



## **Some Thoughts on a Light Evaluation of PARIS21**

### **Background**

Separate, but linked, evaluations of PARIS21 and the TFSCB were carried out in 2003 following approximately three years of operation. The evaluations concluded that the two linked initiatives had generally been successful. The Steering Committee authorised the extension of PARIS21 until the end of 2006 and a joint work programme and funding proposal was developed to bring PARIS21 and TFSCB activities even closer together. The evaluation was funded by the World Bank Development Grant Facility and cost US\$113,000. A summary of the evaluation of PARIS21 can be found in Annex I.

The second evaluation of the programmes are due in 2006. The Trust Fund evaluation will be carried out according to World Bank procedures. This paper proposes a process for a 'light' evaluation of PARIS21.

### **Lessons learnt from previous evaluation**

Some lessons can be learnt from the earlier evaluations. Firstly, the findings came too late to develop the PARIS21 work programme and secure funding for 2004–2006. This slowed PARIS21 activities almost to a standstill in the first half of 2004. This suggests that reporting results of the second evaluation at the June 2006 Steering Committee meeting would be too late to inform development of the next phase of PARIS21's work programme and funding. On the other hand, given the slow start due to delays in funding, it is still rather early to evaluate the 2004–2006 programme.

Secondly, following such a thorough evaluation in 2003, is such a rigorous review needed in 2006? DFID suggested at the November 2004 Steering Committee meeting that: *'a new evaluation would not be necessary considering one was conducted as recently as 2003. Perhaps a mere afternoon seminar with donor and developing countries discussing PARIS21's impact would be sufficient'*.

### **Proposal**

In view of the findings of the evaluation in 2003, and to reflect DFID's suggestion that was unopposed, it is recommended that:

- A sub-group of six SC members is formed, with balanced representation from countries and partner organisations, recognising that PARIS21 is funded substantially by bilateral donors and is for the benefit of developing countries. The group would be selected at the June 2005 SC meeting, then meet in its margins to select a chairperson and set out a timetable and process which would be agreed with the full SC by correspondence. The sub-group would be free to co-opt other members and to arrange to meet other SC members (and others) electronically or face-to-face.
- The sub-group would review impact, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of PARIS21 with reference to its current logical framework, the joint funding proposal (2004–2006) and the 2003 evaluation report.
- The sub-group would provide recommendations on the possible future of PARIS21, including its orientation, objectives, and priority activities.



- The sub-group would report back to the next SC meeting, which it is proposed should be postponed until March/April 2006 (replacing also the June 2006 meeting) to allow sufficient time for the evaluation findings to be acted upon before the end of 2006, whilst allowing the evaluation to reflect progress in 2004 and 2005.
- A budget of €30,000 would be allocated to meet any costs incurred.
- The sub-group would be supported by an independent reviewer, selected by the SC and whose role would be to facilitate the process, including making arrangements for meetings of the group and with others they wish to consult, maintaining a record of discussions and of the process, and writing a draft report, reflecting views of group members.

### **Making it happen**

Volunteer representatives are sought as follows:

- Two partner countries
- One regional organisation
- Two bilateral donors
- One multilateral organisation



## **Annex I: Summary of evaluation of PARIS21 by Oxford Policy Management, August 2003**

- i. PARIS21 was conceived in 1999 as an experimental and temporary programme to improve the contribution of statistical work to the management of development. It was to do this by strengthening understanding and coordination between producers and users of statistics in developing countries, between them and aid agencies, and among aid agencies themselves.
- ii. The programme has been run by a Steering Committee co-chaired by the DAC Chairman and a senior member of the UN Statistical Commission, and containing equal numbers of representatives of multilateral agencies, bilateral donors and developing-country statistical offices. Its small Secretariat has been located at OECD headquarters and its operations financed largely by European bilateral donors.
- iii. Early discussions led to a definition of the programme's overall goal as the development of "a culture of transparent, evidence-based policy making and implementation". This was to be pursued by organizing regular workshops, especially for low-income (IDA) countries, Task Teams to achieve greater consensus on particular issues, and improved information flows among all concerned parties.
- iv. The programme has operated mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where teams from almost all countries have now attended PARIS21 workshops. Workshop programmes began in Asia and Latin America in 2002. By the end of this year, teams from more than 80 developing and transition economies will, on present plans, have participated in PARIS21 workshops.
- v. The workshops aim essentially at stimulating the dialogue between statisticians, policymakers and other users of statistical material for policy-related purposes, and between them and aid agencies involved in supporting statistical work. They have proved particularly relevant and popular in Africa because they coincided in timing with government efforts to prepare Policy Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and to pursue the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- vi. Interviews with participants from a sample of one-third of the countries involved in the first two workshops (in 2000-01) indicate that they had lasting effects in strengthening interactions between statisticians and policymakers. Even under difficult circumstance, the countries have seriously pursued the action plans they prepared, and most have embarked on longer-term strategic planning exercises to clarify priorities in the development of statistical services.
- vii. These efforts have helped the countries to respond to the needs for the data that are required for evidence-based policy making and implementation in connection with PRSPs and MDGs. Workshop follow-up has also sometimes called forth specific help from donors, and greater mutual self-help among the countries of the region. Interviews with participants from more recent workshops suggest that similar results can be expected.
- viii. The effects of the advances described on the bottom line, of what statistics are produced, and the use that is made of them, are only gradually showing up. The new approaches have also to spread to fields and agencies much beyond those at the core of work on PRSPs. But the interviews give grounds for hope that PARIS21 activities are creating understanding and ownership of the idea that good statistics are central to good management – and can be generated.
- ix. PARIS21 sponsorship, and partial financing, is enabling the Task Teams to do important work that would not otherwise have been done. They have also helped to create more consensus, among aid agencies and between them and developing countries, about the right approaches to



take to various aspects of statistical development. The results should have increasing impact in coming years.

- x. The evidence available on the overall effectiveness of the PARIS21 programme is promising, even though it cannot be conclusive at such an early date. There is virtually universal agreement that the needs it was designed to meet are more important today than when it was founded, and the overall environment more favourable to progress. All we have come across who have actually participated in its workshops have been keen that its activity continue.
- xi. We recommend that the programme be extended for a further three years, but with somewhat more focused and measurable objectives. The particular strength that PARIS21 has shown in bringing statisticians and policymakers together, and bridging the gaps between them, would be further built on. Particular emphasis would go to the achievement of early improvements in (a) collection of data regarding key Development Indicators and the monitoring of MDG-related expenditure programmes and their effects, and (b) country-level coordination of donor assistance to statistical development.
- xii. The first step in this should be the development of a new Logical Framework, with specified targets, to guide PARIS21's activities over the next three years.
- xiii. To help reach the targets suggested, consideration should be given to various reinforced or modified instruments that the Secretariat might use. The following paragraphs mention the principal ones.
- xiv. Follow-up regional workshops, envisaged in original PARIS21 plans but not so far organized, need now to be activated following the large recent effort on initial workshops. They are strongly demanded by participants, as a means to help maintain momentum. They can focus more specifically than was possible in the original gatherings on the aspects of results-based management most relevant to the particular sub-region addressed, including the issue of priority work on Development Indicators, where needed. Regional agencies should be encouraged to play as large a part as they are able to carry.
- xv. Workshops for individual countries, focused on the specific problems they face in development of statistical and monitoring systems, can have powerful effects. They can reach not only a much wider audience than possible at a regional event, but often one including more high officials. Citing its own experience, PARIS21 should strongly encourage bilateral partners to undertake such workshops in appropriate circumstances. But, for budgetary reasons, it should be very selective in undertaking them itself – perhaps, for instance, only when a regional follow-up workshop in the area was also on its agenda and could be held in the same week.
- xvi. The improved donor coordination achieved at the international level needs to be extended to the country level, where little change has so far occurred. PARIS21 staff, benefiting from their neutral location and status, should carry out systematic brief visits to country statistical agencies and local donor offices. They would review progress in consistency between external assistance and national action/strategic plans, and draw donor attention to any problems or opportunities that emerged. Such visits would also be a useful occasion to gather material for *ex post* evaluation of workshops held.
- xvii. PARIS21 should seek opportunities to deliver its message, in carefully prepared, brief and practical form, at sessions of an hour or two at occasional international/regional meetings of high-level African civil servants and politicians arranged for other purposes. The video that it has already prepared is considered powerful, and PARIS21 now has the reputation in Africa to play a valuable role in spreading results-based management philosophy at this level.



- xviii. Again particularly with a view to African needs, PARIS should convert its periodic individual meetings with the other agencies organizing training and capacity building on statistics and their use into a joint annual meeting. The aim would be to enhance coordination and complementarity. This would involve, in particular, WBI, UNDP and GDDS.
- xix. PARIS21's plan to assemble an annual report briefly summarizing the status of statistical capacity, and its progress, in each developing/transition economy, is much to be welcomed. It activates an idea already envisaged in 1999 and would help draw broader attention to the matter, and to patterns of needs for assistance.
- xx. We believe that some adjustment of governance arrangements should be considered, to enhance the programme's capacities for reaching high-level policymakers and for making a practical contribution to reducing the country-level coordination problem. The Chairman might be a recently retired very high policymaker from a developing country, backed by the DAC Chairman as Vice-Chairman. The Steering Committee should be somewhat expanded in scale to provide a larger number of seats for the developing/transition countries, with half of those seats going to policymakers interested in use of statistics for evidence-based policy. A small Executive Committee run by the Vice-Chairman could take responsibility for supervising and assisting implementation of the policies decided by the full governing body.
- xxi. The correct size for the Secretariat cannot be determined until the Steering Committee has decided whether to accept some of the suggestions in this report and how to phase them. But there is likely to be some need for an increase from the present scale. A highly desirable move would be to recruit one or two development economists, with appropriate developing-country experience, to complement the statisticians. This would expand the programme's abilities to deal with policymakers generally, and increase the Secretariat's capacities for handling several of the new tasks proposed here.
- xxii. We have learned much from our investigation, both about the needs and the demands of the developing countries, and about the overall effectiveness of PARIS21. We conclude from what we have learned that a well worked out increase in the programme's overall expenditure in coming years would be money well spent. This is based on the assumption that the donors would reach a reasonable degree of consensus on appropriate overall targets for categories such as those suggested in the 'Proposed Logical Framework'. It therefore also assumes that there would be an effective focus on early improvements in priority statistics, and in country-level coordination of aid.
- xxiii. It would be particularly important that all donors significantly involved in statistical work with the developing countries become contributing members and participate fully in guiding the programme, especially on aspects relating to aid coordination. The smaller donors will also remain very important to the success of the programme. They need to be provided with somewhat better information flows than they now receive.
- xxiv. An Annex contains a proposed process for agreeing on a new logical framework, and, in a draft 'Proposed Logical Framework', suggestions by the evaluation team on possible targets for improvements in statistics production and use, statistical planning, and coordination of aid for statistics, over the next three years. These targets need careful scrutiny, particularly by the donor community, with a view to reaching a consensus in PARIS21's governing body as to what should be feasible. This, in turn, would enable the Secretariat to prepare a detailed proposal for PARIS21's own activity, for consideration by the governing body.