Report of the Third Meeting of Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific
26 February 2012 – New York

Co-chairs: Ms. Chellam Palanyandy, Asian Development Bank, and Mr. Ralph Hakkert, UNFPA

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

Ms. Chellam Palanyandy, ADB and Co-Chair of the Partnership welcomed the participants to the meeting. The following agenda was adopted:

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda
2. Strategic areas of collaboration: Status and involvement by partners
5. Way forward and other matters

2. Strategic areas of collaboration: Status and involvement by partners

a) Working Group on Coordination of Statistical Training

Dr. T. C. A. Anant, Chief Statistician and Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, India, and Chair of the Working Group on Coordination of Statistical Training ¹ informed the meeting of the work of the Group to assess training needs and gaps in the region and develop a strategy for long-term coordination of statistical training activities.

Dr. Anant urged partners who had not yet responded to the questionnaire circulated for the assessment to do so. He further welcomed comments by partner and training institutions to the draft strategy, which had been prepared by the Group, ² in particular to the proposed mechanism for long-term coordination. He emphasized that partners implementing statistics capacity development programmes in the region were important stakeholders in any future coordination mechanism.

Dr. Anant sought the support of partners for the organization of a consultative meeting among training institutions and other training providers during 2012.

¹ The membership of the Working Group is listed on: www.unescap.org/stat/WG-stat-training/membership.asp
² The draft strategy and preliminary recommendations of the Working Group are contained as chapters 5 and 6 of the report of its first meeting, available at: www.unescap.org/stat/WG-stat-training/Greater-Noida/strategy-report-of-WG.pdf
All partners confirmed their general interest in following up and contributing to the further discussions on strengthening coordination of statistical training.

**b) Regional implementation plan for improving economic statistics in Asia-Pacific**

Ms. Rikke Munk Hansen, Statistics Division, ESCAP, provided an overview of the work of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics, which had been established by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics in early 2011. The Steering Group, comprising member State experts as well as ADB, ASEAN, Eurostat, FAO ROAP, IMF and SPC, was developing a regional implementation plan, for the review and endorsement by the Committee on Statistics in December 2012. She mentioned that the Steering Group had stressed the importance of developing country-level action plans to ensure the appropriateness and effectiveness of support provided through regional-level activities.

Eurostat informed the meeting of a handbook on business registers, which was currently being developed by the Group of Experts on Business Registers (Eurostat, UNECE, OECD) and would be useful for delivery of technical assistance and training on the topic in the context of a regional implementation plan.

Mr Rafael Diez de Medina, ILO, indicated interest in contributing to the work of the Steering Group, and noted that ILO also had an interest in increased involvement in social statistics development in the region. He further alerted the meeting to the ILO training centre in Turin, Italy.

Mr Shyam Upadhyaya, UNIDO, mentioned their work on industrial statistics, having recently carried out workshops on the topic in Cebu, the Philippines and Seoul, Republic of Korea. He further noted the need for additional assistance to countries in Central Asia and welcomed the interest expressed by the Russian Federation in supporting such efforts.

The Russian Federation confirmed this interest, stating that project funds would be directed to UNIDO Statistics Division to support 10 CIS countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Considering the current lack of committed resources for the regional programme on economic statistics, the meeting discussed how the importance of strengthening economic statistics could be conveyed convincingly to a decision-making policy audience. It was felt that the Busan Action Plan, with its focus on NSDSs and closing statistical gaps for policy-making could possibly be leveraged for this purpose, given that economic statistics in a number of countries in the region is not well-covered in NSDSs. Initiating country action to complete national plans for the improvement of economic statistics was also considered important given that donors increasingly refer to NSDSs when assessing country priorities for improving national statistical systems.
The World Bank suggested that the focus in the Busan Action Plan on small and fragile States could also be leveraged in the context of improving economic statistics, and that the argument for subregional or regional action is particularly strong for this group of countries.

The meeting welcomed the commitment of ILO, WB and UNIDO to contribute to the finalization and implementation of the regional implementation plan for economic statistics.

c) Regional implementation plan for improving agricultural & rural statistics in Asia-Pacific

Mr. Jay Castano, FAO, informed the meeting of the status and plans for regional implementation of the Global Strategy for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics. A Steering Group, comprising member State experts as well as ADB, the APCAS Chair, DfID, IFAD, SPC, IASRI and FAO ROAP and established by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics (CST) and the Asia-Pacific Commission on Agricultural Statistics (APCAS) was functioning under the leadership by the Chair from the Philippines and the Vice-Chair from Bhutan. A regional implementation plan for the Global Strategy is under development, to be considered by the CST and APCAS later in 2012.

The meeting welcomed the commitment by the ADB and particularly DfID to contribute funds to the regional efforts but expressed concern for the lack of funding for the preparation of the plan.

The importance of coordination of the training component with relevant regional initiatives such as the Working Group on the Coordination of Statistical Training was highlighted as was the need for integrating agricultural statistics into NSDSs.

Referring to the experiences on the African continent, the benefits and approaches to developing a solid business case for justification of funding proposals (national and international) was discussed. Such justification should be based on policy needs, for example food security, given that decision-makers were more likely to react and respond to political rather than technical demands.

It was noted that the regional implementation plan should provide the room and means to differentiate approaches and focus based on the specific needs and priorities of each country.

d) Technical Advisory Group on Social Statistics

Ms Haishan Fu, Statistics Division, ESCAP, informed the meeting of the work of the Technical Advisory Group on Social Statistics, established by the Committee on Statistics in 2011 and comprising member State experts as well as ADB, SPC, UNESCO
and UNODC. Due to changes in the composition and leadership of the TAG, as well as the intrinsic complexity of the issues at hand, the work of the Group had not progressed as originally planned by the Group.

It was suggested that, rather than attempting to develop a core set of social statistics or design a specific framework or list of domains, the TAG could consider formulating a roadmap for improved coordination, integration and consistency, bearing in mind the many national institutions involved in producing social statistics. The formation and work of the TAG was in this regard seen as an opportunity for advocating the coordination role of the NSO.

The meeting welcomed ILO as a new member of the TAG, given the involvement by this organization in a number of relevant areas such as education, health & poverty.

It was agreed that ESCAP would share further information and solicit expressions of interest and type of involvement by Partner agencies upon the appointment of new Co-Chairs of the TAG.

e) High-level event on civil registration and vital statistics

Ms. Carla Abouzahr, WHO, informed the meeting of the status of preparations for a high-level meeting on civil registration and vital statistics, to be held in Bangkok during 10-11 December 2012. She also provided an overview of efforts by national and international partners to improve civil registration systems and the vital statistics produced on the basis of registration, and sought the advice of Partners on how to proceed:

- How to make sure that sufficient and appropriate training was available on vital statistics production?
- What roles could be played by partners, bearing in mind that civil registration was currently not an element of NSDSs?
- What kind of outcome should be targeted for the upcoming high-level event?

ESCAP informed the meeting that the Bureau of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics had requested that a regional programme for the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics be submitted for its consideration and adoption at its third session, which would be organized immediately after the high-level meeting.

SPC informed Partners that vital statistics was one of three priorities in the Pacific Statistics Strategy Action Plan for 2011-2014 and that the plan was fully funded during that period. He highlighted the plan’s sub-sub-regional (i.e. operating with different groups of Pacific countries) approach and its emphasis on partner collaboration.

The World Bank informed the meeting that vital statistics was identified in the Busan Plan of Action as one of the four major statistical gaps.
The meeting welcomed PARIS21 as a new member of the Organizing Committee for the high-level meeting.

UNFPA informed the meeting that their involvement in this area of work was under review, and that it was expected that the review would result in increased involvement. Other Partners expressed satisfaction with the involvement of UNFPA’s regional office for Asia (in Bangkok) and its subregional office in the Pacific (in Suva).

UNICEF informed the meeting that they would follow-up with their regional office regarding involvement in the preparations for the high-level event.

ESCAP agreed to continue to work closely with partners already involved and reach out to the additional partners that had expressed specific interest in the preparations for the high-level event.


Mr. Eric Bensel, PARIS21, presented the main findings from the Asia-Pacific spin-off report 2011, which had been produced following the decision at the second meeting of Partners. He welcomed suggestions for improving the report, especially whether additional, more specific analyses of the data would be useful.

Mr. Bensel also noted that reporting by agencies could improve, citing UNFPA as a good example to follow. To this, UNFPA indicated their commitment to continue to improve their reporting.

In reference to the chapter on statistical training activities, Mr. Bensel reminded respondents with relevant programmes to tick statistical area 5.4 (Human resources and training) to ensure that all training activities were captured in the training chapter.

The Partners expressed their gratitude to PARIS21 for producing the report, which was useful for coordination & collaboration, not least in the context of the work to improve coordination of statistical training (see agenda item 2a). The Partners further requested PARIS 21 to continue producing the spin-off report on an annual basis.


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1 The Organizing Committee currently comprises the Australian Bureau of Statistics, ADB, ESCAP, Health Metrics Network, Plan International, SPC, the Thai Government, UNDP, UNICEF (RO), UNFPA, University of Queensland, and WHO (EURO, SEARO, WPRO).

Mr Grant Cameron, World Bank, provided an overview of the Busan Action Plan for Statistics which had been endorsed at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 29 November to 1 December 2011.

He highlighted the renewed push for monitoring in the context of pursuing development effectiveness, and noted that this was likely to increase the visibility of statistics, also at follow-up events.

Outlining the objectives and actions of the Plan, Mr Cameron emphasized the focus at the Forum on the openness agenda, which was expected to shift attention towards making better use of available data.

ESCAP noted the need to ensure and advance recognition of the value-added of regional initiatives and approaches.

5. Way forward & other matters

The Partners decided to refer to the current meeting report for a summary of follow-up actions.

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Annex I

Third Meeting of the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia and the Pacific

New York, 26 February 2012

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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CHINA
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INDIA
Mr T. C. A. Anant, Chief Statistician and Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, New Delhi

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