



Statistics for Transparency, Accountability, and Results:

A Busan Action Plan for Statistics



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Executive summary

As the world community faces a complex array of challenges, policy makers need better statistics.

Statistics provide the evidence needed to improve decision making, document results, and heighten public accountability. The demand for improved statistics to monitor the Millennium Development Goals and the parallel effort to support a culture of results-based management has stimulated a decade long effort to improve statistics. The results have been impressive, but much work remains to be done.

This five point action plan provides the direction for the decade ahead. It supports three principal objectives: (1) Fully integrating statistics in decision making; (2) Promoting open access to statistics; (3) Increasing resources for statistical systems.

The Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF4) to be held in Busan, Korea in 2011 is an opportunity to form a partnership to implement this action plan. As a result, partner country statistical capacity will be better able to highlight strategic issues for policy decisions, monitor progress, evaluate impact, and ensure results-focused public sector management.

While maintaining the partner country-led approach of past efforts guided by the 2004 Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS), the Busan action plan goes beyond MAPS in many ways. It adopts a system-wide approach to capacity development to integrate national statistical activities with the requirements of planning, budgeting, monitoring, and results. It recognizes the important synergies between survey and census-based data, administrative data, and vital statistics. The plan also explicitly supports greater transparency and encourages the use of new methods and technologies to increase the reliability and accessibility of statistics.

The action plan explicitly recognizes the statistical activities necessary to support key global commitments including on initiatives such as gender equity and the empowerment of women. (See Annex I for a sample list of statistical programs responding to emerging global initiatives.)

The action plan will require substantial effort and investment across the range of development actors. While it establishes priorities, it must still be translated into a set of time-bound and monitorable tasks. Implementation should be “bureaucracy light,” relying on existing partnerships, agencies, and institutions. Financial support will come primarily from domestic revenues, but donor support remains essential and new sources of financial assistance will be sought to supplement existing ones. The full engagement of international bodies will be crucial, especially forums that bring together national and international experts to exchange knowledge and solve problems.

Policy makers need better statistics

Reliable and accessible statistics provide the evidence needed to improve decision making, document results, and heighten public accountability. As the world community faces a complex array of challenges, policy makers need better statistics. Ongoing global economic and financial challenges have demonstrated the need for timely, high quality macroeconomic and financial data. Rising food prices have differential impacts on consumers and producers that can only be understood through integrated statistics on household consumption, agricultural production, and trade. Health programs for communicable and non-communicable diseases similarly require administrative data from the health system combined with data obtained from vital registration household surveys. And new initiatives to address gender equality and opportunities for women will require innovative methods of data collection and analysis.

The demand for improved statistics to monitor the Millennium Development Goals and the parallel effort to inculcate a culture of results-based management to increase development effectiveness has stimulated a decade long effort to improve statistics. The results have been impressive, but much work remains to be done.

The need is urgent, because many gaps remain.

Africa may never know the impact of the global financial crisis on its poorest citizens. Only 17 Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries have collected data to measure changes in poverty in the past decade and 47 percent of SSA countries have not carried out a household income or expenditure survey in more than five years.

Without better statistics, opportunities for designing and implementing program policies to improve gender equality and increase women's empowerment are constrained. Between 2005 and 2009, 71 (out of 145) countries did not report data on the share of women in non-agricultural wage work, an MDG3 indicator. Indicators of female entrepreneurship remain under-developed.

Actions to improve food security require better and more up-to-date statistics. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, the quantity and quality of agricultural statistics coming from national statistical offices have been on a steady decline since the early 1980s, particularly in Africa, and official submissions from countries in Africa are at their lowest level since before 1961, with only one in four African countries reporting basic crop production data.

Statistics are a matter of life and death. In 2009 the births of 50 million children went unrecorded. They entered the world with no proof of age, citizenship, or parentage. That same year 40 million people died unnoted except by family or friends. There are no records of where they died, when they died, and more importantly how they died. In most high-income countries these vital events (births and deaths) are recorded by civil registration systems, which also record marriages, adoptions, and divorces. But in many developing countries registration systems are incomplete or absent. In South Asia only 1 percent of the population is covered by complete vital registration records, and in Sub-Saharan Africa only 2 percent (UN, *Population and Vital Statistics Report*, 2011). Lacking effective registration systems, countries must rely on infrequent and expensive surveys to estimate the vital statistics needed to support the core functions of government and to plan for the future. More often, key policy decisions are made in the absence of reliable data.

Improvements will build on past successes

The need for better statistics to design, monitor, and assess development programs was recognized at the First International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results in 2002.

The Second Roundtable held at Marrakech in 2004 endorsed the *Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics* (MAPS), establishing an international agenda for support to statistics in developing countries. The following year, the *Paris Declaration* adopted the “the core principles put forward at the Marrakech Roundtable on Managing for Development Results.”ⁱ Subsequently the *Accra Agenda for Action* made broad commitments on behalf of donors and developing countries to strengthen national statistical systems; provide more data disaggregated by sex, region, and economic status; and “invest in strengthening developing countries’ national statistical capacity and information systems, including those for managing aid.”ⁱⁱ More recently, the 2009 *Dakar Declaration on the Development of Statistics* reaffirmed that “concerted and co-ordinated actions are required to make more effective use of statistical data to support poverty reduction policies and programs and to strengthen and sustain the capacity of statistical systems especially in developing countries.”

MAPS recommended six “short- and medium-term actions consistent with long-term, sustainable improvements in national and international statistical capacity.”ⁱⁱⁱ Recognizing the essential partnership between national and international institutions, the actions were divided into those addressing national needs and a second set of actions addressing international responsibilities. Resources to support implementation of the MAPS agenda came from bilateral and multilateral donors and from national budgets.

Much progress has been made. Out of the 79 low-income IDA countries, only eight countries do not have a national strategy for the development of statistics (NSDS) and are not planning to prepare one. Implementing these strategies is well underway in many countries. After the 2010 census round concludes, 98 percent of the world’s population will have been counted. Since donors began reporting support for statistical capacity development in 2008, financial commitments to statistics have increased by 60 percent to \$1.6 billion over the period 2008-10. Over 55 developing countries have improved their practices in data collection, management, and dissemination of household surveys. The Interagency and Expert Group on the MDGs has conducted a series of regional workshops aimed at improving the monitoring of the MDGs and has reported annually on progress. Over this period, the quality of statistics as measured by the World Bank’s statistical capacity indicator has improved from its benchmark level of 52 in 1999 to 68 in 2009. And there has been progress in developing results-oriented monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks.

Evaluations have confirmed the effectiveness of MAPS. The “Progress Since Paris” report found “substantial progress” reflected in “More partner countries hav[ing] sound national development strategies in place, and these tend[ing] to be more clearly prioritized than in 2005” along “with evidence suggesting that MDG-related statistics are becoming increasingly available at the country level.”^{iv} An evaluation of MAPS carried out in 2008 found that “MAPS focused on topics that remain of highest priority in the development of statistics in the developing countries ... to create a strong framework for dealing with the multifaceted problems of statistical development in developing countries.”^v MAPS was also included in a global program review conducted by the World Bank’s Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) in 2010. The main findings of the 2010 IEG evaluation concluded that “Significant progress has been achieved in the primary objective of encouraging and supporting developing countries to design National Strategies for the Development of Statistics

(NSDSs), but only some progress has been made in NSDS implementation.” The report also noted that statistical development has begun to receive a higher priority in national development programs. But it cautioned that “Statistical capacity building programs need to involve the users of statistics more actively.”^{vi}

Experience since 2004 suggests the following lessons:

- Rapid progress is possible and there is strong uptake by developing countries for programs to increase their statistical capacity^{vii}. But implementing national strategies is not always straightforward and the plans are often too ambitious. Maintaining core statistical activities while responding to the wider results agenda and new, emerging data needs of decision-makers remain a challenge. Additional support is needed, especially in fragile states and small island developing states. Furthermore, the capacity to use statistical information remains weak and should be addressed as part of a larger, system-wide approach to capacity development.
- There is growing demand for disaggregated statistics and for geo-coded data needed to monitor and evaluate programs at the local level. But sex disaggregated statistics, needed to measure results and ensure that programs and public expenditures are appropriately targeted, are not systematically compiled or used; essential statistics on agricultural inputs and production are missing or outdated in a majority of developing countries; and few developing countries are equipped to manage large geo-spatial information systems.
- At the international level, coordination of donor support for statistical capacity development programs remains imperfect. Despite the increased emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, many donor-financed projects fail to collect or preserve important statistical indicators. At the same time, new technologies and the advent of geographic information systems are making possible innovative methods of collecting, storing, and analyzing data, requiring additional efforts toward creating international standards and methods for managing and disseminating large datasets.

A Renewed Partnership to Improve Statistics

An HLF4–endorsed partnership to implement a *Busan Action Plan for Statistics* provides the opportunity to extend the progress made over the last decade under MAPS and to provide direction for the decade ahead. The action plan has three principal objectives:

Fully integrate statistics in decision making: Improvements in the production of statistics are essential, but policy makers and program managers must also understand how to use statistics effectively. Poor quality statistics lead to their under use, which in turn leads to neglect and under funding of statistical activities. Statistical offices should be routinely engaged in planning, budgeting, and M&E processes so the statistics they produce are relevant and meet user priorities.

Promote open access to statistics: The hallmark of transparent and accountable governments is open access to information. Making timely and reliable statistics widely available to the public as well as to policy makers and other stakeholders increases government effectiveness and public confidence.

Increase resources for statistical systems: Continued investment is a key to breaking the vicious cycle of neglect and disuse of statistics. Financial support to national statistical systems should be integrated in development assistance programs with developing countries providing in-country

leadership. Donors should adopt system-wide approaches, coordinating their assistance strategies to ensure they are consistent with national priorities.

An Action Plan for Statistics

The action plan has benefited from a thorough consultation process and has been endorsed by members of the PARIS21 partnership and other key development partners. It builds on past successes and addresses outstanding gaps, going well beyond current approaches. It draws from experience since the launch of MAPS and an assessment of the major factors shaping the evolution of statistical systems. Its focus is on country capacity development through country-owned and country-led development strategies but recognizes the interdependence of national and international statistical activity. It proposes a manageable number of actions that can be adapted flexibly to country circumstances.

Like MAPS, it recognizes the complementary roles of developing countries, bilateral development partners, and international agencies. It encourages a coordinated, system-wide approach to capacity development. Aid aligned with countries' statistical development strategies will be more effective than ad hoc, donor-initiated capacity development and data collection efforts. And improvements in country statistical systems will improve international statistics, while a more effective international system will provide more consistent advice and better support for national activities.

This plan will also rely on indicators to track progress under each action. Although a work in progress, some possible progress indicators are provided under each of the six actions.

Action 1 - Strengthen and re-focus national and regional statistical strategies with particular emphasis on improving statistical systems that address country-level development priorities. A key aim is to increase in-country capacity to respond to emerging and unforeseen needs. Strategies should be updated to reflect new challenges and opportunities and integrate international and domestic data collection activities.

- Building on existing national plans, prioritize implementation to ensure that crucial domestic policy priorities are addressed first. Early small successes achieved through gradual implementation will help build up to larger successes at a later stage.
- Establish partnerships of national users and producers of data through Communities of Practice^{viii} at both the national and regional level to enhance communication and encourage innovation.
- Grounded in country priorities, ensure gender statistics are fully mainstreamed into the national statistical system. This will require improving existing data collection approaches and developing new ones that are implemented on a regular basis. Multi-purpose household surveys will be particularly important for measurement of female entrepreneurship, time use, access to finance, and gender-based violence.
- Address weaknesses in vital registration systems and data critical for monitoring program performance – including administrative data, sex disaggregated data, and geospatial information.

- Ensure that the development of sectoral data (such as agriculture, health, education, environment, and labor) is fully integrated into and synchronized with national and regional statistical strategies, not only to contribute to stronger statistical systems but also to rationalize resources and reduce the duplication of efforts across ministries at country level.

Possible indicators to track progress: i) Number of NSDSs with clear priorities and costing for implementation; ii) countries incorporating specific plans for gender statistics in their NSDSs; iii) Level of "alignment" of statistical capacity development actions with NSDSs.

Action 2 - Implement standards for data preservation, documentation, and dissemination that permit full public access to statistics.

- Initial efforts should be directed towards instances where statistics exist, but have not been published. Building on the success of efforts to improve access to household surveys, expand in-country capacity for data documentation and preservation, anonymization, and dissemination of enterprise statistics, vital statistics, and administrative data.
- Support the development of legal frameworks to encourage open access to data.
- Develop frameworks for assessing the "openness" of the statistical programs of national and international statistical offices.
- Facilitate the dissemination of data standards and common survey methodologies for enterprise and administrative data.
- Support the implementation of global geospatial information management systems.

Possible indicators to track progress: i) Proportion of national websites offering free data; ii) Published assessments of statistical "openness"; iii) Track development of a catalogue for enterprise statistics and administrative data; iv) Number of countries publishing recent census data and documentation thereof on their national websites.

Action 3 - Develop programs to increase the knowledge and skills needed to use statistics effectively for planning, analysis, monitoring, and evaluation, thus increasing transparency and accountability and improve accessibility of statistics at the national and international levels.

- Use new technologies and innovative methods of e-learning to share knowledge between producers and users of statistics.
- Develop programs to increase public awareness of the role of data in policy development and tracking outcomes to empower users to more effectively use statistics.
- Ensure that technical and financial support of statistical and M&E systems remains aligned with national policy priorities and that statistical producers are closer to discussions on policy priorities.
- Recommend curation standards for information collected by development organizations through their research activities and development projects. Encourage implementation of the data standard of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

Possible indicators to track progress: i) Number of registered users of globally endorsed e-learning tools; ii) Measures of advocacy material; iii) Number of NSO websites which are updated at least weekly; iv) Number of countries maintaining and publishing up-to-date quality assurance frameworks for their official statistics; v) Number of development partners adopting internationally accepted transparency standards.

Action 4 - Build and maintain results monitoring instruments to track outcomes of all global summits and high level forums. Rigorous monitoring of global initiatives requires collaboration between national and international statistical organizations. Outcome documents should specifically recognize the need for statistical capacity development, including technical assistance, training, and financial support.

- Resolutions of global summits and high-level forums should clearly state the policy issue being addressed and the key set of indicators to be developed, and provide an implementation strategy for sequencing technical assistance, training, and financing.
- Statistical activities required by global initiatives should be implemented with developing country leadership, consistent with their national strategies, and at a pace in keeping with other priority needs.
- Monitoring and follow-up reports should include assessments of statistical progress.
- Through the Interagency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics, existing statistical capacity development initiatives, and working closely with national statistical offices and other stakeholders, provide adequate support to countries to produce data based on established indicators for monitoring the progress of gender initiatives.
- Examples of other global commitments include the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics; and the newly proposed Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

Possible indicators to track progress: i) Share of summits and high level meetings which specifically mention statistics/indicators; ii) share of summits which agree on a set of common indicators to measure goals and commitments; iii) availability of “bulletin boards” or other public information sites providing complete data and metadata for monitoring global initiatives.

Action 5 - Ensure financing for statistical information is robust and that funding instruments and approaches reflect the new modalities and actors in development finance.

- International organizations and bilateral agencies should ensure financial support is sufficient, flexible, adaptive to rapidly changing in-country requirements. Donor programs should be coordinated and aligned with the priorities agreed in national and regional statistical strategies.
- Recognize statistical capacity development and implementation of M&E frameworks as priorities in bilateral and multilateral institutional work programs.
- Governance arrangements should be inclusive, reflecting the changing mix of development actors.

- In the same way that M&E is now seen to be a necessary part of project financing, international organizations should incorporate support for statistics in all development assistance programs.
- Ensure critical global initiatives — such as statistics for gender equity and women’s empowerment — are adequately funded to support country requirements in developing their statistical capacity.

Possible indicators to track progress: i) Trends in donor funding allocations to capacity development including levels of concentration and fragmentation; ii) Share of NSDS activities financed through domestic contributions; iii) Number of donor/government in-country coordination groups, instances of pooled resources, basket funds.

Implementation

Putting these actions into effect will require substantial effort and investment across the range of development actors with developing countries playing an important leadership role. Although the action plan establishes priorities, it must be translated into a set of time-bound implementation steps. These steps will recognize that fragile states and small island developing states have special needs and may require different, perhaps phased, approaches to capacity development and institution building. Implementation will also reflect the increasing diversity of the development partnership in terms of financial support, knowledge exchange, and sources of technical advice. Implementation will adhere to the following criteria:

- Broad international support exists and a lead agency/partnership/institution can be identified to support in-country leadership of national implementation strategies
- In-country capacity development is the primary focus (not building international bureaucracies)
- Outcomes are identifiable, monitorable, and time-bound (indicative indicators to track implementation progress are provided above)
- Implementation is “bureaucracy light” and will rely on existing partnerships, agencies, and institutions

Financial support for statistics will come primarily from domestic revenues, but donor support remains essential. It will be important to seek new sources of financial assistance — from new and prospective donor governments, international companies, and foundations — to supplement existing sources of finance. Funding instruments of bilateral agencies and multilateral institutions should be sufficiently flexible and robust to channel both existing and new financing to improve in-country statistical capacity.

Governance structures overseeing implementation will draw from existing institutions and frameworks. At the national level, National Strategies for the Development of Statistics have become established practice, helping to ensure country ownership in setting improvements and providing a coordination mechanism for donor programs and projects. These strategies will be updated to provide a framework for effective and results-oriented strategic management of the national statistical system and for mobilizing, harnessing, and leveraging both national and international resources.

Full engagement by international bodies will be crucial. The UN Statistical Commission is the highest decision making body for international statistical activities, especially the setting of statistical

standards, the development of concepts and methods, and their implementation at the national and international level. Implementation of the action plan and results will be regularly reported to the UNSC, in compliance with the UNSC reporting policy. PARIS21 is an effective forum of donors and development partners and network to promote, influence, and facilitate statistical capacity development and the better use of statistics at the national and international level^{ix}. To effectively support capacity development, harmonization with existing statistical organizations, systems and regional agencies should be regarded as extremely important. International agency and expert groups such as those established by the United Nations to monitor the MDGs or to guide the development of gender statistics provide effective mechanisms for bringing together national and international experts to exchange knowledge and solve problems. These and other expert groups will play important roles in the implementation of the action plan.

Conclusions

Implementation of the action plan will help fill statistical gaps of relevance to critical policy issues, while going beyond past efforts in important ways:

- It adopts a system-wide approach to capacity development to integrate national statistical activities with the requirements of planning, budgeting, monitoring, and results.
- It recognizes the important synergies between survey and census-based data, administrative data, and vital statistics.
- It explicitly supports greater transparency and encourages the use of new methods and technologies to increase the reliability and accessibility of official statistics.

As such, the Busan Forum is invited to acknowledge the importance of establishing a global partnership to support the plan and encourage rapid implementation.

ANNEX 1: Recent / Emerging Statistical Programs Responding to Global Initiatives

Initiative	Issues to address	Lead Agency	Key Outputs and Delivery Dates
Gender Statistics Initiative	Gender data to produce the minimum set of gender indicators to support policies to promote gender equality and empowerment of women, focusing in particular on strengthening data collection instruments—especially household surveys.	UNSD, UN Women, WB, OECD	A set of indicators to be developed and an implementation plan to collect these statistics as discussed at the October 2011 meeting of the Interagency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEGGS). This includes a list of 15 indicators focusing on employment, education and entrepreneurship.
Global Strategy for Agriculture Statistics	Critical gaps in data limit policy making regarding nutrition, food security, and rural development.	FAO	Core set of indicators to be generated by National Statistical systems over the next five to ten years. Implementation strategy to be discussed by donors in October 2011.
HMN MOVE-IT (Monitoring of Vital Events, including use of Information Technology)	Vital statistics underpin demographic estimates; vital statistics systems provide documentation of citizenship and legal status of individuals.	WHO	Strengthen country information systems to ensure recording and reporting of every birth and death, with a cause of death.
Programme on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM)	Further development of global geospatial information and promote its use to address key global challenges.	UNSD	Integrating statistical information with spatial framework so that detailed information becomes available at local level for development planning.
G20 Initiative to address Gaps in Financial Indicators	Critical information gaps revealed by the global financial crisis.	IMF	See reports on http://www.imf.org/external/np/g20/ and http://www.imf.org/external/data.htm
G20 Financial Inclusion Action Plan – Action 4: Improve Data	Improve measurement for the purpose of promoting financial inclusion, increasing awareness of the issue, and strengthening and informing national financial inclusion strategies.	Mexico, WBG	Propose a core set / framework of financial inclusion indicators.
Open Data Initiative	Expand activities to develop standardized concepts and methods for statistical data and facilitate curation, storage, and accessibility of these data.	WB	Continuous expansion; near term objectives include additional microdata holdings, climate change data, and helping countries make their data more accessible.
Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators	Preparation of data and analysis to monitor progress towards the MDGs. Review and define methodologies and technical issues in relation to the indicators, produce guidelines, and support countries in data collection, analysis and reporting on MDGs.	UNSD	MDG Report, July 2010
The Monrovia Roadmap on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding	Development of a set peacebuilding and statebuilding indicators, combining both objective measures and measures to understand the views and perceptions of people on results achieved.	International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding	Work in progress

ⁱ *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action*, Paris: OECD, 2008, page 7. Downloaded from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid*, pages 19-20.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Better Data for Better Results: An Action Plan for Improving Development Statistics*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004, page 1.

^{iv} *Aid Effectiveness 2005-2010: Progress in Implementing the Paris Declaration*, OECD, draft 15 August 2011.

^v As reported in "Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics. Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, and Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity," *Global Program Review*, Vol. 5, Issue 3, Independent Evaluation Group: 2011, page 22.

^{vi} *Ibid*, page 58.

^{vii} An indicator of this increase in statistical capacity is the substantial growth in the number of countries participating in the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS), reaching 101 as of end-October 2011. In December 2008, the IMF's Executive Board decision favored further enhancements to the GDDS and supported recasting the GDDS to emphasize data dissemination and facilitate graduation to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS), including through closer conformity to SDDS specifications.

^{viii} Regional Communities of Practice on managing for development results currently exist to serve as platforms for knowledge exchange and capacity development.

^{ix} For more information on PARIS21 activities, visit www.paris21.org

This paper has benefitted from extensive comments from and consultations with developing country statistical offices; aid providers; key players in the development results, gender, country systems and effective states communities; and other PARIS21 partners.

