

**Reinforcing Statistical Co-operation at the Regional Level to Support Sustainable Development**  
**PARIS21 Regional Forum**  
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**Forum Summary**

**A. Rationale for regional statistical cooperation and regional statistical strategy**

1. Drive regional statistical agenda that complements socio-economic, environmental and security concerns in the region
2. Provide legitimacy of national statistical agenda in regional issues
3. Address regional issues (e.g., environment, water, security, food security, poverty, migration) that need multi-country focus
4. Collaborate on common strategic approaches to address opportunities and concerns on big data, resource and capacity constraints, changes in the environment, while balancing regional and country-specific solutions
5. Facilitate the adoption of common tools, platforms, and solutions in data collection, dissemination and communication
6. Harmonize and standardize regional data to inform and monitor regional integration policies and programs
7. Serve as forum for collective reflection and encouragement of innovation and enhanced statistical integrity
8. Provide effective regional oversight of statistical information resources at the regional level
9. Enable a realistic mapping and estimation of resources against expectations
10. Stimulate collaboration and cooperation among development partners
11. A regional approach to statistics enhances the opportunities for consistency, continuity and comparability of data across the region as well as globally

**B. Good practices in regional statistical cooperation**

**1. Mandate of regional bodies to engage in statistics**

- Backed by legal regional framework (e.g., regional treaties citing the need for regional statistics/indicators to inform regional policies) (e.g. AFRISTAT, UEMOA, CEEAC)
- Statistical cooperation is recognized by ministerial bodies/regional leaders (e.g. ASEAN, SPC, EUROSTAT)
- Statistical cooperation programs are linked with regional policy and development agenda
- Regional body's juridical influence on statistics (principle of subsidiarity) (e.g. CAN)

## 2. Leadership, governance and management drives regional statistical cooperation

- Convening of regular meetings of statistical committee/heads of NSOs as the statistical governing body (e.g. Afristat, ASEAN, CAN, CEEAC, OECS, SAARC, SADC, SPC, SICA)
- Convening of technical working groups on thematic statistical concerns led by member countries with involvement of development partners (e.g. ASEAN, SAARC, SPC)
- Cost-sharing arrangement in convening/hosting regional statistical meetings (e.g. ASEAN, SAARC)
- Adoption of regional statistical policies by all member states (e.g. ASEAN, SICA)
- Structure of the regional statistical system is in line with regional development programs and supports regional decision-making processes (e.g. Afristat)

## 3. Resource mobilization (financing/investment) schemes

- Long-term capital funding (e.g. Afristat), pooled funding (e.g. Afristat), multi-year investment planning (SPC), voluntary member contributions (e.g. ASEAN, SIAP, SPC), government counterpart-funding of major statistical activities (e.g. SPC)
- Aid effectiveness as a means of mobilization and rationalization of resources for statistics (e.g. Afristat)
- Multiple partners in regional development have common understanding of scope, priorities, staging and adaption to emerging issues (e.g. SPC)
- Regional statistical units facilitate resourcing of technical and financial assistance to member countries (e.g. SICA)

## 4. Approaches to strengthening institutional & human resources of regional and country statistical systems

- Recruitment of staff in regional statistical unit with strong technical capacity (e.g. Afristat, SPC)
- Administrative location of the regional statistical unit is backed by legal and/or institutional framework with clear statistics mandate and role in the statistical system
- Rotation and mobility of statisticians across the region to extend technical assistance (e.g. Afristat, SPC, ASEAN)
- Sharing of country best practices on statistics through hosting study visits of NSOs (e.g. ASEAN)
- Community of practice and south-south technical collaboration by sending statistical experts from one member country to another (e.g. SPC, ASEAN)

## 5. Capacity building strategies to ensure relevance and responsiveness

- Partnership with wide-range of institutions on official statistics training programs and short courses (e.g., country training institutes, regional and international organizations, universities) (e.g. SIAP)
- Training programs offered are informed by systematic assessment of capacity needs and demands of member countries and are consistent with frameworks adopted in the region (e.g. SPC, SIAP)
- Co-financing arrangements on training programs on thematic concerns (e.g. SIAP)

- Regional centres of excellence on statistics provide statistical services to member countries (e.g. SPC, UNECE, EUROSTAT, UEMOA)
- Structured approach to transfer of knowledge across countries (e.g. UNECE)
- Provide a forum for convening statistical experts across different countries and regions to share experiences and practices which can be replicated by countries (e.g. UNECE)
- Statistical capacity program designed for member states lagging in statistical development to bring them to same level as other member states in the region (e.g. Afristat, ASEAN)

## 6. Data management practices

- Agreement on a core set and/or priority indicators to be adopted in the region addressing regional needs, priorities and policies (e.g. ASEAN, SADC, SPC, UEMOA)
- Analysis and periodic evaluation of indicators relevant to the region
- Ensuring regional data quality and comparability through adoption of international standards and classifications (e.g. ASEAN, CAN, SICA, SPC)
- Harmonization of regional data through adoption of statistical frameworks, common methods, tools and procedures
- Focus on dissemination of data, access and visualization for better user engagement

## 7. Considerations in regional statistical strategies (in different stages of design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation)

- Regional statistical strategies are linked to national and regional priorities as well as the NSDS of member states, and the monitoring systems in the region (e.g. SICA, Afristat)
- Adoption of the NSDS principles in the design/formulation of regional statistics strategy (e.g. SICA, CAN)
- Recognition of different levels of statistical development of member states and statistical programs are tailored to address differences and development gaps; principle of solidarity (e.g. ASEAN, Afristat, SPC)
- Recognition of distinct characteristics of the region to inform priority setting (e.g. SPC, OECS)
- Multi-country focus and balancing of regional and country-specific solutions
- Long-term commitment to invest in improving regional and country statistical infrastructure and systems (e.g. Australia, DfID)
- Mapping of resources against expectations
- Highlighting south-south collaboration as means for strengthening statistical capacity across the region and in sharing best practices (e.g. ASEAN, SPC, EUROSTAT)
- Recognition of actual and potential place of related organisations and structures in the regional statistical system (e.g. Afristat)
- Wide consultation of different stakeholders at the country and regional levels to ensure alignment of priorities (e.g. ASEAN, SICA)

## 8. Development partners' support

- Collaboration among development partners in the implementation of regional statistical development plan or on specific thematic concerns (e.g. Australia, DfID, EUROSTAT, World Bank)

- Development partners' group on statistics established
- Statistics support is integrated in the development partner's regional approach to monitoring and evaluation in broad development areas (e.g. DfID)
- Regional support backed by "ground support" at country level through posting of country statistical adviser to manage statistical programs in partnership with the government (e.g. DfID)
- Support for coordinated regional approach to providing technical assistance on statistics to member countries which is linked to regional political mandate, e.g., Ten Year Pacific Statistics Program (e.g. Australia)
- Bilateral support to countries as part of and complementing the regional statistical development strategy (e.g. Australia, DfID, EUROSTAT)
- Provision of basket funding to support NSDS implementation (e.g. DfID)

### **9. UN's role in regional statistical cooperation**

- UN regional commissions have statistical committees that serve as venues to bring together countries in the region with diverse socio-cultural background to discuss statistical concerns
- Intergovernmental regional organizations serve as the collective voice of member countries in the UN Statistical Commission
- A number of UN statistics projects are oriented on subregional groupings which are a more cost-effective approach than having to work with a large number of individual countries
- Capacity building interventions are implemented through existing regional/subregional structures

## **C. Challenges faced by regional statistical systems**

### **1. On governance and leadership and co-operation**

- Statistical co-operation can lead or lag integration at political or economic level if not managed well
- Multiplicity of regional bodies engaged in political or economic integration can bring contradictory pressures to statistical co-operation
- Crowding out regional statistical needs due to increased value placed on statistics to be reported at the international level vis-a-vis national and regional concerns
- Threats to regional statistical processes brought about by disjoint priorities of short-term governments vis-a-vis regional development priorities
- Burden to heads of NSOs in attending regional meetings and forum

### **2. On data management**

- Data collection and dissemination practices at country and regional level would need to be revisited to ensure it addresses new non-traditional statistical concerns on sustainable development agenda and data revolution (e.g., justice, security, peace)
- Inadequate system and/or framework for collecting, consolidating, and harmonizing data at the regional level

- Ensure the level of disaggregation of regional data adequately reflects realities at the country level
- 3. On resources**
- Inadequate resources of regional organizations to push for regional statistical development
  - Weak capacity of regional statistics unit to provide adequate guidance to member countries
  - Incoherent statistical support (financial and technical) within the region due to specific initiatives and priorities of development partners
- 4. On stakeholder engagement**
- Balancing engagement of stakeholders in a regional landscape as well as the priorities and expectations at national, regional and international levels
- 5. On advocacy**
- Cultivating statistics culture within regional organizations
  - Weak statistical culture in some member countries; need to better articulate/advocate for the place of statistics

#### **D. Forum Recommendations**

##### **1. Role of regional bodies in monitoring sustainable development goals (SDGs)**

- Facilitate a forum to adapt SDGs to the specific needs of the region by defining a framework for monitoring at the regional level that is consistent with country priorities and capacity; establishing wide consultations among member states to identify priority indicators for the region, particularly for small island developing states (SIDS)
- Provide technical assistance, guidance and support to member countries in the relevant SDG processes
- Develop and/or recommend an appropriate assessment tool for the region to assess member countries' statistical needs and capacities to respond to SDGs but allow each country to do their own SDG assessment
- UN Statistics Division have a network of funding opportunities to guide countries in their resourcing as well as provide technical support both at the thematic and geographical level
- UN can provide a global indicator list and catalogue of international standards useful for SDG monitoring

##### **2. Innovative approaches to address regional challenges**

- Adoption of common framework and international standards in regional statistical processes (e.g., GSPBM, SDMX, DDI, etc.)
- Establish common regional platform to share data and enable better data accessibility
- Stimulate wider use of technological innovation in data collection, processing and dissemination, including the use of big data
- Statistical skills and expertise available in the region should be shared through innovative means such as in a common training centre, distance education, and virtual meeting place

- Establish new and/or strengthen existing technical centres of excellence to provide support for region-wide capacity building (e.g., common curricula on official statistics, tie-ups with academic institutions)

### **3. On governance structure of a regional statistical system, monitoring and regional statistical plans**

- Establish regular forum or meeting of government statisticians in the region as the governing body that provides direction on regional statistical development (meetings could be annual, bi-annual, monthly or quarterly; and provisions for extraordinary meetings when needed)
- Establish a dedicated core group and/or regional statistics unit/secretariat to manage regional statistical cooperation, RSDS design process and implementation of statistical programs and activities, including periodic review and evaluation of outcomes and provide technical support on statistics, where needed; the unit should be integrated in the structure of the regional organization with political visibility and recognition
- Wide consultations of diverse stakeholders involved in regional statistical cooperation should be part of the RSDS design process, including periodic consultation meetings with data users for checks and balances
- Member countries' should have ownership of both process and the strategic plan
- The RSDS should have a clear purpose and be closely tied with regional and national development priorities as well as part of the monitoring and evaluation processes at the regional level; it should be aligned with the NSDS
- Monitor the implementation of the RSDS on a regular basis (i.e., annually) possibly with external reviews and subsequent adjustments as recommended in the reviews
- The RSDS should enable/facilitate communities of practice and knowledge transfer across the region with a common development agenda

### **4. Evolving relationship between countries and development partners**

- As golden rule – put the region (country) in the driver seat of statistical development with adequate support from development partners
- Create donors' basket fund for the implementation of the RSDS to be managed by the regional organization
- Facilitate the establishment of development partners' coordination group at the regional level to meet regularly (face to face in conjunction with related meeting or online)
- Develop tools such as matrix of donor activities being implemented, to be monitored on an annual basis
- Align monitoring evaluation systems of development partners with country and regional practices
- Consider possibility of having alternative forms of collaboration which allows greater flexibility in the way countries and development partners work together

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