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CREATING A SET OF ADVOCACY TOOLS

Background

The PARIS21 framework document sets out the role of the Consortium. One of the long-term objectives is to develop an evidenced-based culture for setting and monitoring policy - and hence to strengthen the role of statistics. To meet the objective, the Consortium needs to create an advocacy tool-kit to use in support of official statistics and statistical capacity building in developing countries.

All governments collect and use statistical information for different purposes and most countries have set up specialist agencies for this purpose. Typically, they have to meet many conflicting demands for their services and their products. First, they provide statistical information for the different parts of government, both for day-to-day administration and for longer-term policy making. Second, the information is used by people and organisations outside government, for their own decision making and planning. The basic argument is that better information can lead to better decisions, which in turn can lead to faster economic growth and reduced poverty. Third, the publication of reliable official statistics is an important part of good governance. Official statistics provide voters with a means of comparing the competing claims of different political parties. This is important at the local as well as the national level. Providing people with access to timely and accurate data is a crucial element of decentralisation and empowerment.

The problem is that the managers of statistical agencies are facing ever-increasing demands at a time when the environment they work in is changing rapidly and when resources are very limited. The role of government is changing and the way that business is being done is being reformed. Emphasis on management by objectives and greater accountability are creating new demands for data. At the same time, as part of government, statistical agencies are themselves having to change. Managers are having to re-think their strategies, both in terms of what is done (including the possibility of contracting out some activities) and the means by which they do it. There is increasing pressure to improve the quality of the data, especially in relation to coverage and timeliness. If official statistics are to be widely used then they must be seen to be accurate, timely, free from political manipulation and appropriate to users' needs.

A major problem is that national statistical systems do not operate in a market framework. Most activities are carried out or at least initiated by governments. They are mostly financed from tax revenue and the majority of statistical products are either made available free of charge, or if a charge is applied it does not reflect the full costs of production. There are a number of reasons for this situation, perhaps the most important is that much official statistical information is a **public good**. In many countries, there has been considerable debate in recent years about the role of national statistics, and the extent to which governments should finance data collection and

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dissemination for public use. In developing countries, facing much greater resource constraints and under pressure to reduce public expenditure the issues are even more difficult. Governments and legislators need to be persuaded that statistical activities are of value in their own right and can make an important contribution to promoting development and reducing poverty. This needs to be done in an environment when many users are unsure how to use data effectively, where communication facilities are inadequate and when the case for statistics is not widely recognised.

The Proposed Approach

The Consortium, therefore, proposes to develop a number of different advocacy tools and requires the services of a consultant to help with the development and preparation of these. Different tools are likely to be needed for different purposes and for use with different audiences. The kinds of uses are expected to include the following.

- Making the general case for governments to invest in statistical activities and the role of statistics in development and poverty alleviation.
- Promoting wider use of statistics, for example, to promote greater participation in decision-making and supporting decentralisation, accountability and good governance.
- Strengthening macro-economic management and promoting the role of statistics in promoting economic stability and growth.
- Emphasising the role of statistics in supporting private sector investment and in promoting the development of effective and efficient markets.
- Making the case for specific statistical activities such as household surveys, drawing attention to the range of uses such surveys could be put to and highlighting the costs and benefits compared to other information sources.
- Strengthening the use of statistical data for decision making at the sectoral level by presenting examples of how policy-makers could use available data from a range of sources to improve both policy and day-to-day management.
- Promoting the need for investment in core statistical activities such as population and agricultural censuses and surveys of business activity. These kinds of data are crucial to the effective production and use of other data series, but are often difficult to finance because there is little appreciation of why they are needed.
- Making the case for long-term investment, since the value of statistical data often is only realised when there are sufficient data to generate time series. It is crucial, therefore, that activities are financed on a sufficiently reliable basis to support the development of consistent time series data.

When drawing up any advocacy documents there will be a number of different audiences to target. These will include decision-makers in developing countries, other users including civil society organisations, the private sector, politicians and the media, donor agencies and representatives of the international financial institutions. It will almost certainly be the case that a range of different documents will be needed to target these audiences. The PARIS21 Secretariat has already begun to collect papers for this purpose.

It is also anticipated that documents and other advocacy tools will be disseminated and used in different ways. Material will be needed for briefing notes, brochures, posters, Internet web sites, and for use in the press and on television and radio. It is also anticipated that the materials will need to be translated into different languages.

The Task

The Consortium proposes to seek the services of suitable consultants to help develop the proposed advocacy tools and to provide advice on their use. It is anticipated that the task will involve:

- i. Widespread consultation with members of the Consortium;
- ii. A review of existing material;
- iii. Drafting new material and the adaptation of existing materials for use in different formats;
- iv. Testing materials with different audiences and using different media;
- v. Developing proposals for the use of the advocacy tools and identifying opportunities for their use.

The task is likely to require a number of different skills, including widespread knowledge of the use of statistics in development, the development and implementation of information campaigns and the design and production of material for use in different media. It is anticipated that it will involve an initial input of about two person months, after which proposals can be made for further development and support for the use of the materials. The work will be coordinated and facilitated by a reference group, which will be set up by the Consortium. The consultants will be required to interact with this group on a regular basis, using electronic communication as much as possible. It is anticipated that the initial two-month task will not require any substantial travel, other than the need for possible consultation with the Secretariat and some members of the Consortium.

The Next Steps

Depending on the response to this proposal and the availability of funds, it is proposed that the Secretariat will agree with the donor on funding who in turn will initiate the process of selecting consultants, through a competitive tender, with a view to the initial task being completed by the end of October this year.

*Graham Eele (based on an initial document prepared by the PARIS21 Secretariat)
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