

UN ESCAP Committee on Statistics Technical Advisory Group on Population and Social Statistics

Fourth Meeting
November 2013
Summary of Key Input and Discussions

Opening Remarks

- Haishan Fu, Director, Statistics Division,
 - welcomed members of the TAG and commented on the remarkable achievements of the group to date including articulation of a core set of population and social statistics, and endorsement of the set by both the Committee on Statistics and UN ESCAP Commission
 - reflected on three challenges heads of NSOs discussed at a recent Management Seminar in Japan
 - many countries have a long way to go before they have the capacity and capability to produce the most basic of statistics
 - new areas of statistics and measurement
 - need to modernise our statistical systems, including exploring the potential of Big Data
 - noted that compared with Economic Statistics, population and social statistics do not have an integrated and unifying framework (e.g. SNA) and so the TAG are recommending the use of core set of population and social statistics as a framework for capacity development and prioritisation

Meeting Outcomes, Agenda and Structure

- Gemma Van Halderen, co-chair of the TAG
 - reflected on the capacity building process, and that the focus of the fourth meeting of the TAG was on assessing capacity needs and assets, and developing a plan of action
 - outlined how each of the sessions (A - G) fed into our main focus, the development of a regional strategy or plan for capacity development

Session A - Gaps in availability and quality in the current production and dissemination of the core set

- TAG members
 - heard from Indonesia that
 - all domains are collected by the NSO, including at disaggregated levels.
 - Relevance, timeliness, comparability and accessibility are not major quality issues
 - Accuracy is the biggest quality issue - most indicators are from surveys or the census, and the use of a large field force impacts on quality
 - there are effective systems in place for gaining consensus across stakeholders
 - the emerging demands relate to social inclusiveness and subjective wellbeing
 - heard from Singapore that
 - almost all domains are covered, but not all by the NSO
 - the emerging demand is highly disaggregated data - geographic as well as by characteristics (block of flats by gender, age, etc) and survey sources are struggling to meet this demand

Session A - Gaps in availability and quality in the current production and dissemination of the core set

- TAG members
 - broke into groups to discuss gaps in availability and quality in the current production and dissemination of the core set
 - identified a number of statistical themes that were
 - high priority and relatively easy to address in a regional capacity framework (e.g. quality of education, quality of employment)
 - high priority but relatively difficult to address in a regional capacity framework (e.g. sensitivity of income, wealth and consumption statistics, child labour, international migration/emigration, forced marriages, lack of a measurement framework for governance)
 - high priority but really depended on national priorities (e.g. ICT, Culture and Leisure)

Session A - Gaps in availability and quality in the current production and dissemination of the core set

- TAG members
 - discussed a number of issues relevant to all themes
 - increasing demand for disaggregation
 - trust in the official statistics system
 - timeliness of the production of the statistics
 - accuracy (?)
 - anything else here?

Session A - Gaps in availability and quality in the current production and dissemination of the core set

- TAG members
 - identified a number of 'system' level issues
 - statistical literacy of users, including policy makers, academics, media, Parliamentarians
 - priority given to social statistics compared to other fields of statistics, especially economic statistics
 - age of existing standards and whether they are relevant to today's needs (e.g. some ILO standards are from the 1960s, definition of households and living arrangements) and whether countries are complying with the standards
 - use of administrative data and whether it is available and/or fit-for-use in official statistics
 - statistics laws, and whether they have enough force behind them. Do members of the NSS respect the coordination function given in statistics laws?
 - anything else here?

Session B : strengths and weaknesses in national capacity to produce and disseminate the core set

TAG members

- heard from Azerbaijan that
 - weaknesses in national capacity include the quality and coverage of admin data
 - NSOs have a number of strengths and these are not necessarily widely known or recognised
- heard from India
 - about the importance of strengthening administrative data as well as surveys
 - about the importance of effective coordination, with policy agencies and NSOs, given the fragmentation of statistical production in India; that a National Statistical Body has been created, it is in early days, but hopefully will strengthen and bring about coordination and harmonisation in methodology; and that a number of initiatives are required for coordination - need to improve institutional capacity and skills of those involved in statistical work - need coordination skills, not just statistical skills
 - Periodicity and timing of surveys is always getting affected.
- heard from Australia
 - about efforts to improve statistical literacy
 - about initiatives to give effect to their coordination role - the articulation and quality assessment of essential statistical assets and infrastructure; and work to develop a national statistics policy
 - importance of collaboration and communication

Session D : Synergies

- Coordination is very critical
 - Secretariat should look at existing regional plans (e.g. CRVS, Economic Statistics, Gender Statistics) and see if they are synergies and how best the different Groups/Plans can work together
 - Ask the Secretariat to organise meetings of the co-chairs of various regional initiatives aimed at improving statistical capacity and capability in the region
- Post 2015 Momentum
 - Chiefs Statisticians need to be engaged, and suggest asking the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics to consider and advise on how Chief Statisticians can be involved
 - Secretariat to be involved in regional forums so they can keep the TAG informed on what is coming out quickly and re-adjustment can be done quickly if need be
 - HEads of Management Seminar (Japan last week) are pushing for statistical for development to be part of the Post-2015 Agenda, and recommended

Synergies

- Ask the UN ESCAP Committee of Statistics to
 - recommend end to international bodies, like ILO, to give guidance to NSOs on how their standards, guidelines, etc meet emerging policy demands like poverty, post-2015 development, social inclusion, etc
 - hold user-producer dialogues in conjunction with the Committee meetings, asking users to inform what are the statistical requirements (e.g. inequality by ethnicity) and for statisticians to information what are the statistical issues (e.g. lack of data on ethnicity)
 - encourage next steps in the CRVS in the NSS but recognise challenges in many countries due to cultural and traditional barriers. One idea for encouraging next steps is to use CRVS to highlight risks of poor data (e.g. in government funding models)

Regional Strategy

- Undertake the national review of the capacity of the NSS to produce the core set, building on existing like NSDS
- Strong Coordination from ESCAP Statistics Division with ESCAP Secretariat to ensure there is a voice from the NSOs represented at Commission meetings ie so that the Commission support the Chief Statisticians, be that Ministry of Finance. So can establish a link between a regional document and national level actions
- Then take I

Actions within a country

- Establish a coordination board, with Chief Statistician having lead role, ensuring country commitment within the Commission
- Strategy on Statistical Infrastructure
 - formulate a statistical policy within the NSS to improve metadata from surveys and admin sources, so we can also target quality gaps
 - monitor implementation of statistics policy
 - at regional level, ESCAP to build conceptual infrastructure to help attract donor support
 - ESCAP to facilitate an international discussion on governance and family and community domains to develop best practice guidelines, towards the development of standards, classifications, etc.
- Invite donor bodies to COmmittee on Statistics so they can see where to engaged and assist

Control over resources

- A strategy for coming up with an expenditure framework that can be linked to investment plan. Have support from development partners. Secretariat to do this.

Level of technical and statistical skills

- At national level, NSOs to regularly undertake a program for statistical appreciation to media as well as targeted, high level, decision makers
- At regional level, Secretariat to look for opportunities to support training needs. Establish a training program to address the gaps coming from the national institutional review. Critical that this is coordinated with existing technical coordination bodies and persons in countries
- Need to improve level of skills about official statistics. To improve understanding of role of official statisticians.

Capacity development in NSS

- Leadership development programs. Advocacy skills, Management skills.

- Look at SPC experience at how to tell statistical stories with the media.
- Need to turn data into information, using south-south cooperation. and identify best practices across the region that can be shared e.g. Indonesia's experience, Bangladesh experience with policy briefs

Data sources

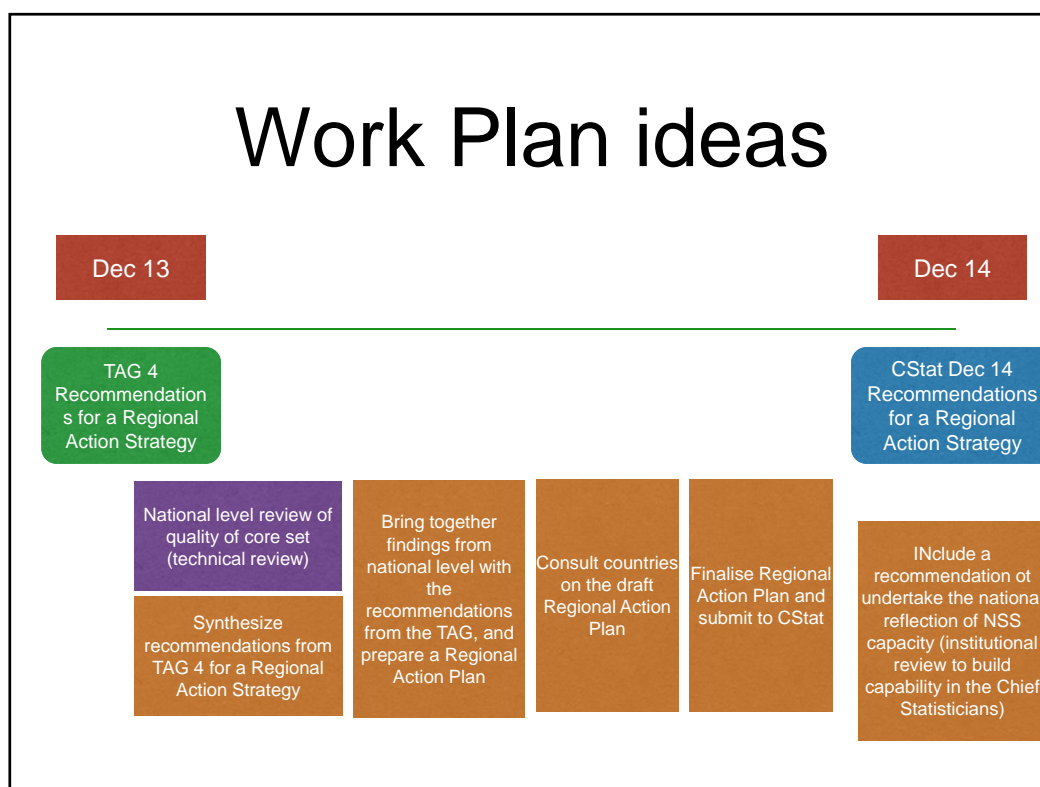
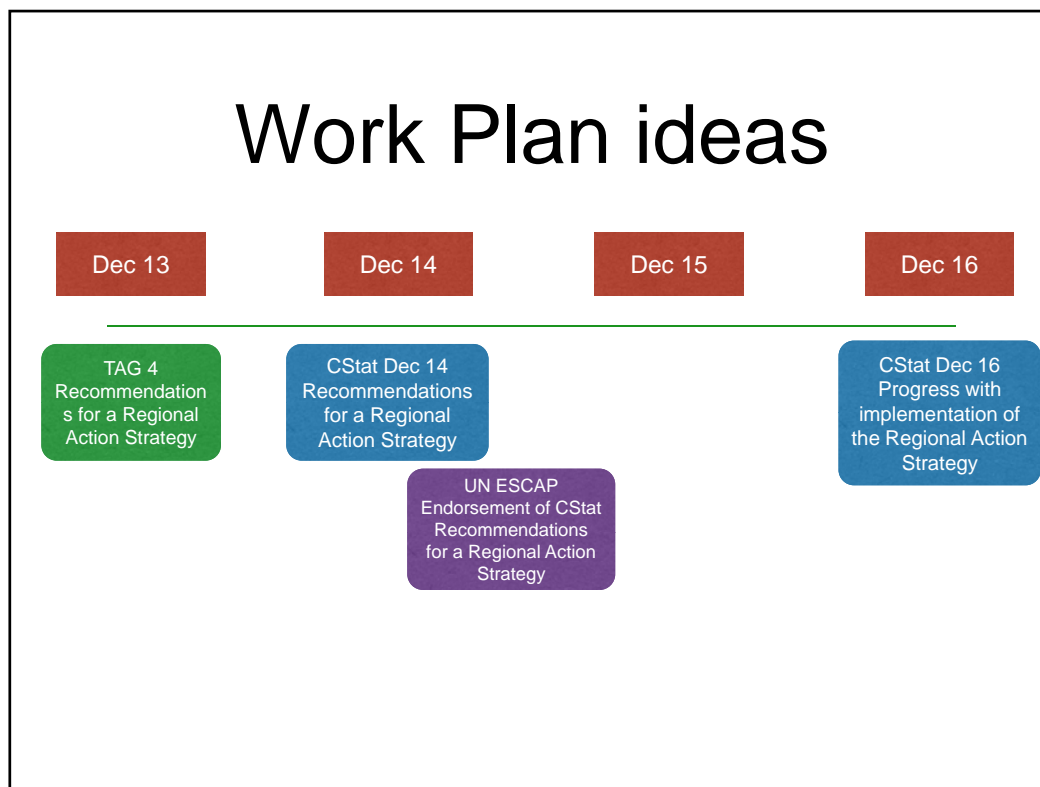
- Establish a system of designated statistics at the national level to identify what actually are the official statistics in a country.
 - Have south-south cooperation, and international development partners to support this south-south cooperation
- To ensure the capacity for NSS to undertake quality review and clearance processes for admin based data sources. Aim here is to assess and improve quality, and to minimise duplication of data systems (across survey and admin)
- Manuals and guidance material on admin data. Standards and methods on how admin data could be used.

chief statisticians has to take some action

- we call upon chief statisticians to
 - initiative a review
 - consider the best action plans eg. need for a Coordination Board within their
 - share knowledge, etc of what is the most effective strategy in their country
 - Can't assume that the Chief Statistician has the power to undertake a national consultation. What is most important (Sairi) is to how to modify legislation in a country to be stronger so they have more power to report to President. Also need to consider cultural consideration -federal versus rational countries. Law will take a long time - hence suggestion for a Coordination Board, or an effective way to position the statistician. To do a national reflection.
- have a regional learning forum to build capacity in chief statisticians needs capacity in communication and leadership. Without that skills, they won't make a difference.
- Next Commission needs to give Chief Statisticians the power to do this - e.g. in context of Post 2015 Development Agenda. Have to leverage the urgency

- south-south cooperation. Build regional support networks that draw on skills within the region e.g. look at more advanced countries in the regional to encourage cooperation, to do staff exchanges instead of hiring consultants, country level initiatives like Philippines and PNG, can we more organised to have some sort of countries identifying pool of experts to get them onboard in a quick process to help out another country - its a two way learning process to teach/share capability building
- be more organised on sharing skills across the region.
- South-south is just a modality. A buzz word of the UN ESCA.
- The issue is how to make it happen. So, establishing a regional network of experts is an output from the program but how to make it happen e.g. how to do at a regional level to facilitate bilateral exchanges, to set up some funding so countries can get a grant to help the expert go to the other country to help to

Work Plan



Next Steps

- What are the potential problems we might run into?

Overseeing implementation of the strategy

- What is the governance mechanism for taking the regional action strategy forward?
 - Do we want to recommend a Steering Committee for resource mobilisation at the regional level, prioritisation, monitoring and evaluation, etc
 - Does the TAG want to continue as a TAG or do we want to become the Steering Committee?
 - Collectively, we are individually building our strategic leadership skills and we've come a long way since TAG 1. We are strategic champions!

Technical Advice

- Do we see an ongoing role for a Technical Advisory Group in the regional strategy?
 - to advise on
 - administrative data
 - guidelines and standards
 - integrated survey frameworks,
 - data linking,
 - data quality assessment tools, etc etc

Methodological Leadership

- Would we like to recommend the creation of an Expert Group on measuring **governance** in the Asia and Pacific region
 - to advise on
 - current practices and possible best practices
 - tools for data collection
 - tools for data dissemination
 - Do we also need a expert group on **vulnerability**?
 - Do we also need a expert group on **urbanisation**?