



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**Seventy-sixth session**

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Item 6 (d) of the provisional agenda*

Management issues: report on the evaluation activities of the Commission during the biennium 2018–2019 and outcomes of the evaluation/review of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization and the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management**Report on the evaluation of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific pursuant to resolution 71/1****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The present document is submitted pursuant to paragraph 5 of resolution 71/1 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in which the Commission decided to review the continued substantive relevance and financial viability of each regional institution. The present document contains an overview of the independent evaluation of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, which was conducted by an external evaluation consultant, including the conclusions and recommendations for improving the results orientation, relevance, sustainability and efficiency of the Institute. The present document also contains the management response and a description of the actions taken by the secretariat to address the recommendations in the evaluation.

I. Background

1. In resolution 71/1, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) decided to review the continued substantive relevance and financial viability of each regional institution every five years. In line with that decision, the secretariat commissioned an independent evaluation of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific in 2019.

2. The evaluation consultant presented the outcome of the evaluation to the members of the Governing Council of the Institute at its fifteenth session, held in Chiba, Japan, on 9 and 10 December 2019. The Governing Council broadly accepted the recommendations made in the independent evaluation report. The conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation are excerpted from the full

* ESCAP/76/L.1/Rev.1.

report and included in the present document for the information of the Commission.¹

II. Purpose and method

3. The objective of the evaluation was to provide information for the Commission's review of the Institute, including recommendations on how to improve the Institute's substantive relevance and financial viability, in particular in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the preparation of the Institute's strategic plan for 2020–2024. The evaluation included an assessment of the impact of the Institute's training activities and its performance against standard evaluation criteria, such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and gender and human rights. It also offered recommendations for improving the results orientation and performance of the Institute.

4. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the norms, standards and procedures for evaluation as set out in the ESCAP monitoring and evaluation policy and guidelines² in order to ensure the evaluation would be independent, objective and of high quality. The evaluation was conducted from May to October 2019 by Mr. Frank Noij, an evaluation professional, with support from Mr. Jonathan Palmer, a specialist in statistics.

5. The evaluation included a comprehensive review of relevant documents, consultations, interviews and a survey of the stakeholders of the Institute. The evaluator conducted a mission to Japan from 20 to 24 May 2019 and consulted with the officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications and the Japan International Cooperation Agency. Interviews were conducted with members of the Governing Council and other stakeholders of the Institute. Furthermore, short case studies of countries that reflected a variety of subregions and included Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand, consisting of country visits, and Fiji, consisting of a video call, were conducted.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

6. The evaluation included conclusions and action-oriented recommendations to enhance the performance of the Institute. It found that the Institute has remained an important actor in the development of statistical capacities in the Asia-Pacific region. It showed that the Institute has adapted to the changing context with regard to the international development agenda and its data requirements, has managed to tap into the expertise of a variety of partner organizations through joint statistical training activities, and has moved towards a more systemic approach to statistical capacity development through partnership with national statistical training institutes.

7. In terms of geographical coverage, the evaluation found that a relatively large number of participants in the Institute's training activities came from South-East Asia. The Institute was found to be less successful in adapting training activities to meet the requirements of Central Asian and Pacific countries. Furthermore, the evaluation showed that the Institute's training activities, at the present level of outreach, could not be expected to be a sufficient factor with regard to capacity development for Sustainable Development Goal monitoring at the country level.

¹ For the full report on the evaluation, see ESCAP/76/INF/2.

² See www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAPME2017.pdf.

8. The evaluation concluded that the Institute had served the region relatively well as a regional-level training provider in previous decades, when statistical capacities were comparatively low overall. The evaluation found that, in the present context, that approach had become increasingly less appropriate, as capacities have increased and national-level training institutes have developed in some of the subregions. In the evaluation, an approach was recommended to shift the Institute's focus from providing training to staff of national statistical offices, line ministries and other statistical stakeholders towards playing multiple roles in statistical capacity development in the region, including increasing its support for building capacities of existing and emerging national statistical training institutes, developing statistical training materials on new topics and indicators, making use of new modes of training delivery, using its extensive relationships with statistics stakeholders and its position in regional and global networks to enhance coordination of statistical capacity development, and expanding the focus on individual-level capacity development to mid- and higher level staff positions in national statistical offices and other relevant government statistics agencies.

9. The evaluation contained six recommendations for improving the results orientation, relevance, sustainability and efficiency of the Institute. The secretariat expressed its appreciation for the full cooperation accorded by the member States, the host Government and other development partners to the evaluation consultant by engaging in constructive interviews and discussions and providing relevant information.

10. The following paragraphs contain excerpts from the evaluation and describe the secretariat's response and actions to address these recommendations.

Recommendation 1: The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific should work on variety of approaches to focus statistical capacity development more at the organizational level and to bring results to scale by adopting innovative roles in relation to statistical capacity development in the region.

11. With regard to recommendation 1, ESCAP has initiated a process to develop capacity at the organizational level by developing and delivering training programmes and workshops that focus on production of data for compilation of tier 1 and tier 2 global indicators for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals at the subregional and country levels through national statistical training institutions and national statistical offices, including training-the-trainers activities delivered by the Institute. In addition, the Institute will also deliver management-related programmes for senior personnel of national statistical offices in the region. The Institute will deliver at least three training programmes in Russian for Central Asian countries in collaboration with the statistics office of the Russian Federation or with other institutions recommended by that office and three programmes for Pacific countries. The Institute has begun using the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific for enhanced delivery of training programmes, sharing of training materials and sharing of information about its various programmes through national training institutions. The Institute is also an active member of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training and will use this Network to enhance capacity-building in the region.

Recommendation 2: The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific should further develop an e-learning approach, making virtual courses more attractive to users and providing enhanced opportunities for interaction for participants and for sharing of information.

12. With regard to recommendation 2, ESCAP has initiated the following measures to further develop the Institute's approach to e-learning:

- (a) Developing e-learning modalities³ geared towards different ways of learning, including moderated and non-moderated forms of learning;
- (b) Expanding e-learning beyond technical statistical topics, to include governance and management issues for national statistical offices, as well as communication, coordination and negotiation skills;
- (c) Balancing the use of e-learning with face-to-face interaction;
- (d) Increasing the use of the on-line forum for trainees and alumni to interact, share experiences and learning and become part of an online community of statistics practitioners;
- (e) Making stand-alone e-learning continuously available online for statisticians and others interested in the topic;
- (f) Adopting and continuously updating a modern learning management system and related infrastructure for e-learning;
- (g) Reviewing and further developing the current distance learning content, together, where feasible, with partners that embody relevant expertise;
- (h) Including more active learning in the delivery of e-learning;
- (i) Conducting webinars during delivery of an e-learning programme.

Recommendation 3: The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific should stay informed about the developments with regard to the Sustainable Development Goal indicators for tiers 2 and 3 and follow up on agreed methodologies, providing practical training to support the Institute's assessment of countries in the region, in close collaboration with United Nations agencies that are the custodians of specific Sustainable Development Goal indicators

13. With regard to recommendation 3, ESCAP has initiated actions to participate in and contribute to international, regional and national events on official statistics, including meetings and working groups of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, and to coordinate development of training materials for delivery of training programmes with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Statistics Division of ESCAP, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and other international organizations.

³ These include blended learning, flipped classrooms, mobile learning and microlearning, among others.

Recommendation 4: The Governing Council, in close consultation with ESCAP, should determine the human resource set-up of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific in the upcoming strategic plan period in order to align human resources with the requirements of the programmatic contents of the strategic plan.

14. With regard to recommendation 4, ESCAP will develop a resource mobilization strategy in line with the requirements of the programmatic content of the strategic plan and rules and regulations of the United Nations and present it to the Governing Council in 2020 for consideration.

Recommendation 5: The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific should enhance the use of results-based management in the implementation of the strategic plan as well as in all of its initiatives, identifying clear results and providing monitoring and evaluation at the level of reaction, knowledge and behavioural change and at the organizational level, identifying when to use each level of assessment, with limited use of the latter level.

15. With regard to recommendation 5, ESCAP initiated the process for enhancing the use of results-based management in the implementation of its strategic plan. On 7 and 8 January 2020, ESCAP conducted a capacity-building workshop on results-based management, including monitoring and evaluation, for the Institute's staff. The workshop provided information to support the Institute's efforts to develop and implement an improved monitoring and evaluation system for its programme of work and to report on its performance and results to stakeholders, in line with results-based management standards in the United Nations system and the ESCAP monitoring and evaluation policy and guidelines. Furthermore, the workshop was also aimed at enhancing the use of results-based management in the implementation of the Institute's strategic plan, by identifying clear results and providing monitoring and evaluation at different levels of results. At the workshop, ways to improve the quality of the results framework in the draft strategic plan for 2020–2024 and of the feedback questionnaire for each type of the Institute's training programmes, in line with ESCAP guidelines for the assessment of capacity-building activities, were identified.

Recommendation 6: The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, with support from the ESCAP Strategy and Programme Management Division, should develop a resource mobilization strategy that includes, but is not limited to, requesting that member States enhance their contributions to the Institute.

16. With regard to recommendation 6, ESCAP will develop a resource mobilization strategy in line with the ESCAP resource mobilization strategy for adoption at the sixteenth session of the Governing Council.