



## In focus

### New Year, New Era for Regional Statistics Development

It's the end of the year, and a time for many of us to reflect on our achievements and draw plans for the next year.

The present moment has added significance for statisticians. Just three months ago in September 2015, leaders of the world's countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which will be implemented over the next 15 years, starting next year in 2016. A group of experts from 28 member States across the world have been working intensively to develop a global monitoring framework and a proposal of indicators for the 17 goals and 169 targets of the new agenda, under the auspices of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The discussions on a robust monitoring framework to track progress has brought into limelight the need for high quality data and statistics, and the gaps in the existing capacity of countries to produce and disseminate such data.

Member States of ESCAP have strived to strengthen the capacity of their national statistical systems with support by a multitude of multilateral and bilateral partners, in particular guided by the two strategic goals that the Committee on Statistics set in 2010. The progress achieved thus far has laid a solid foundation for the statistical community in the region to meet the information needs for national and regional follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda implementation. Such achievements include major regional initiatives to improve economic, population, social and environmental statistics and to strengthen statistical training. National statistical systems have been active in shaping the global discussions on monitoring framework, including through the regional representatives of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals, and raising awareness among national stakeholders of the need to strengthen data and statistics.

Looking ahead, there will be several milestones for the statistical community. At the global level, the UN Statistical Commission will review and endorse the proposal of the global monitoring framework and list of indicators in March 2016, which are planned for submission to the UN General Assembly in September 2016 for adoption. At the regional level, the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development will discuss a regional roadmap for implementing the 2030 Agenda in April 2016, which will include data and statistics in support of follow-up and review. The Committee on Statistics will convene its fifth session in development partners to map out concrete steps to meet the information requirements for national and regional follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda implementation.

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ESCAP commits to improve the availability, accessibility and use of quality data and statistics in support of evidence-based planning and policy formulation, analyses and advocacy. It will do so by providing statistical products and services that facilitate regional policy review of progress and by strengthening the capability of national statistical systems to contribute comprehensive, timely and relevant data and statistics at required levels of disaggregation in support of inclusive and sustainable development. ESCAP will contribute to attainment of SDG targets 17.18 and 17.19 on statistics capacity development by supporting statistical systems in harnessing the data revolution, including using data sources provided by the larger national data ecosystem, for modernizing statistical business processes and increasing the use of new data sources in the production of official statistics. To measure progress, ESCAP will implement a regional monitoring framework on statistics capacity.

ESCAP commits to coordinate and mobilize regional support by all relevant development partners for national statistical capacity strengthening. We will continue to convene the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific, a group of international, regional and bilateral organizations and the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific, a group of national, regional and international statistics training providers, to improve the combined impact of capacity-building activities. We will intensify its collaboration with subregional institutions for effective implementation of regional initiatives and improved statistical integration. We will facilitate engagement of national statistical systems, private sector and civil society stakeholders of national data ecosystems through the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data.

ESCAP will continue to provide a platform for the Asia-Pacific CRVS Decade 2015-2024, a country-led, multi-partner initiative aiming to strengthen CRVS systems for good governance, legal identity for all, and better data for measuring development results.



*Margarita Guerrero*  
Director  
ESCAP Statistics Division

## Announcements

### Regional CRVS Partnership

- **New website for the regional CRVS initiative to “get every one in the picture”**

The [new CRVS website](#) serves as a “one-stop” access point for governments, development partners and regional and national level stakeholders seeking information on the implementation of the Regional Action Framework and CRVS activities. It will also be one medium through which countries and partners can exchange experiences and information, as well as their strategies and plans to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics systems.

- **Partnership on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific**

The [Partnership on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific](#) meet regularly to foster engagement among development partners involved in CRVS related activities, thereby ensuring coordination, collaboration and information flows across partners. The Partnership was instrumental in the success of the Ministerial Conference on CRVS in 2014 and is supporting countries in the implementation of the outcomes of the conference.

- **Countries to report on national targets and baseline data for the Regional Action Framework**

Members and associate members were requested to report on their own national targets and baseline data for the CRVS Decade by 15 December 2015. [Questions and answers regarding the reporting](#) are compiled to assist countries. Countries who cannot meet this deadline are encouraged to contact the Secretariat to discuss their submission date.

- **Guidelines for setting and monitoring the goals and targets of the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific launched**

The purpose of the guidelines is to assist countries in the Asia and Pacific region with setting and monitoring their national targets relating to birth and death registration and legal documentation, and the production and dissemination of vital statistics under the Regional Action Framework. In addition to providing background and general considerations, the guidelines outline the methods of calculation, ideal levels and ranges, data sources, and the issues and considerations for each target and include links to further resources as well as a glossary. [The guidelines are available in English and Russian.](#)

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- **Publications informing about the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade 2015 - 2024 available**



A publication containing the Ministerial Declaration to “*Get Every One in the Picture*” and the *Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific*”, which were the two key outcomes of the Conference is now available in [English](#) and [Russian](#).



A Brochure on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific is also available ([English](#) and [Russian](#)). It provides a quick and basic introduction to civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS), highlighting its importance and the main players in CRVS systems. It also includes a snapshot of CRVS in the Asia-Pacific region, with specific emphasis on national and regional initiatives to improve CRVS.

## Asia-Pacific Economic Statistics Week and Call for Papers

The first Asia-Pacific Economic Statistics Week will take place during 2-6 May 2016. The three-day seminar component of the week aims to support national research on the quality of economic statistics production and statistical infrastructure. Statisticians working in national statistical systems of all levels and experience may respond to the call for papers that was circulated by ESCAP in December 2015. [Link for more information.](#)

## Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2015

The 2015 edition of the Statistical Yearbook will be launched in January 2016 to coincide with the beginning of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It will provide facts and trends at the outset of the new Agenda including a regional assessment of the development issues captured by each of the 17 SDGs and the statistical issues related to monitoring progress. The Yearbook launch will be accompanied by fact sheets for each country in the region and updates to the ESCAP Statistical Database - including new indicators reflecting the full scope of the SDGs.

## Latest Stats Brief



**September, issue no. 12:** [“Maternal Mortality and the Importance of comprehensive civil registration and vital statistics \(CRVS\)”](#) - this issue outlined the approaches used for estimating maternal mortality, noting some of the related challenges and limitations of those methods. It provided an overview of the progress in Asia and the Pacific with reducing maternal mortality since 1990 and highlighted the value of comprehensive CRVS systems as a sustainable data source for calculation of accurate maternal mortality indicators.

**August, issue no. 11:** [“Strengthening gender statistics and indicators in Asia and the Pacific: a key foundation for the sustainable development agenda beyond 2015”](#) - it outlines the need to enhance commitments and investments to strengthen gender statistics and indicators in the Asia-Pacific region in order to facilitate monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and other national, regional and global commitments towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Member States recently adopted gender indicator sets at the global and regional levels, which can serve as a starting point and an impetus for action to renew and strengthen efforts at the national and regional levels to speed up the improvement of gender-sensitive data. The Brief highlights existing challenges in the region in producing the core sets and gender-sensitive statistics, as well as key actions that governments can take to integrate a gender perspective in the production, dissemination and use of statistics in order to build a critical foundation for monitoring the relevant targets of the Sustainable Development Goals with the principle of “leaving no one behind”.

**July, issue no. 10:** [“The Supply and Use Framework - understanding its importance”](#) - it introduces the main concepts and definitions concerning the Supply and Use Framework and gives a snapshot of current compilation of Supply and Use Tables in the Asia-Pacific region.

**June, issue no. 09:** [“Calculating Energy Security Indicators for South-East Asia”](#) - it describes a potential statistical framework for analysing energy security. Calculations for a new dashboard of energy resources indicators are presented, using South-East Asia as a case study.

## Updates

### 2015 SDMX Global Conference



The 2015 SDMX Global Conference was co-hosted by UNSD and ESCAP in Bangkok from 28 to 30 September 2015.

This was the first time that the conference took place in a developing part of the world after having been held

every two years for the last 10 years alternating between Europe and the United States. The conference was attended by about 200 participants from 80 countries representing mostly national statistical offices and central banks, the two main constituencies having the most direct interest in using the statistical data and metadata exchange standard, SDMX.

The first part of the conference focused on the strategic importance of SDMX, where a number of

presentations, including ESCAP's, stressed the role of SDMX in the modernization strategies of national statistical institutions. The second topic focused more on successful implementations of SDMX data, with presentations from international organizations (UNSD CountryStat initiative, IMF SDDS/GDDS, Eurostat and ECB data compilation systems) and national agencies (DANE Colombia, INEGI Mexico, NSO Thailand). The numerous examples of successful implementations strengthened the sense of SDMX as a mature standard. The conference was also preceded by a capacity building day for the participants.

There was recognition among participants that SDMX is increasingly used to automate statistical data exchange among organizations; however current uses are often focused on the data, and less so on the metadata exchange. In a sign of further development of the SDMX standard, a number of participants recalled the importance of metadata in data exchanges in order to ensure better data quality and facilitate integration of statistics from different domains.

## Big Data for Official Statistics



The second meeting of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics (GWG) took place on 19 October 2015 in Abu Dhabi, UAE. At the meeting members from 18 countries and

10 international organizations reviewed and evaluated the work of the eight task teams and identified priority areas based on the findings of the global survey (i.e. skills & training, quality frameworks, access to big data, and methodology), and agreed on the future work of the GWG for 2016.

Following this meeting, the [Second Global Conference on Big Data for Official Statistics](#) took place during 20-22 October organized by the National Bureau of Statistics of UAE, UN Statistics Division, Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-STAT). During the Conference experts from national statistical systems, private sector, international organizations, and non-profit organizations shared success stories and challenges in their efforts and future plans for using different sources of Big Data (mainly social media, satellite imagery and mobile phone data). Topics related to capacity & skills requirements, access to big data, communication, quality and methods were also discussed.

## Economic Statistics

The first Asia-Pacific Economic Statistics Week, organized in collaboration between ESCAP and other development partners will take place during 2-6 May 2016. The aim of this regular forum is to integrate analytical work and development of economic statistics in the region. The themes of the seminar component in 2016 will feature two substantive themes - quality of

economic statistics production and statistical infrastructure. The call for papers and contributions was circulated by ESCAP in December 2015. The fifth meeting of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics (SGRPES) will take place on the last two days of the Asia-Pacific Economic Statistics Week. Scoping exercises have begun under the DFID-funded Regional Programme on Economic Statistics. In the Maldives, ESCAP is coordinating a forward-looking review of the national statistical system in cooperation with UNSD and PARIS21. The results of this review will be used to revise the NSDS (2009-2019) and delineate technical assistance on economic statistics. Cambodia is currently working with ESCAP to identify priorities for improving their economic statistics and national accounts within the framework of the project.

## Civil Registration and Vital Statistics

### First meeting of the Regional Steering Group on CRVS,

*Bangkok, 28-30 July 2015*

Members of the Regional Steering Group on CRVS met in Bangkok from 28 - 30 July 2015. Among the



main highlights of the meeting were the election of the Bureau of the RSG, discussion on how to support the implementation of the Regional Action Framework on CRVS and the drafting of a 5 year work programme to support CRVS system improvements in the region.

The RSG comprises representatives of 22 countries and multiple partners and has oversight for the implementation of the Regional Action Framework and acts as custodian for the Asia-Pacific CRVS Decade, 2015-2024.



### Workshop on the international Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System and the Regional Action Framework on CRVS

*Istanbul, Turkey, 15-18 September 2015*

Government statisticians and civil registration officials from 11 countries participated in the [workshop](#) to strengthen their technical capacity and increase their

knowledge of the revised international principles and recommendations for compiling, processing and disseminating vital statistics. Participants of the workshop also benefitted from the opportunity to share their national CRVS activities and proposed CRVS improvement strategies, and engage in discussions on their respective national plans for implementing the Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific.



The [workshop](#) was organized and conducted jointly by the ESCAP, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), and hosted by the Institute of Statistics of Turkey.

### Workshop for National CRVS focal points

*Bangkok 9-10 December 2015*

The workshop brought together national CRVS focal points from 17 countries and several development partners. Currently, 41 countries have nominated national CRVS focal points.

The main aim of the workshop was to deliver information and tools to aid national CRVS focal points to fulfil their role in ensuring the implementation of the Regional Action Framework. This included sharing tools for communicating the regional initiative to key stakeholders in countries and providing the ESCAP secretariat with regular updates including responding to requests for reporting under the Regional Action Framework. [Presentations from the workshop are available](#) on the new CRVS website.



## Disaster-related Statistics

### The third meeting of the Expert Group on disaster-related statistics

*Bangkok, 28-30 October 2015*

The meeting was organized in conjunction with the fourth Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction and the second meeting of the IAEG-SDGs. Led by the leaders of the three task groups formed at its second meeting in March 2015, the Expert Group reviewed and discussed the initial findings of a survey on current practices in defining and classifying the occurrence and direct impacts of disasters. The Expert Group also discussed and endorsed the annotated outline of the draft disaster-related statistics Framework for Asia and the Pacific. To ensure applicability of the framework, the Expert Group members from Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, and the Philippines volunteered to pre-test the draft framework using the existing data.

### Capacity building workshop for pre-testing of disaster-related statistics framework (DRSF) in Asia and the Pacific

*Bangkok, 15-17 December 2015*

Members of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics for Asia and the Pacific from Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia and the Philippines participated in the workshop for pre-testing of the draft disaster-related statistics framework (DRSF). During the three-day workshop, participants reviewed and discussed the draft DRSF statistical tables which would serve as the basic tools for conducting the actual testing in the four pilot countries. The participants also discussed and agreed on the plan for the pilot-testing phase which is scheduled from January to March 2016. The results of the testing as well as the draft DRSF will be reported to ESCAP Commission at its 72<sup>nd</sup> session in 2016.

## Gender Statistics

The Statistics Division in collaboration with the Social Development Division organised two workshops on advancing accountability and strengthening statistics for gender equality and women's empowerment for the [South-East Asia](#) and [South and South-West Asia](#) sub-regions in September and October 2015 respectively. The purpose was to support member States to strengthen their national accountability mechanisms through increased awareness and capacity in the collection, analysis, dissemination and advocacy of gender equality statistics and indicators. By bringing together representatives from national women's machineries and national statistical offices, the Workshops promoted collaboration and coordination in strategizing and acting for gender equality and women's empowerment at the national level, as well as the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experiences across member States in the sub-region



## Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

### Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals: Meeting to identify Asia-Pacific regional and sub-regional priorities

*Bangkok, 21-23 September 2015*

The [meeting](#) brought together leaders and senior managers of 27 Asian and Pacific national statistical systems, as well as representatives from a number of subregional and international organizations. The meeting yielded recommendations in a number of key areas for improving the readiness of national statistical systems of member States to support the monitoring the 2030 Development Agenda, including (a) regional support for broadening stakeholders' engagement in for monitoring SDGs; (b) statistical capacity building for monitoring the sustainable development agenda; (c) sub-regional mechanisms and support for sustainable development agenda; (d) next steps for the IAEG-SDGs and regional consultations; and (e) Immediate follow-up actions on the proposed indicator list for global monitoring ([Link](#)).



### Second meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs)

*Bangkok, 26-28 October 2015*

The representatives from member States and international organizations reviewed and commented on the proposed indicators to measure the SDG targets, and agreed on the way forward. 159 indicators have been tentatively finalized whereas 65 remain not yet finalized with substantial caveats.

For those 159 that have been tentatively finalized, the IAEG-SDGs has opened a consultation on these from 29 Oct - 20 Nov, and after this consultation, an electronic mechanism will be opened for three days to observers

and members alike to provide final comments, which will be considered by the members of the IAEG-SDGs before the final stage. For the 65 indicators which have substantial caveats, after the aforementioned three day comment period, these will be discussed and the nature of the discussions as well as any caveats will be noted. There will be a second electronic mechanism allowing both members and observers to comment. The discussions on these online mechanisms will be entirely public. All indicators will be included in the report submitted to the Statistical Commission in March, though any indicators still having notable caveats will be clearly explained.

The IAEG-SDGs also agreed that all indicators, where relevant, should be disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geography, and that members of the IAEG-SDG will conduct work on how specific indicators should be disaggregated, to be completed by the end of November. By mid-December, the draft of the report to be submitted to the Statistical Commission will be circulated to IAEG-SDG members for their review and finalization ([Link](#)).

## Technical assistance

### Assessment of the national statistical system in Maldives

*Male, 20-22 October 2015*

As part of the institutional component of the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics, Statistics Division (SD) conducted a scoping mission in Maldives on 20-22 October. The purpose of the mission was to determine the substantive focus, arrangements and timing of an institutional and business process review of the national statistical system of the Maldives—to be conducted together with UNSD and other partners—as part of the implementation of the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics. The review is the first component of Statistics Division's work with the Maldives which will be followed by targeted technical assistance on priority areas for economic statistics. In this connection, SD (a) attended the World Statistics Day celebrations in the Maldives and gave a speech emphasizing the importance of the fundamental principles of official statistics (b) Meetings with the senior staff of the National Bureau of Statistics, policy makers from the Ministry of Finance and Treasury which houses the NBS and from the National Centre for Information Technology (c) Meetings with the UN Country Team and (d) Stakeholder's workshop where the priorities given in the current National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (2010-2019) were reviewed and discussed.

## Assistance in data analysis from a gender perspective in Kyrgyzstan

*Bishkek, 19-23 October 2015*

Kyrgyzstan is the fourth country to participate in the UN Development Account project: time-use data analysis initiative, in addition to China, Mongolia, and Thailand.

The National Statistical Committee (NSC) has collected time-use data as part of their Living Standards Measurement Survey in 2015, and requested for assistance in conducting data analysis from a gender perspective, including conceptualizing the research questions, formulating a data analysis plan, coding and re-coding variables, cleaning and merging data, interpreting data results, drafting summaries of findings, and writing-up and finalizing a research paper /country report. The expert will continue to work remotely with the NSC to complete the research paper/country report over the next few weeks.

## Sri Lanka

*31 August to 2 September 2015*

ESCAP undertook a scoping mission on 31 August-2 September to help review the preparations of the country first Official Statistics Programme. As part of the mission, ESCAP staff held meetings with sectoral working groups comprising various stakeholders and senior management of the Department of Census and Statistics. As follow-up to this mission, DCS was invited to participate in PARIS21-SIAP course on NSDS in November 2015.

## ESCAP and ABS support the improvement of cause of death coding in Kiribati

ESCAP, in partnership with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), provided technical assistance on cause of death coding and mortality statistics to the Ministry of Health of Kiribati. The activities support the development of the Health Information System Strategic Action Plan for Kiribati, which sets the goal of “timely, quality and accessible health information to strengthen health policies and services for all I-Kiribati”, and are closely aligned with Goals 1 and 3 of the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Asia and the Pacific.

The partnership was formalized through the signing of a Letter of Agreement (LoA) between the two partner institutions. The activities included under the LoA were conducted in November and the agreement will conclude in December 2015. The LoA is the third of five under the interregional Development Account project “*Strengthening the capacity of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems in Africa, Asia and the Pacific regions to produce continuous and reliable indicators for measuring progress on the development indicators*”. The activities conducted through those partnerships will accelerate the implementation of the Regional Action Framework for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, and consequently contribute to the strengthening of CRVS systems in all beneficiary countries.

## 26<sup>th</sup> session of the Coordination Committee on Statistical Activities (CCSA)

*Bangkok, 1-2 October 2015*

The 26<sup>th</sup> session, in addition to the 2030 agenda, discussed the Principles Governing International Statistics and agreed to revise related Good Practices to better take into account the use of new or alternative data for statistics production, as well as providing further guidance on roles and responsibilities of national vis-a-vis international statistics producers. This year's special session was on “Big Data” and a number of engaging presentations were made by the attending organizations. Presentations are accessible [here](#).

As the host of the meeting, ESCAP presented the current state of statistical development in Asia-Pacific and the pillars of its work on statistics focusing on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

## World Statistics Day - Japan

As an event related to World Statistics Day, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, government of Japan, held a forum on the theme “*Statistics with all, for all*” on 4 Dec. In the forum, it had a panel discussion under that theme as well as the keynote lecture by Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director, United Nations Statistics Division.



## Calendar of forthcoming statistical meetings in Asia and the Pacific

Dates	Organizer	Meeting	Venue
<b>2016</b>			
February	UNICEF/ESCAP	High Level Consultation on Equity Focused Social Statistics and Information	Bangkok
4 March	SIAP	Meeting of Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific Region	Chiba, Japan
March	ESCAP	Expert Group Meeting for CRVS officials and other experts to review and validate CRVS training materials	Bangkok
April	ESCAP	Workshop for beneficiary countries to share outcomes and lessons learnt from technical assistance projects in support of improving national CRVS systems	Bangkok
April	UNESCO/ESCAP	Timor-Leste National Policy Dialogue on Promoting Social Inclusion	Timor-Leste*
2-6 May	ESCAP/UNSD/ADB	Asia-Pacific Economic Statistics Week (APES), including meeting of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics	Bangkok
May	UN Women/ESCAP	Workshop on Gender Statistics	Bangkok*
May	UNESCO/ESCAP	Malaysia National Policy Dialogue on Promoting Social Inclusion	Malaysia
May	ESCAP	DA Gender project closing workshop	Bangkok or Lithuania*
June	UNSD/ESCAP	Asia Pacific Regional Workshop: Transformative Agenda for Statistics	Bangkok
September	SIAP	Workshops on Forging Partnerships in Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific	Bangkok
November	UNESCO/ESCAP	Cambodia National Policy Dialogue on Promoting Social Inclusion	Cambodia*
December	ESCAP	Fifth Session of Committee on Statistics	Bangkok
December	SIAP	Twelfth session of SIAP Governing Council	Bangkok*

\* To be determined