

Agenda for Action on the Use of Data in Evidence-Based Decision Making in Asia and the Pacific

3 February 2010, Siem Reap, Cambodia

The 90+ participants of the Regional Consultation on Using Data in Evidence-Based Decision Making, coming together in Siem Reap, Cambodia from 2-3 February 2010, representing policy makers, data producers and United Nations officials from 20 countries, have hereby issued the following recommendations guided by the principles and commitments underpinning the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action:

National statistical systems are integral components of modern governments. Relevant, accurate and reliable data needs to be regularly collected, analyzed and widely disseminated in user-friendly ways in order to allow governments and civil society, including the media to monitor progress of their societies, and make fact-based decisions to inform public policy. The ongoing initiatives taking place in several countries in conjunction with the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, and the 2010 MDG Reports, are a valuable opportunity to promote the importance of statistical data collection, analysis, dissemination and utilization.

National governments and development partners must work closely together to ensure adherence to key principles of the new aid environment when developing and strengthening national monitoring and evaluation systems. These include the promotion of government ownership, alignment to national frameworks, harmonization of development partners' support, strengthened mutual accountability, and mainstreamed management for development results.

The use of technological developments in the 21st century is making statistical data more accessible to the general population. Innovative methods should be supported for the collection, storage, retrieval, dissemination and dynamic visualization of national statistical data. One such tool that this consultation has explored is DevInfo, which is distributed royalty free by the United Nations, promotes adherence to international standards for statistical data and metadata exchange, and has been endorsed by the UN Development Group as a recommended tool for monitoring progress against the Millennium Development Goals. Countries could consider taking advantage of DevInfo's customization features to have a data dissemination tool that is tailor made to fit their specific requirements.

In bringing together data producers and data users, this consultation has made an important step forward in fostering linkages that need to be strengthened if the full power of information contained in national statistical systems is to be harnessed. Key points include:

- Participants highlighted the role of the United Nations and other development actors to support countries in strengthening national capacities to timely collect, analyze, disseminate and use reliable and accurate data to systematically support evidence-based decision making at the policy level.
- The need to institutionalize country-led Monitoring and Evaluation systems was stressed, including Managing for Development Results at national and sub-national levels in order to reinforce evidence-based decision making. This includes target setting at sub-national level to promote equitable and sustainable achievement of development goals.

- It was mentioned that in this work, coordination between Line Ministries, National Statistics Offices, and other related institutions is essential.
- Participants stressed the need to strengthen support to effective and sustained capacity development on data analysis and policy assessments, to feed back into the cycle of policy making.
- It is essential to strengthen the enabling environment, through legal and other policy frameworks, for using data in evidence-based decision making.
- Participants mentioned the importance of ensuring that information is documented and disseminated based on principles of transparency and ethics.
- There is a need to address geographic, socioeconomic and other forms of disparities by promoting the collection and use of disaggregated data. Analysts need to further explore the use of small area estimation techniques to obtain disaggregated data, in particular for hunger and poverty.
- Governments were encouraged to strengthen and/or implement monitoring systems for timely impact assessments of external shocks such as food and oil crisis, global financial and economic crisis, and natural disasters.
- Governments' openness to the use of data produced by the private sector, namely reputable firms, universities and civil society organizations was also encouraged.
- Governments were encouraged to collect data to monitor the progress on MDGs and other national goal indicators by multiple methods. For example, support for vital / civil registration systems as well as survey/census systems.
- Participants recognized the importance of linkages between all MDGs. Countries are therefore encouraged to also assess progress towards and take ownership of MDG 8.
- New features of DevInfo version 6.0 could be fully utilized to enhance knowledge sharing between countries on strengthening country-led monitoring and evaluation systems.

The participants of this consultation vow to continue striving for a greater evidence base for all strategies, policies and other decision-making processes in Asia and the Pacific, and look forward to continuing dialogue between high-level policy makers, data producers and the United Nations for this purpose.