

Executive Summary



At the end of the 1990s, Africa's leaders committed themselves to the continent's renewal with the creation of the African Union and the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Both initiatives were intended to address Africa's development challenges; place African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development; and extricate the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalizing world.

Africa's leaders also committed themselves to the results agenda, including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and other national and sectoral development plans. The results agenda requires clear and systematic measurement and reporting on achievement of outputs, outcomes, and the impact of development policies and programs using better statistics. Better statistics are required to inform various development challenges facing Africa and are a necessary part of the development infrastructure.

The results agenda has led to an unprecedented increase in demand for better statistics, putting severe pressure on already fragile and underperforming national statistical systems in many countries. Concerted action is needed to address this problem. In particular, statistical systems need to be reformed and strengthened, and statistical capacities need to be built in a sustainable manner if the data challenges posed by the results agenda are to be met.

Despite statistical capacity-building initiatives in Africa over the past 40 years or so, the capacity of most countries in the region remains weak, and there is little use of data by policy-makers. The Reference Regional Strategic Framework (RRSF) sets out a coherent framework to build this capacity, in line with the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS). The framework will provide guidance to countries on how to improve their statistics and increase their use in policy-making and decision-making. For this to happen, key stakeholders in the national statistical systems in Africa will have to work in concert and within this framework.

The national statistical system is made up of national stakeholders and external stakeholders. National stakeholders include government ministries

and institutions, public sector institutions, private sector institutions, civil society organizations, research and training institutions and the general public. External stakeholders include sub-regional and regional organizations, regional statistical training centers, bilateral and multilateral donors and international organizations.

The assessment of national statistical systems shows that development strategies and frameworks such as sectoral policies and programs, PRSPs, the MDGS, and other national development plans represent a principal source of statistical demand and influence which data are collected in African countries. It also reveals that there is a low level of awareness of the role that statistics can play in policy-making and decision-making, with consequent low levels of demand.

Data are produced by many institutions in Africa, including the national statistical office; line ministries; public sector institutions, such as the central bank; private sector institutions, such as chambers of commerce and industry; research and training institutions, including universities; and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The assessment reveals that many national statistical systems are trapped in a vicious cycle in which the shortage of funds contributes to poor performance and low-quality statistics, which in turn create a negative view of and further lack of support and funding for statistical operations and development. Many national statistical systems lack the capacity to perform even the minimum operations and cannot adapt to the new challenges or meet the new demands for data. When the national statistical office has not been able to perform adequately, other entities, such as the central bank or the ministry of finance, have sometimes taken over some of the statistical functions it would normally assume, further reducing its standing and its claim to sustained government funding. In many countries, donor assistance has sustained statistical operations.

Sub-regional organizations are promoting the production of harmonized and consistent data by member states; use of best practice, standards and methods; and the adoption of international guidelines for statistical production and compilation. Their statistics units vary in size and effectiveness, making it difficult for some of them to perform their functions properly.

At the regional level, the African Development Bank (the AfDB) is carrying out statistical capacity building consistent with the Yaoundé Declaration on Statistical Development in Africa, adopted by the Directors of national statistical offices in 2004. This work builds on the AfDB's work as coordinator of the International Comparison Program for Africa (ICP-Africa) and its assistance to countries in developing their national strategies for the development of

statistics. The AfDB expects to sustain its support for statistical development beyond 2007, when the current program ends.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) is responsible for several forums that promote statistics, including the Advisory Board on Statistics in Africa (ABSA) and the Committee on Development Information (CODI). UNECA, in collaboration with the AfDB, the PARIS21, and the World Bank, is also jointly responsible for the Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV). UNECA's role in the past 10 years has declined, but there are plans to strengthen it.

While the African Union has not been actively involved in statistical development, it has realized that for effective implementation of its programs, it will need a lot of statistical information. For this reason, it has established a statistics unit (to be upgraded later) to organize statistical products that will support the programs. The AU is expected to play a role in the implementation of the framework and especially in high-level statistical advocacy.

Donor agencies and international organizations are assisting countries to develop statistical capacity, with technical assistance and funding of large statistical development programs. Significant contributions have been made in such areas as population and housing censuses, integrated large-scale household surveys, technical training, and the development of standard computer software systems for statistical purposes.

Statistical personnel are trained at national training institutions (usually universities) and regional statistical training centers. While the regional training centers adapt their training programs to the needs of national statistical offices, in universities teaching programs tend to be theoretical. Moreover, throughout Africa the teaching of statistics is done largely from the supply side. It does not provide an understanding of the demand for statistics by the national and international development agenda or the implications of monitoring progress toward achievement of the goals and targets set out in PRSPs or the MDGs. Most statistical training centers face shortages of teaching staff, fellowships, teaching materials (mainly books and computers), budgetary support from the government, and teaching space.

The RRSF has been prepared to overcome problems and constraints and meet the challenges that have been identified. Its overall objective is to improve development outcomes and good governance by strengthening national statistical systems in Africa. Specific objectives include raising societal awareness of the role of statistical information, increasing user satisfaction by enhancing the quality and usability of statistical information, promoting

greater use of statistical information and achieving synergy, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability in statistical information systems.

The following strategies have been developed to achieve these objectives:

Overall: Design and implement a national strategy for the development of statistics.

1. Invigorate statistical advocacy.
2. Mainstream statistics as a cross-cutting sector in the development process.
3. Update the legal and regulatory framework.
4. Assess and prioritize user needs.
5. Undertake data development.
6. Foster coordination, collaboration and partnerships.
7. Enhance the statistical infrastructure.
8. Harness information and communication technology.
9. Develop human capital.
10. Improve data analysis.
11. Improve data dissemination.
12. Improve funding and sustainability.

National stakeholders (principally the Directors of national statistical offices) and external stakeholders have been consulted on the framework. The framework was endorsed by the Directors of national statistical offices in Africa (STATCOM-AFRICA) and the Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on February 6-8 and February 9-10 2006, respectively. The framework will be referred to ABSA and CODI before being presented to the UNECA Conference of Ministers of Finance and Planning for final endorsement and to the AfDB Board of Directors for information.

The roles of stakeholders in implementing the framework have been identified. Primary responsibility for implementation lies with the countries, the primary beneficiaries of the RRSE. Under the framework, national statistical offices will create awareness about and enlist support for the framework among key stakeholders, designate an official to coordinate framework implementation at the country level and liaise with coordinators at the sub-regional and regional levels, and design and implement a national strategy for the development of statistics. Sub-regional organizations will continue to assist countries in adapting global concepts and classifications to suit conditions in the sub-region. The statistics units in these organizations will be strengthened and a framework coordinator designated at the sub-regional level. The regional organizations will create awareness about and enlist support for the framework regionally and internationally, using various forums, such as international meetings, PARIS21 meetings, FASDEV meetings and regional meetings of ministers, and establish a regional Framework Coordinator.

International organizations and donors (bilateral and multilateral) will continue to develop statistical methodologies and frameworks, fund statistical activities at all levels and provide technical assistance. The role of donors and international organizations in developing statistics in Africa is expected to grow in the context of this framework, as about \$73 million a year in additional external assistance will be needed to implement the framework throughout Africa, about \$60 million of which will go to low-income countries. They will have greater impact if their efforts are coordinated.

Monitoring of framework implementation will be handled by building on the PARIS21 Statistical Capacity Building Indicators and the IMF's Data Quality Assessment Framework. Both qualitative and quantitative indicators will be used for this purpose, and monitoring will be done on a continuous basis. Countries will provide a mechanism for monitoring statistical development within their national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS). UNECA and the AfDB will jointly coordinate framework implementation, monitoring, and reporting. Both organizations will agree on the appropriate coordination mechanism. The AU will play a strong advocacy role at the highest level of government in all African countries and among development partners. As part of the monitoring framework, peer review of country national statistical systems and statistical work by the sub-regional organizations will be undertaken.

Critical risk factors that could affect implementation of the framework have been identified and mitigation measures proposed. To enhance the effectiveness of monitoring activity, actions will be taken in response to what is measured and reported. An annual report will be produced by the coordinator at the

regional level, based on information and reports provided by countries to sub-regional organizations, by sub-regional organizations on their own activities and by training institutions. This report will be distributed to members of ABSA and FASDEV. A biennial report will also be produced based on a review to be undertaken every two years (in 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013). The mid-decade review of the framework (in 2010) as well as the main review (in 2015) will be undertaken by an independent institution or agency selected by UNECA and the AfDB. The biennial, mid-decade, and main review reports will be presented to CODI, FASDEV and the UNECA Conference of Ministers for Finance and Planning and the AfDB Board of Directors. Together with the agencies responsible for implementation - national statistical offices, councils, commissions, boards, and committees; line ministries; sub-regional organizations; regional organizations; and international agencies - the coordinating agencies will make recommendations on implementation, monitoring, and reporting.