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**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF THE
NATIONAL STRATEGIES
FOR THE DEVELOPPEMENT OF STATISTICS**

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

CHIEF ECONOMIST COMPLEX



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Executive Summary

This document presents the first conclusions of the analysis of the documents of National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) for the French speaking Regional Member Countries of the African Development Bank (AfDB). This analysis is the first step of the evaluation of the NSDS launched by the AfDB, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The evaluation of NSDS is part of the coordination mechanism of the implementation of the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa (RRSF) which was adopted in 2006 by the African countries. The overall objective of this RRSF is “to improve the performance of the development and governance in Africa by strengthening national statistical systems (NSS)”.

The content of the NSDS documents was analyzed bearing in mind the international principles governing their design. Generally, the process of designing NSDS is aligned to international standards in spite of some difficulties which were noted in particular as regard to the political support and coverage of needs. The outcomes of discussions held with the key players of the national statistical systems of countries that were visited soon after this analysis will significantly contribute to that finding.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFRISTAT:	Observatoire Statistique et économique d’Afrique subsaharienne
AfDB:	African Development Bank
ECA:	Economic Commission for Africa (UN)
RRSF:	Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa
MDG:	Millennium Development Goals
PRSP:	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
NIS:	National Institute of Statistics
MAPS:	Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics
PARIS21:	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
RMC:	Regional Member Country
PTF:	Technical and financial Partners
NSDS:	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
PRS:	Poverty Reduction Strategy
NSS:	National Statistical System

1. Background

1. In 2004, the international community adopted the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS) aimed at improving the availability and use of data for the strategic planning of the development and its evaluation mainly, strategies for poverty reduction and Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In this context, the least developed countries had to design by the end of 2006, their national strategies for the development of statistics and implement them with the support of the development partners.

2. In response to the recommendations of MAPS and in order to tackle the challenges related to the availability of statistical data by 2015, Africa has acquired, in 2006, the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa (RRSF) with the help of the AfDB, the UNECA, the World Bank and PARIS21. The overall objective of this RRSF is “to improve the development performances and the governance in Africa by strengthening the national statistical systems (NSS) in the region”. To achieve this objective, the RRSF develops a global strategy which aims at designing and implementing an NSDS and proposes twelve operational strategies on which the NSDS can be based depending on the specific needs of every country. The African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Economic Commission for Africa of the United Nations (ECA) coordinate the implementation of the RRSF at the regional level.

3. The NSDS is therefore in the centre of the statistical capacity building and gets the support from most of the development partners. It should (i) provide a framework for assessing statistical needs and priorities; (ii) propose an approach for the strategic choice of subjects; (iii) give a framework for matching priorities and resources; and (iv) provide a framework for mobilizing resources within and outside the country.

4. The technical and financial partners were strongly committed to support countries in their efforts to design and implement their NSDS. Particularly, the AfDB, the World Bank, PARIS21 and AFRISTAT provided financial and/or technical assistance. Also, in partnership with PARIS21, ECA, the African Union Commission (AUC) and other partners, advocacy joint missions in some countries for the promotion of the processes of the NSDS have been undertaken. Several seminars were organized to sensitize and train national staff on NSDS.

5. Five years after the MAPS period and the adoption of RRSF, the NSDS is more and more the expression of the objectives of the development of statistics. Almost all countries have their NSDS or have started the process of designing it. Some of them accumulated experiences in NSDS development. Gained results should therefore be assessed and learnt lessons recorded. The AfDB and the ECA, in their capacity of regional coordinators of the RRSF, have initiated, in 2011, the process evaluation of the NSDS's. This evaluation is part of the mid-term review process of the RRSF.

2. Objectives of the evaluation

6. The overall objective of the evaluation of NSDS is to review the processes of their design and implementation in view of identifying weaknesses and achievements, and making proposals for

their improvement. It will be about (i) highlighting results and progress; (ii) identifying good practices and promoting their use. The evaluation should also contribute to set up a mechanism for countries to evaluate the implementation of their NSDS on a regular basis.

3. Evaluation approach

7. The analysis of the design and implementation conditions of NSDS is based on the principles of NSDS development that are defined at international level, and the functions of NSDS. These principles are the following:

- Integration to the context and process of development policy by taking into account regional and international commitments;
- Design that uses a participative approach and integrates the principles of the result-based management based on results and quality standards satisfaction;
- Completeness, coherence and foundation of a sustainable development of statistics that ensure the required quality “in line with the targeted objective”;
- Presentation of the status of the national statistical system, the requirement of its development and how to achieve such an objective.

8. The methodology of the evaluation is around two supplementary aspects: (i) analysis of the documents of the NSDS of all African countries and (ii) missions to countries.

9. The analysis of the documents mainly aims at assessing the process of the design, the strategic dimension of the document and the integration of the NSDS in the development policies. The main documents analyzed are :the road map, the diagnosis report, the NSDS document, the PRSP and the implementation reports or progress reports of NSS activities.

10. The analysis of the documents was supplemented by missions to a group of countries which were selected according to the status of the NSDS process and their membership to economic integration zone. During these visits, discussions were held, using a guidelines document, with the key players of the national statistical systems: coordinator of the NSDS, Permanent Secretary of the National Council of Statistics (NCS) or national director general of National Institute of Statistics (NIS) depending on the circumstances, heads of sectoral services of statistics, data users and development partners. These discussions offered an opportunity of fine-tuning the conclusions of the document analysis and gave more information on the processes of implementing the NSDS. The main topics discussed are as following:

- The participative and transparent aspect of the process
- The political commitment, the planning of the process of the design and the integration of statistical sectors
- The mechanism of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the NSDS

- The financial resources mobilization
- The coordination of activities
- The coordination of the interventions of the development partners
- The difficulties that were met
- The way forward.

4. Status of the evaluation

11. In the framework of the NSDS evaluation two groups of countries were constituted based of the linguistic criteria: the group of French-speaking countries and that of English-speaking countries. The work started in the fourth quarter of 2011 with a technical meeting of the team in charge of conducting the evaluation. During this meeting, the method to be used for addressing different terms of reference of the evaluation was discussed, and the instruments for collecting needed information and the content of deliverables were adopted.

12. To date, the analysis of the documents of the French-speaking countries has been completed and the first draft report is available. The following countries were visited: Benin, Cameroon, Congo, Ivory Cost, Gabon, Mali and Djibouti. The country reports are being drafted. The analysis of the NSDS documents from the English-speaking countries is ongoing and the missions to these countries are scheduled for February 2012. The general report of the evaluation should be available in May, 2012.

4.1 Preliminary conclusions of the analysis of the contents of NSDS

13. The analysis of the documents of the French-speaking countries covered countries which have an NSDS: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Comoros, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Chad, Togo and Tunisia. It was based on the documents of final synthesis of NSDS, the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) or other documents related to the development policy. For countries that are involved into NSDS implementation, the reports of its implementation and peers' review as well as the reports of development programs/projects (PRSP, MDG) were also reviewed.

14. The lack of details in the NSDS documents about the agenda of the process of their design, the organizational framework (official coordination entity or ad hoc structures), and the consultation and validation procedures, did not enable undertaking a detailed analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. However, a certain number of findings were noted among which those with implications on the effectiveness of the strategy.

- a. Integration to the context and process of development policy by taking into account regional and international commitments

15. The principle of integrating the NSDS in the processes of decision making and policies, as well as in development strategies, is partially respected. In most cases, the processes of designing the NSDS and the PRSP are disconnected. The cycles of these two documents of strategy coincide only in less than one third of countries and in the countries where it is the case, the priority statistical operations of the NSDS are not always reflected in the PRSP. However it should be noted that countries which recently designed their NSDS tend to match its cycle with that of the PRSP. Other countries sometimes undertake the updating of their NSDS in order to reconcile both processes. For that reason, Cote d'Ivoire is about to revise its NSDS once again in order to align it to the new National Plan of Development (NPD) which will cover the period 2012-2015. Also, Guinea has revised the plan of action of its NSDS for 2009-2013 to align it to its PRSP for 2011-2015.

16. Nevertheless, the processes of designing the NSDS have in general a political support at a high level. However, the involvement of the senior political authorities is not always translated in terms of provision of resources for the design of the NSDS; this partly explains the delays often noticed in the chronogram of the road map. In almost all cases, the biggest part of the needed resources for the design of NSDS comes from the external sources. Regards the level of this political support, it should be noted however that the initiative of designing the NSDS is not always taken by the political authority, even if the launching ceremonies of the process of designing the NSDS are sometimes chaired by a political authority representative. On the contrary, the validation of the NSDS is more and more assured by a political authority of high level, sometimes in the form of communication through the Cabinet meeting, while that the validation of the interim reports remains technical.

17. Moreover, the demand of statistics that results from sub-regional and regional commitments are rarely pointed out. Only four countries (Comoros, Niger, Senegal and Togo) mention the RRSF in the document of final synthesis of their NSDS. Nevertheless, the content of specific strategies of the RRSF is found in different places in the plans of action of most of the countries.

b. Development using a participative approach, incorporating the principles of the result-based management and quality standards satisfaction.

18. The participative and inclusive aspect of the process of designing the NSDS is fulfilled in almost all the countries. Workshops bringing together producers and users of statistics as well as development partners are organized for the validation of the reports of each step. These consultations of stakeholders should promote their participation in the process and collaboration when implementing the activities of the strategy. The scope and weaknesses of the participative process will be highlighted in the country reports.

c. Completeness, coherence and foundation of the sustainable development of statistics with a quality that is aligned to the targeted objective.

19. Except the environment and cross cutting issues (gender, disaggregated data at infra national level) and governance, the "traditional" areas are well covered in the plans of action. The gender issue is tackled in most of the NSDS but in general, the plans of action do not propose clear activities to be executed to this end. The Tunisian national Plan of statistics (NPS) 2007-2011

contains a certain number of recommendations related to the consideration of «horizontal topics» such as gender and regional statistics. Out of all the 17 countries covered by the analysis of the documents, only 4 have considered activities on gender, 8 mentioned activities for disaggregated data at infra regional level and 7 mentioned activities on the governance.

d. Presentation of the status of the national statistical system, the need of its development and how to achieve such an objective

20. In accordance with this principle that is widely covered in the Guide on how to design a national strategy for the development of statistics, published by PARIS21 in 2004, the NSDS documents generally establish a diagnosis of the NSS and present the elements of the strategic framework: vision, mission, strategies, objectives, plan of actions, and mechanism of monitoring-evaluation. Consequently there are important similarities in the structure of the documents of final synthesis of NSDS. Also a similarity of the fundamental problems of statistical development to be solved is noted: weaknesses in the culture of decision making based on the facts, difficulties of the national statistical systems to timely produce data that are needed for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and development strategies; those difficulties can be due to weaknesses of the legal, institutional and regulatory framework of statistical activities and lack of statistical infrastructure, human and/or financial resources.

21. Generally, strategies do not define the most priority and decisive actions to be implemented. Considering the difficult challenges faced by the NSS, the strong increase in demand and their overall aspect, the NSDS's tend to cover all the problems identified in the diagnosis without taking into account the actual financial and human capacities of the country. The report also proposes an analysis of the pertinence of objectives, strategies, and actions in line with the appraisal.

4.2 Next steps of the evaluation

22. The activities of the evaluation of the NSDS will continue in 2012 according to the tentative following chronogram:

Period	Activities
January	Finalize the report on the analysis of the documents for the countries in group 1
	Produce and review the country reports for the countries in group 1
	Finalize the report on the analysis of the documents for the countries in group 2
February	Finalize the country reports for the countries in group 1
	Missions to countries in group 2
March	Missions to countries in group 2
April	Produce the country reports for the countries in group 2

May	Produce the general report of the evaluation
June	Validation of the general report of the evaluation of the NSDS