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Report of the African Group on Statistical Training and Human Resources

AGROST

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Acronyms

AFRISTAT	Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa
AfDB	African Development Bank
ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
REC	Regional Economic Community
STC	Statistical Training Centre
CoBAMS	College of Business and Management Sciences
AUC	African Union Commission
EASTC	Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre
ENE	Escola Nacional de Estatística
ENSEA	École nationale supérieure de statistique et d'économie Appliquée
ESSAI	Ecole supérieure de la statistique et de l'analyse de l'information
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
INSEA	Institut national de statistique et d'économie appliquée
IFORD	Institut de formation et de recherche démographiques
ISI	International Statistical Institute
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NSO	National Statistical Office
Paris21	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st century
STPA	Statistical Training Programme for Africa
TFP	Technical and Financial Partners
ASSD	African Symposium on Statistical Development
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSS	National Statistical System

I. Introduction

1. The link between statistics training and the requirement for quality statistics to promote development is high on the agenda of African countries.
2. One of the problems facing Africa is the lack of human resources needed to produce good quality and up-to-date statistics to cater for increasingly diverse needs. While the subregion does have a few statistics training schools and university statistics departments, there still is a dire need for qualified statistics personnel to meet the growing needs of the continent. This is because of the emergence of issues such as good governance, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), climate change and the environment and gender equality. However, the language barrier is impeding the full integration of the continent and greatly reducing opportunities for French and English-speaking training centres to interact with each other. It noticeably reduces opportunities, in statistical training, of moving from French degree courses to English degree courses and vice versa.
3. At the 19th Meeting of the Economic and Statistical Observatory of sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT) Steering Committee held in Ouagadougou in April 2009, statistical training stakeholders in Africa met to agree on the need to coordinate their activities to preserve the continent's meager resources and streamline their assistance. In June 2009, the first continental forum held in Bujumbura for representatives of Statistical Training Centres (STCs), National Statistics Offices (NSOs), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), pan-African organizations and technical and financial partners (TFPs) concluded that the various groups responsible for statistical training should be merged under one umbrella, namely the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa).
4. This led to the establishment of the African Group on Statistical Training (AGROST) comprising the following:
 - Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st century (PARIS21) working group on statistical training in Africa;
 - Working group on statistical training of the African Statistical Coordination Committee;
 - Statistical training project (and its working group) of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF); and
 - StatCom-Africa working group on statistical training.

II. Responsibilities of the group

5. The main responsibility of the group is to coordinate activities and initiatives on statistical training and human resource development in Africa in terms of (i) ongoing activities and initiatives; (ii) project planning; and (iii) synergy in assistance from various TFPs.
6. The terms of reference of AGROST are as follows:
 - Set up a coordination and cooperation mechanism among its members;
 - Facilitate regular meetings organized by the group;
 - Analyse training components as part of national statistical development strategy;
 - Update the list of African statistical training centres;

- Set up and review training programmes;
- Assess statistical training needs and capacities;
- Formulate a strategy to harmonize and standardize curricula and qualifications; and
- Create a portal to enhance visibility of AGROST activities.

III. Activities of AGROST

Coordination mechanism

7. Following StatCom-Africa II, ECA appointed an officer of the African Centre for Statistics to assume full-time responsibility as coordinator of the AGROST secretariat. This decision helped to strengthen coordination and exchange of information among various stakeholders of the group.
8. The secretariat created a synergy that led to a series of meetings organized by the group. Members of the secretariat also conducted a mission to Abidjan to meet with counterparts at the *École nationale supérieure de statistique et d'économie Appliquée* (ENSEA), which chairs the group. Here, they shared the preliminary document on the statistical training programme for Africa with the Chairman of AGROST.
9. The secretariat was also involved in preparing the training programme of the ISIBalo training centre in South Africa, with a view to harmonizing it with other STCs in Africa.

Frequent meetings

10. Since its last meeting held in the margins of StatCom-Africa II, AGROST has also organized the following meetings:
 - Meeting held in the margins of the Sixth African Symposium on Statistical Development, November 2010, Cairo, mainly to adopt the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) and the African component of statistical training, as part of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics;
 - Meeting in April 2011 in Maputo. The main item on the agenda was the drafting of the terms of reference for baseline studies on statistical training;
 - Meeting in the margins of the 58th Congress of the International Statistical Institute (ISI), held in Dublin in August 2011. The meeting, which brought together AGROST and key ISI officers, discussed the support that ISI could provide to AGROST, as well as how it could join the Group;
 - Meeting in Yaoundé in November 2011. Here, the final reports of studies on statistical training were adopted and the AGROST report to StatCom-Africa III was finalised.
11. In August 2011 in Dublin, AGROST also organized a joint workshop with GIZ on environmental statistics for STCs.
12. In November 2011 in Yaounde, it also held a workshop on mainstreaming MDG methodologies into statistical training programmes.

Analysis of the training component in national strategies for the development of statistics

13. ECA, the African Development Bank (AfDB), ACBF, the World Bank and PARIS21 conducted joint missions to the D. R. of Congo, Djibouti and Liberia. They engaged in vigorous advocacy designed to help formulate concrete proposals for enhancing statistical training in these countries, as they prepare their national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS).

Update the list of African centres for statistical training

14. It would be fanciful to claim to strengthen statistical training when we lack proper knowledge of major statistical training centres, the training profile and training supply. To address this situation, a directory of statistical training centres has been prepared and is being printed. Regional STCs have been around since the 1960s. Quite recently, NSOs have set up and are managing national centres for training middle managers. The directory reveals the lack of geographical or linguistic coverage of the continent, compelling African students to continue pursuing their studies abroad.

List of training programmes

15. Because of the need to have updated and very diverse statistics on current issues, it is important to review the programmes so as to assess how to match training to statistical needs. Such an inventory should also help to harmonize training programmes and certificates, owing to the great difficulty in establishing equivalence between the French-speaking and English-speaking systems on one hand, and the programmes offered by universities and schools on the other.

Assessment of statistical training requirements and capacities

16. Based on information provided on current programmes, a study was carried out to assess statistical training needs and capacities on the continent. This was intended to match demand for statistical training with supply.
17. Human resources are still lacking in terms of quantity and quality. Africa must have a critical mass of qualified statistical staff, especially in emerging areas.
18. The study identified the gap between demand and supply and will be used to formulate a strategy to integrate more modules into programmes.

Strategy for harmonizing and standardizing programmes and diplomas

19. The strategy for harmonizing training programmes and diplomas, which is part of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa, is important for the African integration so cherished by Africa's Heads of State. Africa's French-speaking, English-speaking, Portuguese-speaking and Arabic-speaking training centres lack convergence criteria for admitting students and also for the academic programmes. Each country has its own system and recruitment methods.

20. The study developed a strategy which opens the way for exchange of ideas among statisticians from all the subregions of the continent.

Establishment of a portal to ensure wide visibility

21. With GIZ assistance, in September 2011, the group established a portal for disseminating information on its activities and on statistical training in Africa. Also, the portal will be a major vector for distance learning and a vital tool for maintaining an exchange network among STCs and technical and financial partners, as well as all parties involved in statistical training on the continent. The portal is currently lodged at GIZ and may be accessed at:

<http://gc21.inwent.org/agrost>

The group also has its own logo.



Implementation of the Statistical Training Programme for Africa

22. STPA was formulated in the nineties. AGROST relaunched the programme, with the following objectives:

- Build the capacities of existing STCs and support the establishment of new ones;
- Standardize and harmonize statistical training programmes;
- Design programmes that factor in growing market requirements.

23. Implementation of STPA cost \$11 million and started with four baseline studies on statistical training:

- STC directory;
- Review of programmes;
- Assessment of training needs and capacities;
- Harmonization of curricula and qualifications.

Implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

24. The African plan to implement the strategy is now ready. AGROST is fully engaged in the global strategy to implement the statistical training component in Africa. In this context, the secretariat conducted a study which led to the formulation of the agricultural statistical training strategy adopted at the Cairo meeting.
25. The cost for the training component of the African strategy is estimated at \$18 million.

Mentoring young statisticians

26. The secretariat has always endeavoured to invite young statisticians to all workshops organized by ECA and also to meetings organized by AGROST.
27. These young statisticians have always taken the opportunity offered by these meetings to voice their challenges. These include:
- Lack of private sector involvement to supplement government efforts;
 - Lack of coordination between STCs and NSOs;
 - Lack of training modules on emerging topics;
 - Lack of supervision from senior statisticians;
 - Difficulty to obtain scholarships for training;
 - Courses that are more theoretical than practical;
 - Difficulties in finding jobs following studies.

Partnership

28. In addition to ECA, AfDB, the African Union Commission and ACBF, the Group also receives support from the German cooperation through GIZ and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development through PARIS21. These partners jointly financed the participation of members of the Group in the meetings mentioned above and organized joint activities on statistical training in Africa.
29. GIZ strengthened the AGROST secretariat with the recruitment of an officer who is based at ECA.
30. Paris21 contributed to the production of a brochure on advocacy for AGROST.
31. ECA and ACBF signed a financing agreement for the development of a number of statistical training modules.

32. The four baseline studies mentioned earlier under activities were financed by a Swedish Trust Funds allocated to ECA.
33. ISI has expressed a strong desire to join the Group and support it. Other potential partners could join in the effort to build statistical capacities in Africa. These include the World Bank, the United Kingdom Department for International Development and the Islamic Development Bank.
34. ENSEA in Abidjan and the College of Business and Management Science (CoBAMS) in Kampala have exchanged professors.
35. Although South Africa and Liberia are English-speaking, they have sent students to ENSEA in Abidjan. For his part, IFORD hosted students from Angola, a Portuguese speaking country. This is designed to lift the language barriers and pave the way for the total integration of the continent.

IV. Challenges

Mobilizing funds to implement activities

36. Realizing the ambitions outlined in the STPA and the global strategy would require adequate financial resources which cannot be provided solely by the African countries and partners mentioned above. Additional technical and financial partners would be needed.

Coordination

37. While coordination is gradually taking shape as a result of the many activities undertaken, some partners are still doing their own thing and signing bilateral agreements without the knowledge of the secretariat and the other statistical training stakeholders.

Lack of Portuguese-speaking schools

38. While English, French and Arabic-speaking countries are well-endowed in statistical training centres, the same cannot be said for their Portuguese-speaking counterparts.

Access to higher institutions

39. Statistical training is faced with many bottlenecks including training costs. Scholarships hitherto paid by international organizations are becoming less frequent, and the countries do not have the means to send their citizens abroad for studies. To alleviate the problem, many countries have established national centres to train middle managers, at least to meet national statistical data collection and compilation needs. These countries include Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Madagascar, the Niger and South Africa, on a larger scale, with the ISIBalo centre expected to open in its doors in other countries of the Southern Africa Development Community.

Language barriers

40. Language barriers hinder possibilities of fruitful interactions between professors and students and also the conduct of joint research programmes among STCs.

V. Priorities

41. After conducting baseline studies, the Group must speed up the following:

- Making available harmonized curricula to the national training centres;
- Developing modules on emerging topics;
- Inventorying courses developed by partners and posted on their websites;
- Making an inventory of experts.

VI. Conclusion

42. The continent should be commended for the increasing awareness about the need for human development resources. Indeed, statistical training has now been integrated into NSDSs and national centres have been set up for official statistics training, as a concrete solution to the needs of countries. However, even where STCs do exist, human resources in statistics fall short of needs.

43. Advocacy should continue with technical and financial partners to solicit their assistance.

VII. Key points to be discussed by StatCom-Africa III

44. The current Session of the Statistical Commission for Africa should discuss and decide on the key following subjects:

1. Financing the Statistical Training Programme for Africa and the Global Strategy for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics
2. Harmonization of statistical curricula and qualifications
3. Identification of three key modules to be urgently developed according to the needs of NSOs.

Annex: List of AGROST members

<i>Countries/National Statistics</i>	
Representatives of francophone national statistical institutes (NSIs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burkina Faso • Burundi • Madagascar
Representatives of English-speaking NSIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gambia • South Africa • Uganda
Representative of Portuguese-speaking NSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angola
Representative of Arabic-speaking NSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egypt
<i>Training centres</i>	
Representatives of francophone training centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENSEA Cote d'Ivoire • ENSAE- Senegal • IFORD - Cameroon
Representatives of English-speaking training centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EASTC – Tanzania • ISAE – Uganda • University of Botswana - Botswana • University of Ibadan - Nigeria
Representative of Portuguese-speaking training centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENE - Mozambique
Representatives of Arabic-speaking training centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESSAI - Tunisia • INSEA - Morocco
Representatives of national training centres (integrated into an NSI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre de formation statistique du Niger • ISIBalo - South Africa
<i>Regional Economic Communities</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern African Development Community • Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa • Economic Community of West African States • Economic Community of Central African States • Arab Maghreb Union • East African Community 	

Technical and Financial Partners

- African Capacity Building Foundation
- AFRISTAT
- African Development Bank
- World Bank
- African Union Commission
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
- French Cooperation
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- European Commission/EUROSTAT
- PARIS21
- The United Kingdom – DFID
- Islamic Development Bank
- Statistics Norway