ESCAP Project Support Meeting on Economic Statistics
Organized for countries with special needs and other developing countries in southern Asia, Bangkok, 5 May 2016

Report of the Meeting

I. Introduction

1. The support meeting for the economic statistics project funded by DFID was organized by ESCAP Statistics Division as part of the first Asia-Pacific Economic Statistics Week. The meeting was attended by participants of national statistical offices from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Japan, Lao PDR, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam. Representatives from the Asian Development Bank, Food and Agricultural Organization, the UK Department for International Development, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations Statistics Division also attended the meeting that was chaired by Ms Rikke Munk Hansen from ESCAP.

2. The meeting objectives were to (i) ensure that project activities and modalities are clear to all countries; (ii) update on the progress of project implementation in Cambodia and the Maldives and; (iii) share information on timelines and identify scope of collaboration with other project countries.

3. The meeting featured three presentations: An introductory presentation by the secretariat on the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics (RPES) and the ESCAP-led economic statistics projects and two country presentations giving progress updates from Cambodia and Maldives. The presentations were followed by a tour de table where representatives from other project countries shared their priorities and current initiatives for developing economic statistics.

II. Summary presentations and discussion

Project implementation approach at the national level

4. Project implementation at the national level entails a comprehensive review covering the institutional and legal setting, data production and dissemination processes, statistical infrastructure and other technical capacity to assure the sustainable impact of project activities. It is therefore preferable to time the

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1 The list of participants is included in Annex II.
2 The agenda of the meeting is included in Annex I.
3 Summary of the post-meeting evaluation is in Annex III.
review in coordination with development of new national strategies for the
development of statistics (NSDS) or as mid-term assessments of existing plans.
For this reason, the project implementation is phased, i.e. not all project countries
start implementation at the same time. The most important criterion to be
considered is the national statistical planning cycle.

5. Technical assistance can be provided in parallel with the conduct of reviews, in
areas that need improvement and are in line with existing national statistical plans
and work programmes.

The resource facility and regional activities

6. The resource facility is designed to support national statistical systems to conduct
analytical and methodological studies for developing their economic statistics.
Developing countries from across the region will be eligible to submit proposals
for funding support within the resource facility;

7. Areas of priority that are common to a number of countries may be addressed
through regional activities, e.g. workshops, seminars, training activities and
exchange visits, as well as research-based training for the development of
analytical studies.

Project implementation updates in the Maldives and Cambodia

Maldives

8. The Maldives is the first country to start implementing the project with a peer
review of their national statistical system focusing on economic statistics
production and dissemination in May 2016. Staff capacity is a key factor in
developing economic statistics and implementing the project at hand. On-line
training activities and training of trainers result in more sustainable outcomes, as
they allow improving capacity of national staff on an ongoing basis. When it
comes to on-the-job training, consultancies that are for short periods and on a
continuous basis are preferred.

9. In terms of statistical infrastructure, the Maldives is interested in working on
establishing a statistical business register and would welcome support on this.

10. Since many international organizations are working with the Maldives on
different projects, the National Bureau of Statistics will keep all international
partners informed to avoid duplication of efforts.
Cambodia

11. There is already an agreed concept for the implementation of the project in Cambodia which outlines the priority activities as a review of economic statistics development, a national economic statistics development plan and a parallel technical assistance project on the incorporation of economic census results, the upgrading of the industrial classification to ISIC Rev. 4.1, etc.

12. In addition to what is covered in the plan, Cambodia also highlighted the need for advocacy for improving statistical production.

Information sharing by other project countries

13. Lao PDR:
   - The last economic census was conducted in 2006 and 2013 and the next round is planned for 2018.
   - Despite availability of much of the needed data, due to lack of staff skills Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) can produce only 40 per cent of the over 200 economic indicators that are required for the national set of indicators.
   - LSB needs assistance on training for new staff to be able to produce economic statistics.

14. Bangladesh:
   - Bangladesh developed its NSDS with support from PARIS21. In terms of SDGs, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) has undertaken an exercise to understand the indicators and to compare with the NSDS action plan to identify the data gap. Given that there are many SDG indicators that require economic statistics, this study would inform project implementation in the country.
   - Bangladesh also gives importance to the development of environment statistics which is captured in the natural resources component of the Core Set of Economic Statistics.
   - In terms of data sources for economic statistics, there is a need for improving the use of administrative data.
   - BBS requires technical support for utilizing the collected data to produce reports and graphs.

15. Viet Nam:
   - Viet Nam has reached mid-term in NSDS implementation. There are many ongoing projects with international partners in Viet Nam, such as the EU-ASEAN COMPASS project, the UNDP-supported implementation of NSDS, the World Bank-supported data dissemination project and the FAO-supported global strategy for improve agricultural rural statistics.
• For economic statistics development, the priority is national accounts. In particular, compiling product-level data, integrating institutional sector accounts and the implementation of the 2008 SNA are challenges.

• Viet Nam is also interested in reviewing economic statistics that go beyond the Core Set.

16. Bhutan:
• There are two ongoing economic statistics related projects supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on statistical business registers and supply and use tables, and one project supported by IMF on quarterly GDP.

• Technical support is needed in areas of rebasing GDP, improving agricultural data for GDP and improving data analysis skills.

17. Myanmar:
• Myanmar is going through a transition period that is also reflected in statistics. Right now, the country is updating the base year for CPI from 2006 to 2012 and changing over from the 1968 SNA to the 2008 SNA. CSO has submitted a revised Myanmar statistics law to parliament to replace the previous one (which took effect in 1952). Currently CSO is drafting the NSDS and also reviewing the SDG indicators to identify priority indicators.

18. Nepal:
• NSDS preparation, with support from UNDP, is in the final stage and the strategy gives priority to SDG monitoring.

• The economic statistics development priorities are national accounts and establishing statistical business register in Nepal. Improving data recording for the statistical business register and analytical capacity are important preparatory steps for the economic census planned in 2018.

• Assistance is required for enhancing staff skills to conduct analysis on economic statistics.

19. Sri Lanka:
• DCS is currently preparing the statistical business register and facing difficulty in getting data from establishments. DCS is exploring alternative data collection methods.

Conclusions and next steps

• Project activities will continue as planned in the Maldives and Cambodia.

• The secretariat will work with other project countries to develop frameworks for collaboration under the project. Applying the phased
approach that takes into account the planning and programme cycles and
priorities in each country, the aim is for collaboration frameworks to be
agreed and activities initiated within 2016 in Lao PDR and Sri Lanka.

• The resource facility will be launched with leaders of national statistical
systems during the Asia-Pacific Conference on Transforming Official
Statistics for Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development, to be held in Bangkok, 24–26 August 2016, at which point
further information about how to benefit from the facility will be
available.

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Annex I. Meeting agenda

Project Support Meeting

*Regional Programme on Economic Statistics in Asia-Pacific*

UNCC MR-A
08:30 – 12:30, 5 May 2016

Expected outcomes:

1. Ensure that project activities and modalities are clear to all countries;
2. Update on the progress of project implementation in Cambodia and the Maldives;
3. Information sharing on possible timelines and scope of collaboration with other countries.

| AGENDA |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 08:30 – 09:00   | Introduction  
Presentation of the project concept and practical considerations  
*Ms Zeynep Orhun, Statistics Division, ESCAP* |
| 09:00 – 09:20   | Presentation of the national project concepts: Maldives  
*Ms Aishath Shahuda, Chief Statistician, National Bureau of Statistics, Maldives* |
| 09:20 – 09:40   | Presentation of the national project concepts: Cambodia  
*Mr Chettra Keo, Director, National Accounts Department, National Institute of Statistics, Cambodia* |
| 09:40 – 12:00   | Tour de table with the other countries |
| 12:00 – 12:30   | Conclusion and agreement on the next steps |
Annex II. List of participants

MEMBERS

BANGLADESH
Mr Mohammad Abdul Wazed, Director General, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Dhaka

BHUTAN
Mr Sonam Laendup, Statistical Officer, National Statistics Bureau, Thimphu

CAMBODIA
Mr Sovorlak Khin, Deputy Director General, National Institute of Statistics, Phnom Penh
Mr Chettra Keo, Director, National Accounts Department, National Institute of Statistics, Phnom Penh

JAPAN
Mr Makoto Shimizu, Director-General, Statistical Research and Training Institute, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Tokyo

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
Mr Thipsavanh Intharack, Acting Director General, Department of Economic Statistics, Lao Statistics Bureau, Vientiane

MALDIVES
Ms Aishath Shahuda, Chief Statistician, National Bureau of Statistics, Male

MYANMAR
Ms Nyaung Tai, Staff Officer, Central Statistical Organization, Nay Pyi Taw

NEPAL
Mr Mahesh Chand Pradhan, Director, Economic Census Section, Central Bureau of Statistics, Kathmandu

SRI LANKA
Ms Darshi Munasinghe, Statistician, Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo

VIET NAM
Mr Quang Vinh Pham, Deputy Director General, General Statistics Office of Viet Nam, Hanoi
UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (DESA)

Mr Benson Sim, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), DESA, New York

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)

Mr Mahinthan Joseph Mariasingham, Statistician and Project Officer, ADB, Manila

OTHER ENTITY

DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID)

Mr Craig Irwin, Statistician, United Kingdom Department for International Development, DfID, Dhaka

SECRETARIAT

Ms Rikke Munk Hansen  Chief, Economic and Environment Statistics Section (EES), SD
Mr Christopher Ryan  Regional Advisor on Statistics, Office of the Chief, SD
Ms Zeynep Orhun  Statistician, EES, SD
Mr Marko Javorsek  Associate Statistician, EES, SD
Ms Jingyi Xie  Team Assistant, EES, SD
Ms Olga Shipina  Consultant, EES, SD

STATISTICAL INSTITUTE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (SIAP)

Mr Alick Mjuma Nyasulu  Statistician/Lecturer, SIAP, Chiba, Japan
Annex III. Results of the meeting evaluation

EVALUATION FORM

To help us assess the effectiveness of this meeting and improve in the future, please complete and return this questionnaire. Thank you.

I. Organization of meeting:

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<th>Too short</th>
<th>Too long</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Duration of the meeting</td>
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<td>133</td>
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II. Please rate the following aspects of the meeting:

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<th>Poor</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.1 Preparations by ESCAP secretariat</td>
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<td>2.1.a Meeting facilities</td>
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<td>2.2 Meeting Documents (concept note, invitation, etc.)</td>
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<td>2.2.a Time of distribution</td>
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II. Content of the meeting:

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<td>3. Did the meeting achieve its objectives? (Please select as many as applicable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants have a clear understanding of project objectives and modalities</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>I have a clear understanding of project objectives and modalities to ensure alignment with national priorities of NSDS by timing of project for each country.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants have an understanding of progress in project implementation in the Maldives and Cambodia</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>I have a clear understanding of the statistical infrastructure of Maldives by showing key collecting, compilation, frequency, updates, progress and core set of economic indicators of project implementation plan. And then, I studied NSS, current status of economics statistics, and ESCAP RPES project of Cambodia for future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants have an understanding of current economic statistics development priorities and next steps for project implementation in the countries</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>I understood current economic statistics development priorities from 9 countries included Myanmar. Next steps RPES project during 2015-2018 for project implementation in the beneficiary countries. I knew that the updating progress of Maldives and Cambodia and collaboration framework to be agreed and activities initiated within 2016 in</td>
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<td>Lao PDR and Sri Lanka for RPES project during 2015-2018. I would like to know about the rest of countries for RPES project by timing plan.</td>
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4. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions for the improvement of this meeting?

- For output 2, maybe set up group training, because 9 countries differences needed support from project.
- Progress in project implementation needs to be expedited.
- This project support meeting for the regional programme on ES focuses on core set of ES for implementation plan with priority country. Statistics is very important for country with professional statistician. We learned /know about the situation of implementation of country presentation for future work. Thank you very much.

First of all, thank you very much for ESCAP project support meeting on economic statistics and providing report of meeting. We learned about the situation of implementation of Maldives and Cambodia’s presentation and initiative activities of Lao PDR and Sri Lanka for future work. You already have mentioned that statistics is very important for country with professional statistician. Therefore, Myanmar also needs to produce development of economic statistics. CSO is calculating CPI and Inflation for Union. CSO would like to calculate PPI and ICP for developing economic statistics. We have lack technical, methodology, and knowledge for price section’s staff. Sometimes, technical assistance gave not related staff from other fields. That’s big problem for working staff. And also, term of trade and natural resources and environment need technical assistance.