

Second Forum on African Statistics Development

FASDEV II

Friday, 10 February, 2006



Overwhelming approval for African statistics framework

Addis Ababa, 10 February 2006 - Participants at an African statistics meeting in Addis Ababa have overwhelmingly approved a comprehensive road-map aimed at boosting data development on the continent.

The second Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV II) was held at the UN Economic Commission for Africa from 9-10 February. It brought together some 150 participants - from African National Statistics Offices (NSOs), ECA, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate (DAC), and Partnership for Statistical Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) - who approved a Reference Regional Framework for African Statistical Development and Capacity Building (RRSF).

Speaking at the closing session, ECA's Executive Secretary Abdoulie Janneh stressed that it was important for Africa to invest in statistics.

"Your achievements during this FASDEV II are a keystone in building the basis of better statistics for Africa," he told participants.

The framework, which establishes for the first time the building blocks of National Statistics Development



Systems (NSDS) for the continent, was approved following a three-day workshop on the RRSF attended by directors of NSOs from all over Africa,

"Statistics offices everywhere are under-funded. This kind of framework recognizes that more needs to be done to bridge different areas of development, all of which require timely and sound statistics," said Richard Manning, OECD DAC Chair, who attended the meeting.

He said that donors are more willing to assist Africa directly with statistical development. "But it also needs to be clear to African governments that they should also be concerned with this issue - governments need the right evidence to help them build policy that will in turn foster development," he stressed.

Interview with Janvier Litse, Director of Planning and Budgeting, African Development Bank (AfDB)

ECA: What were the AfDB's expectations for FASDEV II?

AfDB: As the ECA's Executive Secretary Mr Abdoulie Janneh said, as well as Mr Maxwell of the African Union, the situation of African statistics is in a sorry state and requires urgent measures. FASDEV is a platform to share means and appropriate action for the generation of truly timely and accurate socio economic data that will lead to development and also to help achieve the MDGs. It's also an opportunity for partners to strengthen their cooperation ties and to showcase their comparative advantages. Finally, it's a resource mobilization opportunity. Here we can strategize, so that every institution does its best to optimize resources, to



avoid wastage and duplication of efforts.

ECA: There is a vocation for each of the partners, what vocation would AfDB be happiest to undertake and/or share?

AfDB: The dire paucity of the statistics situation in Africa calls for collaboration among partners. To make a difference, no single institution can undertake the daunting task of building statistical capacity on the continent on their own. With 53 Member States, it will require huge resources to implement activities. The Bank's contribution is within its mandate and its development strategy: results measuring for development effectiveness. We want to emphasise in our funding of projects statistical capacity build-

Donors and Africa to share cost of statistical development

Addis Ababa, 10 February 2006 - The donor community will assist Africa in its statistical development, said Richard Manning, Chair of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Co-Operation Directorate (OECD/DAC).

He participated in the ECA-hosted Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV II), held at the Commission's headquarters in Addis Ababa from 9 to 10 February.

"Recognition has been growing in the donor community that it is in everyone's interests to get better data. Both PARIS-21 and the World Bank Foundation are dedicated to statistics advocacy, for example," he noted.

He said donor countries had agreed to increase aid by up to 60 percent over a period of six years, starting in 2004. However he noted that with European economies growing at only 2 percent on average a year, such high rates might not be feasible.

"There will certainly be an increase, as we already have witnessed. But whether or not it's 60 percent



Richard Manning (to the left)

will remain to be seen," he said. "African economies on the other hand, are growing by at least 5 percent a year - meaning successful countries are already helping themselves, and will be able to do much more."

Manning reiterated the need for concerted efforts by partners to "beef up" statistical development.

"In particular, I see a lot of complementarity between the ECA and AfDB, the ECA working on policy and collaborating closely with the AfDB in development funding," he added.

Boost for Africa's health statistics

Africa's health statistical system is receiving a US \$50 million boost from the Gates Foundation through a new World Health Organization-hosted project entitled Health Metrics Network (HMN).

Set within the WHO system, the project entails streamlining health information systems that are cross-cutting, encompassing data in areas as disparate as vaccination programmes and basic sanitation.

For Norma Wilson, a specialist in monitoring and evaluating health systems, on loan from USAID to kickstart the programme, HMN is an important building block in aligning health information systems around the world.

"The overall purpose of the programme is to improve the availability, quality and use of information, defining health information a little differently than what we have previously considered effective," she told the ECA during the second Forum for African Statistical Development (FASDEV II).

In effect, while traditionally health ministries have almost exclusively administered health, this shift in paradigm implies the involvement of areas that



Norma Wilson (to the right)

though not strictly related to health, also cause an impact on the lives of citizens.

Forty one countries, so far, are to receive a total US\$6 million in seed money from the programme. This will be used to lay the foundation for comprehensive national health information systems.

"The real difference is that within these country-owned projects stakeholder committees include data gathering and statistics persons," said Wilson. "Our priority is capacity building."

The programme is particularly relevant for streamlining indicators and standardising data, allowing for an increase in the use of statistics in health policy making.

ECA statistics exhibition brings partners together

Addis Ababa, 10 February - Statistics partners in Africa showcased development statistics this week at an exhibition at the United Nations Conference Center in Addis Ababa, set up for the second Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV II).

The exhibition was a chance for partners from the Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency, the United Nations Statistical Division in New York (UNSD), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Organization for Education and Scientific Cooperation (UNESCO), the ECA, the African Development Bank, the World Bank/IMF, Partnership for Statistical Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), and the Nairobi branch of the statistical software makers Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to display their work.



“This kind of exhibition is really important for us in Ethiopia, as it gives us the chance of showing other people in this field what we do, and how we work, and for future planning – where we are going,” noted Seleshi Teffera, Public Relations Officer of the Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency.



Overwhelming approval...

On partnerships, Janvier Litse, the director of Planning and Budgeting of the African Development Bank, noted that the situation of African statistics requires the redoubling of efforts by all the partners to trigger real change.

“There is room for everyone to do their job,” he said, reaffirming the AfDB’s commitment to working with the UN, other international partners, and Member States on establishing RRSF and the NSDS.

Another major task of FASDEV II was to reach

consensus on an African position in March when the world body on statistics, STATCOM 2006, meets at UN headquarters in New York.

“I am delighted that participants of this second meeting of FASDEV have endorsed the RRSF, and have reached a consensus on partnership building, paving the road to evidence-based decision-making, and monitoring and evaluation of outcomes that will strengthen confidence in national and international development agendas,” concluded Abdoulie Janneh.

Statistics should improve by 2010, say partners

Statistical development in Africa is aligned with Millennium Development Goal targets, said Shaida Badiie, Director of Development of the World Bank Data Group.

Ms Badiie participated in a press conference held by FASDEV II partners at the ECA on the closing day of the Forum. In the past, she said, statistical development was not considered a priority, and no time limits were set for broadening its agenda.

“But the launching of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, along with commitments on development made by international partners, come as an opportunity to improve statistics and to come up with results more quickly,” she said.

One of the explanations for the lag in statistics on the continent was the fiscal crisis faced by most African nations in the 1980s and 1990s. “The fact is that during a fiscal crisis, the first target of budget cuts tend to be statistics offices,” said Augustin Fosu, director of the Economic and Social Policy Division of the ECA, hosting the forum.



“Since the 1990s statistics capacity building has been improving and we are now experiencing a positive trend,” said Antoine Simonpietri, manager of the PARIS21 secretariat.

FASDEV II’s partners, the ECA, the AfDB, the World Bank and PARIS 21 confirmed their commitment to maintaining and developing relationships to further the cause of statistical development in Africa.

They said that institutional support by all partners for statistics goes beyond capacity building, and includes standardization of data, facilitating statistical comparisons beyond national borders.

Interview with Janvier Litse...

ing at the country and sub-regional levels, helping the continent produce timely socio economic data in national accounts, sector data, and social data.

ECA: Do you consider that the National Statistical Development Systems and the RRSF will be levers for additional funding for development from donor nations?

AfDB: Timely accurate comprehensive data provide greater insight into social and economic strengths and weaknesses, and ease decision making processes. Naturally, better informed policy makers can be better advocates of foreign and domestic investments, needed in a country, and hence also provide an idea of resource requirements to finance these investments.

ECA: How much has the AfDB earmarked for statistical development this year?

AfDB: The AfDB is fully committed to this process. We mobilized US\$30 million for this year for statistical development alone to support the RRSF, and will continue to do so.

