs and identify policy choices. They cannot forecast the future demand and supply situations and, therefore, cannot plan for change. And, very importantly, they do not generate and manage the data and information required to monitor policy implementation and evaluate policy outcomes and impacts. Owing to the pervading control of Governments over the economies of African countries, inadequate official statistics has often contributed to poor resource allocation and expenditure programmes with dire consequences on the general welfare of the people. In addition, the perpetual shortage of data required for monitoring and evaluating programme implementation creates avenues for poor accountability and corrupt practices. The poor data management culture in the public administration of African countries makes public sector operations very slow and service delivery prone to under-the-table deals as demanders for services are inclined to circumvent bureaucracy in order to get quick and favourable attention.

At the micro-level, where households and agricultural and non-agricultural establishments (large and small) operate, surveys and censuses are the normal tools to obtain statistical information required by data users. Governments at all levels need household and establishment data to understand their problems and plan to alleviate them. They need the micro-data to monitor and evaluate the impact of public actions. The organized private operators also need demographic characteristics of households, family size, spatial distribution of population, age composition of households and their income and expenditure patterns in order to understand how to meet demands for the goods and services they produce. Similarly, researchers and academicians need household and establishment data to conduct micro-level studies. In the same vein, development partners need micro-level data on poverty and welfare status, prevalence of diseases, access to infrastructure, gender problems and so on, to design interventions for African countries. Unfortunately, in many of the African countries, household and establishment statistics are not available as and when required, and many reasons account for this.

Most National Statistics Offices (NSOs) in African countries are not financially and materially equipped to conduct the relevant surveys and censuses needed to obtain the required micro-level data for to all shades

of users, and to monitor and track Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Funding from home Governments for NSOs have always been in short supply, not only for the regular surveys, but also for the 10-yearly Population and Housing Censuses. Occasionally, donor agencies collaborate with NSOs and other agencies of government to conduct surveys. The donor agencies also sometimes conduct independent surveys and even contribute substantially to the conduct of national population and housing censuses of many African countries. In many cases, the donor-supported surveys are tailor-made to meet the narrow data requirements of the sponsors. Even when the NSOs manage to conduct surveys and censuses, the data production process is generally manual, slow and prone to errors. Reports are generally not produced early and when produced, are released years after completion. In many cases the data are not disseminated as required. Another common feature of the operations of the NSOs of African countries is the dearth of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) tools in data collection, processing, management, analysis and dissemination. One consequence of the afore-mentioned poor micro-level data production process is that different government agencies and donors conduct surveys on the same subject, using different and often questionable methodologies, thereby producing conflicting results to the embarrassment of the Governments.

In addition to the foregoing, the NSOs of African countries suffer from neglect and non-recognition from their Governments. They enjoy very low profile and in most cases are mere appendages of government ministries. The staff are poorly paid as other civil servants. The NSOs cannot hire and fire staff and have limited disciplinary control over them. The heads of the NSOs have limited say into the management of the National Statistical Systems (NSSs) of these countries, and are, therefore, not well-managed. The NSOs are often overstaffed with non-professional personnel, leaving a poor mix of workers. Though they have professional statisticians on their payroll, in many cases they do not get the full complement of other professionals like economists, sociologists, political scientists, communications experts, Geographical Information System (GIS), Global Positioning System (GPS) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) specialists like data base developers, network engineers, computer programmers and software engineers. The staff often work under very harsh conditions because they lack the right equipment. Due to preponderance of statisticians in their professional cadre, conducting surveys attracts all their attention such that limited time is given to the compilation of administrative statistics. They are also poor in economic modelling

and quantitative analysis. And, in many African countries, the NSOs are housed in inconspicuous and over-crowded buildings with limited access to conveniences.

At the macro-level of economic management, the failures of Governments in many African countries arise out of poor statistical information support to policy makers. In their NSOs, National Accounts estimates are poorly compiled and presented, and in many cases the figures are based on estimates, which are not sufficiently disaggregated to make meaningful inputs into macro-level policy decisions. Market prices are not properly collected to produce representative Consumer Price Indices (CPIs) and inflation figures. In fact, in many African countries, retail prices are collected only on few commodities and in few urban centres or even in the capital cities alone. Also, rural retail prices are not factored into the estimation of inflation figures. Even in the same market outlet and on different data collection days, prices of similar commodities are often different because there are no standard measures and prices depend largely on the bargaining abilities of buyers. And, since different areas of the same country use different measures to sell local commodities, reported retail prices are suspect.

Another problematic area of statistical operations in many African countries is in the inaccuracies of their Trade Statistics, that is, import and export quantities and values as well as Balance of Payments (BOP) figures. Poor trade recording system by their Customs Services is a major reason for this. The existing methods of collecting and collating trade figures by the Customs are devoid of any system of automation. Most border trade transactions are informal and not sufficiently captured, even as smuggling and unofficial cross-border trades are rampant. In addition, the Immigration Services do not have well-articulated systems for the capture of the inflows and outflows of foreign currencies by travellers. In effect, establishments in the tourism sub-sector of African countries, namely, hotels, parks, cultural sites, travel agencies and so on, have no access to data to predict the sizes of their markets and plan into the future.

Heads of NSOs in many African countries lack the clout to champion the cause of the agencies they manage. They are generally not well-known to top politicians and policy makers like the Heads of Government (Presidents or Prime Ministers), Heads of Regional Governments, Heads of the Civil Service, Ministers of Finance, Heads of the Customs Services, Tax Office and Immigration Departments, Directors of Budget, Heads of the

Central Bank and other top government officers. The relatively anonymous status of Heads of NSOs of African countries partly explains why they find it difficult to have sympathetic listening ears from top Government officials. They are, therefore, not sufficiently active in raising money for their Agencies amongst policy makers, private sector operators, academicians, researchers and international donors agencies. Most heads of NSOs of African countries limit their influence to their Agencies, and hardly interact with Statistical Officers at the sub-national levels (State and Local Governments). This also limits their ability to effectively coordinate the National Statistical System of these countries. On the social front, heads of African NSOs do not cultivate relationships outside their immediate official environments. They rarely socialize with members of other public organizations, old-school alumni associations, organized private sector organizations, professional associations and social clubs to enable them informally popularize the mandates of their NSOs. For instance, it is rare to find the Head of an NSO of an African nation as a member of say, a Golf or some other top social club.

The foregoing analysis puts into perspective the enormity of the challenges of managing the national statistical systems of African countries. The problem of the weak system of statistics delivery in the Continent attracted the attention of African Governments in the 1980s with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) preparing a strategic plan called the Addis Ababa Plan of Action (AAPA) for statistical development in Africa (United Nations, 1993). AAPA was implemented between 1990 and 1999, but the outcome was very disappointing. In the late 1990s, the international community outside Africa showed more concern about the low statistical capacity in the continent in the face of growing global demand for statistics. Their concerns echoed in a number of commitments made at international fora, notably, the summit on Social Development and Beijing Conference on Women in 1995 as well as the Conference on HABITAT in 1996. Two other conferences, on the Environment and the UN Conference setting the Goals on Millennium Development, also highlighted the need for strong statistical capacities in Africa. Following these expressions of concerns, a number of international initiatives started to take roots in the early 2000s, with particular emphasis on moving African Statistics forward. These initiatives were based on instituting international best practices in the management of Africa NSSs.

2. Instituting International Best Practices for the Development of Statistics in Africa

The organisational and operational weaknesses of the National Statistical Systems (NSSs) of most African countries in much of the 1990s have been extensively discussed in the previous section and the intervening initiatives discussed in this section are based on international best practices. The guiding philosophy is adherence to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics as put forward by the United Nations Statistics Commission (UNSC). The UN adopted this set of principles to enhance the acceptability of official statistics and guide statistical offices in their data production processes (United Nations, 2003). The main elements of the fundamental principles are that official statistics must be impartial in the sense that they provide an indispensable source of information about the economy. Strictly professional considerations, including scientific methodologies and procedures must be adopted for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data. Statistical information must be presented according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures used to compile data. Data compiled from surveys and censuses must be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes. To ensure transparency, the laws, regulations and measures under which the National Statistical System (NSS) operates, must be made public. Furthermore, Statistical offices must be free to comment on erroneous interpretations and misuse of statistics.

In addition to the foregoing, there must be cooperation amongst major data producers within the NSS under the coordination of the National Statistical Office (NSO), to achieve consistency and efficiency in statistical production. Statistical offices must adhere to international standards by ensuring that they abide by internationally-accepted concepts, classifications and methods to promote consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels. Finally, Statistical offices must understand that bilateral and multilateral cooperation is needed to improve the systems of official statistics produced locally (United Nations, 1999).

Based on these fundamentals principles, several of the specialised international agencies have undertaken a number of initiatives to improve statistical operations globally, but more particularly in Africa. The IMF, for example, launched the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS), the Special Data Dissemination Standards (SDDS) and the Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF). This set of frameworks is intended to assist countries improve and strengthen their statistical capacities. The aim is to

support the more effective design, implementation and monitoring of economic policy and poverty reduction strategies. The framework is not only to promote transparency in the production and dissemination of statistics, but also to enhance the systematic development of national statistical systems by providing diagnostic tools to identify areas that require attention and the processes to formulate and implement statistical development plans (Liuksila 2000, IMF, 2001).

To complement the role of the IMF, another international initiative aimed at improving statistics production and usage in Africa was a collaborative effort of some agencies under a partnership with the acronym PARIS21, which stands for Partnership in Statistics Development in the 21st Century. The partnership brought together international producers and users of statistics, notably, the United Nations, World Bank, IMF, EU and OECD. The role of PARIS21 in supporting statistical development in Africa includes pushing for a culture of evidence-based policy making with data coming from the National Statistical Officers (NSOs) and other major data producers like the Central Bank and the Sector Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) (PARIS21, 2004). In support of these international initiatives, Africa also came up with a framework for statistics development in the continent known as the Regional Reference Strategic Framework (RRSF).

Specifically, the RRSF was actually the response by African countries, with the support of the international community, to meet the data challenges of the development results by 2015. Its overall objective, which is to strengthen the national statistical system of individual countries, is formulated round three themes namely, meeting the data needs of users in government, the private sector, universities and research organisation, the general public and the international community; improve the management of the national statistical system; and ensure the sustainability and irreversibility of statistical development in Africa. To meet the demands of the RRSF, African countries were encouraged to prepare and implement home-grown National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS); undertake development in key data areas with particular emphasis on monitoring poverty reduction strategies and MDGs; invest in the underlying statistical infrastructure needed to support efficient use of new technologies in data collection, compilation and management at national and sub-national levels; strengthen the analysis of data by producers and users; improve data dissemination in line with the framework of the GDDS; upgrade the legal and regulatory framework for statistics in line with the UN Fundamental Principles and Good Practices for Official Statistics; strengthen the Na-

tional Statistics Office (NSO) to coordinate the national statistical system and cooperate with all data producers and users with the system; ensure the development and more effective use of human resources in the production and management of statistics; and ensure sustainability and irreversibility of the development of statistics and funding of the entire statistical system so that statistics can be mainstreamed into the development process as well as make statistics the cornerstone of improving governance and accountability in each country. The entire development process will however kick-start with the preparation of a Statistical Master Plan (SMP) or a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) in each country (World Bank, 2003, PARIS21, 2004b). It was on the basis of these fundamental principles and international initiatives that the repositioning of the National Statistical System (NSS) of Nigeria was contemplated in the early 2000.

3. Repositioning of the National Statistical System in Nigeria

The repositioning of the National Statistical System in Nigeria started in 2004 with the production of a Statistical Master Plan (SMP), which provided a detailed programme of action to run from 2005 to 2009. The SMP was at the instance of the Federal Government of Nigeria, but its preparation was funded by the World Bank. The SMP focused mainly on the reorganisation of the two Federal Statistical Agencies responsible for data production and data management in the country, namely, the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) and the National Data Bank (NDB). FOS had been the apex data producing agency in the country since 1947, while NDB, a wholly-computerised data management agency, was established in 1989, as a data warehouse designed to hold time-series data dating back to 1914 when Nigeria was created. The two agencies maintained a complex and overlapping relationship with other members of the National Statistical System (NSS). The first action taken under the implementation of the SMP was the merger of FOS and NDB into the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), which harmonised the activities of the two agencies into a more focused schedule within the NSS.

In the years before the preparation of the SMP, the national statistical system in Nigeria was very fragile and under considerable pressure. The system was too weak to meet the demands of users, particularly in government, the academic community and international agencies. The Federal Office of Statistics could not fulfil its mandate of producing adequate, accurate and timely data for decision making. The agency had a respite in the mid-1990s with support from the UNDP, but this improvement could not be

sustained after the end of the programme to the extent that in the first few years of the new millennium the agency had fallen into decay. The agency's performance got to its lowest ebb between 2002 and 2004. Among the reasons for its appalling state were the poor attention from Government in terms of key appointments and budgetary allocations, bad management, a bloated and low quality workforce, preponderance of non-professional staff, archaic data production and management technologies, poor salary structure and conditions of service as well as low moral and productivity of workers. The situation was similar in the statistical units of the Federal and State MDAs. The statistical agencies at the State and Local Government levels were also either technically non-existent or at best operating marginally.

The foregoing manifested in the non-production of relevant statistics for planning and evidence-based policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. And, in subject areas where data were produced, they were often untimely and without any lot of integrity. These shortcomings necessitated the current repositioning of the National Statistical Office, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the need to produce a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) to cover the entire national statistical system. The NBS is currently preparing the NSDS at the national level. The relevant document for the States, the State Strategy for the Development of Statistics (SSDS), is also being prepared and this may be extended to the Local Government Strategy for the Development of Statistics (LGSDS) in the not too distant future.

The broad objective of the current repositioning of the NBS is to implement the SMP and transform the Bureau along the dictates of the Federal Government Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP). The Agency is covered in the Economic Reform and Governance Project (ERGP) of the World Bank and the European Union's (EU's) Economic Management and Capacity Assistance Programme (EMCAP) support programme, which are both managed by the Federal Ministry of Finance. The Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom is providing part of the \$20 million World Bank funding for the NBS under the ERGP. A World Bank trust fund grant of \$200,000 has been provided and a further \$400,000 grant from AfDB is currently being provided to the NBS to prepare the NSDS, which will incorporate strategies for the development of statistics in Federal MDAs, State Statistical Agencies (SSAs) and State MDAs. The AfDB will support the implementation of the NSDS and SSDS, while the EU has promised to provide funds for preparing the LGSDS. The goal of the entire repositioning exercise is to

transform NBS into a world class National Statistical Office (NSO) as well as develop the national statistical system of Nigeria into a strong and viable model for other countries, particularly in Africa. It is expected that the outcomes will meet the demands of users in and out of government and, very importantly, provide platforms for measuring development results in Nigeria on a sustainable basis. The repositioning of the NBS has the following components:

Institutional reforms

The National Statistical Office (NSO) of Nigeria has gone through a long period of reorganisation, starting in 1928 with the establishment of a Statistics Unit in the Office of the Colonial Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat of the British Colonial Administration. The Unit focused mainly on the collection and publication of basic statistics on trade and other commercial activities to serve the interests of the home Government in London. In 1947, a more focused reorganisation took place with the establishment of a Statistics Section in the Department of Customs and Excise, which later metamorphosed into a full-fledged Department of Statistics. In 1949, the Department's responsibilities were expanded to form the nucleus of a centralised National Statistics Office for the country. With the adoption of the Federal System of Government in 1958, the central and three Regional Governments had their statistics establishments incorporated into a decentralised National Statistical System (NSS).

A legal framework for statistics operations in Nigeria was enabled with the Statistics Act of 1957. The Act gave backing to a decentralized statistical system, but advocated collaboration between the central and regional statistical offices. It also allowed a common statistical service for the central office. At independence in 1960, the Department of Statistics was moved from Customs and Excise to the Ministry of Finance and later to the Federal Ministry of Economic Development, with its name changed to the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS). Further reorganisation of the activities of the national statistics office took place in the 1970s and 1980s, leading to the Central Bank of Nigeria taking on the collection of Financial Statistics and the National Population Commission given the responsibility of population statistics (including the conduct of population and housing census and collection of vital statistics like birth and death registrations and migration statistics) as well as the conduct of demographic and health surveys. In addition, in the 1980s, the common statistical system was abolished. The changes eroded the working environment for the FOS and reduced its relevance. It further led to the decreased attention of Gov-

ernment to the FOS in terms of funding and institutional support. The foregoing adversely affected the ability of the FOS to meet its mandate, which left the agency a very weak institution in most of 2004. Indeed, it could not be regarded as an information resource centre or a reference point in Africa as claimed by its mission statement in the 1990s. Furthermore, despite the strategic importance of Nigeria in Africa, the FOS in the year 2004 could not compare favourably with any of the respected statistical offices on the Continent.

This unfortunate situation required a change, hence the recommendation in the Statistics Master Plan that the 1957 Statistics Act be repealed and a Bill to establish the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and a coordinated National Statistical System (NSS) proposed. As part of the general public sector reform of Government, the President sent the Bill to the Senate and House of Representatives in December 2005. By October 2006, the Bill had gone through two readings in both Houses as well as a public hearing. The Legislators and the public were favourably disposed to the Bill and the new Statistics Act came into being in May 2007. The major provisions of the Act include:

- Establishment of the National Statistical System with NBS coordinating the collection of Official Statistics in all Federal MDAs, State Statistical Agencies (SSAs) and Local Government Statistics Units.
- Establishment of a Statistics Board to guide and oversee the operations of the NBS.
- Power to obtain information, maintain confidentiality and non-disclosure of sources and provision for offences and penalties.
- Establishment of a common statistics service so that the Agency's staff will maintain presence in all MDAs.
- Have an independent source of funding through sale of services, assets and investments, in addition to regular funding from the treasury.

It is pertinent to note that the Statistics Bill as proposed in the Statistical Master Plan and as presented by the President to the Assembly, included a provision of mandating the Bureau of Statistics to conduct the 10-yearly population and housing census, the registration of births and deaths and collection of migration statistics. However, the collection of population and vital statistics are contained in the mandate of the National Population Commission in the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria. Since the issue of population is a constitutional matter, the schedule was stepped down in the Statistics Act, but will be revisited in future when the 1999 Constitution is reviewed.

Organisational framework

The subsisting organisational structure of the National Bureau of Statistics is the same as what obtained in the defunct Federal Office of Statistics, with Seven Departments and three Units as listed below:

- Personnel Management Department (PMD)
- Finance and Supplies Department (F&SD)
- Corporate Planning and Technical Coordination Department (CPTCD)
- Field Services and Methodology Department (FSMD)
- Computer Management and Information Services Department (CMISD)
- Censuses and Surveys Department (CSD)
- Social and Economic Analysis Department (SEAD)
- Legal Unit (LU)
- Internal Audit Unit (IAU)
- Public Affairs and International Relations Unit (PAIRU)

There are also 36 State Offices, an office in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Six Zonal Offices and 3 Schools of Statistics.

In the Statistical Master Plan, the departments are reduced to six with some realignment of responsibilities as indicated below:

- Population and Social Statistics Department (PSSD)
- Real Sector Statistics Department (RSSD)
- Macro-Economic Statistical Department (MSD)
- Field Services and Methodology Department (FSMD)
- Corporate Planning and Technical Coordination Department (CPTCD)
- Information and Communication Technology Department (ICTD)

Other novel ideas in the proposed organogram for the NBS in the Master Plan is the transfer of the responsibility of the Department of Personnel Management and Finance and Supplies in the old FOS to the Corporate Planning and Technical Coordination Department, the creation of Macro-economic, Real Sector, Population and Social Statistics Departments from the old subject-matter Departments and with wider orientation. For example, a department now manages population and social statistics rather than before when a department was managing both social and economics statistics. Better still, Prices and Trade Statistics were moved from Censuses

and Surveys into one department with National Accounts which was previously under the social and economic analysis department.

The proposed organogram in the Statistical Master Plan is superior to the former one but flawed in putting the responsibilities for General Administration, Finances and Supplies under Corporate Planning and Coordination. The NBS is a big organisation with some 3,000 personnel in 47 different locations (Headquarters, 36 State Offices, an office in the Federal Capital, 6 Zonal Offices and 3 Schools). Under normal circumstances, it will require about \$125 million annually to manage its operations and, therefore, needs a separate Department of Finance and Administration.

With the foregoing analysis, a Seven-Departmental Structure is being adopted for the repositioned NBS along with the 4 Units, six Zonal Offices, 36 State Offices, an office in the Federal Capital and 3 Schools. The departments are as follows:

- Corporate Planning and Technical Cooperation (CPTC)
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- Finance and Administration (F&A)
- Economic Statistics (ES)
- Demographic and Social Statistics (DSS)
- Real Sector Statistics (RSS)
- Field Services and Methodology (FSM)

In the reformed NBS, the Corporate Planning and Technical Cooperation (CPTC) Department is expected to maintain an institutional linkage with other departments and units within the agency as well as with all public and private sector organisations and development partners and users of official statistics in Nigeria and overseas. The department will be strengthened to coordinate the inter-agency relationships and inter-agency collaboration on statistics matters. Within the NBS, the CPTC Department will coordinate the activities of other departments from the planning to the execution of routine and ad-hoc statistical activities. It will work with the F&A department on personnel matters relating to matching of skills with responsibilities, manning levels in Headquarters, Zonal and State Offices in the choice recruitment and posting of staff, in the engagement of consultants and vendors and in the processing of contracts. The department, under the supervisor of the Chief Executive Officer, will also coordinate donor supports through its Project Implementation Unit (PIU). It is further expected to coordinate special projects initiated by other institutions in the country and international organisations.

The CPTC will be fully involved in the coordination of the relationships between the NBS and Federal MDAs through the Federal Agencies Consultative Committee on Statistics (FACCS), which meets twice a year. The department is similarly organised to liaise between the NBS and State Statistical Agencies (SSAs) through the National Consultative Committee on Statistics (NCCS), which also meets twice a year. The NCCS, by law, will bring together all Directors of Statistics in SSAs and key Federal Agencies. The conventional approach to the coordinating role of CPTC is advocacy, collaboration in special surveys and censuses and periodic meetings and workshops.

The NBS has been developing new approaches to its coordinating responsibilities. One is the development of a compendium of statistical terms, concepts and methodologies for data production and management. The document covers, to-date, 30 data sets of over 54,000 variables. The data sets are as follows:

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| 1. Agriculture | 16. Public Finance |
| 2. Water Resources | 17. Prices and Price Indices |
| 3. Petroleum | 18. National Accounts |
| 4. Mining & Quarrying | 19. Public Order, Safety & Crime |
| 5. Manufacturing | 20. Education |
| 6. Electricity Supply & Demand | 21. Population & Vital Statistics |
| 7. Water Supply | 22. Health and Human Services |
| 8. Housing, Building & Construction | 23. Employment & Labour |
| 9. Distributive Trade & Services | 24. Environmental Statistics |
| 10. International Trade & BOP | 25. Membership Organisations |
| 11. Hotels, Restaurants & Tourism | 26. Recreation & Sporting Activities |
| 12. Transport | 27. Religion & Related Activities |
| 13. Communications | 28. Public Administration Security |
| 14. Money & Banking | 29. Meteorological Statistics |
| 15. Financial Intermediation | 30. Research and Development |

The compendium represents a form of meta-data for the different types of data needed by Government in managing the national economy.

The contents of the compendium will allow the NBS and other organs of government responsible for producing the different types of official statistics to work in a coordinated fashion in the management of data in the country. The compendium is currently being used to develop the National Socio-Economic Database (NSED) that will be housed in the National Data Centre (NDC) at the NBS. Each sectoral data base will also be de-

veloped in relevant MDAs and linked to the NSED. For example, the education data base in the Federal Ministry of Education will be linked to the education data component of the NSED at the NBS. This way, both the Ministry and the NBS will be talking about the same set of data on education. Once the Ministry updates its data base, the component of the NSED allocated to education statistics will be updated automatically at the NBS. When fully developed, a similar situation will exist for all Federal MDAs.

A further new approach to coordination in the NBS is the mounting of various technical workshops for professional staff in the MDAs at the Federal and State levels to improve their capacity for survey planning, data collection, processing, management and dissemination. Special workshops have also been mounted for members of the Legislature, Organised Private Sector, journalists, students and staff of Nigerian Universities and Research Institutes for them to understand the processes of statistical activities in the NBS.

Apart from the CPTC department using the afore-mentioned approaches to coordinate the Statistical System, it will be fully engaged in the development of Annual, Short-Term (3-year) and Long Term (5-year) Statistical Programmes that will guide statistical activities within the NBS. Currently, this programming activity is being used in the development of the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) with extension to the States and Local Government Areas (LGAs) and possibly to lower levels (Wards or Communities); all in the spirit of the on-going National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS), Local Government Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS) and Community Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (CEEDS).

Another area of reform within the NBS is the creation of a new Information and Communication Technology Department (ICTD). The ICTD will in addition to managing the data processing activities in the NBS, be involved in software engineering activities, particularly, in data-base and system administration and application development for managing micro and macro-level data. The department will work with the Public Affairs and International Relations Unit (PAIRU) in the management of the NBS Portal for the dissemination of statistics to the outside world. ICTD will manage the National Data Centre (NDC), which is being established to archive and manage statistical as well as non-statistical information from

documents and other media. Apart from macro-level data, ICTD will manage all micro-data from past and present surveys and censuses in the NBS and other MDAs. The Department will continually transfer new data production and management technologies to the MDAs at the Federal and State levels. Finally, it will be responsible for managing all items of hardware and software in the NBS; the Local Area Network within Headquarters, Zonal and State Offices; the Municipal Area Network to connect the NBS to Federal MDAs; Wide Area Network to connect the NBS to its Zonal and State Offices and the Internet connection between NBS and the rest of the world.

Both the CPTC and ICT are service departments, that is, their operations complement those of other departments. Another service department is the Finance and Administration (F&A), which handles all personnel matters and finances. The department will manage the payroll, prepare and manage the capital and recurrent budgets, oversee disbursement of funds, pay salaries and honour contract obligations. A recent innovation into the working of the F&A department is the deployment of a computerised Human Resource and Payroll System (CHRPS), now being used to manage personnel records and pay salaries of workers all over the country from the Headquarters. The Department also coordinates training programmes for NBS staff, including the management.

There is also the establishment of an Economic Statistics Department (ESD), which will manage data relevant to economic management at the macro-level as well as data relating to input, output and financial markets. Data to be assembled, managed and analysed by the ESD will cover items in all areas of monetary and fiscal policies, including taxes (corporate, excise duties, tariffs, etc.), external trade, foreign exchange transactions, Balance of Payments (BOP), government revenue and expenditure, estimation of the National Accounts and consumer, producer, export and import price indices, inflation rates, and other economic indicators. The department will work closely with the Central Bank of Nigeria and Ministry of Finance at the Federal and State Levels. It will also work in close collaboration with the Real Sector Statistics department.

The NBS has also reorganised the old Censuses and Surveys Department (CSD) of the old FOS. The Prices and Trade Division of the erstwhile CSD is moved to ESD, leading to the creation of a Real Sector Statistics Department (RSSD) from the remaining three Divisions in CSD, namely, Household, Agriculture and Establishment. This Department will be solely responsible for the conduct of censuses and surveys to obtain household

and establishment level data for agriculture and non-agricultural enterprises in the country. The key activities in the department will entail the conduct of the following core censuses and surveys:

- General Household Survey (GHS)
- National Integrated Survey of Households (NISH)
- National Integrated Survey of Establishments (NISE)
- Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)
- National Living Standards Survey (NLSS)
- Labour Force Survey (LFS)
- Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaire (CWIQ) Survey
- National Agricultural Sample Survey (NASS)
- National Agricultural Sample Census (NASC)
- Ad-Hoc Surveys

In view of the nature of the activities of the RSSD, it will work closely with the Field Services and Methodology Department (FSMD). The FSMD is expected to manage field operations of all surveys and censuses. It will also handle the design of surveys based on Enumeration Area (EA) demarcations of the National Population Commission (NPC). Since the Commission currently enjoys constitutional support to handle population and housing census, the FSMD will carry out field service planning in terms of surveys and master frames, including household and establishment listings and selection of sample domains based on information from NPC. The department is expected to oversee and coordinate operations at the Zonal and State Offices of the NBS.

The last operations department in NBS is the new Demographic and Social Statistics Department (DSSD). Again, given the constitutional autonomy of the Population Commission, it is expected that the DSSD will collaborate with the Commission in the conduct of the Population and Housing Censuses and demographic and health surveys as well as the collection of routine vital statistics. The Demographic Statistics Division of the DSSD will be fully involved in all national demographic surveys conducted, whether by the Population Commission or the Federal Ministry of Health. It will also work in close collaboration with the RSSD and FSMD in the NBS. Other areas of the activities of DSSD will cover the assemblage and management of statistics that touch on the social lives of Nigerians. The statistics will consist of data from the system of administrative statistics derived from activities of public institutions at the Federal, State and Local Governments. Such data will come explicitly from economic, social and institutional infrastructural organisations in subject ar-

areas like power, transportation, communications, health, education, water resources and supply as well as security, judiciary and law making. And, in line with global statistical demands, the department is also organised to have Gender and MDG Desks to mainstream gender and poverty issues into the statistics programmes of the NBS. In the same vein, Energy and Environmental Desks will domicile in the ESD, but will have to work with the DSSD now that environmental and energy statistics are beginning to feature in the estimation of National Accounts.

In the repositioned NBS, four special Units will exist under the Office of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). First, is the Public Affairs and International Relations Unit (PAIRU), which will manage data dissemination through production of publications and management of the NBS Portal (website), publicity of NBS operations, interaction with development partners through the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and the management of the Protocol Desk. Second, is the Legal Unit under the management of the Legal Adviser and a team of lawyers. The Unit will provide legal services for the NBS, undertake court appearances for the Bureau, prepare contracts and offer legal advice based on the Statistics Act. Third, is the Audit Unit, which will provide the necessary financial controls under conventional public service accounting procedures. Finally, is the Research and Policy Analysis Unit (RPAU), which will be responsible for researching into the policy interpretations of statistical outputs from the NBS. The RPAU is an innovation and will be involved in quantitative and qualitative analyses, working closely with researchers, academicians and policy analysts within Government, particularly those in the National Planning Commission, Federal Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Nigeria and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation.

Upgrading office infrastructure

The most noticeable demonstration of the repositioning in the NBS by the Federal Government of Nigeria was the purchase of a new building to serve as the Corporate Headquarters for the Agency in Abuja, the nation's Capital. The building is located on Plot 762, Independence Avenue in the Central Business District. It is conspicuously located and close to the imposing NNPC Towers, and short distances from the headquarters of the Central Bank of Nigeria and Federal Secretariat. Hitherto, headquarters staff of the agency were accommodated in four locations in Lagos. This is the first time in the long existence of the organisation that a corporate headquarters building is provided for it. The Lagos offices have been closed down, except for one that has been converted to the NBS Lagos State Office.

The headquarters building is a 5-Storey twin edifice, which is currently being partitioned to accommodate about 500 professional and support staff. It is also fitted with two 500KVA generators, a fire-fighting system, large water reservoir and an intercom facilities. The structure is in direct contrast to the former headquarters building, also in Abuja, and provides a more conducive work environment for the staff.

The NBS Headquarters building was actually purchased in 2005, but had not been put into use since it was built 10 years earlier. It has undergone substantial rehabilitation. Along with civil works, a borehole has been sunk to complement the erratic water supplies from the main System. Partitioning and furnishing of the building were funded by the European Union (EU) under its Economic Management and Capacity Assistance Programme (EMCAP).

The fifth floor houses the Office of the Chief Executive Officer of the NBS, a Board Room, the Units under the CEO, except the Internal Audit Unit (IAU), as well as the ICT Department. The National Data Centre (NDC) is also on the 5th floor. Other Departments occupy floors 2-4, while the first floor has a large conference room, a sick bay, data shop and Information Centre, the library, training room, canteen and utility rooms. By mid-2007, the Local Area Network (LAN) became fully functional. The LAN has about 500 nodes with every member of staff in the Office connected. The Office is fully computerised; at present, the NBS has in stock over 520 PCs, 15 Laptops, 8 Servers, 7 Scanners and 9 Network Printers. The NBS Headquarters has been fully linked through the fiber optics network to all the Zonal offices.

Human resource management and development

The Agency inherited about 4,100 workers from the former Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) and National Data Bank (NDB). A significant proportion of these workers were either unqualified to work in a National Statistics Office or lack the required skills to cope with modern technologies being introduced into the NBS. In fact, as explained in the Statistical Master Plan, only 15 percent of the workforce in the FOS were professionals and sub-professionals. As part of the repositioning agenda for the NBS, early in 2006, 1,153 workers, mainly enumerators, messengers, cleaners and clerks with only primary school leaving certificate were disengaged from service. Before they were finally let go, they all underwent a two-week training workshop that exposed them to entrepreneurial skills on management of funds and small-scale enterprises. They were all paid their terminal benefits after the training.

The NBS inherited a large number of non-professional and purely civil service workers from the old FOS. They were mainly administrative and accounts officers posted from the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) and the Accountant-General's Office. A number of reforms have since been introduced to manage the human resources of NBS. First, was the identification of the non-professional staff that will be returned to their parent offices. This process will be completed by the end of March, 2007. Second, is the development of a computerised Human Resource and Payroll System (CHRPS). As mentioned earlier, this software application is now being used to pay salaries directly into the bank accounts of all NBS workers across the country. Before this time, each State and Zonal Office had to wait for up to three weeks after the end of each month before staff could collect their salaries. This was because the existing salary processing system relied on manual technology, which was very slow and prone to human errors.

As part of the human resource management component of the reform in the NBS, attempt is being made to strike a right balance between the number of staff in the Headquarters and Zonal and State Offices. Hitherto, most of the professional staff of the agency worked in the Headquarters where surveys are planned, collection of administration statistics organized, and all data processing took place. Now at the NBS, statistics operations are being decentralised and a significant proportion of the professional staff have been transferred to the Zonal and State Offices where most survey operations (including data processing) now take place. This decentralisation has greatly improved field operations and quickened data processing.

In another area, plans are on to increase the number of professionals through recruitment. The target is to improve the share of professional and sub-professional staff from the present 15 per-cent to 40 per cent in the short term and 60 per cent within the next 3 years. A programme has also been designed to gradually disengage fatigued and inefficient personnel from the workforce through the normal public service disengagement process.

Staff training is another major component of the on-going reform at the NBS. At the onset of the reform, a change management training programme was organised for the headquarters staff. Similar training programmes are currently being extended to the Zonal and State Offices. A training consultant working with the agency has prepared a 3-year training programme to equip staff to the challenges ahead. The programme covers courses in all

facets of applied statistics, ICT tools and general management. The agency has 3 training schools for the production of sub-professional statisticians. Their curricula are now being upgraded to include courses on ICT, including the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) in statistical operations and analyses. The schools will also be upgraded to teach French as a second language to facilitate the Bureau's work with sister organisations in the French-speaking West African countries around Nigeria. In future, Franco-phone students from these countries are expected to be trained in the NBS Schools of Statistics.

Improved data production technologies

Data collection and processing are two major activities in data production, and in Nigeria, the technologies used had been largely manual. In a reformed NBS, however, the introduction of digital technologies in data collection and processing is presently being explored. The traditional questionnaire design for manual data capture is also being replaced by scannable ones. This has the possibility of substantially reducing non-sampling errors, make data processing more friendly, fast, less labour-intensive and relatively cheap. In terms of labour use, the number of data processing staff for a national survey can be halved by the new technology. For example, in the recently concluded Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) survey in Nigeria, 74,400 household questionnaires were processed in 8 weeks as against an estimated period of about 8 months using the old manual data processing technology.

Another innovation into data production process in the new NBS is the out-sourcing of data collection. Previously, most national surveys relied only on the full-time enumerators of the agency, with occasional recruitment of "relatives" who were generally unqualified and inexperienced or not committed to the exercise if they did not understand the local language or culture to elicit the required responses from the interviewees. Under the reform and with the disengagement of the largely "illiterate" enumerators in the workforce of the agency, data collection is now being outsourced. For example, in a recently concluded National CWIQ Survey, advertisements were placed in newspapers with national reach to engage well-qualified enumerators to execute the field work together with regular NBS enumerators. Those that responded to the advertisements and interested NBS Staff sat for an examination to select the final list of enumerators. This CWIQ survey represents the first time in the history of the agency that data collected for a national survey were not only out-sourced but also processed using the scanning technology. The outcome was outstanding in terms of the quality of

data and timely delivery of results. In the nearest future, data collection will be better enhanced by the use of hand-held GPS-GIS mobile equipment. With this technology, the locations of all enumerators will be geo-referenced and ascertained when field data are downloaded into the data capture system at the Headquarters. This will eliminate the usual practice of enumerators filling forms without actually carrying out enumeration. The technology will greatly help in improving the integrity of field data from surveys and data collection activities relating to prices.

Another very important advantage of the mobile technology is that it has greatly enhanced the quality of agricultural census and survey data. The equipment has the capability of calculating the area of a farm by merely walking round the farm. Hitherto, areas of farms were obtained manually by using poles, compasses and tapes with bearings and distances round the farm boundaries recorded on the farm. Using the old method, the data obtained on the farm were then transferred into a programmable calculator to calculate the area of the farm. Apart from saving some time, this new technology will also generate the sketch of farms, reducing closing errors to zero, thus eliminating the use of compasses, tapes, poles and manual calculators and reducing fatigue from long stay on farms doing physical measurements.

Data management, dissemination and access

Data had always been organised in the traditional way in the agency as a carry-over from the Federal Office of Statistics. This old method was based on a flat-file system like creating tables from surveys and administrative records. This made method makes it difficult to share data table and because the system was not amenable to queries. The new initiatives under the reform in NBS will require the deployment of several data-base systems using well tested software engines. The first of this initiative is the development of a Time-Series Socio-Economic Data-base of macro-level data based on the Statistical Compendium earlier discussed. Currently, the data base has been designed to handle over 54,000 variables covering all Sector Statistics in Nigeria. The strategy is to develop a module for each MDA so that data collected and entered into sectoral databases will come to NBS central database automatically. This way, the NBS can track the performance of the data generation activities of all MDAs at the Federal level. Other data bases are also being developed, and notable amongst them is a set of micro-data-bases that are being used to warehouse data from surveys and censuses conducted by the NBS and sister organisations. These data bases rely on the International Household Survey Network Microdata Manage-

ment Toolkit, which facilitates dissemination through the Internet. In this way, users, particularly researchers, can have access to individual household and establishment level data for further analysis. An integrated spreadsheet template is also being developed to capture administrative data from Local Government Areas, States and Zones. This template will enable the production of State Statistical Yearbook (SSYB), Zonal Statistical Yearbook (ZSYB) and National Statistical Yearbook (NSYB) for the country on annual basis. Finally, a document management system is being developed for the agency to warehouse statistical and non-statistical information about Nigeria from old publications and satellite maps.

The afore-mentioned data bases will be warehoused in the National Data Centre (NDC), which will also double as the virtual window for the NBS to the rest of the world, through the NBS Web Portal www.nigerianstat.gov.ng. The data centre shall warehouse all statistical and non-statistical information about Nigeria, going back to the pre-independence years. Apart from archiving of these historical materials, the NDC will also house results of all censuses and surveys as well as sector statistics from MDAs at the Federal, State and Local Government levels. The contents of the NDC will reach users all over the world through the NBS web portal, in addition to conventional media like CD ROMs and publications. The agency is also planning to reach regular data users in Government, academics, private sector and international organisations through a central e-mailing facility. These users will be provided with customised e-mail addresses to link up with the NBS. As part of the ICT solution currently being introduced into the Bureau, the Jos, Kaduna, Maiduguri, Ibadan, Enugu and Calabar Zonal Offices have been upgraded to Zonal Data Centres (ZDCs) to serve as a hub of data capture, processing, dissemination and access at the sub-national level. This is a prelude to a National Data Network (NDN) that the NBS is developing for the country with a national hub at its National Date Centre.

4. Innovative approaches to sustainability in Nigeria's NSO

Poor funding of NSOs had always been the bane of the development of statistics in Africa. The Nigerian experience is typical of the situation. The Nigerian NSO, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) went through a pathetic funding experience prior to the current reform agenda which is attracting significantly high funding support from the donor community and the Federal government of Nigeria. The contribution of donor funds to the reform is, however, substantially high compared with the contribution from Government. This poses a worrisome scenario because when the

current level of international funds reduces the funding situation and current level of performance of NBS may revert to the pre-reform period. The foregoing explains why the office is conceiving of a number of innovative approaches to sustainable funding for the agency. More importantly, NBS is making attempts at institutionalizing a sustainability programme so that the development of statistics in the country is guaranteed.

The sustainability programme will ensure the continuation of the current and future work programmes of NBS and provide the agency the leverage to continually play a leading role in the country's NSS. In addition, the programme will lay the foundation for a continued financial and moral support for the production of official statistics from top Government functionaries, politicians in the parliament, international donor agencies as well as the business, research, academic and media communities. The choice of approaches are many but NBS is experimenting with some few ones as explained in what follows.

First, in NBS plans are on to establish a National Statistics Fund (NSF) since the 2007 Statistics Act empowers the agency to source for money outside Government to fund statistics activities. The Fund will be based on contributions from large government organisations, internally generated funds, donor funds and voluntary contributions from large corporate organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The major contributors from the public sector will include large data producers and users like the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Federal Inland Revenue Service (NIRS) and other large income-generating public institutions. Incidentally, most of the expected institutional contributors to the Fund are members of the proposed Board of Governors of NBS in the 2007 Statistics Act. The donors and International financial institutions expected to be contributors will include the UNDP, DFID, EU, USAID, the World Bank and several other bilateral donor agencies and NGOs. The large publicly quoted companies, including commercial banks and manufacturing companies as well as insurance companies are expected to contribute to the Fund. Finally, NBS will be able to contribute to the Fund from the sale of its products (offline and on-line) and provision of technical services to other public sector organisations as well as international and domestic private sector organisations and NGOs on consultancy basis. The Fund will be managed through a private Fund Manager to ensure transparency and accountability under the supervision of the Board of Governors of NBS.

Secondly, NBS has plans to institutionalise an Outreach Sensitisation Programme (OSP) to “sell” statistics to the Political Class (PC), Organised Private Sector (OPS), Research and Academic Community (RAC) and other groups of data users. This will be in form of regular workshops and seminars. The idea is to make NBS survey results not only available for use but to build capacity for users to understand how surveys are conducted and results generated and analysed. The political class, particularly the members of parliament in the National Assembly at the Federal level, needs to understand the importance of statistics and relevance to their legislative role of making informed contributions to policy debates. This will also help them in their oversight functions over the executive arm of Government. For the OPS, the outreach programme will enable the business community understand why Establishment Surveys are undertaken and how data from member organisations contribute to the estimation of the National Accounts (GDP, for example), Price Indices, Employment figures, and so on. In addition, members from the OPS will be able to learn from Household Survey results on how an understanding of household consumption pattern in different locations within the country can assist in designing effective production and marketing strategies. The Research and Academic communities will, through the outreach programme, learn how to access NBS survey and administrative data offline and online. Household level survey data will be particularly useful to academic researchers. More importantly, the institutionalisation of the outreach sensitisation programme will induce the parliamentarians to continually support improved financial appropriation to the agency. It will also encourage the research and academic communities to pay for data and therefore enhance the income-generation ability of the agency and increase the willingness of the organised private sector to contribute voluntarily to the National Statistics Fund (NFS).

Third, in order to ensure the relevance of NBS in the data-producer-data user community, the agency is planning to develop a robust capacity to meet special demands from all shades of clients. This explains why the agency is planning to institutionalise a Service Enhancement Programme (SEP) to boost the existing capacity of the agency. Relying on the new status of the agency as stipulated in the 2007 Statistics Act, the condition of service and salary structure of its staff will be enhanced by moving them from the Civil Service System to the University System. This does not only come with enhanced salary, but will enable the agency to retain staff beyond 60 years of age and also make performance the key factor for staff

promotion. This will promote productivity of staff, build better capacity and be able to meet higher levels of demand. A retainership scheme is also being planned to use well-qualified data collection agents on an outsourced basis. Also, the agency plans to retain the services of national experts who will be engaged on short-term basis to support in-house staff on survey planning, data collection monitoring, data processing, data analysis, and report preparation. The outsourcing of expertise will boost the capacity of the agency to meet special demands from clients, complement in-house capacity on regular large surveys, improve quality of outputs and very importantly, create an opportunity for additional sources of funds as clients will be paying administrative fees to the agency on special assignment. This innovation on service enhancement will also anchor on the deployment of ICT tools in all aspects of data production, data management, dissemination and analysis, including mapping of survey results. The service enhancement programme will reduce the cost of statistical operations in the agency apart from improving the ability of the agency to meet special demands for surveys as well as the management of regular surveys. In addition, NBS is experimenting with engaging a private courier service company to move survey materials to and from the Headquarters and the 36 State offices. Hitherto, this service was rendered by staff which turned out to be expensive and slow.

Finally, NBS is in the process of institutionalising an improved work environment at the agency's Headquarters as well as the 6 zonal, 36 State and Federal Territory Offices. The idea is to make workers enjoy a stress-free work environment that can improve productivity and eventually reduce cost of statistical operations. The first thing being experimented is to contract a private Facility Management Company to take care of all the civil, mechanical and electrical maintenance duties in the offices. In addition, private service providers also handle office cleaning services, including horticultural maintenance services in the offices. Furthermore, a private security company also provides security services in the offices. This approach has proved more effective and less costly than the previous arrangements where the agency's staff perform these services. In fact, the agency has demonstrated by this action that public servants are not cut out to handle maintenance, gardening, cleaning and security services, in public sector organisations.

5. Concluding Remarks

This paper has attempted to showcase what African countries can do to establish a virile National Statistics Office (NSO), with Nigeria as the case study. What is important to note, however, is the sustainability of the present repositioning exercises in many African countries. The worry is that a significant amount of the funds now being used for the reforms in these NSOs is coming from donors and international financial organisations. The suggestion, therefore, is for each NSO to put in place a sustainability programme as currently being experimented by the Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). These approaches include the establishment of a National Statistical Fund (NSF) to continually fund statistics operations in addition to what comes from the Treasury as well as a number of innovative cost-saving and productivity improvement approaches, including outreach sensitisation programme to win financial and moral support from the political class, the organised private sector and research and academic institutions; a Service Enhancement Programme in the areas of better condition of service for staff; outsourcing of a number of operations and services; extensive use of ICT tools and various retainership arrangements, as explained in the main body of the paper.

In conclusion, it is expected that sister African countries will have something to learn from the Nigerian experience and share their experiences along the line.

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