



Asia-Pacific Statistics Newsletter

Issue: Fourth Quarter 2014
9 January 2015

In focus

The first Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific

The first Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific took place in Bangkok during 24 to 28 November 2014 under the slogan 'Get Every One in the Picture'. The intergovernmental meeting was convened in response to a request from member States in ESCAP resolution 69/15 (2013), which put into action the recommendations from the High-level Meeting on CRVS and the third session of the Committee on Statistics, both from December 2012.

There were 44 Governments represented at the Conference - 20 at the Ministerial level - and 17 international and non-governmental organizations participated.

Signifying how important CRVS is for development, the Conference was organized by a partnership between ESCAP, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, WHO, ADB and Plan International, in collaboration with the PMNCH, the World Bank Group, PARIS21, SPC, the Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, and World Vision International.

The Conference was historic and reached visionary yet implementable outcomes, including a ministerial declaration, a regional action framework for 2015-2024, and the proclamation of 2015 to 2024 as the Asian and Pacific CRVS Decade. 53 media outlets covered the Conference with almost 500 tweets making reference to it.

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For the regional statistics community, the outcomes are significant, including a commitment from Governments to move towards using administrative data from civil registration as the primary source of vital statistics by 2024. ESCAP will work with the Committee on Statistics to support the achievement of this goal, in tune with the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

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Message from Dr Anis Chowdhury, Director, ESCAP Statistics Division



Dr Anis Chowdhury

Let me first wish a very prosperous and fruitful 2015 for all before briefly reflecting on the year that has just passed. The year 2014 has been a very hectic one for the Division with major events such as the first ministerial meeting on civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) and an expert group meeting (EGM) on post-2015 development agenda and implications for statistics development in the region. The Division also implemented a number of capacity building projects in collaboration with other regional commissions and international organizations. Our success owes a great deal to the partners - UN agencies, national statistical offices and civil society organizations as well as the Asian Development Bank; my sincere thanks to all.

As we all know 2015 is going to be an exciting one for statistics as the member States deliberate on a post-2015 sustainable development agenda. The discussion so far has firmly acknowledged the critical role that data play in monitoring achievements of sustainable development goals and making stake-holders accountable. Thus, the United Nations Secretary-General in his synthesis report has emphasized the need for statistics development.

We need data that are timely and reliable to measure development and well-being as well as for making informed policy decisions. But we have a daunting task given huge data gaps in certain areas and capacity gaps in least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS). The statistical community faces the challenge of making use of technological advantages to unleash the potential of existing data - both official and private sector - in a smart way well as to urgently tackle the large data gaps, the inequalities in the availability of data and their use.

These are some of the issues that would be deliberated upon during the forthcoming 4th session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics (25-27 March, 2015) together with the progress made on two strategic goals that the Committee has set up in 2010. These two goals to: (a) ensure that all countries in the region by 2020 have the capacity to produce an agreed basic range of population, economic, social and environment statistics; and (b) create a more adaptive and cost-effective information management environment for national statistical offices through stronger cooperation - are highly relevant in light of the emphasis given to the availability of timely and trustworthy data for monitoring sustainable development.

Achieving the goals on statistics development requires not only additional resources, but also active involvement of key stakeholders in the government, the business sector, research community and civil society. It is only through concerted efforts from both data producers and a wide range of data users will it be possible for national statistical systems, in coordination with regional and global statistical bodies, to collect and disseminate the high quality statistics required for effective and efficient implementation of a post-2015 development agenda.

Thus, I look forward to enhanced cooperation with partners in achieving the two strategic goals for national statistics development that ESCAP member States have set up in 2010 through the ESCAP Committee on Statistics.

Announcements

Committee on Statistics, 25 to 27 March

[The fourth session of the Committee on Statistics](#) of ESCAP will take place from 25 to 27 March, 2015 at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Bangkok, Thailand.

In recognition of the increasing range and complexity of issues related to statistics, emerging from the ongoing dialogue on the post-2015 development agenda, an expert group meeting was convened (see article on page ??) to make recommendations on strategic priorities for the Committee's consideration at its fourth session.

Data2x - ESCAP Partnership

In December, Data2x, represented by Hillary Clinton and Michael Bloomberg, announced a partnership with ESCAP to ensure that regional efforts to improve civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems during the "Asian and Pacific CRVS Decade (2015-2024)" contribute to gender equality by giving particular attention to the challenges faced by women and girls to getting a legal identity and being included in officially-produced vital statistics. Data2x works to advance gender equality and women's empowerment by building partnerships to improve data collection and use to guide policy, better leverage investments, and spur global economic and social progress.

Statistical Briefs

In October of 2014, the ESCAP Statistics Division commenced its new monthly release “Stats Brief”. Three editions have been produced thus far tackling the issues of:

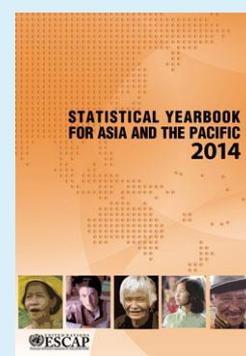
October, issue no. 01: “[Post-2015 sustainable development agenda: Challenges and Opportunities for Statistical Development](#)” - discusses the challenges that lie ahead in addressing the Open Working Groups proposed 17 goals and 169 targets.

November, issue no. 02: “[Get everyone in the picture: Why is civil registration so important to statistics?](#)” - summarizes the current status of CRVS in Asia and the Pacific and the global and regional initiatives proposed to improve the situation.

December, issue no. 03: “[Data revolution: Harnessing the power of statistics](#)” - aims to synthesize a data revolution definition and raise some important questions to increase the understanding of the data revolution.

Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2014

The [Statistical Yearbook 2014](#) has been released in an electronic file, consisting of a short analytical text on 32 selected diverse topics and related key messages as well as relevant data tables for each of the 58 regional member countries/areas of ESCAP.



The Statistical Yearbook is accompanied by the following products:

- [Online statistical database](#) containing approximately 630 data series updated twice a year (March and September).
- The [data visualization](#) interactive tool to generate time-animated statistical charts and maps.

Voices of the region

Mr Trevor Sutton, Deputy Australian Statistician and Chair of the Strategic Advisory Body for the Modernization of Statistical Production and Services in Asia and the Pacific (SAB-AP)



Mr Trevor Sutton

1. You are responsible for the transformation program in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). What is the purpose and expected outcomes of the program?

It is an exciting time at the ABS as we embark on a once in a generation revolutionary change to the way we do our business. Like most statistical

organisations, the ABS operates in a fast changing and complex information landscape - users expect more data, more frequently. But we are finding it difficult to respond as we are constrained by a tight financial situation and aging systems.

In response to these challenges, the ABS has embarked its transformation program which will modernize the way we collect, manage and deliver statistics. This is the largest and most significant change in ABS's 108 year history. The program will create:

- enterprise wide, flexible, nimble, component based systems and business processes, and
- interactive products and web services which help communicate our statistics in a more meaningful way.

2. ABS is actively contributing to regional and international work on modernization of statistical production and services. What gains are there for the ABS, thus motivating this involvement?

I have had discussions with the leaders of many statistical organisations from around the globe. We are all facing similar challenges of reducing budgets, increasing expectations and aging systems. Importantly, statistical organisations do not compete against each other for business - so we can genuinely collaborate together.

If we work together on these shared challenges, the statistical industry could harness the collective wisdom of staff across the world. We can build infrastructure once - and use it throughout the world.

I recognised that successful international collaboration is vital to the sustainability of the ABS and other NSOs around the world. The ABS cannot reduce its costs unless it can share development costs with other NSOs to help build its infrastructure.

We cannot underestimate the size of the challenge ahead of us. If we want to remain relevant to our respective governments, we will need to work together to build common solutions or approach vendors.

3. Some statistical organizations in the region may find that it is challenging to find the resources needed for modernization. What would you say to them?

One of the first pieces of work the SAB-AP commissioned was a survey of NSOs to identify progress and barriers to modernization. The survey found that there was lots of activity already happening around the region. But there

were also some barriers such as funding, availability of experienced staff and knowledge of standards.

As a region - there is a lot we can learn from each other. We need to help all statistical organizations build a compelling business case to their respective governments for modernization. We also need to share our experts - so that if one country builds expertise in standards (like GSBPM), they should help other countries build their skills.

Most importantly, the problems facing statistical organizations will not go away. We need to work together to develop cost effective methods of modernizing. We simply can't afford not to change.

4. Under your leadership, the SAB-AP is driving and setting direction for regional cooperation on modernization. What is the group trying to achieve?

We established the SAB-AP to bring together senior officials of statistical organizations committed to promoting modernization within the region. There has been a great amount of enthusiasm from the SAB-AP members over the last several months.

The SAB-AP is an essential group for helping the region to transform. We will be commissioning a range of work, including raising awareness, and helping to mobilize financial and human resources. We will also be a regional voice - representing the Asia-Pacific region in global strategic bodies.

On a more practical level - we have brought together a working group of experts who will:

- a. Create promotional materials with a regional context;

- b. Provide use cases of standards (such as GSBPM, GSIM, DDI, SDMX and CSPA) and identify champions for the standards; and
- c. Link modernization with other regional initiatives, such as NSDS.

The SAB-AP has a demanding work program ahead of it - but it will deliver strong benefits for all statistical organizations in the region.

5. What advice can you offer to statistical organizations or other development partners that want to be more actively involved in regional collaboration to modernize statistical production and services? Where and how can they obtain all the necessary information?

The first step for participation is for statistical organizations to start to think regionally, and even globally, when developing new systems. I see a future where we approach vendors together for our software needs - imagine the combined purchasing power of 200 statistical organizations. But this will only occur when individual statistical organizations make local decisions to modernize.

There is lots of information available for organizations to learn more. Firstly, we have created a [Wiki](#) - it contains best practice, promotional material, and current work program. It is a great source of general information.

For those interested in participating regionally, they should look to help with the activities of our Modernization working group. If you are interested, you can contact the ESCAP secretariat (stat.unescap@un.org) for more information on current projects and meetings.

For information about the work on modernization of statistical production and services, please visit:

UNESCAP website: <http://www.unescap.org/our-work/statistics/modernization-statistical-production-services>

Modernization wiki: <http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/msisap/Modernization+Asia-Pacific>

Updates

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)

'Get everyone in the picture'

ESCAP will work with partners to capitalize on the momentum generated by the Ministerial Conference to support Governments to implement the outcomes. The Regional Steering Group for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific will oversee the implementation of the outcomes of the Conference. The Steering Group comprises government officials and other development partners from across the Asia-Pacific region and will work under terms of reference to be finally decided on by the ESCAP Commission in May.

Disaster Statistics

The [first meeting of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics](#) was conducted from 27-29 October in Sendai, involving statisticians and disaster risk management experts, academia and international organizations. The meeting concluded with key recommendations that a basic range of disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific should focus on the occurrence and the immediate/direct impacts of disasters, and build on existing practices and experiences at national, regional and global level.

Economic Statistics

ESCAP will be implementing a Development Account Project together with the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on "Strengthening statistical capacities for building macroeconomic and sustainable development indicators". The project is designed to support countries in implementing the 2008 SNA and the SEEA by improving underlying economic and environment statistics. The time frame is three years and selected Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States are the priority beneficiaries of the project.

Environmental statistics

Environmental statistics in the Pacific

ESCAP is initiating work in environment statistics in the Pacific aimed at supporting 4-6 countries in implementing the System of Environmental Economic Accounts (SEEA) and linking environment statistics to policy. The project will include national sensitization and needs assessment workshops for National Statistical Systems and line ministries in the Pacific; a regional training course on SEEA for Asia-Pacific SIDS for national statistical entities; technical assistance that addresses specific policy concerns; and technical assistance and guidance in linking the information with the national planning process. This work should not only help the participant countries, but stimulate further regional interest and commitment in environment statistics.

Workshop on achieving a Green Economy

A workshop is currently being organized jointly by ESCAP and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) entitled "Supporting developing countries measure progress towards achieving a Green Economy". The project is led by DESA (UNSD) and this meeting follows the completion of assessment studies they conducted in several Asia-Pacific countries. The event will take place at UNCC in Bangkok from 20-23 January and will involve nearly 40 officials from about 14 ESCAP member States. The Statistics Division is working with colleagues from EDD and UNEP/ROAP to prepare to contribute substantively to the discussions.

Social Statistics

Crime Statistics

Official statisticians and crime experts agree on priorities for building capacity in the region to produce crime and criminal justice statistics: [A meeting of crime experts and statisticians from Asia and the Pacific](#) took place in Bangkok from 1-3 December 2014. The meeting brought together 40 participants from 22 countries to identify the priorities for building capacity to produce crime and criminal justice statistics, including those required in support of the sustainable development goals.

Gender Statistics

• *Core Set of Gender Indicators*

The Division is currently compiling and reviewing the results of the Region-wide Review of the draft Core Set of Gender Indicators for Asia and the Pacific, which was circulated to countries in September 2014. The results will determine if further work is required, before it is presented to the fourth session of the Committee on Statistics in March.

• *Time-use Data Analysis Workshop*

A workshop on Time-use Data Analysis was conducted from 11-15 October 2014, to raise awareness on the value of time use statistics for public policy making and to strengthen national capacity in analyzing this data. China, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan and Thailand, participated in the workshop which combined an introduction of existing approaches to analyzing time use statistics with hands-on manipulation of national data.

• *Inter-regional Workshop on Good Practices in Gender Statistics*

ESCAP together with ECE and ESCWA organized an Inter-regional Workshop on Good Practices in Gender Statistics from 5-7 November 2014 in Aguascalientes, Mexico. The objective was to exchange good practices in integrating a gender perspective in statistics, with a special focus on institutional support for gender statistics. Five countries from the three regions (China, Georgia, Moldova, Morocco and State of Palestine) presented their good practices at the workshop and experts from Canada and Italy shared their national experiences in mainstreaming gender statistics. Armenia and Maldives submitted written papers on their good practices for the workshop.

Meetings/Workshops

International development agenda

Sub-regional advocacy workshops were recently held in Kazakhstan and Nepal focusing on the means of implementation for the MDGs and the post-2015 development agenda. These workshops highlighted the importance of a strong and well-functioning national statistical system in ensuring progress towards development goals. Feedback from country participants has contributed to the ongoing drafting of the 2014/15 Millennium Development Goals report.

Modernization of Statistical Production and Services

• *Meeting of the Strategic Advisory Body*

The Strategic Advisory Body for the Modernization of Statistical Production and Services in Asia and the Pacific ([SAB-AP](#)) met at its fourth meeting on 2 December over a video-conference. They tasked the Modernization Working Group (MWG) to prepare an e-newsletter and reform the [Asia-Pacific modernization wiki](#) to enhance advocacy of the modernization work.

The [Modernization Working Group \(MWG\)](#) circulated a questionnaire to the heads of NSOs in the region seeking to understand the level of awareness and readiness for modernization activities, which will be used to inform and shape an advocacy strategy. They also finalized two case studies from Malaysia and Viet Nam, on their experiences with the implementation of GSBPM as one of the modernization standards.

- [International Conference on Big Data](#)

The [International Conference on Big Data for Official Statistics](#) took place in Beijing during 28-30 October 2014. The conference served as an important platform to exchange information on big data initiatives and specific experiments being undertaken globally using various big data sources. The conference was followed by the first meeting of the Global Working Group on big data, where members discussed the priorities and work plan for 2015. It was agreed that developing countries should be the focus of this group and to organize work around seven task teams.

- [Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange \(SDMX\)](#)

A meeting of the Expert Group on SDMX took place in Seoul from 27-30 October which was jointly organized by OECD and Statistics Korea. The global meeting offered an opportunity for experts from all over the world to review and exchange ideas on latest SDMX developments and initiatives.

[ESCAP Expert Group Meeting takes stock of the post-2015 development agenda and the implications for statistics development in Asia and the Pacific](#)

An Expert Group Meeting (EGM) of 45 statistical leaders and development experts from government and non-government agencies took place from the 9 to 10 December, 2014 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok.

The experts assembled reflected on a range of issues emerging from the post-2015 development agenda, drawing conclusions on the implications of those issues for statistical development in Asia and the Pacific and made a series of recommendations on:

1. national priorities and actions;
2. strategic priorities for regional support; and
3. realizing the data revolution.

A draft report has been sent to meeting participants for their comments which once finalized will be submitted for deliberation by the leaders of the region's national statistical systems at the fourth session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics, scheduled to take place from 25 to 27 March 2015.

Presentations delivered at the EGM, background papers and the meeting report (once finalized) can be found in [this link](#).

[EU-India seminar on quality matters in national accounts](#)

The EU-India seminar on quality matters in national accounts, co-organised by Eurostat and the Central Statistics Office of India, was held on 25 and 26 November 2014 in Greater Noida (India).

Participants included experts from Eurostat and EU Member States, SIAP, as well as middle managers dealing with quality and national accounts in the national statistical offices of the SAARC region, ASEAN region, Mongolia and China.

The seminar was very helpful in increasing knowledge and sharing experiences on available international and regional standards for quality of statistics, such as the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the European Statistics Code of Practice, the ASEAN Community Statistical System Code of Practice, etc., as well as on main quality issues of national accounts and tools for ensuring quality compliance.



Relevant documents can be found in [this link](#).

[News from the Pacific](#)

The Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (PSSC) met in Nadi from 20-22 October 2014. In addition to adopting Phase II of the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS II) in principle, the group also decided to establish three working groups to guide implementation. The groups proposed were: 1) Future Pacific Surveys; (2) Administrative data and (3) ICT (the ICT group is already functional, but previously lacked this role related to the TYPSS II).

[Training - Agricultural and Rural Statistics](#)

[Sampling methods for collecting data on agricultural statistics](#)

SIAP held a regional training course on *Sampling Methods for Producing Core Data Items for Agricultural and Rural Statistics*, in collaboration with BPS-Statistics Indonesia and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), from 29 September to 10 October in Jakarta, Indonesia. The course was a part of the capacity building strategy of the Asian-Pacific Regional Action Plan to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (RAP). The course focused on practices and issues in applying sampling methods for collecting data on agricultural statistics.

Enhancement of scientific thinking on the relationship between sustainable agriculture, food security and poverty alleviation

SIAP, in collaboration with the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture (CAPSA) of ESCAP, conducted a workshop on *Measuring Sustainable Agriculture, Food Security and Poverty Alleviation for Enhancing Accountability in the Post-2015 Development Agenda* from 24 to 28 November in Boger, Indonesia. The workshop was organized with financial support from RAP. The workshop drew food security policy and agricultural statistics experts from various ESCAP member countries. The workshop enhanced understanding on current scientific thinking on the relationship between sustainable agriculture, food security and poverty alleviation.

Capacity building on integration of agricultural statistics into national statistical system

The Fourth RAP Regional Workshop on *Building Training Resources for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics* was held from 14 to 18 December 2014 in Teheran, Islamic Republic of Iran. The workshop was conducted by SIAP in collaboration with RAP implementing partners (the Asia-pacific Regional Office of FAO and the Asian Development Bank) and was hosted by the Statistical Research and Training Center of the Statistical Center of Iran, Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The workshop provided an overview of the ongoing methodological work on data integration in the context of integrated survey strategies and present issues and recommendations addressed in this work.

Equipment for developing, implementing and managing needs assessments in the area of agricultural statistics

SIAP, in collaboration with FAO, conducted a *Training Course on Assessing Training Needs of the Statistical Workforce in Agricultural Statistics*, from 15 to 18 December in Chiba, Japan with support from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Government of Japan. The training course was a part of the programme of work of the *Asia-Pacific Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training* (the Network), specifically the sub-group on agricultural and rural

statistics which was established in September 2014. This training-of-trainers course equipped participants with requisite knowledge and tools for developing, implementing and managing needs assessments as a basis for assessing the training.

Training - General ([Link to SIAP news](#))

National Quality Assurance Frameworks for National Accounts

The seventh regional workshop on *Statistical Quality Management and Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* was conducted by SIAP from 27 to 28 November 2014 in New Delhi, in collaboration with Eurostat and Central Statistics Office (CSO) of India. With the theme “National Quality Assurance Frameworks for National Accounts”, the workshop continued the discussions on national quality assurance frameworks (NQAFs) started at the fifth version of this series of workshops.

Strategic Planning for Statistical Development

SIAP and Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) jointly conducted the regional training course on the *National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS)* from 9 to 13 December in Chiba, Japan. The training course was geared towards apprising participants on the new NSDS guidelines developed by PARIS21 specifically on the design process and implementation processes and links to existing norms, tools and good practices.



Increase knowledge and requisite skills of official statisticians of GDS on the use of CSPro - Training for Timor-Leste

SIAP conducted the country course on *CSPro for the Government of Timor-Leste*, in collaboration with BPS-Statistics Indonesia and Timor-Leste Directorate of Statistics (GDS), from 24 November to 5 December 2014 in Dili, Timor-Leste. This course was the third country course SIAP and GDS agreed on a statistical training programme for 2014, following the Country Course on Basic Data Analysis and Statistical Report Writing conducted from July to August 2014.



Capacity Building Missions

Bhutan visit

At the request of the Prime Minister, His Excellency, Mr. Tshering Tobgay, a statistical scoping mission to Bhutan took place on 3-5 November. A key outcome of the mission was the need for a peer review of the NSS to assess where improvements could be made, which will be followed up on throughout the course of 2015.

The regional advisor on Statistics visited Lao PDR

The ESCAP Regional Adviser on Statistics visited Laos Bureau of Statistics (LBS) in October as a follow-up mission to support their 2015 population census. This mission's primary focus was on getting the census preparations back on schedule in order to meet the March 1 deadline. Modifications were made to the timing on preparation activities, through consultations with the LBS and other development partners.



Calendar of forthcoming statistical meetings in Asia and the Pacific

Dates	Organizer	Meeting	Venue
2015			
20-23 January	UNSD, ESCAP	Workshop: Supporting developing countries measure progress towards achieving a Green Economy	Bangkok
26-30 January	SIAP	Regional Course on Statistical Business Registers: Making a Business Case for an Operational Statistical Business Register	Perak, Malaysia
17 March	ESCAP, SROENEA	Second meeting of the Expert Group on Disaster-related statistics	Sendai, Japan
23-24 March	ESCAP	The fifth meeting of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for Population and Social Statistics	Bangkok
23-24 March	ESCAP	The fourth Meeting of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics	Bangkok
24 March	ESCAP	Inception workshop for Phase II of Strengthening capacity of NSSs in priority countries to produce and disseminate economic statistics, including national accounts in accordance with 2008 SNA (TBC)	Bangkok
24 March	ESCAP	Seventh Meeting of Partners for Statistics Development in Asia and the Pacific	Bangkok
25-27 March	ESCAP	Committee on Statistics, Fourth session	Bangkok
23-25 June	ESCAP, ECE, ESCWA	Inter-regional Workshop on Sustainable Communities of Knowledge for Gender Statistics (TBC)	Bangkok
3-5 August	ESCAP, SIAP	Regional Course on Core Set of Gender indicators (TBC)	Chiba, Japan
28-30 September	UNSD, ESCAP	SDMX Global Conference	Bangkok
12-13 November	ESCAP, ECE, ESCWA	Inter-regional Project Closure Workshop: DA Project on Gender Statistics (TBC)	Bangkok
10-11 December	SIAP	11 th Session of SIAP Governing Council (TBC)	Chiba, Japan