

**AN EVALUATION OF PARIS21—
DRAFT REPORT TO THE STEERING COMMITTEE**

**Comments provided by the International Monetary Fund
to the PARIS21 Steering Committee Meeting
July 1– 2, 2003**



**Statistics Department
International Monetary Fund
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Thank you for giving us an opportunity to comment on the draft report prepared by the review team.

We were very pleased that the review revealed strong support, especially in developing countries, for the work of PARIS21, and we would therefore support the recommendation to extend the program for a further three years if adequate funding from donors can be secured. Provision should be made for an evaluation to be made before the end of that period to reach judgments on the future of this initiative.

Following are a number of more specific comments about the draft:

- The effectiveness of the report, in our view, could be greatly enhanced by focusing more on factual information (e.g., on domestic resources spent on statistics, or of claims made in the Summary, items vi and vii). This would also help in reducing the length of the report and be more conducive to a productive discussion by the steering committee.
- We are not surprised, nor too much concerned, that the review could not establish a direct link between PARIS21 activities and progress in terms of data (paragraph 58 and elsewhere). Building on this finding, we would recommend that the objectives and the Objectively Verifiable Indicators that are proposed for the coming three years (Annex A) be set in terms of areas over which PARIS21 has effective control rather than “increase the percentage of IDA countries subscribing to GDDS from about 40% currently to 70% ;” or “raise the share of IDA countries regularly collecting...data on....” (Annex A:).
- In terms of focus, we would encourage PARIS21 to concentrate especially on advocacy and donor coordination. A greater focus on advocacy activities (i.e., “to spread the message among senior policy makers, with the objective to give support to statistics”), would help to build on the unique comparative advantage of PARIS21, since other donors tend to focus on TA or financial support. Working with country authorities for more national budgetary appropriations to statistics is increasingly critical given the widespread inadequacy of domestic resources available for statistics and the pressing needs for transparency and accountability. The balance between advocacy and training activities referred to in paragraph 70 should therefore clearly be in favor of the former.
- The usefulness of focusing on donor coordination is borne out, inter alia, by the references in the draft to the very high dependence of countries on donor support for the production of statistics (quoting from the final report of the Task Team on Statistical Capacity Building Indicators) and the large number of donors active in many countries. We would support especially proposals for coordination at the country level. This is consistent with the need for stronger leadership by national authorities in this area, with which we agree (paragraph 82). Whether country visits is the most effective vehicle (recommended in Summary, item xvi) is doubtful, however, and this could be a very useful topic of discussion by the Steering Committee and

possible PARIS21 action. In this connection we welcome the suggestion for PARIS21 to collaborate as well as coordinate with regional initiatives, such as the Fund's regional technical assistance centers (AFRITAC East and West, CARTAC, and PFTAC) and regional GDDS projects (in particular their resident regional advisors, paragraph 92).

- PARIS21 advocacy activities could also be tied in more closely with support for international initiatives such as the data standards—GDDS and SDDS—and the observance of these standards by countries that are participants/subscribers. We have learned from feedback from member countries that interest exists at the highest policy levels to use the framework of international standards and codes and achieve the consequent international recognition. This suggests that this aspect should be emphasized more in the future in advocacy activities, while at the same time avoiding making reference to specific community outputs, referred to in the report as “Objectively verifiable indicators”. This leads to references that can be confusing.²
- We also concur with the suggestion, as mentioned above, that donor coordination be carried out primarily by the recipient country. In this regard, the PARIS21 Statistical Capacity Building Indicators provide an extremely valuable snapshot view of a country's statistical system as cited in the report for Mozambique and Bolivia. We encourage the compilation of these indicators (paragraph 86, second bullet) to be included as suggested in a PARIS21 annual report.
- The Task Teams have been a useful way of carrying important work that would not otherwise have been done (Summary item ix). We concur with the evaluation report that there are areas in which the teams are instrumental in steering the efforts. A specific task suggested for a team, that is “to set benchmarks for assessing performance of statistical organizations” (page 43, D.5), could build on the IMF

² such as those on the GDDS that are incorrect in the evaluation report: page 28, item 2, GDDS regional projects provide TA in addition to training, and covers socio-demographic data in addition to economic statistics; participation has not peaked in 2001, but continues to expand rapidly; page 28 and page 4 of Annex A, currently among IDA eligible countries, 36 are GDDS participants and a further 26 are actively working toward participation; also on page 4 of Annex A, item 6.c..

experience in assessing macroeconomic statistics with the Reports on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC), and the ongoing work with the World Bank, UNESCO and ILO in developing assessment tools for socio-demographic datasets in collaboration with the IMF.

- We would suggest that the PARIS21 work be extended to other developing countries in addition to Africa (page 42, item D.1). In order to maintain a narrow focus, it may be advisable for PARIS21 to limit its involvement in “improvements in collection of data regarding key development Indicators and the monitoring of MDG-related expenditure programs and their effects” (Summary, item xi), which seems overly ambitious and likely to overlap with work already covered by other donors.