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**African Group on Statistical Training  
and Human Resources**



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## I. Introduction and background

Statistics and statistical training capacity in Africa face are beset with challenges, which hinder their advancement. These challenges include inadequate human resources, courses and curricula, and the low capacity of statistical training centres. This notwithstanding, a few interesting experiences in statistical training in Africa have contributed to the development of statistical systems. These efforts, however, have been segmented, while the lessons learned have not been documented or translated into recommendations that could be of benefit to other training centres and institutions across the continent.

The African Group on Statistical Training and Human Resources (AGROST) was established in 2009, under the auspices of the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa), to coordinate the various statistical training initiatives on the continent and help curb the growing number of statistical training groups and initiatives, which was leading to inefficient use of scarce resources and duplication of efforts. The primary objective of AGROST, therefore, is to coordinate statistical training and human resource development activities and initiatives in Africa. It centralizes information on statistical training initiatives and programmes, monitors statistical training activities and provides a permanent forum for exchanging information and best practices on statistical training and human resource development in African national statistical systems. AGROST also promotes the development and dissemination of statistical training curricula and courses to support the training portfolios of all statistical training centres in Africa.

The second meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa held in January 2010, in Addis Ababa, endorsed AGROST as one of its working groups. Since then, the Group has adopted the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) as the main reference framework for its activities.

The African Centre for Statistics of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) houses the secretariat of AGROST and has provided it with a full-time dedicated staff.

## II. Objectives

The main objective of AGROST is to coordinate statistical training and human resource development activities and initiatives in Africa by monitoring ongoing activities and initiatives, conducting project planning and aligning the support of technical and financial partners with statistical training.

The specific objectives are to:

- Centralize information on initiatives and programmes on statistical training and ensure their monitoring
- Ensure the existence of a permanent forum for exchanging information and best practices on statistical training and human resource development in African national statistical systems

The scope of the work of the Group includes initial training and continuous learning (on-the-job training).

### **III. Recommendations by the third meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa**

The third meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa III) recommended that AGROST should be the sole window for statistical training. The meeting report also recommended that student mobility should be facilitated in an effort to break language barriers. It also acknowledged the support provided by ECA, GIZ, Paris21 and the African Development Bank for statistical training and human resource development in Africa.

The meeting welcomed the interest expressed by the International Statistics Institute to become a technical and financial partner of AGROST. It also welcomed the efforts by statistical training centres to train statisticians, taking into account the guidelines introduced by AGROST on aspects such as harmonization of curricula.

StatCom-Africa III recommended that:

- Training centres should pursue efforts to train African statisticians, taking into account guidelines introduced by AGROST on aspects such as harmonization of programmes and certificates, and mobility of students and teachers.
- Countries and technical and financial partners should support statistical training centres by providing them with human, material and financial resources to enable them to continue providing good quality statistical training.
- Statistical training centres, universities and in-service training should integrate the content of all handbooks into their existing curricula and/or develop separate courses and/or build separate modules in existing courses.

### **IV. Implementation of the recommendations of the third meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa**

All the StatCom-Africa III recommendations were communicated to countries, statistical training centres and technical and financial partners. In 2013 and 2014, AGROST has engaged in advocacy work and coordinated efforts to help implement those recommendations. It is mainly responsible for lines of activities of AGROST from 2013 to 2014.

- Coordinating the secretariat, preparing the annual meetings and developing an online platform
- Conducting research on statistical training in Africa. As part of this component, the Group has produced four studies on statistical training trends in Africa
- Developing and disseminating statistical training modules
- Cooperating with the International Statistics Institute and GIZ on statistical module development and delivery
- Providing country assistance for developing national training capacity
- Aligning training initiatives with those of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA)
- Implementing the training component for the Action Plan for Africa of the global strategy to improve statistics for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development

## V. Major outputs

### Statistical training needs and capacity assessment

A study was conducted by AGROST in 2012/2013 on statistical training needs and capacity assessment in Africa. The overall aim of the study was to develop estimations of the demand and supply for statistical training requirements and the capacity to train at all levels.

The tasks involved were:

- Assess the scope of needs: identify the volume and type of training needed to respond to demands for statistics
- Evaluate the existing capacity of statistical training in the region
- Identify the gaps between training capacity and statistical needs
- Identify key challenges
- Propose a strategy to fill the gaps

The study concluded that there was sufficient training capacity at all levels and in all linguistic regions. Also, anecdotal reports were made of statistics on unemployed graduates in all the three linguistic regions covered.

The quality of training was not satisfactory in some training institutes, which had issues with costs, the skills of trainers and information technology.

The study recommended that accompanying measures should be introduced to make the best use of statistics training. They included tackling the issue of how national statistics institutes dealt with the process of training, learning, applying knowledge and change management. Also, capacity-building programmes at training centres should focus on improving training skills and managing knowledge and equipment. In particular, there was a need to understand and tackle the issue of the structure of training costs and also conduct financial analysis to deal with the financial stability of training institutes. Lastly, the costly process of changing curricula called for harmonized action.

### Compendium of African Statistical Training Centres

The objective of the compendium was to have a detailed picture of the various institutions delivering training in statistics in Africa and identify the various degrees in statistics offered by African institutions, in an effort to harmonize them.

### Review of statistical training curricula

The review provided information on the statistical training designed to help assess training capacity and identify demand gaps. It was also supposed to be the basis for work on harmonizing the curricula and accreditation programme.

The review gave the following information on each statistical training centre:

- Degree issued
- Type of training
- Duration of programme
- Admission criteria

- Specialization areas
- Available trainers by level
- Degrees by level
- Kind of training
- Country of origin

According to the review, the curricula offered across the continent were very diverse. It recommended that AGROST should involve a professional organization or any other independent organization in the design of training standards. It also called for the accreditation of the various curricula.

### **Report on the harmonization and standardization of statistical training centres and curriculum development**

(a) Review and harmonize the statistical curricula currently offered by each of the four language groups (English, French, Portuguese and Arabic) ;

(b) Review qualifications and degrees currently offered by statistical training centres;

(c) Define an action plan and a clear timeframe for achieving standardization and harmonization;

(d) Highlight potential issues and constraints;

(e) Identify key challenges and advantages.

### **AGROST activity report to the second meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa Development of an AGROST online platform**

An AGROST online platform was developed on the African Centre for Statistics website:

### **Training module on: “Mainstreaming methods of measuring development progress in statistical training programmes”**

The African Capacity Building Foundation and the Development Account of the United Nations provided AGROST and ECA with funding to develop, update and offer courses on two statistical modules, one of which was called “Mainstreaming methods of measuring development progress in statistical training programmes”, has and was based on ECA experiences in supporting its member States to measure the Millennium Development Goals and introducing systems for measuring development beyond the Goals and the 2015 goal line.

A three-day training of trainers course was organized for the lecturers and experts of the East African Statistical Training Center and the National Statistical Office of Tanzania from 29 June to 1 July 2012 to test the viability of the training course and gauge its relevance and adaptability.

The African Centre for Statistics has produced a draft gender statistics training toolkit to build the capacities of official statistics producers in generating gender-sensitive data for development planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Following a review of the draft toolkit by a group of international experts comprising data producers, users, trainers and programme officers from 19 to 20 February 2013, in Kampala, it was deemed necessary to expand the target audience and uses of the toolkit to include diploma/certificate and degree programmes in academic institutions.

AGROST is currently developing the “Gender Training Toolkit” training module to help by training institutions tailor it to regular certificate and degree courses.

### **Training module on updating the 1993 System of National Accounts**

In June 2012, with financial support from the African Capacity Building Foundation, AGROST and ECA organized a training course on updating the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA) to the 2008 System of National Accounts. The course was designed for statistics practitioners and new graduates to help them understand the differences between the 1993 SNA and 2008 SNA. The intensive training programme was intended to build the capacity of practitioners in Africa in international standards for the compilation of economic accounts. It was conducted jointly with subregional organizations such as the Economic and Statistical Observatory for sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT) and the Ecole Nationale de Statistique et d'Economie Appliquée (ENSEA), a regional training centre of excellence, where students from African countries receive initial training prior to working with the NSO or central bank of their countries. In addition, the regional implementation plan for the 2008 SNA had recommended that ECA should provide SNA training at centres of excellence, to future government and NSO statisticians. Reaching out to students at statistical training centres and centres of excellence is therefore a key component of the regional implementation of the 2008 SNA. Facilitators from AFRISTAT led the discussion on regional harmonization and classification, while the Cote d'Ivoire NSO offered practical examples on the concept of SNA, shared detailed country experiences in implementing SNA and identified examples of the definition and concept of sectors, and the production and compilation of the gross domestic product. It also identified the main changes where local circumstances presented challenges to implementing the SNA, and required creative solutions.

### **Aligning the Statistical Training Programme for Africa with the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa**

The Statistical Training Programme for Africa is a regional training initiative introduced in 1978. It is an all-encompassing training programme, which uses statistical training schemes to help augment the continent's human resource capacity in statistics. STPA has been revised often, taking into account the development agenda of the regions, the resource capacities for implementing the programme and the changes in stakeholders. This is the continent's umbrella programme for guiding and streamlining statistical training initiatives. The latest version (2011-2013) of STPA was developed by the ECA African Center for Statistics.

AGROST is currently updating STPA to align it with SHaSA, while ensuring that the Programme's objectives and activities have been properly reflected in the new strategy. The exercise entails reviewing the current statistical training programme for Africa and identifying areas of common ground or overlaps, and the gaps between STPA and SHaSA. A comprehensive STPA assessment report will then be developed based on the historical accounts and outlook of statistical training and human resource development in Africa. This report will be used to produce a new training programme for Africa, building on the current STPA and dealing with any gaps to ensure consistency with the objectives and the strategic themes of ShaSa.

## **Preparatory activities for the training component of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics**

### Staffing the training component

One of the priorities of the training component was to recruit and maintain qualified project management staff, with skills in agricultural statistics and training management. ECA recruited one senior consultant expert in agricultural statistics, one junior consultant with project management skills and one local support staff for the period July 2013 to June 2014.

### **Preparation of documents to support the training component**

Two manuals were developed for the training component:

- An agricultural statistics human resource development policy guide designed to provide guidance to agencies responsible for producing agricultural statistics in the strategic management of their human resources.
- A handbook on agricultural statistics training needs analysis framework to provide a mechanism by which agricultural statistics agencies can identify, capture and prioritize short- and long-term training needs and build a capacity development strategy.

The following syllabuses were also produced:

- Sampling design for agricultural surveys
- Agricultural data processing and dissemination
- Economic accounts for agriculture
- Agricultural census and surveys

An expert group meeting was organized jointly with the Instituto Nacional De Estatistica and Escola Nacional de Estatistica of Mozambique from 8 to 12 November 2013, in Maputo to review and validate these manuals.

### Communication and advocacy

As part of the implementation of the training component, ECA conducted a mission to the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Statistique et d'Economie Appliquée to discuss the details of the implementation of the project with the President of AGROST. The mission recommended, among other things, that advisory missions should be sent to statistical training centres in Africa to explain the objectives of the project, assess the capacity-building needs of the training centres and discuss their involvement in the project. Based on that recommendation, the African Centre for Statistics sent an advisory mission to the following statistical training centres:

- Ecole Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique (ENSAE), Dakar
- Escola Nacional de Estatistica, Maputo
- Institut National de Statistiques et d'Economie Appliquée (INSEA), Rabat
- Ecole Supérieure de la Statistique et de l'Analyse de l'Information (ESSAI), Tunis
- Institut Sous-régional de Statistique et d'Economie Appliquée (ISSEA), Yaounde

As part of the communication strategy of the project, ECA has also published articles on the global strategy and training component in the African Statistical Newsletter.

#### Training of human resource managers

As part of the component of the project to strengthen human resource management in agricultural statistics offices, the African Centre for Statistics organized training on statistical human capital strategy design and integration and statistical training needs assessment for human resource managers. The training, organized in partnership with the United Nations Institute for Economic Development and Planning, was held from 3 to 7 February 2014 in Dakar. It was attended by 45 human resource managers and officers responsible for the development of agricultural statisticians from 23 countries.

The main objective of the meeting was to train human resource management staff at agricultural statistics offices and enhance their efficiency in agricultural statistics production systems. The training ran for six days and had four components:

- Training English-speaking agricultural statistics human resource staff in agricultural statistics and human resource policies
- Training English-speaking agricultural statistics human resource staff in agricultural statistics training needs analysis framework
- Training French-speaking agricultural statistics human resource staff in human resource policies
- Training French-speaking agricultural statistics human resource staff in agricultural statistics needs analysis framework.

#### Training statisticians in agencies, which produce agricultural statistics

A training session on economic accounts for agriculture was held in August 2014, in Dakar, for agricultural statisticians. The objective was to train staff and experts of agricultural statistics agencies in the production of timely and reliable agricultural, rural development and food security information by using modern systems to conduct improved agricultural censuses and surveys. More specifically, the course was designed to familiarize participants with state-of-the-art methodologies in economic accounts for agriculture development processes. The training was organized for the staff of agricultural statistics agencies in Africa. The target groups for the August 2014 round were agricultural statistics experts, selected on the basis of the country assessment results recently released by the African Development Bank. The assessment results had reflected the poor state of agricultural statistics in those countries, and the lack of capacity to conduct agricultural censuses and surveys. Course participants were expected to have gained the following skills, upon completion:

- Understand the logic of economic accounts for agriculture architecture and recording and evaluation methods of the economic activities stated in such accounts
- Prepare or participate in the preparation of economic accounts for agriculture
- Introduce appropriate methods for calculating the indices of volume and prices linked to agricultural production activity and their interpretation (for instance, with respect to economic growth)
- Analyse and interpret indicators provided by economic accounts for agriculture, in particular, the measurement of agricultural growth in Africa

### Building the capacity of agricultural statistics trainers

One of the activities developed by the training component to build the capacity of agricultural statistics trainers was the harmonized agricultural statistics training curricula, designed to:

- Promote the progressive alignment of agricultural statistics curricula with the proposed harmonized curricula: contact training centres, discuss the alignment with them, follow-up on difficulties and adjust the proposed harmonized curricula accordingly.
- Further develop the harmonization and accreditation strategy proposed in the Statistical Training Programme for Africa and use agricultural statistics as the domain for first stages of the implementation.
- Develop an initial implementation plan for the proposed Masters in Agricultural Statistics. in collaboration with the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) (recommended by the review meeting).

A first curriculum was proposed and reviewed at the expert group meeting organized in Maputo, from 8 to 12 November 2013. The observations of the meeting were taken into account, and a second curriculum was proposed and validated at an expert group meeting, held from 26 to 30 May 2014 to finalize the curricula in Rabat.

As part of efforts to build the capacities of statistical training centres, the training component initiated the procurement of geographic information systems software and Global Positioning System equipment for distribution to the centres.

### Scholarship programme

The training component has provided agricultural statistics scholarships to ensure the constant supply of skilled agricultural statisticians in the medium to long term. The countries, which submitted their official lists of beneficiaries for the 2013 scholarship fund for a master's degree in agricultural statistics are: Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Comoros, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Tanzania. The following statistical training centres have signed a memorandum of understanding with ECA, under the programme:

- ENSEA-Abidjan
- ENSAE-Dakar
- EASTC-Dar es Salaam
- ISSEA-Yaoundé

The School of Statistics and Planning of Makerere University in Kampala did not sign the memorandum because its annual budget could not cater for the university's tuition fees and related expenses. That expenditure will be factored into 2014 work plan. Thirty-three students are currently being trained under the scholarship programme.

## Monitoring and evaluation

As part of the monitoring and evaluation activities of the scholarship programme, a meeting of the training component of the AGROST Action Plan for Africa of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, was organized from 13 to 15 November 2013 in Maputo, on the margins of the Group's annual review meeting to:

- Present the training component of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics
- Present the proposed harmonized curricula for agricultural statistics at the certificate, bachelor's and master's levels, and also two manuals and four syllabuses developed under the training component
- Report on the activities implemented so far under the training component of the global strategy
- Agree on a monitoring and evaluation framework for the training component
- Discuss the participation of various partners to the training component

Evaluation missions were also sent to the following statistical training centres to review the scholarship programme:

- ENSEA-Abidjan
- ENSAE-Dakar
- EASTC Dar es Salaam
- ISSEA-Yaoundé

## **Contribution of AGROST to the establishment of the Pan-African Statistical Training Centre**

AGROST participated in the meeting held in November 2013 in Dakar to discuss the design of the Pan-African Statistical Training Centre to be established by the African Union Commission. In addition to contributing to the design of the centre, at its November annual meeting 2013 in Maputo, AGROST made some recommendations on how the new statistical training centre should position itself on the statistical training landscape.

In an effort to create synergy between the establishment of the African statistical training Centre and the overall coordination of statistical training on the continent, AGROST included recommendations on the mandate and structure of the new centre in the document of the revised statistical training programme for Africa.

AGROST is continuing to work on the design of the Centre, for which a consultant will be recruited shortly.

## **VI. Way forward**

Issues to be considered by AGROST to fulfil its mandate to coordinate activities and initiatives to support statistical training and human resource development in Africa include:

- Working jointly with IDEP. Following the repositioning exercise of ECA, IDEP was mandated to coordinate all the training activities of the Commission. AGROST and IDEP should discuss how their two institutions will work together and see their

partnership as an opportunity to leverage the Institute's expertise in training and capacity-building.

- Participation of AGROST in the training component of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. AGROST is a key partner in the implementation of the training component of the Strategy, and its contribution of AGROST to the activities and the practical modalities of this contribution.
- Development of the AGROST online platform: The partnership with IDEP provides a unique opportunity for AGROST to use the Institute's platform to host its website and put the various courses developed by the group online. AGROST should approach IDEP to discuss the practical modalities for this exercise.
- AGROST collaboration with the International Statistical Institute: The International Statistical Institute has expressed an interest in becoming a technical and financial partner of AGROST. It is willing to give short training courses in selected statistical training centres in Africa. AGROST should consider how best to support such an initiative.
- AGROST action plan for the next five years: AGROST has already recruited a consultant to review the Statistical Training Programme for Africa and produce an action plan for the coming years. The first draft of the study is available.
- Strategies for revitalizing the group: AGROST members have not been very active in the past two years. The Group should devise a strategy to foster more active participation by its members and meet or preferably exceed the expectations of its financial partners so as to maintain their support for statistical development in Africa.