



## Possible Role for PARIS21 in Post–2015 Discussions

*Concept Note prepared by the PARIS21 Secretariat*

*April 2013*

### **Purpose**

The aim of this short note is to discuss if and how PARIS21 as a partnership as well as its Secretariat should engage in the emerging post–2015 development framework discussions. The Secretariat proposes a number of activities to support the process, based on its history, its comparative advantage and the current state of play. The note is for feedback and discussion for the Executive Committee and Board meetings.

### **Background**

PARIS21 was created in response to the original International Development Goals (IDGs) then later Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) processes, to help build statistical capacity in developing countries to measure progress toward these goals. The PARIS21 satellite programmes (IHSN and ADP) were also established to help countries produce the data to measure MDG progress.

The Busan Action Plan for Statistics (BAPS) — for which the PARIS21 Secretariat has been mandated to act as Secretariat — calls for a more systematic reaching out to users and integration of statistics in development policy making. The plan’s fourth action aims to “build and maintain results monitoring instruments to track outcomes of all global summits and high-level forums.” The intention is to ensure that summit outcome documents specifically recognise the need for statistical capacity development.

This background provides PARIS21 with a legitimacy to play a crucial role in the post–2015 framework as the only international partnership mandated to co-ordinate statistical activities and bring together users and producers of statistics for evidence based policy making. In fact, it seems less of a question if the Secretariat and Partnership is or should be involved (many partners are already active), but rather: (a) to define a more precise role for the Secretariat and the partnership as a “neutral entity” that adds value without losing focus; and (b) to bundle together voices promoting statistical capacity development to maximise their impact. Therefore the Partnership should avoid replication/duplication since many parallel processes are in play.

### **Current State of Play**

The impact of the MDG exercise on data production and statistical capacity in developing countries seems to suggest that it is of fundamental importance to link the goal and target exercise with investments in data production at the country level. While it is indisputable that progress has been made in key areas such as education and health, other areas have been neglected or crowded out such as agricultural, business, employment and national accounts statistics.

Over the past decade, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators (IAEG-MDGs) has been carrying out the mandate to ensure that the monitoring of development goals is firmly grounded on statistical principles and provides the most up-to-date and reliable data from official statistical sources for the indicators. The IAEG-MDGs recently formed a Task Team on Lessons Learned from MDG Monitoring. The group reviewed the strengths and shortcomings of the current set of indicators; identified technical inconsistencies between goals, targets, and indicators; and discussed technical issues in setting numerical targets and proposing criteria for selecting MDG indicators.

Among the findings of their work was that “there was general agreement that developing countries had not been sufficiently involved in selecting indicators to measure the MDGs and needed to have a greater say in any indicators used to measure post–2015 goals. Agencies could also agree that not all indicators selected last time had met the agreed criteria of relevance, clarity, avoiding unnecessary reporting burdens, meeting international standards, and being constructed in a quantifiable fashion”. The group also concluded that “the absence of the consultation with national statistical offices often resulted in numerous conflicts and inconsistencies between national and international data systems on MDG monitoring”. These findings suggest that a strong federated engagement by the PARIS21 partners to lobby for the strengthening of national capacities and their alignment with the global goal setting processes could prove to be very useful.

Looking forward, there are currently three major processes tasked with defining a post–2015 framework: (1) the [High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#) led by Homi Kharas; (2) the [UN System Task Team to support the preparation of the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda](#) comprised of technical experts from UN agencies; and (3) the [Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals](#) which is the nucleus of the UN member states that will ultimately determine the post–2015 agenda.

## **Proposed Way Forward**

PARIS21 has a solid reputation as a neutral entity focused on ensuring that developing countries have functioning statistical systems that respond to the needs of data users and policy making. The Secretariat proposes the following activities to co-ordinate the Partnership’s involvement in the post–2015 framework, broken down into two sub-categories:

### *Improving co-ordination*

- Create a **collaborative online platform (if not yet existent)** for partners to post reports, initiatives, and events regarding statistics on post–2015 and to facilitate the sharing of experiences and views on the new framework. An alternative could be the development of a portal to other already existing platforms to facilitate the quick finding and sharing of information.
- Develop an **online inventory of global summits** and their outcome documents. The objective would be to respond to BAPS action 4 by: (i) sharing information on agreements endorsed at the global (and perhaps even regional) level; (ii) raising awareness of the burden placed on statistical systems by the proliferation of indicators to be measured in these agreements; and (iii) acting as a repository of language and indicators already agreed, so that future summits could more easily draw from what exists.
- Participate in the **UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) Friends of the Chair Group** on the Rio+20 Sustainable Development Agenda. Established at the 2013 UNSC, this group will identify good/best practices and facilitate the sharing of knowledge in developing broader measures of progress in the lead-up to the post–2015 development framework. The Secretariat has already formally expressed its interest in joining this group.
- Support the **participation of developing country statisticians** in post–2015 events. At regional and international events where the new framework will be discussed, PARIS21 can support the participation of developing country statisticians to ensure that the perspective of the data producer is represented.

- Organise **workshops/conferences** on statistical aspects of the post–2015 agenda. These consultations would present and debate successes and failures in statistical capacity development and the provision/availability of MDG data then propose some recommendations for the future framework.

#### *Advocacy and knowledge sharing*

- Produce **advocacy materials** for various PARIS21 clients to promote statistical capacity development issues at national levels in the post–2015 discussions. One such leaflet is already in production in collaboration with UNECA and the African Union.
- Initiate or produce **discussion papers on data production and statistical capacity development** and draw conclusions for the next framework. An abstract for such a paper is available in Annex I. In addition, PARIS21 could consider a project that would follow up the six country case studies conducted by a PARIS21 task team in 2004. Given the detailed reports that were prepared at the time, it would be possible to trace the development of those statistical systems over the past 8 years and, perhaps, draw some conclusions about the impacts of MDG reporting, national priorities, donor initiatives, and PARIS21’s activities.
- Set up at the 2013 Board Meetings a **Post–2015 task team**, which would be mandated to co-ordinate and follow the various activities of the partners in this area. See draft terms of reference in Annex II.
- Explore the possibility to organise a **High–Level Meeting in 2014** on the topic of “Statistical capacity development in an emerging Post-2015 Development Framework: ”
- Investigate further how a **Global Report on Statistical Development** can be a useful tool to make the case for the existence of an effective and functional national statistical system as a prerequisite for achieving the different goals and targets still to be identified. The report could take stock of the current situation with statistics and measurement at country level, reflect on lessons learnt and good practices as well as present a road-map for going forward.

While the activities proposed above would be carried out mostly by the Secretariat, the wider PARIS21 Partnership can support these efforts through several means: promoting the perspective of developing country statisticians in all relevant discussions; co-organising (with the Secretariat) workshops/conferences; and providing intellectual inputs to the outputs proposed above.

***The PARIS21 Board is invited to provide feedback on the proposals outlined above and highlight how the Partnership can support the Secretariat in these, or other, activities supporting the post–2015 development framework discussions.***

# Annex I: Abstract for paper on “MDGs, Post-2015 Development Framework and Statistics: What to do?”

PARIS21 Discussion Paper

Toward a Post-2015 Framework:  
Aligning Global Monitoring Demand with National Statistical Capacity Development<sup>1</sup>

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March 28, 2013

Draft – not for circulation

## Abstract

The monitoring requirement of Millennium Development Goals has posed challenges for statistical communities at the global and national levels. Twelve years into the MDGs, while data availability has been slowly increasing, statistical challenges remain for MDG and the monitoring of development in general. In this paper, we employ a user-producer framework to examine the questions of how MDG monitoring demand has driven changes in data collection on the national level, and how national statistics have been utilized for MDG monitoring. We find evidence that MDG monitoring requirements and the resulting donor assistance have driven the increase in number and type of surveys conducted on the country level. However, statistics produced on the national level have not been sufficiently utilized by the MDG monitoring exercise, leading to not only the poor availability and reliability of MDG data, but more importantly, poor relevance and acceptance of the MDG data at country level, challenges for national statistical systems to coordinate the external and internal demand, as well as a lack of incentive for donors to invest in capacity building. Although National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) has been established in a number of low-income countries with the goal of helping national statistical systems to better meet and coordinate statistical demand from country-, regional- and international-levels, resource and institutional barriers to implementation persist. For a meaningful Post-2015 Framework, we argue that it is imperative to align the demand for global monitoring with the need for developing national statistical capacities. This could be achieved through 1) involving national statistical communities in setting global goals and indicators 2) existing national statistical resources should be utilized to the extent possible. Financial and technical resources should be invested for improving data collection, analysis and management on the country level 3) Better utilize national statistics for global monitoring through increased efforts in data source reconciliation and survey documentation and dissemination.

### 1. Introduction

### 2. Data collection on the country-level

- Evidence from IHSN/ADP survey catalogues shows increasing number and type of surveys conducted after 2000
- Donor agencies have played an active role in driving the increase in household surveys at country level, especially through international surveys that provide the main source of MDG data. But the extent of donor impact varies by country.
- Donor involvement has also influenced the sectors in which surveys are conducted
- Donor-sponsored surveys fill important data gaps and have influence on national statistical capacities

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<sup>1</sup> Disclaimer: the opinions expressed in this paper are personally opinions of the authors and should not be attributed to the PARIS21 partnership or its members.

- But household surveys are not enough to close the remaining gaps: survey data not successful for measuring certain indicators, and tend to underrepresent. Other data sources, especially vital registration systems, have seen much slower progress.
3. Using statistics produced on the country-level for MDG monitoring
- Underutilization of existing statistics on the country level for MDG monitoring
    - A number of factors contribute to the issue, especially the lack of uniform definitions
    - Currently the definitions and methodologies for MDG indicators are donor-driven with little consultation with countries → poor availability of suitable data from country → reliability of estimation
    - Even when country data is used, lack of data reconciliation and unclear documentation → inconsistency of data
  - Consequence:
    - relevance and acceptance at country level
    - waste of existing national resources, hard for NSOs to coordinate external and internal demand
    - lack of incentive for donors to invest in capacity building
4. NSDS
- Objectives
  - Means and design
  - Success
  - Barriers to implementation:
    - Scarce resources on national level and low rate of aid to statistical capacity development
    - Institutional barriers within countries
    - Donor prioritized immediate data need over statistical capacity
5. Conclusions
- Involve national statistical communities in setting global goals and monitoring strategies. This would help identify technically-sound and methodologically-feasible measurement and indicators and align MDG monitoring demand with countries' internal data demand and statistical strategies.
  - Existing national statistical resources should be utilized to the extent possible. Where statistical challenges and data gaps exist, actionable plans and financial and technical investment should follow for national statistical capacity development, and the strategic planning should be emphasized.
  - Data source reconciliation, dissemination of microdata and survey documentation would help reconcile the comparability vs. relevance dilemma and foster better utilization of national data.

## Annex II: Draft Terms of Reference for a PARIS21 Task Team on Post–2015

### Objectives / Activities

The overarching objective of this task team is to influence the current discussions with a view that the new framework explicitly refers to the need to strengthen then national statistical capacities (eventually through an own target and with a monitoring framework). To achieve this end, several activities are possible – a few possible once are highlighted below:

- Develop advocacy materials to promote statistical capacity development in the context of the post–2015 agenda and to lobby for a specific target in the new framework to measure improvements in national statistical capacity. Feed these through partners channels into the debate
- Undertake a few selected workshops/conferences on statistics and the post–2015 framework and develop a template agenda for such events.
- Consider sketching out the modalities for an update of the [six country case studies](#) conducted in 2004 by the *PARIS21 Task Team on Improved Support to Monitoring Development Goals* in order to trace the development of those statistical systems over the past decade and draw useful conclusions for the next set of global development goals.
- Consider a proposal for the development of an online inventory of global summits, their outcome documents, and indicators. If approved, refine the proposal in collaboration with the team of experts tasked with developing the tool.
- Produce good practice materials on how to align the demand for global monitoring with the need for building statistical capacity.
- Further develop the proposal for a global report on statistical development, to take stock of statistical capacity worldwide and thereby serve as a major input to the post–2015 deliberations.