



## Top-level meeting to approve statistical framework for Africa

Addis Ababa, 9 February 2006 - Expectations are high for approving a framework for statistical development in Africa during the second Forum for African Statistical Development (FASDEV II), starting today at the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) headquarters in Addis Ababa.

During this meeting, over 150 representatives from African countries, donors, partners, sub regional, regional and international organizations will review and endorse the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Capacity Building in Africa (RRSF), which will guide African statistical development in the future.

FASDEV II is co-sponsored by the ECA, African Development Bank (ADB), the Partnership in Statistics for the 21st Century (PARIS 21) Consortium, and the World Bank. The meeting is an opportunity to showcase the importance of building capacity in the field of statistics on the continent in order to improve targeting for development programmes.

"African countries, with full support from the donor community, should engage in making statistics a keystone of their development process," said Abdoulie Janneh, ECA's Executive Secretary.

Established following a recommendation made by the first meeting of the Governing Board of the International Comparison Programme for Africa (ICP-Africa) in 2003, FASDEV is dedicated to ad-



vancing the common goal of improving statistics in Africa through partnerships and consensus-building.

Like other current development planning and monitoring programmes such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), FASDEV is largely about Africa's ownership of its own development process.

In addition, documents such as the RRSF are the product of extensive consultations among member states and partners, reflecting the continent's commitment to democracy-building and transparency in decision-making.

"Every country on the continent should be equipped with national statistical systems that are capable of supporting economic, political and social development in a sustainable manner, in order to guarantee that planning and policymaking will be evidence-based and bias-free," said Janneh.

## Interview with Antoine Simonpietri, Manager PARIS21 Secretariat Development Co-operation Directorate

**ECA: What is your main expectation for this meeting?**

PARIS21: This meeting is a chance for stakeholders to sit with donors and highlight the importance of statistics and statistical development on the continent. Statistics is a key element of governance, without which you cannot say anything on the impact of your policy. A country should be able to say not only how many students went to school, for example, but also what is the impact of that schooling on their lives.



**ECA: Are you talking about better targeting for ODA?**

PARIS21: Definitely. Both donors and recipients should take statistics compilation and analysis as being key to measuring the effectiveness of aid and development programmes.

Of course that means that donors need to assist, provide African partners with the means to measure the outcomes of the programmes they fund. But donors also need to understand that national strategies for statistics need to respond to the individual needs of countries. →

## Statistics Vital to ECA's work

Statistics are at the core of economic analysis at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Social scientists at the Commission scrutinise data provided by government agencies, international organizations, and other agencies in the UN system assisting members in designing country-specific public policy.

As the Africa branch of the UN secretariat dedicated to assisting the development of member states, ECA is engaged in improving the compilation, analysis and dissemination of statistics and statistical development in Africa through core programmes and specific activities.

"It is imperative that Africa as a whole works towards enabling African National Statistics Systems to provide data for evidence-based policymaking and planning and tracking progress towards na-



tional and international development goals," said Abdoulie Janneh, ECA's Executive Secretary.

To this end, much of the work of the research undertaken by ECA's divisions in governance, sustainable development, trade, and economic and social policy analysis reflects the need to enhance statistics on the continent as part of the enabling environment for development.

→ **ECA: What's the biggest priority?**

PARIS21: The real priority is building capacity within countries for them to come up with National Strategies for the Development of Statistics that are not just driven by the priorities of donors, but reflect their own immediate and medium-term needs. So if a country places a lot of importance on food security, their statistical development should probably focus on different aspects of food production, processing, and commerce, along with nutrition, diet, health, internal displacement, and migration, among other factors.

**ECA: What is your timeframe for improving statistics and statistical development on the continent?**

PARIS21: If they decide to back this framework we can really make a difference in five years' time. We can engage in extensive training to come up with real figures on everything, from national accounts to health, gender, and education, producing data that is key to making development work.

### What is an NSDS?

The National Strategy for Development Statistics (NSDS) is a key component of the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS), approved by Africa's statistics partners in 2004.

An NSDS provides a country with a strategy for strengthening statistical capacity across the entire national statistical system (NSS). Its aim is to align statistical development with wider poverty-focused national development programmes and strategies.

Strengthening statistical capacity is essential to support the design, monitoring, and evaluation of national development plans, including poverty reduction strategies, sector strategies, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Many African countries already have some form of strategic plan in place. The NSDS reflects good practice in statistical planning, building upon country experiences. A good NSDS, as defined by PARIS21 in consultation with its partners should:

- Be nationally led and owned, with high level political support and champions;
- Be demand-focused and integrated within national development processes;
- Be developed in an inclusive and consultative way;
- Assess all statistical sectors and user needs and provide a vision and strategic plan for national statistics
- Set out an integrated statistical development programme to build capacity to deliver results;
- Address institutional constraints and processes;
- Build quality "fit for purpose", drawing on best international practice and standards;
- Respond to user needs but be realistic about resources;
- Serve as a coherent framework for international support for statistical development

Source: PARIS21 - Draft Progress Report on National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) in Sub-Saharan Africa Countries