

Strategy for statistical development: an introductory note

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October 2009

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List of acronyms

ECA: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

BWIs: Bretton Woods Institutions

IDA: International Development Association

LDC: Least Developed countries

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

M & E: Monitoring and Evaluation

MICS: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey

MTEFs: Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks

NSDS: National Strategies for the Development of Statistics

PARIS21: The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century

PRSP: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

Introduction

1. Ten years ago, the international community acknowledged that the progress achieved in terms of development remained highly unsatisfactory. Despite robust global growth, poverty was still widespread and human development indicators, in particular in the health and education fields, showed that billions of human beings were not enjoying the advantages of progress. This observation resulted from the work done by civil society organisations, and, on the multilateral side, by the United Nations system. In this context, the UNDP promoted the recognition of the “Human Development” approach in its World Reports published from 1990 onwards. All this led to the definition and the adoption of a new approach with respect to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) by the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs). In late 1999, the decision was taken that henceforth the benchmark document that would be used as the basis for interventions by BWIs (and therefore the international community) would be focused on combating poverty: any country wishing to benefit from the support of BWIs would have to draft and validate a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), written and adopted in a participative process. One year later, Heads of State meeting at the United Nations headquarters, committed the international community to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were to be met in 2015.
2. This turning point rapidly gave rise to the issue of the economic and social system information needed to steer this initiative. The creation of PARIS21 in late 1999 expressed this concern at a point in time when the afore-mentioned turning point was taking shape in terms of institutions. The PRSP approach and the MDGs were reflected by quantified objectives, in particular with respect to reducing the level of poverty and improving human development indicators (health, education, gender, etc.). In an approach that was in line with “results based management”, it was obvious that availability of reliable and regular information about trends in the main indicators covering the MDGs and LDCs was a prerequisite.
3. Ten years later, LDCs still do not have a statistical system that would enable them to formulate strategies by drawing on a quantified diagnosis of reality and to monitor its implementation as well as its impact on target populations. In other words, the same need subsists: economic and social information is essential for the drafting of development policies (within the framework of PRSPs or not) and their monitoring and evaluation. However, at the same time under-development determines the quality of the statistical system. Is it possible to have an efficient information system in a faulty economic and institutional environment, in which there are not enough funds available to finance the civil service while political and administrative governance is poor? This contradiction is crucial in terms of the recurring problems met by capacity building in information systems in LDCs.
4. The efforts undertaken in the last ten years, notably within the framework of PARIS21, show that progress can be achieved. The scorecard that can be compiled with respect to the strategies implemented in order to improve the information system shows that such an objective is still not effectively a key issue for countries. Compiling economic and social information remains a minor concern, even when it is included in the PRSP. A radical change in this situation, in this ranking of priorities, is needed. Thus, a mobilisation is required. However, it would be misguided to think that an information system could be built for the purpose of development steered from outside

the country. Furthermore, such a mobilisation must not be aimed at statisticians themselves, although they remain the main contacts of development partners, but at the potential users of information: political decision-takers, the civil service of course, but also the private sector and civil society, since they can play their role only if they have access to an efficient information system. The importance of demand is in fact at the heart of the PARIS21 project. Accordingly, the choices of the Consortium ought to be focused on this aspect in the new forthcoming phase. Supply must of course be improved to create and stimulate demand while helping build a wide consensus on the need to promote economic and social information to the level of a priority in any country's development strategy. We will now successively study the issues that arise at the level of demand for, and supply of, information for the purpose of development.

1-Anchoring the information system among users: the need to promote demand.

5. Demand for economic and social information will be the priority of the strategy. A careful distinction needs to be drawn between three demand components: civil society, the private sector and the civil service. Each one of these sectors has its specific requests and taking them into account will help build a balance of power in favour of an efficient statistical system serving development.

1.1. *Civil society*

6. One of the principles of the PRSP approach consists in significantly changing the process applied to formulate development strategies in order to ensure the country and its representatives really buy into the strategy. The BWIs came to the conclusion that one had to take into consideration criticism bearing on the lack of appropriation by the relevant countries of the policies implemented under agreements with the international community. PRSPs are by consequence based on a participatory approach. The goal consists in formulating strategies, drawing on a diagnosis fed by indicators and, the most often, a perception survey, which are in principle focused on poverty reduction and aimed at taking into account the aspirations of populations. The process followed to formulate the strategy accordingly seeks to have a significant participatory dimension. Every PRSP, furthermore, includes monitoring and evaluation (M & E) mechanisms with a significant participatory content. Participatory monitoring requires drafting an annual monitoring report. This report must be submitted for debate to representatives of the population, including civil society. Results have to be studied and, if they are disappointing in comparison with the objectives that have been set, the reasons why need to be examined and, if need be, strategies have to be modified. This approach combines a significant participatory dimension and the taking into consideration of results. Emphasis is put on the participation and support of intermediate bodies: trade unions, employers' associations, but also representative organisations of civil society. In other words, insofar as possible, the goal is to forge a consensus on development strategies and on the resources allocated to implement them.
7. This approach supposes instruments are available to measure the implementation of strategies and results that are achieved. While in most countries concerned, annual reports are indeed drafted, their content in terms of information remains poor overall. Hardly any information is available on an annual basis, and the information that is available is not always collected or processed on time. Comments on trends in the data that can be made remain very general. All in all, and on average, annual PRSP monitoring reports do not play their expected role and do not

enable a dialogue to be carried out on the strategies and their results with civil society. The same point holds for MDG monitoring reports. Of course, this is accounted for by the low quality of the statistical system, which fails to produce the necessary data or process and analyse them. As a result, the participatory approach that is called for is going nowhere fast. Such a situation calls for two kinds of response:

8. (i) The mobilisation of civil society to ensure it effectively exerts pressure to gain access gradually to the information it requires to be involved, since this is an official objective. Civil society must demand that the government provide it with the information it needs to carry out its checks and balances missions, a crucial component of the “good governance” the international community and governments themselves refer to. Civil society can intervene to ensure that building satisfactory economic and social system information is set as a priority.
9. If civil society is not clearly aware of what socio-economic indicators can actually contribute, it would be useful to illustrate the potential advantages of an efficient information system, in particular by drawing on significant achievements in comparable countries. The objective is to fuel the demand for information needed to manage development by representative civil society, by showing the useful contribution it can make in terms of steering strategies and monitoring their implementation and results. Holding workshops dedicated to training and exchanging information on information systems, and the systematic introduction of a component covering information systems into the drive to build capacity in civil society then becomes a priority.
10. (ii) One needs to re-orientate the studies and production of statistical institutions to make sure they include to a better extent the demands of the participatory approach applied to the PRSP and MDGs. Since the late 1990s, methodological studies have sketched out the guidelines leading to an information system that can meet the new challenges set by PRSPs and MDGs². Introducing these proposals into National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) is a significant step forward in terms of taking them into account.
11. All in all, the goal is to **build up partnerships** around the information system while including civil society, so that it becomes a player that gradually holds the information it requires to fulfil its mission with respect to making proposals, controlling the development process and, more generally speaking, providing checks and balances. Civil society must understand to what extent information is a key variable, and evaluate the room for manoeuvre it enjoys in terms of influencing the government’s choices, both with regard to the organisation of statistical systems as well as the amount of resources the country can decide to allocate such systems. Upstream, this refers to the concept of “good governance”, in particular to one of its crucial aspects with respect to political governance: the obligation imposed on elected representatives and the civil service to be accountable to the beneficiaries of public policies for the management of public resources. This implies the development of an assessment culture.
12. The partnership involving civil society must be built around the accountability principle and around the information system it requires. If civil society is mobilised around such an approach, it will be a pressure group able to demand from the government that it should grant the information system the priority it deserves.

² See in particular, for French-speaking Africa, the methodological approach formulated by Afristat in 2006.

1.2. Private sector

- 13.** The private sector is a key player in development, insofar as it is the main source of the production of marketable goods and services. Like any other economic agent, companies take their decisions on the basis of available information. LDCs are characterised by the pre-eminence of the informal economy, which the most often employs at least 75% of the population (this figure includes traditional agriculture and pastoralism). The rationale that dominates in the informal economy is that of a subsistence economy, in which economic calculations remain elementary. The weight of the formal or modern sector is comparatively small. In the countries that have mining or energy resources, the rationale of an enclave economy dominates. In other words, the modern non-mining productive sector is tiny and now concerns services more than industry.
- 14.** This sector can however be mobilised around an efficient economic information system. Statistical institutions have the most often tended to consider modern companies as suppliers of information (annual company and employment surveys, statistical reports on tax returns, etc.). However, the modern sector also seeks information to take its decisions. So far, in most IDA countries, statistical institutions hardly provide any useful information to companies. Yet, they have demands in terms of analysing the economic environment, forecasting activity in their sector, as well as in the sectors of their suppliers and clients, studying the behaviour of economic agents, in particular with respect to the major components of final demand: household demand and public demand (investments notably).
- 15.** If demand from the modern private sector were to be taken better into account, this would lead employers' associations to call on political decision-takers to promote capacity building in statistical institutions. Furthermore, these institutions would be able to consider selling their information to companies, and this would help increase the resources available for the information system. Moreover, this would encourage companies to provide public information institutions with data whereas currently such cooperation is often unsatisfactory. A partnership is therefore necessary at this level, in order to strengthen the institutional position of the statistical system and to improve information flows from companies into said institutions.

1.3. Public users

1.3.1. The needs of public finances and sector ministries

- 16.** The civil service has major needs in terms of economic and social information. Drafting the Finance Bill, a crucial instrument of public policies, requires massive amounts of information, both to determine expenditure and assess revenues. The budget's macroeconomic framework supposes updated national accounts, as projections are drawn up on their basis.
- 17.** At the level of strategies, sector ministries can formulate proposals only if they can draw on precise knowledge of the situation in the sector and of its players. In this respect, in countries

where agriculture and herdsmanhip employ most of the population, one would need to have a faithful description of the sector's components: agricultural and pastoral censuses and surveys are basic instruments, but are often missing. The same flaws are seen in most sectors however.

18. To face these serious flaws in terms of sector information, efforts aimed at mobilising sectors are required. One should not forget that a major proportion of the information on the sector is collected by the relevant ministries, before it is sent to the institutions in charge of statistics. ***Mobilising sector ministries in the battle for information is therefore another priority in an approach focused on capacity building in statistics.*** Development partners have given excessive weight to statistical departments or institutions until now in their efforts. When they have backed requests for information in specific sectors, they have failed to insert their approaches and actions into an overall view of information. The stakeholders in each sector include players belonging to the private sector and civil society organisations, as well as to public institutions. In order to promote an appropriate system of information for the sector, efforts are needed to mobilise the players so that they push for the design and implementation of such a system. ***Partnerships should be built at the sector level*** in order to reunite the most active players of each sector in favour of an information system responding to their needs. Advocacy is needed in this perspective, to show the potential for decision of an appropriate system of information at the sector level, and the need to insert properly this system within the framework of the global statistical system.
19. The overhaul of sector information must go hand in hand with the introduction of result based management at the level of public finances. As is well known, the BWIs are seeking to promote an approach of government expenditure based on Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEFs). The concrete consequence of this approach at the level of sectors consists in the budget programme. It is a document, generally on a moving three-year basis, which covers all the available funding (MTEFs are organised around macroeconomic framework) for all types of expenditure (operations and investment) in the sector. Such expenditure is the financial reflection of the sector's strategy and of the objectives and results that are to be met. The budget programme covers all the expenditure needed to meet every planned result. In principle, it is combined with indicators that will show to what extent the result will have been met.
20. Clearly, to a significant degree, information is a crucial component of this approach: it enables to set quantitative targets reflecting the objectives of the selected sector strategy and to monitor the results among targeted players. Obviously, these guidelines are fundamentally consistent with the overall development frameworks provided by the PRSPs and MDGs and we can see to what extent reforming information systems is a prerequisite in such an approach.
21. The targets in terms of mobilising public players are therefore the sector ministries, on the one hand, and the ministry in charge of drafting the budget, on the other hand. The link between these two categories of player is provided by budget programmes. These players thus have to lobby the ultimate decision-takers to ensure they are granted all the attention and resources necessary to reforming statistical systems.

1.3.2. The needs related to good governance

22. Governance is a key dimension of development. We have seen that it involved civil society to a significant extent, and fuelled its demand for information. Within the civil service, specific players are concerned by the promotion of good governance and these players should be attentive users of economic and social information. Good governance supposes that **assessment** of public policies should be developed. This dimension has been noticeably neglected until now. However, insofar as one intends to promote the responsibility of political players and civil service managers, assessing policies becomes a necessity. It supposes defining an appropriate methodology and the existence of targeted information on the beneficiaries of these policies and their evaluation of changes. The conditions are far from met under which LDCs would regularly assess public policies, but one has to operate within this perspective, which is consistent with result based management and the PRSP, MDGs, MTEF approaches as well as budget programmes.
23. Before reaching this stage, other players are directly interested in the setting up of an efficient information system because of their mission of promoting good governance: we are referring to all the bodies in charge of **controlling public management**, notably public finances. For instance, parliament is given the mission of approving the execution of the Finance Act. In many countries, there is a government audit agency or an equivalent institution, i.e. bodies in charge of auditing public institutions and players that benefit from public funding. Such public players request economic and social information that is a prerequisite if they are to fulfil their missions.
24. All in all, within public institutions, there are players who, to a varying extent, request information without which they cannot carry out their missions. In our approach in this paper, these potential users have to be turned into proactive agents working to implement efficient economic and social information systems, via appropriate partnerships.
25. Beyond the purely national public players, a strong demand for information emanates from sub-regional public institutions, the role of which is growing. These institutions have a strong concern about statistics, may have resources and take initiatives, and tend to play a normative role. They should be closely associated to the future of the statistical systems and be included in the partnerships to be built around improved information systems.

2-Adapting supply

26. Although most of the efforts made by the international aid for several decades with respect to economic and social information have been aimed at improving supply, it remains seriously deficient in most LDCs and unable to carry out the missions it is given, in particular since the afore-mentioned turning point in development management. This low level of supply partly explains why potential users of information have failed to defend actively the statistical system.

2.1. Getting supply to be closer to users' needs

27. Statistical systems have been frequently criticised for obeying technical rationales that suffered from two major flaws: (i) statisticians who rule information producing institutions refer to technical standards governing the production and processing of data that are very stringent and expensive in terms of resources and time. Applying such standards leads, in the context of LDCs,

to producing a low amount of information that lags badly behind users' needs; (ii) users' needs are hardly taken into account, and the dissemination of information is restricted.

28. Another approach is indispensable. National accounts, for instance, are produced so late that they often cannot be used for development management purposes. Frequently, BWIs reject the most recent national accounts, built to a greater extent from extrapolating trends than on the basis of surveys and reports by agents, and impose their own figures during negotiations with governments. The excessive technical dimension of the statistical studies required to produce information dwarfs the resources the relevant institutions have at their disposal and this reduces production and delays its dissemination. Conceptual progress, however, has been achieved in terms of providing information at a significantly lower cost, with a noteworthy decrease in the time needed to collect and process data. This point holds for instance for household surveys that cover several dimensions (CWIQ surveys, 1-2-3 surveys, aim at regularly monitoring key socio-economic variables: employment, informal sector, household consumption, education; MICS surveys, etc.) and lower the cost of operations. With respect to national accounts, techniques that are less expensive in terms of collecting information and are more automated³ enable the production of said accounts to be carried out faster. Priority must be given to ***pressing ahead determinedly with this move towards a less technically focused approach that will also enable information to be produced more cheaply***. This will lower costs and accelerate the production of information.

29. The new approach must also go hand in hand with a real determination ***to take into account users' interests and requests***. This would reinforce the ownership of the information system: the statistical system is often considered as resulting from international demand. But ownership does not mean that statistics are under the exclusive control of national statisticians. Ownership implies the integration of the demand side. There is significant potential demand for indicators that cover the situation of households by region, and by gender; which describe employment and incomes. Qualitative surveys monitoring how the population perceives developments and reforms also provide useful information for decision-takers and civil society. Such tools are needed as soon as an evaluation approach of public decisions and policies is promoted. Steering statistical production into these fields is required if demand is to be built up and mobilisation in favour of a statistical system serving development is to be stimulated. A strong potential demand exists concerning two levels of information: the sectors and the regions. The national statistical systems face continuing difficulties in the production of appropriate information in these two fields. Their capacity to respond to these needs will play an important role in the mobilisation of large portions of the people around a strong statistical system. Such a change, nevertheless, runs into significant obstacles: widespread demand for region-specific data for instance if it is to be met will increase the number of necessary observations to ensure data are representative at the level of regions, and to an even greater extent at the level of municipalities. Moreover, the regionalisation of statistics often means the implementation of regional statistical offices. Decentralisation of decision making, in most cases strongly supported by the donor community, is often considered as implying the regionalisation of statistics offices. However, considering the scarcity of human and financial resources and the difficulties faced by the statistical institution at the central level, the issue of the sustainability of regional statistical offices is a major concern.

³ For example, the ERETES approach designed and disseminated by Afristat.

Sharing experience between institutions of comparable countries is likely to provide information about the cheapest solutions with respect to surveys and data processing, for a given technical level.

30. Ensuring users are put in closer contact with economic and social information, furthermore, entails implementing a daring policy in terms of **disseminating information**. Practices in this respect have the most often been fainthearted, as one part of information has been disseminated only among public decision-takers; moreover, publication delays are in general long and the budgets allocated to disseminating information are far too small. Promoting a participatory approach of development, consisting in a dialogue on policies and a participatory monitoring & evaluation of PRSPs and MDGs implies radical changes and changing over to an approach based on **transparency**: economic and social information has to be available for all interested players. Information technology, in this respect, offers possibilities that have not been sufficiently used. Openness must be the rule, and documents should be easy to read and access, based on a user-friendly approach. Demand for information will furthermore be stimulated by the strict compliance with the concept of **independence** of statistical institutions that must be guaranteed by a pluralistic statistics committee, open to users and operating effectively, and reflected in an adapted Statistical Act to be debated at Parliament.

2.2. Widening the field of observations and of analysis

31. Statistical institutions are focused on producing economic and social information, including demographic data, as this is the mainstay of their traditional concerns. However, since the 1990s, with the promotion of human development, of PRSP and MDGs, other kinds of information are sought. This type of information is not covered to a large extent by the conventional centres of interest of institutions in charge of collecting and processing information.
32. First of all, such information relates to the situation of countries with regard to the various dimensions of **governance**: numerous methodological attempts have been undertaken to characterise countries in relation to governance, through the use of indicators, and have been debated. As is well known, a country's socio-institutional characteristics and notably its governance policy are key variables with respect to its capacity to develop. Characterising the way justice operates, the degree of press freedom, the level of corruption in the civil service, the quality of the associative fabric of society, and so forth, is no less important than its situation in the fields of education and health in terms of assessing a country's situation with respect to development and measuring changes in its development capacity. Nowadays, there are enough theoretical studies, proposals and experience to enable every country to be validly assessed in these fields, and its progress to be monitored.
33. Another dimension is even less well covered than governance: we are referring to **the environment**. Most countries have nevertheless signed up to numerous solemn commitments in this field, but they are unable to monitor the implementation of measures when they are effectively launched. In this field, many methodological issues are far from being solved, nevertheless there are already indicators that enjoy a wide consensus. Key variables of the environment such as the situation with respect to water and sanitation should be far better covered by public information institutions. Progress that will be achieved in these directions will enhance the legitimacy of these institutions, and lead to a significant increase in users' demand.

34. Major advances have been achieved in the last twenty years or so in terms of measuring variables while taking **gender** into account, even though these efforts have to be continued to result in a better description and analysis of the situation of women. Such progress results from the growing pressure exerted by women associations at a worldwide level, and organisations in developing countries can draw on them to ensure the gender dimension is correctly covered in information. A similar breakthrough is certainly possible with respect to governance and the environment.
35. Overall, it can be seen that statistical institutions are of the opinion that their mission primarily relates to the economic, social and demographic spheres, and they primarily aim public decision-takers. Information relative to governance and environment dimensions are not part of the culture of these institutions. However, the field of information aimed at informing **citizens** is of great importance in a holistic and participatory approach of development.
36. While statistical institutions traditionally focus on collecting and processing information, they often grant less emphasis on **analysing information**. Carrying out surveys, as this enables these institutions to receive substantial funds, sometimes is given more attention than the analysis of results, although this is in fact the decisive aspect since it helps prepare and influence the content of policies: one needs to know to be able to understand and act. One has to demand from institutions that collect and process information that they set as their primary concern the analysis of the data they have collected and processed. In other words, their overriding concern should not consist in conducting surveys. PARIS21 and the World Bank, through the **Accelerated Data Programme** launched in 2006 in the framework of the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics have included this dimension in their concerns⁴.
37. Lastly, one has to underscore the extent to which **safeguarding data** must be one of the key concerns of any public information institution. Archiving has become a discipline, but it is struggling to set itself through in most LDCs. A huge effort must be made in this respect. To consider exclusively economic decisions, we know that modelling behaviour patterns is based on the utilisation of long and homogenous series, and generally speaking there are no such series in LDCs. Once more, pressure exerted by demand and users can lead to information covering the past being stocked, managed and disseminated to users.

2.3. Factoring in specific and emergency contexts and complying with international standards

38. While the approach of information is governed by universal methodological principles, nonetheless one has to take into account specific features of the context in the organisation and planning of the system.
39. Development in certain states is determined by unique constraints. **Small island states**, which are numerous in the Caribbean and in the Pacific, have concerns with respect to information that are different from those of larger states. The overhead costs of government are often very large in relation to the economy, and solutions need to be found that reflect this situation. A specific approach must enable the information required to assess the country's situation to be identified, and make it possible to define the way in which it is produced and disseminated.

⁴ The accelerated data programme tackles with more issues related to the survey programmes as well as preservation and dissemination of data.

40. **Crisis states** and states pulling out from a crisis display significant specificities related to the type of information required to ascertain their situation (in particular in a humanitarian perspective), target emergencies and act. Furthermore, the capacity to gather information is noticeably affected by the situation in the field. One therefore needs to define an approach that takes this context into account.
41. Wide-scale **disasters**, which could be deemed, in an initial analysis, “natural disasters”, imply that information is needed to organise the appropriate action to meet the population’s needs. Clearly, this context significantly disrupts the ability to collect the necessary information. Accordingly, one has to set up an information system covering zones at risk, which will be available when the risk eventuates. Likewise, one has to put in place **alert systems** that consist in gathering pertinent information that enables the increase in risks to be measured.
42. In these fields, conceptual progress is needed to define the information systems that are the best adapted to needs. The international community is the best placed to promote these approaches and disseminate them. Subsequently, it is up to countries to include them in their information system.
43. The international community also has the mission of defining instruments that measure economic and social situations that are comparable. Such work needs to be carried out if one wants to speak the same language, understand changes, compare situations, reflect and act on the basis of standardised information that has the same meaning for all. It is thus important that the supply of information at the level of each country should introduce the standards defined by the international community.

3-Proposals for a shared strategy for statistical development:

44. Drawing on the foregoing rapid diagnosis of the most pressing needs, and bearing in mind that IDA countries remain the priority target, what objectives can the international community set itself for the next five years? We propose the following main guidelines:

3.1. Promoting a second generation of NSDSs

45. NSDSs remain a perfectly adapted approach. The participatory formulation of a development strategy for statistical information, which implies an in-depth dialogue between public institutions in charge of collecting, processing and disseminating this kind of information and users, remains perfectly pertinent. The international community must press ahead with initiatives in favour of this approach, by taking into account the lessons drawn from experience. The concern with a user focus in statistical development is no news: the Addis Ababa plan of action for statistical development in Africa in the 1990’s promoted by the ECA twenty years ago, stressed the importance of demand. The review on progress in the NSDS approach issued by the PARIS21 Secretariat in October 2008 shows that 47.5 % of IDA countries were implementing NSDS at the end of 2008. PARIS21 has done a remarkable work in terms of dissemination of the approach. But serious limitations have been identified: in many countries, the NSDS document and its validation are a target in itself. No continuous planning process has been set up. The weakest aspect is the implementation phase: action plans designed to sustain a programming approach, including prioritising and sequencing the actions, are often missing; financial

commitments from the government and the international partners are not effective; realistic costing of the action plan, and appropriate financing are duly completed in less than 50 % of the IDA countries with NSDS⁵. A focus on the *process* of implementation is needed. It includes a reinforcement of coordination with the donors, and the promotion of a clear ownership of the survey programmes by the statistical institution. The management and implementation capacity of the Statistical institutions is a major constraint. The outputs of the NSDS are not clearly identified, and the monitoring of the strategy lacks attention and capacities: indicators are missing, and robust reporting mechanisms associating the donors, ought to be set up. The permanent participation of the donors in the preparation, implementation phases of the NSDSs and in the monitoring process need to be strengthened.

46. A scorecard covering the NSDS approach should be compiled and a second generation of these strategies should be designed and then promoted, which would explicitly take into account the weaknesses of the first-generation model above mentioned.

3.2. Developing national partnerships

47. The advent of an efficient statistical system crucially depends on the mobilisation of users. Information available on the NSDS process shows that the *involvement of the policy makers at the highest level* in the decision to prepare a NSDS is crucial. Their involvement will ease the mobilisation of funding and strengthen the implementation phase.
48. Statistics still remain in the hands of statisticians. To upgrade the status of social and economic information implies a strong commitment of other actors. Evidence shows for instance that widening the set of actors in the preparation of a NSDS improves the outcomes of the process. NSDS aim at mobilising users, but it proved ineffective in a number of countries. Partnerships involving more decisively the demand side, i.e. bringing users deeply into the process, should be a priority.
49. Generally speaking, the users should be in a position to exert pressure on decision-makers so as to assure the financing on a sustained basis and the functioning of a public information system responding to their needs. To create this power relationship, the statistical system must produce information users deem indispensable for their missions. *Partnerships aimed at such goals should be forged with the main users*, whether from the private sector, from civil society or from the civil service, around the production of crucial information for every one of these categories. This entails an effort by information suppliers, which must adapt to users' needs: regionalised indicators, situation in terms of poverty, of women, data covering employment, incomes, analysis of data, sector-specific information, etc. This has implications on the frequency of the publication of data and on the formats of publications and the form of dissemination. One will also need to initiate a change in the fields covered by information, in order to include gradually the various dimensions of governance, the environment, etc. Such partnerships should be sought at two levels: *at the sector level* associating the various stakeholders in order to promote the regular production and dissemination of relevant information should be initiated. Key sectors as agriculture, education, health should be priorities in this perspective. Coalition of users can also be built in favour of *regional information*. In order to mobilise the users, it may be necessary to

⁵ Acceptable costing and financing plans exist in 26 countries among the 56 with an NSDS (see PARIS21 Secretariat October 2008).

strengthen their awareness of the potential of an efficient information system through training sessions and workshops, initiatives that should be illustrated by disseminating reports of successful experiences in comparable countries. The initiatives taken at the sector or regional level in order to build partnerships for public information responding to the users' needs should comply with two main constraints: (i) respect the global statistical framework adopted at the country level; and (ii) be compatible with the capacities of the whole statistical system, meaning that the development of sector and regional information systems should not alter the capacities of the central information system, an issue which is often underestimated.

3.3. Ensuring the long-term survival of efficient information systems

50. In all likelihood, the resources that can be gathered at a national level will not be significant enough to ensure the regular production of the information expected by users. Therefore, countries will have to continue relying on external aid, at least in the medium term. However, the scorecard that can be compiled for external aid in the field of statistics is hardly encouraging. It shows that funds are far from being the only component of the support needed. Substantial assistance has been provided since independence (nearly 50 years ago...), but it has not led to the creation of institutions that are strong, credible and autonomous with respect to external support. External aid, *de facto*, mainly consists in substitution assistance, which has failed to strengthen, in a lasting manner, the institutions it has supported. Here, we can see the limitations of technical assistance, as it is an oasis of relative prosperity in civil services that are starved of resources and lack motivation. The conditions for the reproduction of what has been achieved in the oasis framework are structurally missing. The supposed beneficiaries of technical assistance have other concerns (e.g. earning a decent income) and other references than the ones they are officially claimed to have. Furthermore, the structural adjustment period weakened the civil service in LDCs, and obviously, institutions in charge of statistics were not spared.
51. External assistance has always sought to train statisticians. However, high-level graduates in statistics and economics⁶ because of their studies and reputation are recruited for executive positions that provide compensation and working conditions well above what can be offered on average by statistical departments or institutions. As a result, these institutions cruelly lack qualified personnel. Overall, the civil service proposes working conditions and compensation that could hardly be described as motivating.
52. The reforms of international aid, including the Paris Declaration (2005), seek to promote open new perspectives. Using budgetary aid, for instance, would make it possible to offset the drawbacks of technical assistance of projects. Introducing ***budgetary aid in favour of statistical institutions*** may enable the institution to be in charge of its minimum programme of surveys for instance, and would contribute to put an end to the erratic nature of planning of the surveys that currently prevails. Budgetary aid supposes, however, a high level of governance that is not guaranteed in all statistical institutions... An ***assessment of the governance*** of these institutions, taking into account their specificities, would provide a basis for an evolution of external assistance towards budgetary aid. Notwithstanding, thought needs to be given to the forms of external support if one really intends to head towards greater autonomy of national institutions.

⁶ Such as Statistician & Economist Engineers

This should be a priority issue: ***how can the Paris Declaration be applied in the field of economic and social information?***

3.4. Building up external partnerships

53. Further reflection and discussion at the international level is necessary with respect to several fields that have not been completely explored. We are referring first and foremost to initiatives that could be useful in the context of IDA countries: (i) widening the areas covered by information: how can the situation of governance be monitored in developing countries? How can the various dimensions of the environment be covered? (ii) Designing information systems that are adapted to the needs of PRSPs, MDGs and the drafting of public policies⁷; (iii) Pressing ahead with the definition of standards (national accounts, surveys, etc.); (iv) Funding and technical assistance modalities in the field of economic and social information. This refers *inter alia* to the application of the Paris Declaration to the specific field of Statistics. Further thought must be given to these issues within the framework of international partnerships associating representatives of IDA countries and donors. PARIS21 can set up such partnerships and facilitate the definition of frameworks for action.
54. A specific attention should be given to the situation of fragile states and the information system they need. Most of the countries that do not have a NSDS in place are either small islands or countries in crisis or post crisis. Small Islands have specific problems and cannot rely on the standard NSDS process to set up a sustainable information system. There is a need for a specific approach for these countries. ***Guidelines for a NSDS adapted to the context of fragile states, including small islands should be a priority*** for the international community.
55. The architecture of the “statistical system” at the global level is of course a source of concern. According to most of the actors, a clarification is needed and a common understanding of the specific roles of the international institutions should be agreed upon. More coordination, synergy and efficiency are requested. Norms and standards need to be adopted at the global level, and the UN constitutes the most appropriate framework for this purpose. The articulation of the various regional levels of intervention and the status of the Forums habilitated to intervene need to be specified.
56. The international community needs an instrument to monitor the progress made in the implementation of an appropriate information system, to disseminate information and to strengthen the status of statistics at the global level. An initiative should be taken in this respect aiming at the design of an appropriate tool and the set-up of an institutional framework, and taking into account the instruments introduced by the World Bank (statistical capacity indicators).

3.5. Enhancing the worldwide status of economic and social information

57. We have seen that economic and social information, gradually completed by taking into account the various dimensions of governance and the environment, is a pre-requisite in the approach of development that the international community has defined around PRSPs and MDGs. This Forum

⁷The work carried out by Afristat, for example, is in line with this perspective.

could take over the role as an advocate calling for the recognition of the need to set up an efficient information system for development as a ***ninth millennium objective***. This would usefully enhance the status of the demand for information production, analysis and dissemination to be recognised as a development instrument.