

# General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) – Anglophone African Countries Project: Support to Statistical Development

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Oliver J.M Chinganya  
Regional Advisor – GDDS  
International Monetary Fund  
P.O Box 46301, Nairobi, GPO 00100, Kenya  
E-mail: ochinganya@africaonline.co.ke

## 1. Introduction

The General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) was designed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to assist countries improve and strengthen their statistical systems in data production and dissemination. In 2001, a GDDS project for 14 Anglophone countries<sup>1</sup> was set up to promote orderly development of their statistical systems, provide tools to diagnose areas that require priority attention and establish processes to aid in the formulation and implementation of development plans. The Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom funds the project. In essence there are two parallel projects - one executed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) launched in November 2001, and another the World Bank in August 2002. The two projects are designed to work together, sharing the same objectives and management structure. The IMF covers the macroeconomic sectors namely, fiscal, external, finance and real, whereas the World Bank covers at the socio-demographic areas; population, poverty, health and education. The first phase of the project ended on April 30, 2004; second phase started on May 1 2004 and will come to close in May 2006. In the new phase of the project, Ghana has been included, bringing to the total number of 15 countries in the project.

## 2. GDDS Framework

The GDDS framework is built around four dimensions:

- a) **Data characteristics** - including coverage, periodicity, and timeliness. Dissemination of reliable, comprehensive, and timely economic, financial, and socio-demographic data is essential to the transparency of macroeconomic performance and policy.
- b) **Quality** – data quality is important, as users must be provided with information to enable them to assess quality according to their own needs. GDDS therefore recommends the dissemination of documentation on methodology and sources used in preparing statistics.
- c) **Integrity** – for users to have confidence in official statistics, they must first have confidence in the objectivity and professionalism of the agency producing the statistics. Transparency of practices and procedures is a key factor in creating this confidence. The GDDS therefore recommends the dissemination of the terms and conditions under which the statistics are produced, identification of internal government access to the data before release, identification of ministerial commentary on the occasion of statistical releases, and the provision of information about revisions and advance notice of major changes.

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<sup>1</sup> Participating countries are Botswana, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe

d) **Access by the public** – dissemination of official statistics is an essential feature of statistics as a public good, and therefore ready and equal access by the public are principal requirements. GDDS in this case recommends dissemination of advance calendars and simultaneous release to all interested parties.

The GDDS framework covers the following sectors;

- **Real sector** – national accounts, production index, price index, labour markets
- **Fiscal sector** – central government operations, central government aggregates, central government debt
- **Financial sector** – depository corporations survey, broad money and credit aggregates, interest rates, stock market
- **External sector** – balance of payments, balance of payments aggregates, external debt and debt service schedule, international reserves, merchandise trade
- **Socio-demographic** – population, education, health, poverty

The major key participants in the development of the metadata are National statistical office, the National Reserve Banks, Ministries of Finance, Planning, Labour, Health and Education. Lately the activities have also spread to other line ministries.

### 3. Nature of Support

The GDDS project is designed to provide technical support in both the economic sectors and the socio-demographic areas within its framework. The support is limited to technical expertise. The project has two phases:

- Phase one involve describing the current statistical practices (metadata) in the production and dissemination of statistics and identifying areas which need improvement,
- Phase two deals with provision of technical assistance in identified areas that need improvement.

Most of the countries have their metadata posted on the IMF bulletin board (see date of posting in the table below). The metadata are updated at least once a year to take account changes that may have taken place. Once a country has identified an area which require technical expertise and determined, the skills required, duration and timing, terms of reference are drawn and submitted to the project management. A qualified expert is then hired to provide the necessary technical assistance. Some of this technical assistance has included in-house training. The project has also supported sensitization workshops intended to raise awareness of statistics and help raise the profile of National Statistical Offices. The workshops have assisted in raising interest among policy makers and increased dialogue among producers and users of statistics.

The project has in the past two years also looked at other areas not necessary part of the initial design, namely cartographic mapping and Geographical Information System, statistical organization, gender, vital registration, judicial statistics and dissemination policies.

### Dates of First Posting of Metadata for Project Countries

Country	Date of First Posting	Remarks
Botswana	10/24/02	Metadata updated.
Eritrea	---	Metadata not fully developed.
Ethiopia	11/15/02	Metadata updated
Kenya	10/29/02	In the process of updating metadata.
Liberia	---	Metadata not developed.
Lesotho	08/25/03	
Malawi	12/24/02	Metadata updated
Namibia	12/19/02	Health metadata recently developed. Part of the metadata updated.
Nigeria	04/29/03	
Sierra Leone	05/29/03	
Sudan	08/19/03	
Swaziland	02/11/03	
Zambia	11/01/02	Metadata updated.
Zimbabwe	11/01/02	Not active.

#### 4. Coordination and collaboration

The need for assistance in the participating countries is greater than what the project can provide. For instance, the project does not provide equipment or funds that are required to undertake surveys. Therefore project encourages countries to share the metadata particularly the plans for improvement with other development partners present in the country to seek assistance. The National GDDS coordinators are expected to share this information with other agencies within the country to ensure coordinated and focused assistance. The project also undertakes regional GDDS workshops to enhance coordination and share experiences on best practices. In the provision of technical assistance the project collaborates with other agencies such IMF divisions that are involved in TA, East AFRITAC, World Bank, SADC, COMESA etc. This helps to avoid duplication. In future the project will also be expected to work closely with the Africa ICP in ensuring that countries' statistical capacities are improved, and share information on activities being undertaken.

The project supports strategic planning as tool for statistical development and efficient harnessing of resources. During this phase of the project, participating countries developing national strategies for statistical development (NSDS) will be encouraged to implement the strategies. Those that have not started such initiatives will be encouraged to consider developing plans. A workshop on strategic planning will be held in November 2004 in Kenya and will bring together heads of statistical offices and the GDDS national coordinators. The project will identify co-sponsors to attend the workshop, particularly agencies that have been preparing good practice materials for statistical master plans.