

## Partner Reporting System on Statistical Development (PRESS)

### Task Team – Developments during July 07-January 08

1. This note attempts to present the activities completed by the Task Team on PRESS since its last meeting on June 25, 2007, and the reasons for the delays in requesting approval of the PRESS proposal by the PARIS21 Steering Committee, and thus in launching a second round of the reporting exercise for Africa with non-OECD DAC countries and other partners (as agreed in the June meeting). It also proposes next steps for the Task Team in the design and development of a partner reporting system on statistical development, as defined in its terms of reference.<sup>1</sup>

### Status of Task Team's work program – July 07-January 08

2. The table below presents the key activities of the work program agreed upon by the last meeting of the Task Team and their status:

Activity	Date	Status
Feasibility note on CRS	Mid-July 07	Done
Revised questionnaire	Mid-July 07	Done
Final classification of statistical areas	Mid-July 07	Done
Draft proposal on PRESS to TT	End-July 07	Done
Draft proposal of key features of PRESS to CCSA/PARIS21 Bureau	End-August 07	Done
Reporting exercise on Africa by Eurostat	Sept-Feb 08	Collection ongoing; draft report under way
Presentation of proposal to CCSA session in Madrid	Sept 07	Key features of PRESS were presented, not proposal
Follow-up on AFRISTAT reporting experience	Oct 07	Done, but results never submitted to PARIS21
Draft proposal to P21 Steering Committee for approval	End-Oct 07	Proposal never submitted. Note presenting points to be agreed-upon by the SC

The following sections focus on the three main activities over the period (July 07-January 08): (i) the completion of the CRS study; (ii) the PRESS proposal; and (iii) the presentation of the PRESS to the CCSA. A brief summary and preliminary lessons learned from Eurostat's reporting exercise for Africa are also presented.

### CRS study

3. The CRS study, which *inter alia* examined the possibility of exploiting the CRS for identifying partner support to statistical development, was finalized in July 2007. The main recommendations of the study were that the CRS: (i) is a reliable source of data for OECD bilateral partners; (ii) does not fully report on support to statistical activities by multilateral partners, and so information from these partners should be collected by a different method; and

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<sup>1</sup> As stated in its Terms of Reference, the main objectives of the Task Team are to (i) propose a harmonized partner reporting system, taking into account existing reporting systems; (ii) make recommendations on the design, management, and data processing of its database; (iii) ensure database access to interested stakeholders; and (iv) monitor its development.

(iii) could improve coverage on statistical development by creating a sector code dedicated to statistics.

4. In keeping with the first recommendation, the PARIS21 Secretariat has extracted data from the CRS on support to statistical development to IDA countries (and non-IDA African countries) by OECD bilateral partners for the period 2001-06 and tabulated the data, by recipient country and by partner. It plans to tabulate the data by statistical domain, using the classification agreed-upon by the Task Team, with the assistance of statistical experts. The third recommendation was not supported by the OECD DCD-STAT Division, because past initiatives to make adjustments to the CRS to meet specific user needs, such as trade capacity building and HIV/AIDS assistance data, have reverted to the use of CRS as the main source of data from members. Introducing a specific purpose code for statistics would also require extensive discussion with the Working Party on Statistics and take quite a bit of time to arrive at an agreement.

### **Proposal on the PRESS**

#### *Comments of OECD DCD-STAT*

5. The proposal on the PRESS, agreed upon by the Task Team in June 07, was not presented to the PARIS21 Steering Committee because of a number of comments from the staff of the DCD-STAT during September/October 2007. The key issues voiced by DCD-STAT focused on:

- *mandate and duplication* – The OECD-DAC has the international mandate to collect information on development cooperation activities, under the governance of the DAC Working Party on Statistics (WP-STAT). Thus, there is the concern that the PRESS might be creating a parallel specialized system for statistics only;
- the *cost and purpose* of the PRESS -- described as “an expensive and wasteful exercise that will not meet its stated objectives” (namely, contributing to the elaboration of financing strategies for the NSDS of recipient countries and donor harmonization in the statistical area);
- *constraints of partner reporting systems* to provide more “text fields” (description of activities) and financial information, mainly due to lack of adequate resources in partner agencies. The DAC is working with the Gates Foundation to improve access to the CRS in general and supplementary data in particular;
- *difficulty of reporting on planned activities*: doubt on the ability of partners to provide forward financial data on their statistical activities; and
- *additional burden on partners’ reporting correspondents*.

#### *PARIS21 Steering Committee*

6. Given the fundamental nature of these comments, the PARIS21 Secretariat and the OECD DCD-STAT concluded that a number of points had to be agreed upon by the PARIS21 Steering Committee before proceeding to the presentation of a full proposal on the PRESS. These points, as cited in the note presented at the November 2007 Steering Committee meeting and partly based on the CRS study’s recommendations, were:

- the CRS will be the source for reporting on the statistical support activities of OECD-DAC bilateral countries;

- the CRS will be enhanced by collecting additional information from partners not covered by the CRS. This work will be carried out in collaboration with CRS staff and the DAC WP-STAT, with the aim of improving the level of detail and expanding CRS coverage of support to statistical development;
- partners should be invited to share textual, and where possible financial, information on their planned statistical programs and activities; and
- the partner reporting exercise is an integral part of the NSDS process that needs to be carried out by the recipient countries themselves. Within its overall support to country NSDS implementation and in collaboration with regional/sub-regional partners, the PARIS21 Secretariat will support countries to incorporate a reporting mechanism to manage and monitor partner support to statistical development, as part of their overall budget management as they implement their NSDS.

7. During the Steering Committee meeting, the discussion on these points was sidetracked due to comments from the Belgian delegate, who was principally reacting to the reporting exercise initiated by Eurostat for European member states, in late September. He questioned the need for the duplication of data requests, since the CRS, though limited, can provide information on partner aid flows. Rachel Beaven of DFID remarked that enhancements to the CRS are necessary, but are more of a long-term nature. She stressed that partners need information now to identify gaps in support, to use in development of country programs, and to advocate for additional funds for statistics (for memory, it should be noted that Rachael made similar comments in an email to the Task Team on February 14, 2007, prior to the Team's second meeting). Noting the importance of moving ahead on the reporting system, the chair, Richard Manning, suggested that a meeting to clear up any outstanding issues take place by mid-January 2008 with the DCD Statistics Division, PARIS21 Secretariat, and himself. This internal meeting was held on January 8, 2008.

#### ***Internal OECD Meeting on PRESS***

8. At the end of the January meeting, the chairperson, Richard Manning identified the following conclusions, which basically refine the points presented at the PARIS21 Steering Committee meeting in November 2007, but would require further discussion within the Task Team:

- PRESS would use the CRS as the foundation of the reporting system. The phases will include:
  - PRESS will extract CRS data using the "SCB" activity code and keyword searches.
  - PRESS will complement this information by gathering data from partners who do not report to the CRS (e.g., some multilateral organisations).
  - The information from non-CRS reporters will be sent to DCD-STAT to enrich the CRS.
- WP-STAT would be strongly encouraged to improve the information they provide in free-text fields (not just for statistical capacity-building but for all activities).
- every effort would be made to encourage those donors who do not report to the CRS to do so or at least to report in a manner as CRS-friendly as possible.
- PARIS21 would engage in structured discussions with the major donors supporting statistical development to harmonise their support programmes and to capture country summary information on future commitments.
- as part of NSDS funding strategies, PARIS21 would assist beneficiary countries to manage donor support. This includes helping countries to report to their national

- authorities on the support to statistical development they receive. This information would be provided as feedback on any major differences to the CRS team and CRS reporters, rather than as verification of CRS reporting.
- on 18 January 2008, the PRESS task team — along with the Chair of WP-STAT, the DCD Counsellor for Aid Architecture and Financing, and the Manager of PARIS21 — will convene in Paris to develop a refined proposal for presentation to the CCSA and PARIS21 Steering Committee.

9. It should be noted that, in his December 20, 2007 message to the Task Team, Brian Hammond explained how the above points compare to the Task Team's terms of reference. He argues that the CRS can meet the objectives of the Task Team at marginal cost and offered to explain this solution further at the January 2008 meeting of the Task Team.

### **CCSA and the PRESS**

10. Given the comments of the DCD-STAT on the PRESS proposal, the Progress Report of Task Team 1 to the CCSA session in Madrid in September 2007 presented only the key features of the reporting system, not the full proposal. Though commending the Task Team for its work, the meeting noted that the Progress Report was not concrete enough with respect to its terms of reference. As stated in the minutes of the September session, the CCSA “requested that the progress report for the February 2008 session present the Task Team's progress with respect to all of its terms of reference, taking into consideration appropriate mechanisms for coordination within CCSA and related activities, such as in the forthcoming Steering Committee meeting of PARIS21 and progress in the pilot phase in Africa.”

11. It appears that the CCSA would like to see a more comprehensive (not only OECD members) and future-oriented approach to the reporting exercise.

### **Eurostat's reporting exercise for Africa**

In March 2007, the Advisory Group for the coordination of EU technical cooperation on statistics in Africa agreed to participate in a pilot exercise to collect information of current and future statistical projects in Sub-Saharan Africa. The reporting exercise was launched by Eurostat in late September 2007, with members of Eurostat's Advisory Group and EU partners who participated in PARIS21's Light Reporting Exercise in 2005-06 (both statistical offices and development aid agencies were contacted)<sup>2</sup>. The on-line questionnaire was developed together with the PRESS Task Team.

There was an immediate response from the head of the WP-STAT on the need for the PRESS, giving the same comments as mentioned above. Eurostat countered that:

- scaling up and MDG measurement and coordination efforts require more information about the content of current and planned projects;
- there is a need to identify statistical components within larger non-statistical projects;
- the intention is not to create a parallel system, but a complementary one even within the CRS

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<sup>2</sup> Requests for information were sent to representatives of national statistical institutes of Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom; and to representatives of DFID and the ministries of foreign affairs from France and Netherlands.

The response rate has been slow, partly due to the reaction of the WP-STAT -- 6 member countries, out of 11 have responded. Despite the shaky start, Eurostat reports the following lessons learned:

- the on-line questionnaire was generally appreciated, though some minor adjustments need to be made;
- partners did provide information on “future” projects, possibly thanks to the question on the status of the planning, namely identification/under preparation, appraisal, being approved;
- further advocacy is needed to persuade statistical officers to report support to statistical activities, rather than pass on the request to DAC reporters;
- integration of the results into the CRS might “legitimize” the exercise for the respondents;
- the question on “lead” donor is very important, helping to avoid double-counting when different members report the same project.

### Next Steps

The need for a reporting system on partner support to statistical development has been expressed by a number of key partners, including the EC, the World Bank, and DFID, as an important source of information to support the global partnership on statistical development, in particular for the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics and for the new scaling-up initiative. It is expected that a global reporting system could contribute to improved coordination of statistical activities among partners, implying a need for both the collection of past and planned activities.

In light of this, the first step for the Task Team is to come to an agreement on how to move forward on the design and development of the PRESS, as defined in its terms of reference, and. The draft proposal, discussed at the Task Team’s meeting in June 07, should serve as a point of departure and be re-viewed, taking into account the conclusions proposed at the January 08 meeting and the lessons learned from the recent Eurostat exercise. **The outcome of this discussion should lead to a program of activities for the PRESS, including: (i) the collection of information from different partners (countries reporting to CRS and countries/institutions not reporting to the CRS), (ii) the preparation of a report, analyzing this information, (iii) the dissemination of the results to key stakeholders (WP-STAT, PARIS21 Steering Committee, and the CCSA); and (iv) the design and development of a repository to store extracted CRS data and other information collected from non CRS-reporters.**

Other short-term activities to be considered by the Task Team include:

- a discussion on how to respond to the CCSA’s request at its last session in September 07 and prepare a Progress Report for its next session in February 08.
- a review of the information extracted from the CRS and tabulated by the PARIS21 Secretariat.