



## **Report on statistical development in Africa**

### **Focus on some key areas of statistics**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. Development strategies and frameworks in Africa require indicators to measure inputs, outputs, impacts and outcomes. These strategies and frameworks include sectoral policies and programmes in governance, peace and security, agriculture, education, health, labour, employment and the informal economy, investment and the private sector, human development (gender, social protection, equity and human rights), trade and industry, environment and infrastructure development; national development plans (usually Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and other five-year plans); long-term national development plans (national visions); regional development frameworks (such as Agenda 2063); and international initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals and policy research.

2. As most national statistical systems in Africa are underresourced, most data needs cannot be met. Priority should be given to meeting national demand for statistics, including data required for managing the economy and stimulating social development, such as data on gross domestic product, prices, foreign trade, employment and unemployment, wages, health, education, environment and other sectoral statistics, which are usually identified in periodic governmental statements on policy and in budget proposals.

3. This report covers progress in selected areas of primary focus for statistical development in Africa, while indicating the related challenges faced by the African statistical system as well as some of the recent initiatives taken within the framework of statistical development in Africa. It also raises key potential issues for deliberation by the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa) in order to propel the statistical development of the African continent to new heights.

## **II. Areas of primary focus for statistical development in Africa**

### **A. National strategies for the development of statistics**

4. As reported by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), by January 2016 there were 37 member States implementing a national strategy – about 68.5 per cent of the total of 54 countries. In 10 member States (about 18.5 per cent of the total) either a strategy is being designed with funding secured, or a strategy has been completed but has not yet been adopted by the government.

5. Given that by January 2016 only three countries had not yet planned a strategy to replace an expired strategy (the Gambia, Mauritius and Swaziland), 51 States or 94.4 per cent of the total are either implementing a strategy, designing a strategy or awaiting adoption, or planning a replacement for an expired strategy.

6. Progress has been made towards supporting countries in implementing statistical strategies. Since 2014, joint evaluation missions have been conducted by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and PARIS21 in Cabo Verde, the Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Nigeria, South Africa, the Sudan and Zimbabwe. The evaluations led to key outcomes and recommendations and new requests from some countries for technical assistance in developing a capacity-building programme to strengthen the legal and institutional framework, human capacity and advocacy for resource mobilization for statistical production.

### **B. National accounts**

7. There are many challenges confronting those seeking to compile national accounts statistics in Africa. In general, the continent is still in the early stages of developing viable harmonious national accounts systems across the continent. National accounts statistics are inadequate and not fully comparable across countries. There are limited human, financial and technical resources as well as weak capacity within the statistical systems, coupled with inadequate infrastructure to support statistical operations. Owing to the poor state of technology, the industry and product nomenclatures are not sufficiently disaggregated. Timely data are not readily available or disseminated in the various areas of statistics.

8. In order to address the current challenges and limitations, the joint, continent-wide African Project for the Implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts has brought together and key regional and international agencies and other stakeholders to support the development of national accounts in Africa in a coordinated and cooperative manner. The key stakeholders include: African States, pan-African institutions (ECA, the African Union Commission and AfDB) and other international organizations, including the United Nations Statistics Division, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, regional economic communities, the Economic and Statistical Observatory of Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT) and the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE). These stakeholders have collaborated to carry out activities based on the six pillars of the project implementation plan for phase I: country action plans and follow-up actions; technical assistance; institutional strengthening; compiling

technical documents; advocacy; and coordination, monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

9. By the end of phase I of the project (December 2015), 32 countries had formulated their national action plans, while an additional 10 had begun the process. National action plans have been identified by the African Group on National Accounts as an essential planning and resource mobilization tool. Additionally, countries are taking follow-up action, with 16 countries reporting that they have started implementing the System of National Accounts 2008, while 27 countries plan to complete the transition in 2018, which corresponds with the completion of the project. Issues related to the harmonization of external trade statistics should be of primary focus, for example, harmonization of accounts with the System of National Accounts 2008.

10. ECA is developing practical technical documents on methodologies, experiences and best practices in the form of three technical guidebooks: a Guidebook on the Use of Administrative Data; a Handbook on Supply and Use Table: Compilation, Application, and Good Practices; and an Operational Guidebook on Accounting for Informal Sector in National Accounts. Expert group meetings were organized to discuss, review and improve the three guidebooks, and a “community of practice” was established to share country experience and best practices for the three subjects. The three guidebooks are in the process of finalization and publication.

### **C. The 2020 round of population and housing censuses**

11. The 2020 round of population and housing censuses started in 2015 and runs until 2024. At the request of the United Nations Statistical Commission, the Statistics Division prepared a draft of the third revision of the United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, which was approved by the Statistical Commission in March 2015. The Commission encouraged countries to begin implementation, bearing in mind the importance of setting quality standards for the conduct of the censuses.

12. There is an ongoing process to revise the Africa Addendum to the second revision of the Principles and Recommendations. An expert group meeting on the first revision of the Africa Addendum was held in July 2016 in Nairobi. The main objective was to revise the Africa Addendum and bring it into line with the third revision of the global Principles and Recommendations. A total of 30 participants from 20 African countries and regional and international organizations took part in the meeting. A presentation was made and discussions held on the 2016-2020 workplan for the 2020 Africa Programme on Population and Housing Censuses Decade (2015-2024).

13. A five-year Africa census programme was prepared by a consultant commissioned by AfDB and ECA. At the Nairobi meeting, initial agreement was reached among the representatives of AfDB, ECA and UNFPA to work together in order to implement the programme. They indicated the need to thoroughly go through the Programme and digest it and bring the subject to the attention of the higher management in each institution. They also agreed to try to align the programme with their 2016 work plans, although it might not be possible to secure the necessary financial resources to implement it during the remaining months. Priority issues in the 2020 round include: advocacy and funding of the census; use of technologies; sharing of resources such as tablets; the need for other censuses like geographic information system (GIS) surveys to be carried out continuously; and the formalization and sharing of

different indicators related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 at the national level in priority areas such as health education and the environment.

#### **D. Civil registration and vital statistics**

14. The Africa Programme for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) is being implemented in the light of policy and programme guidance provided by the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration through the resolutions adopted at its three sessions. The Conference was institutionalized by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in 2012 as a standing regional forum of the African Union to deal with matters concerning civil registration, on the recommendation of the Joint Annual Meetings of the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance.

15. The Third Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, held on 12 and 13 February 2015 in Abidjan on the theme “Promoting the use of civil registration and vital statistics in support of good governance in Africa”, reiterated the need for capacity-building, coordination among stakeholder ministries, partnership with the health sector, improved accessibility, a review of the legislative framework for civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS), provision of adequate human and financial resources for CRVS programmes, monitoring and evaluation of the regional initiative and country programmes, and operational research on specific subjects, particularly on how to improve death registration and the collection of cause-of-death information in Africa.

16. The regional CRVS programme is supported by a group of pan-African institutions, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, which together form the regional CRVS core group. A Regional Support Group for French-speaking countries was officially established in February 2015. The APAI-CRVS group participated actively in a workshop on the third revision of the Principles and Recommendations on vital statistics and made practical comments on the issues and challenges involved in the strengthening of CRVS systems. Key achievements of the APAI-CRVS programme are: the development of technical materials designed to enhance skills in African countries; a capacity-building workshop on sharing experience and best practice in many aspects of CRVS; the development of a global e-learning course on CRVS; and support to countries in undertaking assessment and planning processes in their CRVS systems.

17. Many African governments and regional economic communities are increasingly focusing on and committing resources towards the establishment of national identification systems. Capacity development remains a challenge. Although the country-led process of assessments currently under way is helping to develop capacity across the continent, there is a need to build a more systematic approach to management, operational and technical aspects. Among the priority issues related to CRVS are the following: countries should have clear strategies for CRVS; countries should work together (the mandates of national statistical offices and other agencies should be made clear); national statistical offices should build their own reputations; advocacy and awareness of the importance of registration is critical; and countries should enhance the status of civil registration, which will ultimately facilitate the implementation of large surveys such as population censuses.

## **E. Gender statistics**

18. In recent years there has been an increased focus on promoting the production and use of gender statistics in Africa, so as to create greater awareness among African statisticians about gender issues and concerns and the need to mainstream them in national statistical systems. The establishment of the African Group on Gender Statistics by StatCom-Africa has facilitated the coordination of the various activities in this field in Africa. With a view to advancing the gender statistics agenda, the Group developed a regional programme called the African Programme on Gender Statistics (APGS), which encompasses all conceivable activities that needed to be undertaken at the regional level under a five-year plan of action for 2012-2016 to ensure that member States develop and implement comprehensive national gender statistics programmes.

19. The second plan of action will cover the period 2017-2021 and is under development. A set of strategies have been identified for achieving such objectives as advocacy, capacity-building and reporting and dissemination of gender statistics at the country and regional levels. The Programme also proposes an institutional mechanism for implementation and also for monitoring and evaluation.

20. The key technical materials developed by ECA include a handbook on engendering statistical processes, including census and surveys; an integrated training toolkit on gender statistics; an African Glossary of Gender Statistics; an online toolkit on gender statistics; a manual to help countries conduct an assessment and develop national gender statistics; and the African Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Scorecard.

21. The Group has provided much-needed impetus to the advancement of the gender statistics agenda in Africa. There is, however, a need to share information on the implementation of activities carried out under the Programme in a more systematic and structured manner. The gender statistics activities undertaken and the products developed by various international and regional institutions could be shared through a web portal to be developed by ECA.

22. Although other vulnerable groups (such as those displaced as a result of political unrest, civil war, etc.) and marginal groups should not be left behind, the major challenges arising in gender statistics include the need for the statistical authorities to mainstream gender statistics in the plans of national statistical offices, and the need to take account of issues arising in gender statistics as well as statistical issues relating to other vulnerable groups, starting from the design stage.

## **F. Sustainable development indicators**

23. With the coming into effect of the post-2015 agenda, the pan-African institutions have been working with member States on the development of indicators to measure progress under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Meetings were held in South Africa in April 2015 and Algeria in May 2015 to come up with a proposed list of indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals. These were presented at an inter-agency expert group meeting that was held in June 2015 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Meanwhile, a draft list of indicators to measure progress in meeting the targets of Agenda 2063 was prepared in a workshop organized in South Africa in July 2015.

24. Further to the development of two separate indicator sets for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, the three pan-African institutions have agreed to

initiate a matrix for matching the targets and indicators under the two agendas. The matching exercise was based on the outcome of a meeting held in Addis Ababa in August/September 2015 which was attended by participants from seven representative African countries, AfDB, the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Symposia on Statistical Development. A follow-up meeting was organized at the African Union's headquarters in Addis Ababa in December 2015 which was attended by representatives of most African countries' national statistical offices. The indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals used in the matching exercise are global indicators which have been developed through a consultative process in which the seven African countries in the inter-agency working group played an important role in providing a common set of inputs on behalf of Africa. The Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development that was held in March 2016 decided that the monitoring and evaluation of progress under the two agendas should be carried out in an integrated manner. Accordingly, the three pan-African institutions have agreed to come up with a common list of regional indicators taking into consideration the two agendas. To this end, the African Union Commission convened a meeting in April 2016 in Nairobi which produced a core list of national indicators for Agenda 2063.

25. The ECA African Centre for Statistics assigned some staff members to identify the most relevant indicators that will be used for regional monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Having produced a regional set of indicators, the Centre circulated the list to other divisions of ECA for their comments and inputs, which will be used to finalize the regional set of indicators at the ECA level. This set will be shared with AfDB and the African Union Commission in order to arrive at a final list of regional indicators that will be used to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the two agendas.

## **G. Country profiles**

26. The Conference of Ministers mandated the ECA secretariat to produce country profiles, which formed part of the ECA business plan for 2013-2015 and addressed inclusive socioeconomic development, including key indicators and data in the economic sphere. The profiles offered an opportunity for African countries to recount their own narratives and document their experience of and prospects for socioeconomic development.

27. The country profiles also focus on structural transformation, including industrialization-driven policies and inclusive socioeconomic development including employment of young people and women. They also examine the need to strengthen the capacities of national statistical offices and partnerships among them. Issues in this regard include data collection, data analysis and data dissemination by ECA, key institutions and development stakeholders in with the context of Agenda 2063.

28. Fourthly, the country profiles cover the major challenges that include the need for commitment, collaboration and the exchange of information within the partnership between the African Centre for Statistics, data centres at the ECA subregional offices and national statistical offices, as well as the need to develop effective and efficient tools for data validation. ECA is working with some countries to ensure that their statistical production is in line with international standards.

29. The way forward includes the production of country profiles for each of the 54 countries by 2017, and the production of subregional profiles to support and enhance the implementation of the regional integration agenda.

## H. Data revolution

30. The call for a data revolution was first made by the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in 2013. In March 2014, the Seventh Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, held in Abuja, requested the African Union Commission, ECA, AfDB, the United Nations Development Programme and other partners to organize a high-level conference on the data revolution in Africa. This request was reiterated by the Assembly of the African Union at its twenty-third ordinary session. The four organizations and other partners organized the high-level conference as a side event at the Eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in 2015.

31. The report of the high-level conference and its main outcome, the Africa Data Consensus, were presented to the ninth session of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices in November 2015. The Committee recommended that the report should take into account the African Charter on Statistics and the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA) and should be reviewed by the Directors General before being submitted to the African Union Summit for endorsement.

32. A meeting of directors of National Statistics Offices on the data revolution in Africa was held in Addis Ababa in January 2016. It was attended by heads of national statistical offices from 20 countries: Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Morocco, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania. It was also attended by representatives of the African Population and Health Research Centre, the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre, the Economic and Statistical Observatory of Sub-Saharan Africa (Afristat), the International Statistical Institute and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21).

33. The main conclusions and recommendations of the meeting included the following. At the general level, it reaffirmed (SHaSA) as the overarching continental strategy for statistical development in Africa, and undertook to seize the opportunity presented by the data revolution to raise the visibility and importance of statistics through SHaSA, generating subnational data and the mobilization of Africa's diverse data communities. At the African level, it committed to build the capacity of Africa's data communities to provide accessible and verifiable statistics, not only for monitoring and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals, but also for planning and implementing the goals and targets set out in the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also committed to accelerate policy and legal reforms in order to realize the objectives of a revised SHaSA, and urged the African Union Commission, in collaboration with other pan-African institutions, to intensify their collaboration and coordination in the SHaSA revision process, and to provide the SHaSA revision team with the recommendations of the meeting to guide its work.

34. Statistical offices should be able to control the issue of big data management and other emerging issues related to modern technology. Regarding information and communications technology and data usage, governance and data confidentiality issues should be taken into account.

## **I. Integration of statistical and geospatial information**

35. ECA has started the preliminary work to mainstream geospatial technology into the work of national statistical offices. Its efforts include: framing the dialogue to ensure that national statistical, planning and cartographic authorities cooperate effectively in the development of data infrastructure and systems; revisiting national strategies for the development of statistics so as to help countries to incorporate national spatial data infrastructures; and providing technical support for the incorporation of GIS, remote sensing and other geospatial information solutions, tools and techniques (including standard and interoperable common tools) in the analysis and presentation of statistical data.

36. Currently, a global framework is being developed that will provide users with a common approach to connecting socioeconomic and environmental statistics to a location, and improve the accessibility and usability of these geospatially enabled statistics. The integration of statistics and geospatial information will also be promoted and implemented in the 2020 round of censuses. The geospatial information system can be viewed as a capacity-building tool in the value chain. Thus, all countries should have a GIS unit, and it should be equipped. Existing GIS units should be strengthened. An expert group meeting held in Addis Ababa in October 2016 to measure progress in statistical development in Africa and review the present report noted that GIS units require staff with a variety of skills, in such areas as geography and information technology.

## **J. The Africa Action Plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics**

37. In order to respond to the declining quantity and quality of agricultural statistics in developing countries, a Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics was developed and endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission in February 2010. The purpose of the Global Strategy is to provide a framework and methodology that will lead to improvements in the availability and quality of national and international food and agricultural statistics, in order to guide policy analysis and decision-making in the twenty-first century. Issues to be considered include the need to ensure that harmonized information is collected to assess the risk of food insecurity, taking into account the entire value chain in the measurement of the extent of food security, including domestic food distribution channels, and the need to take into account the concept of resilience and the impact of political volatility.

38. Africa is the first region to develop and implement an action plan under the Global Strategy. The Action Plan for Africa was designed in 2010 by AfDB, ECA, the African Union Commission and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and has three components: technical assistance coordinated by AfDB, a research component coordinated by FAO and a training component coordinated by ECA. The Action Plan adopts a long-term perspective (10 to 15 years) but will follow a phased approach, with the first phase covering the six-year period 2011–2017.

39. Under the training component, 13 national and regional training workshops on agricultural statistics have been organized. More than 100 statisticians working in agencies producing agricultural statistics for 43 African countries have been trained in new cost-effective methods. Building on the outputs of the research component of the project, these training workshops are aimed at enhancing the skills of statisticians in designing and



conducting agricultural censuses and surveys using the integrated and cost-effective methods recommended by FAO. The workshops were also open to staff from regional economic communities and regional statistical training centres wherever possible.

40. A total of 39 scholarships for studies in agricultural statistics at the master's level have been awarded with the objective of sustainably strengthening the capacity of African national statistical systems to produce high-quality agricultural statistics for better evidence-based decision-making.

41. ECA has just finalized a specialized curriculum in agricultural statistics as a part of the project to develop and implement the Action Plan for Africa and is about to launch it. Several statistical training centres have already submitted costed proposals for launching the specialization programme in their schools. By mid-July 2016, 30 scholarships for specialization in agricultural statistics will be awarded. More such scholarships will be awarded against 2016 funds that have not yet been received.

42. The project has a component that aims at providing statistical training centres with equipment in order to reinforce their capacity. ECA has secured agreement from the Global Fund to send the centres the necessary funds, which should arrive very soon.

43. Both AfDB and ECA will work on the integration of agricultural statistics into national statistical systems in collaboration with the technical assistance and research components. ECA will also continue to organize training workshops in collaboration with statistical training centres, and to develop training syllabuses in collaboration with the research component, with coordination by FAO.

## **K. Solution Exchange for the African Statistical Community**

44. Solution Exchange is a United Nations-sponsored peer-to-peer online facilitation platform for professionals having similar interests and concerns ("communities of practice"). It allows them to share their knowledge and experience in pursuit of the common objective of solving problems, thereby improving their effectiveness and influence both individually and as a professional group. The ECA African Centre for Statistics offers Solution Exchange for the African Statistical Community as a service to African statistical professionals and other professionals providing or using statistical information in effectively planning, managing, monitoring and assessing Africa's national and interregional development efforts. The community of practice is moderated by a full-time facilitator and a research associate located in the Centre. It is supported by an advisory group comprised of senior representatives from key statistical organizations, whose role is to promote membership in Solution Exchange and to increase the value of the community to its members. The advisory group sets performance targets, reviews progress, provides guidance, direction and support for the community's broad thematic priorities, and helps mobilize resources to ensure sustainability.

45. ECA launched the Solution Exchange statistical community in August 2015. It currently has around 525 members. Nine topics have been addressed to date: mobile technology for data collection; quality of census data collection; statistics for informal cross-border trade; making statistical data more accessible; implementation of the African data revolution; public demand for civil registration and vital statistics; leveraging the power of GIS in national statistical offices; distinguishing between official and other statistics; and fragile States, the Sustainable Development Goals and the role of statistical systems. The African Union Commission is currently seeking views on establishing the Statistical Institute of the African Union. So far over

50 country experiences and recommended resources have been shared through more than 140 member contributions. “Consolidated replies” to these queries can be viewed at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net/africa/stat/STAT-RFKnowledge>.

46. In addition to continuing to address members’ queries, the African Centre for Statistics, together with the advisory group, will work to enhance participation in the statistical community, promote regional, gender and organizational balance among community members, and ensure financial sustainability. Advocacy and sign-up campaigns are carried out by phone and e-mail and also using occasional events related to statistics. Statistics professionals working in government ministries and agencies, non-governmental and community-based organizations, donors, academic and research institutes and the private sector are all welcome to join the community. Sign-up forms can be requested by e-mail or by using the link at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net/africa/stat/JoinCommunity>.

47. To enhance the visibility of this platform, the October 2016 expert group meeting suggested that StatCom-Africa could invite African statistical institutes to refer to the community on their websites, and that the community’s facilitators could take advantage of social networks such as Twitter to obtain information and enlarge the community, thus enhancing technical skills. Furthermore, in order to ensure that censuses and large surveys are carried out continuously, given that securing funds for the purpose is a major challenge in most African countries, StatCom-Africa could recommend that member States might opt to share their physical resources, including statistical infrastructure such as personal data assistants.

### **III. Key issues for discussion**

48. This report has covered selected areas of primary focus for statistical development in Africa, highlighting progress made in statistical activities conducted by ECA with the support of partners. It has explored and examined the major challenges and constraints to progress in these selected areas. The October 2016 expert group meeting put forward proposals for consideration by StatCom-Africa to address the challenges and to take up available opportunities to alleviate the impact of the prevailing constraints on progress in the selected primary areas.

49. StatCom-Africa is invited to endorse this report and provide guidance on the following topics:

- The need to strengthen national capacities in designing and implementing national strategies for statistical development in the context of the national and international agenda for sustainable development.
- The need to strengthen capacities to implement ongoing activities relating to the on 2008 System of National Accounts, gender statistics, CRVS and GIS.
- The need to secure effective participation by African countries in the 2020 round of population and housing censuses.