



## AFRICAN STATISTICS DAY 2017 18 NOVEMBER, 2017

### BETTER LIVES WITH BETTER ECONOMIC STATISTICS

African Statistics Day 2017 will be celebrated on 18 November 2017. Each year Africa celebrates this day to raise public awareness of the importance of statistics in all aspects of social and economic life. The theme of the Day this year is “Better lives with better economic statistics” and focuses on the critical role economic statistics plays in underpinning economic governance that leads to durable growth, and linking economic growth with better lives and better economic status for all citizens of Africa.

Availability and appropriate use of good economic statistics can translate into better lives for people through providing evidence as a base for policy and decision-making by the nation or by firms, households, and citizens. Statistics provide information for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of the progress in meeting the goals and targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), as well as a basis for effective economic governance to promote the welfare of a nation.

The achievement of the sustainable development goals, which are packed with tremendous promises of better quality of life for all, is to be owned, especially by African countries, where poverty continue strike the life of large groups of people. SDG implementation needs to take a methodical approach starting from understanding the functioning of the national economy – whereby economic statistics play a cornerstone role – to designing the most appropriate economic development strategies and policies.

The current status of economic statistics on the continent is not stellar. The power of economic statistics equates that of the information at hand to guide suitable decisions. The more complete the statistics, the more powerful they are,

but come as a cost. The development of good quality economic statistics is a matter of public choice and forms part of the investments that lead to fast and inclusive prosperity for countries and their citizens.

The good news is that every country can endeavour to generate a critical bulk of economic statistics and leverage on these to wisely shape the path of its prosperity.

### BETTER ECONOMIC POLICIES LEAD TO BETTER LIVES FOR THE PEOPLE

The importance of statistics in understanding and using economic information for planning and policy design cannot be overstressed. All key macroeconomic variables (national accounts, savings and investment, employment interest rates, inflation) and microeconomic (poverty, inequality, social outcome indicators, etc.) are based on statistics. For example, national accounts that measure the overall size and strength of the economy, as well as trends in production, consumption, investment, and savings amongst other variables or indicators. Income and wealth of the economy are the bases of the well-being of the individuals and households. When the economy is strong, there will be more opportunities for jobs and employment. Increased employment will elevate more people out of poverty, and increase productivity as well.

Government provides public goods and services to citizens and intervene and influence the economy through fiscal policy. Government finance statistics show the amount and sources of government financial resources and how these resources are spent. A positive impact from public finance (revenues and spending) on the economy can return high growth in the economy, which brings in more tax revenues. Good government financial statistics help improve the transparency and good governance of the economy, and thus better the well-being of the people.

### FINANCIAL AND TRADE STATISTICS BOOST ECONOMY, WHICH IN TURN BENEFITS THE MARKET, HOUSEHOLDS AND INDIVIDUALS

Financial markets bring together the supply of savings and the demand for money to finance businesses and

consumer spending. Financial statistics, including money and banking lending, interest rates, bond yields and share prices, exchange rates among others, affect the decisions of saving and investment. Monetary statistics for money supply, investment in short term bonds, adjusting benchmark interest rates, and reserve requirements provide information for informed monetary expansion and contraction policies and for better understanding and controlling inflation.

Imports provide an economy with inputs of production, increase variety, introduce more competition, and bring down prices. Exports allow firms greater access to larger markets, increase innovation, and increase the number of jobs in an economy, allowing for an expansion of employment and wages. Import and export statistics provide the needed information to ensure trade balance, optimise the benefits of trade to all sectors of the economy and across all income levels so that a country can better engage in a global economy, and increase incomes of the people.

### **SECTORAL STATISTICS: AGRICULTURAL, ENERGY, INDUSTRIALIZATION, TRANSPORTATION AND TOURISM PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES AND FOSTER GROWTH**

Using statistics, we are able to know the sectoral composition of and trends in the economy and therefore policies for growth and transformation can be designed. For example, agriculture makes up a large portion of economic activity in most developing economies and creates jobs and improves livelihoods of the rural populations. Agricultural statistics provide input and output information in agriculture includes crop production, livestock products, forestry and fishery products, land use, agricultural machinery, water use, fertilizers, and pesticides. The development of agricultural statistics is key to monitoring poverty reduction, food security, environmental sustainability, and improving the livelihood of citizens.

To access clean, affordable, and reliable energy is to ensure the economic development is sustainable. Energy statistics help to understand the composition of energy supply, what percentage of renewable energy such as solar, hydro, biofuel, and geothermal are used, and how to shift towards clean and sustainable energy sources. They are also used to help understand how and where energy is

distributed, how much energy lost during distribution to the grid and its effects on the accessibility and reliability of a country's energy supply. A sustainable supply of energy and an efficient distribution grid ensures that a country can deliver clean energy to its population.

Structural transformation and industrialization are the priority agenda of the continent and allow a country to catch up and modernize. Industrial and business statistics, including manufacturing and industrial production and sales, construction spending, fixed investment and investment in stocks, capacity use and utilization, wholesale and retail sales or turnover, orders, stocks, indices, and surveys, provide indicators and signals of the performance of businesses in the economy. They allow for adjustments and improvements to be made in different sectors: incentivizing growth in a sector or moving resources away from one sector towards another.

A transportation network allows goods and services to be allocated efficiently and connect trading partners. Thanks to transportation infrastructure, a firm in one location can produce goods to satisfy demand in another. Transportation statistics such as railway freight traffic can identify underserved areas, and allow for comparative analysis to understand the freight capacities of a country, and determine if a country could be better served by further increasing the usage of railways to connect within the country and to other countries. Freight networks allow consumer goods to meet demand and decreases barriers to entry across large swathes of the economy.

Tourism is an important stimulus to businesses, providing employment and a source of earning foreign currencies. Tourism is a boon to developing economies allowing them to spur growth in areas that otherwise lack the necessary resources or robust infrastructure. Tourism provides additional demand outside of the domestic economy. Tourism statistics help to understand where tourists originate from and where they intend to go within a country; to identify if there is "over-tourism" which needs to be sustainably managed; and what areas are underserved by tourism requiring interventions. Balancing both issues will allow for the benefits of tourism to be fully realised.

We invite you to participate in the celebration of the African Statistics Day on 18 November 2017, and champion the improvement of economic statistics for a better life for all.

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