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BETTER DATA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IT TAKES TO INCREASE FINANCING, FROM BOTH DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SOURCES, TO STRENGTHEN AND BUILD THE STATISTICAL CAPACITY OF COUNTRIES

INTRODUCTION

1. The Sustainable Development Goals are the milestones marking the path towards the future we want. Now, three years into the 2030 Agenda, focus has shifted from defining what we want to achieve to how to measure progress. With this shift comes a wave of new initiatives addressing the necessity of reporting on the SDGs.
2. The UN Statistical Commission was mandated to facilitate the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda. However, this mandate cannot be adequately accomplished without a coordinated improvement of national statistical systems, especially since statistical capacity is not equally distributed.
3. In the follow-up process national statistical systems and particularly national statistical offices should play central role, as statistics produced by them ensure impartiality, reliability and timelines. And the same time, they ensure a well-balanced approach to addressing the pledge of 'leaving no one behind'.
4. The UN Statistical Commission has tasked the High Level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building with providing strategic leadership for the implementation process relating to the SDGs as it concerns statistical monitoring, reporting, and capacity-building.
5. The High Level Group has through the Cape Town Global Action Plan, addressed this task and provided an overall framework for discussion, planning, implementation and evaluation of statistical capacity-building pertaining to the 2030 Agenda.
6. The Cape Town Global Action Plan emphasizes that work on statistical capacity building should be country led and conducted in full consultation and coordination with national statistical offices.

KEY CHALLENGES

1. The poorest and least-equipped statistical systems are fully dependent on external support and struggle to produce the data needed to advance their societies. In these countries, the use of statistics by policy makers remains limited, leading to uninformed decision making that generates poor development outcomes.
2. National statistical systems, in particular in some least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and Small Island developing states, are often trapped in a vicious

cycle of statistical under-development, where limited awareness and appreciation of the importance of data – by policy makers and at all levels of society – has led to sustained under-funding for statistics

3. Lack of effective coordination of donor efforts and participation to increase the efficacy of current funding and assistance approaches to building and improving national statistical systems.

FEW KEY SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

1. The Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS)

- I. The Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, adopted in 2004, targeted to support countries to prepare and implement national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDSs). It was geared towards assisting countries to identify their statistical priorities and to develop coherent strategic plans.
- II. A key lesson from this plan was that, strategic planning was identified as a powerful tool in;
 - guiding the development of national statistics development programmes,
 - increasing political and financial support for statistics, and
 - ensuring that countries are able to produce the data and statistics needed for monitoring and evaluating their development outcomes

2. Statistical capacity building programs

- Refers to efforts towards improving the ability of countries to meet user needs for good quality statistics
 - a) **STATCAP by the World Bank**, was approved as a multi-country Statistical Capacity Building Program designed to make it easier for clients to access regular World Bank financing for improving statistical capacity.
 - It provided a framework for strengthening national statistical systems through a comprehensive approach, and streamlined processing procedures.
 - As a result it encouraged effective coordination, participation of other international and bilateral donors, and participation of national stakeholders, both in the public and private sectors
 - It was effectively implemented in 15 countries across the globe
 - b) **Program-for-Results (PforR) financing model**:
 - Its unique features includes using a country's own institutions and processes, and linking disbursement of funds directly to the achievement of specific program results.
 - Provides funding when desired results are delivered.
 - This fosters greater accountability and ownership, improved management, and effectiveness of service providers.
 - This model can be applied to finance programs geared towards building of national statistical capacity in countries.

c) International statistics cooperation;

- Involves cooperative projects and collaboration needed to enhance the capacity of national statistical systems to produce and disseminate official statistics according to international standards.
 - A key example, is the case of Statistics Sweden's cooperation projects around the world, largely financed by the Swedish foreign aid budget to strengthen the international statistics system
 - Over ten countries, including Kenya, Somalia and Mali are currently benefiting Statistics Sweden's cooperation project.

WAY FORWARD

1. Political goodwill to champion the provision of adequate budgetary resources to support National Statistical Systems in low-income countries to inform policy design, and evidence based decision making.
2. The UN Statistical Commission through the High Level Group is currently developing a paper on a framework addressing capacity-building needs. Capacity-building needs were identified by a survey jointly undertaken by the High Level Group and Paris21. In this survey countries were asked to describe challenges, priorities and plans they have for the short and medium term.
3. Building on the country responses, statistical areas which require the most immediate capacity building were identified. Among them include, environmental statistics, statistics based on administrative sources, and disaggregation by disability.
4. The paper also proposes preconditions for capacity building under this framework, what roles and functions are foreseen, and considerations on possible modalities for financing. The main precondition proposed is that capacity building shall be demand driven and aimed at national statistical systems. Regarding funding, a flexible approach where funding modalities will hinge on characteristics of individual capacity building initiatives is recommended.
5. There are three additional crucial aspects of this framework that I would like to draw your attention to:
 - a. Firstly, capacity building under this framework will address both statistics used for national decision making and for the follow-up on the 2030 Agenda
 - b. Secondly, the framework complements and does not replace other statistical capacity building activities
 - c. Thirdly, Capacity building should be aimed at National Statistical Offices and in line with national statistical plans (National Strategies, NSDS or similar)
6. Finally, it is important to notice that that the paper is in the draft phase and the ambition is that the final version will be adopted either shortly before or at the second UN World Data Forum

FINALLY

7. Now, it is my hope that we, during the UN World Data Forum can tie many elements of the current work on statistical capacity building together. The ultimate goal would be an agreement, including financial, on a concrete mechanism to address statistical capacity