

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

03 February 2010, Siem Reap

**DRAFT for Discussion**

The 80 participants of the Regional Consultation on Using Data in Evidence-Based Decision Making, coming together in Siem Reap from 02-03 February 2010, representing policy makers and United Nations officials from 20 countries, have hereby issued the following recommendations:

National statistical systems are integral components of modern nation states. Accurate and reliable data needs to be regularly collected and disseminated in user-friendly formats in order to allow governments and citizens to monitor the progress of their societies, and make fact-based decisions.

Statistical data dissemination should be targeted to as wide of an audience as possible. Important groups include policy makers, who require data in order to develop, plan, monitor and evaluate national development priorities, and researchers, who require data to test and verify theories or assumptions, and the media, who play an important role in disseminating data to citizens across all corners of a country.

Technological developments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are 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 in user-friendly formats. 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 General Assembly as the official tool for monitoring progress against the Millennium Development Goals. Dissemination tools such as DevInfo should be tailor made to fit the specific requirements of data users.

The ongoing activities taking place in several countries in conjunction with the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, is a valuable opportunity to promote the importance of statistical data collection, analysis, dissemination and utilization. In a census, every resident of a country is counted, along with basic statistics about their housing and socio-economic condition. Progressive societies should use this opportunity to demonstrate to their people the valuable information that can be gleaned from such an exercise.

In bringing together statisticians (data producers) and policy makers (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:

- Governments are encouraged to implement monitoring systems for timely impact assessments of external shocks such as food and oil crisis, global financial crisis, natural disasters, including making use of innovative data collection, analysis, and dissemination methods
- The United Nations and other development actors are requested to support countries in building national capacities to timely collect, analyze, disseminate and use data to support evidence-based policy responses to external shock.
- technological innovations for data collection, transmission and dissemination
- participation of national authorities to encourage ownership and transparent documentation of methodologies for international estimation techniques and understanding, through a consultative process.
- policy impact analysis to feed back into cycle of policy making
- in some cases, sub-national planners should focus on outputs rather than outcomes; also due to methodological differences
- Coordination between Line Ministries, National Statistics Offices, and other relative intuitions

- support on effective and sustained capacity development on data analysis linked to policy planning
- strengthening the enabling environment for using data in evidence-based decision making
- support to institutionalize national Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks, including Managing for Development Results at national and sub-national levels in order to reinforce a cultural change towards evidence-based decision making
- Governments are encouraged to implement monitoring systems for timely impact assessment of such external shocks as food and oil crisis, global economic crisis and natural disasters, including by making use of innovative data collection, analysis and dissemination methods.
- The UN system and other development actors are requested to support countries in building their national capacity to timely collect, analyze, disseminate and use data to support evidence-based policy response to external shocks.

- TECHNICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Governments are encouraged to collect data on MDG indicators by multiple methods. For example, support for vital civil registration systems as well as survey/census systems and calculating measures of hunger using data using household income expenditure or living standards survey data.
- Value of using disaggregated data to identify geographic, socioeconomic and other forms of disparity. Explore potential for use of small area estimation techniques to obtain disaggregated data for measures of hunger, as well as poverty.
- As a country's population transitions from high mortality / high fertility to low mortality / low fertility, there will be profound effects on government expenditures and revenues
- Support for regular collection and public dissemination of labour market and employment data
- Recognition of linkages between all MDGs including MDG 8.

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 welcome the support of senior officials for this purpose.