

Final Record of the Proceedings

Chair: Romulo Virola, Philippines

I. Introduction

1. The chair presented the objectives for the day's meeting, which were to consider several interesting topics: PARIS21's satellite programmes, the Partner Report on Support to Statistics, the World Bank Bulletin Board System, and the role of statistical groups of donors & partners at country level.

II. PARIS21 Satellite Programmes

2. The Secretariat presented the current progress of the two satellite programmes: the International Household Survey Network (IHSN) and the Accelerated Data Program (ADP). Both IHSN and ADP have been evaluated as part of the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS) in 2008.

3. The IHSN team is building on the success of the management toolkit and focuses, in particular, on the Question bank. The main plans for the coming months include further development of microdata management tools and guidelines, further development of the IHSN question bank, and work on quality through a survey quality assessment framework. As far as ADP Task 1 is concerned, it will be expanded to other countries as demand is still growing. Task 2, which consists in harmonising and improving survey methods and programmes, is now being implemented in Cameroon, Mali and Nigeria and piloting will continue in 5–6 countries. ADP Task 3 (support to data collection) remains limited.

4. Developments for 2009 include the expansion of the microdata management toolkit. All the tools are DDI compliant. Dissemination policy guidelines will be finalised. The anonymisation tools will be tested, peer reviewed, and finalised. The team has organised an expert group meeting on this theme, and a task force will be consolidated. Guidelines and best practices will be established to improve data processing, data analysis, data quality, and survey methodology. They will concern not only microdata but also administrative data, census maps, etc. A survey Quality Assessment framework as well as beta version of the Question Bank application will be released.

5. Country participants delivered a series of presentations on their experiences implementing ADP activities. The representative from Ethiopia gave a presentation on his country's prolific dissemination effort and multi-media approach. He underlined users' dissatisfaction and explained how ADP improved the situation, for example through the installation of a National Data Archive (NADA) system. The representative of Sri Lanka showed how the development of a central survey catalogue strengthened the Central Statistics Office. He said the development of this catalogue allowed the classification of their surveys, and progress was accomplished in various areas (microdata management, capacity building). The representative from Argentina talked about the strengthening of the national statistical system through the development of an Archive for Labour Statistics. The representative from Cameroon discussed survey harmonisation and improvement of data quality. He underlined the results already obtained in the education sectors. He also talked about how ADP has provided training on microdata anonymisation, which in turn has inspired the revision of the country's statistical legislation.

6. Finally, the DFID representative working with the Secretariat on IHSN presented the IHSN Question bank, explaining how it can support quality and consistency in survey data. He explained the evolution of survey questions over time, the difficulties researchers are facing, and information deprivation and its impact on the structure of the questions. He presented the internationally accepted DDI standard and



highlighted its importance for interviewers and how it can help them take the right decisions in the field. He presented the progress both on the content and the application.

Discussion

7. The PARIS21 Secretariat manager underlined the fact that ADP and IHSN work very closely with the World Bank. He also added that to ensure the sustainability of archiving and dissemination activities, they have to be included in the NSDS process. Discussion focused mostly on the many positive outcomes that have emerged from the two satellite programmes. The representative from Niger said that the adoption of the toolkit helped to reinforce the coordination role of the national statistical system (NSS). He insisted on the necessity of having a Question bank in order to ensure the coherence between surveys. The representative of UNECA explained that the effort accomplished in data archiving will increase the use of data. The representative from Guinea underlined also the importance of the Question bank given that the questions vary considerably from one survey to the other and stressed its complementarities with the Toolkit. The UNESCO representative expressed his pleasure with the progress in Cameroon, where the NSO has engaged in a fruitful collaboration with the four education line ministries. He added that the satellite programmes are essential in the production and dissemination of quality data in the education sector. The representative from Cameroon commented that ADP supported the efforts in his country to improve data consistency among various sources, in particular household surveys and administrative records in the education sector.

III. Results from the Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS)

8. The Secretariat introduced the presentation by reminding participants that the Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS) was established to (1) collect and analyse information on support to statistical development by financial and technical partners; (2) permit an easier exchange of information on statistical activities being carried out and planned in recipient countries; and (3) promote effective collaboration among development partners particularly in light of the ongoing discussions on developing a Statistics for Results Facility (SRF). To pilot the partner report process, the PARIS21 Secretariat had launched a Light Reporting Exercise in sub-Saharan Africa (LRE) in 2005. Given the positive feedback on the LRE, a multi-partner task team was created in November 2006, under the aegis of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) and agreed upon by the Steering Committee, to carry forward the partner report initiative.

9. The team's principal aim was to design and develop a partner report mechanism, which would take into account existing reporting systems. In this vein, the task team conducted an in-depth study on the potential use of the OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) for PRESS, as well as a review of reporting systems of other development partners (World Bank, IMF, DFID, FAO, Eurostat/UNECE). The study defined a specific search methodology to identify statistical activities in the CRS. In view of these findings, the task team concluded that CRS data should be used for PRESS for past activities of OECD bilateral partners, but that for current/future activities of these partners and for statistical support from other development partners, information should be collected through a survey. For this purpose, the task team developed the (Excel-based) PRESS questionnaire and adopted a classification of statistical areas and financial/non-financial support.

10. For the first round of PRESS – PRESS 2008 – the PARIS21 of reached out to a broad spectrum of development partners considered supporters to statistical development in the developing world. A total of 83 partners were included. The PRESS 2008 survey requested information on active commitments for the period 2006–08, as well as for information on any planned operations. The commitments from bilateral partners as of end-2006 were extracted from the CRS. To complete this information for 2007 and for planned activities, staff of bilateral development agencies and/or national statistical offices were requested to complete a shorter version of the PRESS questionnaire. All other partners received the full PRESS



questionnaire. A database has been developed in MS Access, allowing the production of tables for the PRESS report, answers to partner's queries and serving as an input for future rounds. This database is housed and maintained by the Secretariat.

11. The responses received from partners represent an inventory of ongoing commitments in support of statistical development during the period 2006–08. The results represent the responses of 45 (out of 83) development partners. The following limitations should be kept in mind when reviewing the results of this exercise: (1) financing levels may be overestimated due to the difficulty to identify statistical components in operations with budget support or sector-wide and due to the fact that double-counting is sometimes possible for activities covered by different organisations; (2) financing levels may be underestimated due to the fact that 38 partners did not respond, that information is sometimes only available at national level and not at headquarters level, and that some partners did not report the amount of financing for their activities, especially true of sub-regional organisations and some UN agencies

12. The key financing results for the three-year period 2006–08 are as follows: (1) total reported commitments supporting statistics that were active during the period 2006-08 amounted to one billion USD; (2) financial support to statistical activities totalled around U\$550 million; (3) sub-Saharan Africa received well over half of total support to statistical development, with all other regions receiving on average around USD 50 million each; and (4) three partners (EC, UK, and World Bank) provided nearly three-quarters of total reported statistical support. Detailed information was also presented concerning the support given by statistical category, highlighting the sectors where there is little support: formal statistical training and environment statistics.

13. Key messages from the 2008 round are as follows: (1) financial support to statistics is relatively small, concentrated in a few countries and focusing on institutional development and large activities such as population censuses and household surveys; and (2) partner collaboration in statistical development is to be strengthened and more in-depth studies of PRESS results are necessary.

14. The Secretariat introduced recommendations for the future of PRESS: (1) collaboration is to be improved at headquarters levels: improvement of reporting mechanisms on statistical development and necessary feedback to the CRS; (2) collaboration is also to be improved at national level: PARIS21 to assist countries in monitoring partner support and reporting; (3) PRESS results are to be disseminated from partners headquarters to country offices; and (4) the PRESS activity has to be streamlined into the PARIS21 Secretariat's work programme with an annual periodicity, a specific Quality advisory group being created for providing guidance on future rounds. Comments from partners on the advance copy of the report are requested before 14 November. The Secretariat also introduced the volume III of the PRESS report: the Global Directory of partners in statistical capacity building.

Discussion

15. All participants agreed that the PRESS exercise was yielding very interesting results and filling a gap in terms of information on support to statistical capacity building. The representative from South Africa highlighted the importance of the results and the need to address the subject during the next African Symposium on Statistical Development in Luanda and UN Statistical Commission in New York. The chair and representatives from Eurostat and the World Bank commented that the PRESS was an important input for a better coordination of support in the future.

16. The Manager of the PARIS21 Secretariat stressed the importance of assisting countries in reporting on the support to statistics that they receive and suggested to have these reports available as possible outputs from the future SRF national partnerships.



17. World Bank and Eurostat representatives highlighted the need to have better responses from the UN system in the future, the problem of availability of information at headquarters level vs country level being illustrated by the representative from Niger. The Canadian and Belgian representatives mentioned the importance to demonstrate not only the supply but also the demand (what is needed). The World Bank responded that the demand has already been broadly estimated. Concerning the PRESS methodology itself, the Belgian representative raised specific points of clarification in the report, concerning exchange rates, country lists, and the calculation of annual disbursements. The chair of the meeting concluded that the PRESS activity should become a permanent activity of the PARIS21 Secretariat.

IV. World Bank Bulletin Board System

18. The World Bank representative presented the Bulletin Board System (BBS) for monitoring statistical capacity (available at <http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/csid.html>). The Bank's Executive Board requested good evidence to monitor the impact of their support, so in response the Bank's Development Data Group developed indicators and scores for each country. The BBS is an online database that provides information on national statistical systems (in 140 countries, updated annually) to help assess statistical capacity in countries and to monitor progress in statistical development. The system uses existing data sources only; countries are not asked to provide information. He said that countries can use the system to assess and report on their own performance and progress and development partners can use it to help include statistical capacity issues in policy dialogue; identify projects and monitor and evaluate them; and monitor regional and global trends in statistical capacity. With baseline data that stretch back to 1999, the statistical capacity indicator shows positive trends: the average across all countries has risen from 53 to 65 (on a 0–100 scale) from 1999 to 2008. In response to comments from users and requests from donors to the 15th replenishment of the IDA, the Bank intends to undertake improvements to the BBS, including allowing direct updates by countries, expanded country coverage, improved capacity assessment tools. In January/February 2009, the Bank will call on all IDA countries to participate in updating the data themselves. The newly configured site will be launched in mid-2009.

Discussion

19. Participants offered several recommendations on the Bulletin Board. It was suggested that the BBS be put before the UN Statistical Commission (not for approval but for discussion); be expanded to include all countries and not just the poorest; be open (via, for example, the SDMX standard) to data sharing with other organisations; and include a notation indicating when certain data have been updated in the system.

V. Role of Statistical Groups of Donors & Partners at Country Level

20. The representative from Sweden presented the experience of the statistics subgroup created in October 2007 in Mali to support the implementation of the country's NSDS. The group's overall objective is to facilitate a constructive dialogue and consultation among technical and financial partners and the government of Mali in the field of statistics as part of the implementation of the NSDS, by applying the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. In particular, it is intended to:

- Provide technical support to the Statistics and Information Technology Coordination Committee (CCSI) in its role of ensuring co-ordination within the NSS.
- Provide technical support to the government in the institutional reform of the NSS.
- Improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the contributions made by partners in the implementation of the NSDS by promoting consultation and building collaboration links.
- Provide support to the NSS in its requests for the mobilisation of national and external funds.

Discussion



21. In discussion, several country participants presented their own experiences and concerns in building national level partnerships for statistics. The representative from Niger announced that a group similar to the one in Mali will soon be launched in Niamey with the UNDP as lead donor. Niger's National Statistical Institute presents its annual work programme to partners, which helps them fill funding gaps. The Senegalese representative discussed his country's statistical partners group, in which representatives from the Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Demographie are not invited to participate. He asked if in other countries budgetary aid could be applied to the statistics sector. The representative from Mali replied that, as statistics are never a priority for governments, budgetary aid could not be applied to statistics. At the 2004 donors roundtable in Mali, the government requested a transition from programme aid to budgetary aid, but the implementation of this policy is difficult as there are always most pressing priorities than statistics (e.g., food or energy). The representative from CIDA–Canada reminded participants of two important recommendations from the Accra Agenda for Action: (1) 66% of aid should be via Program-based approaches and (2) donors are encouraged to make use of the national systems already in place.

VI. Closing

22. The chair closed the session by thanking participants and commented that the day's discussions were very enriching. He congratulated in particular PARIS21, who have provided great help to developing countries. He professed that his own work has been greatly facilitated by PARIS21's contribution over the years.