ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Asia-Pacific STATISTICS WEEK 9-13 December 2024 Power of Data

SIAP Management Seminar on Agile Statistical Systems
Concept Note

Time and venue

Tuesday, 10 December 2024, 10:15-17:15 hours

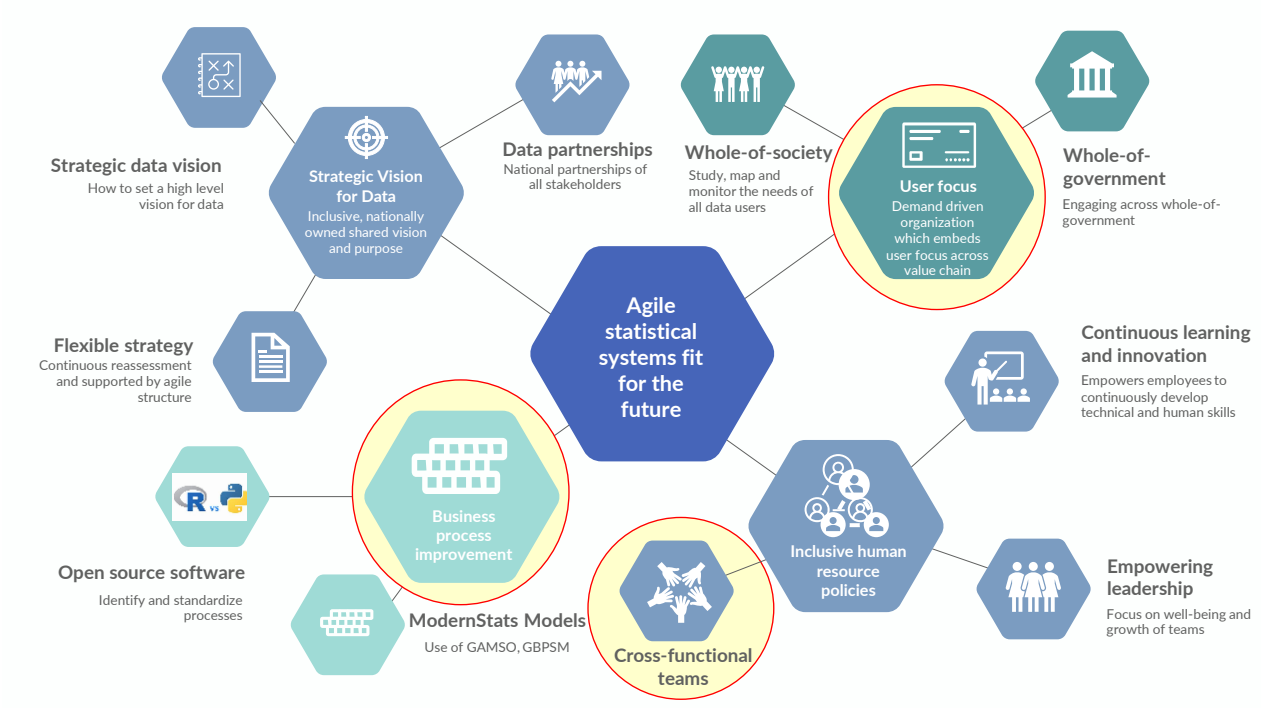
United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Meeting Room A

Background

In today's rapidly evolving world, driven by technological advancements, climate change, and pandemics, the demand for timely, granular, and high-quality data is surging. National statistical systems must adapt, becoming more agile and responsive to emerging demands. This seminar will delve into how statistical systems can become more agile.

The main topics covered in the ninth session of the Committee on Statistics are shown below. Three thematic areas have been identified that would benefit from further discussion at the level of chief statistician, shown in the circles.

Purpose and objective



The purpose of this seminar is to share lessons among chief statisticians on agile statistical systems, inspire deliberations by the Committee on Statistics on agenda item 3 on emerging issues: Agile

statistical systems that are fit for the future (ESCAP/CST(9)/3) and identify priorities going forward, including future work by the secretariat on the topic.

There are two key objectives for the management seminar:

- To identify examples of good practice on user focus, business process improvement, and cross-functional teams in statistical organizations; and
- To identify areas that would benefit from a regional approach.

Format

The management seminar will be split into three main sessions as below:

Time	**Topic Area**
10:15-10:30	Welcome messages
10:30-12:00	Session 1: User focus
12:00-13:15	LUNCH
13:15-15:00	Session 2: Business process improvement
15:00-15:15	COFFEE BREAK
15:15-16:30	Session 3: Cross-functional teams
16:30-17:00	Plenary and feedback
17:00-17:15	Summary and closing

Session 1: User focus

Session moderator: Rikke Munk Hansen, Chief, Economic and Environmental Statistics Section, Statistics Division, ESCAP

Only used statistics are good statistics; the reason for staying agile is to be able to continuously change and adjust to meet changing and evolving user demands.

User-focus is also a central element of the Power of Data initiative launched in September 2023 as one of the 12 High Impact Initiatives emanating from the SDG Summit held in September 2023. This emphasizes the role of national data partnerships that bring political and technical leaders together to establish a set of unified priorities.

User engagement is at the center of understanding and meeting user demand for statistics.

Outline

10:30-11:00 hours Kick-off talks

The session will start with inspirational talks from two chief statisticians of the region who have changed their statistical organization and system towards a greater user focus. The speakers will provide an overview of the vision or strategy behind the change and give examples of practical measures taken to make the change happen.

11:00-11:30 hours Table discussions

The presentation will be followed by table group discussion. Each table will choose a stakeholder group to consider and will spend 30 minutes developing strategies for how to engage with their stakeholder group. The focus will be on coming up with practical ways to engage each stakeholder group at all stages of the data value chain from the identification of issues and questions through to the collection and dissemination of data. This should include the use and reuse of data.

***Stakeholder groups to choose from**: Academic and research institutions; Central government agencies and ministries; Civil society and NGOs, such as youth and indigenous/ethnic groups; General public; International organizations; Local government and municipalities; Media and journalists; Politicians, parliamentarians and parliamentary committees; Private sector organizations; School children.*

***Table moderators**: Selected representatives from international organizations together with ESCAP staff.*

11:30-12:00 hours Sharing and voting

Each table group presents their top three ideas on a flipchart. Then all participants will vote to highlight solutions that appear to be the most promising.

Session 2: Business process improvement

Session moderator: Jan Smit, Regional Adviser on Official Statistics, ESCAP

Many definitions of agile organizations also include aspects of statistical infrastructure, recognizing the role technology and data play in supporting business process improvement. National statistical offices are increasingly using new tools, many of which are open source, including software such as R and Python and platforms such as .Stat Suite, Open SDG and PxWeb. The second session will consider these new tools and initiatives providing an opportunity to hear more about country experiences and to identify areas that would benefit from a regional approach.

Outline

13:15-13:45 hours Kick-off talks

The session will start with inspirational talks from two chief statisticians of the region who have instituted new and agile statistical business processes in their organization. The presenters will provide an overview of the vision or strategy behind the change and give examples of practical measures taken to make the change happen.

13:45-14:45 hours World café

The presentation will be followed by a world café to link country experiences to global and regional initiatives. Participants will circulate to another café table every 10 minutes.

14:45-15:00 Sharing by café table hosts

Each café table (moderator or host) will present three highlights from their table discussion to the plenary.

***Table moderators and presenters**: Each café table has one country representative with something to showcase. The country representative would present every time a new group arrives at the table (1-2 minutes) and moderate the café table discussion.*

Session 3: Cross-functional teams

Session moderator: Rachael Beaven, Director, Statistics Division, ESCAP

Traditional hierarchies can hinder the ability to respond swiftly to the evolving demand of an expanding data ecosystem and the growing needs for real-time, granular data. Cross-functional teams can enhance the agility, inclusiveness and resilience of statistical systems. Cross-functional teams can help to create a culture of collaboration and innovation bringing together staff with different skills and experience. This could be a full matrix organization such as in the Italian Statistical Office and would replace a traditional hierarchy or it could be the use of Sprint Groups that operate within the traditional hierarchy.

Outline

15:15-15:45 hours Kick-off talks

The session will start with inspirational talks from two chief statisticians of the region who are implementing matrix or other innovative management setups within a statistical office. The speakers will provide an overview of working arrangements and give practical examples of where and how the innovative arrangements facilitate collaboration and increase agility.

***Speakers**: Eng-Chuan Koh, Singapore [tbc], and YU Chung Keung, Hong Kong, China [tbc]*

15:45-16:15 hours Table discussions

The presentations will be followed by table group discussions. Each table will identify barriers to establishing cross-functional teams.

16:15-16:30 hours Plenary on addressing barriers

Each table group presents their top three barriers; this will be followed by a plenary discussion on how these could be addressed.

Plenary and feedback

Session moderator: Rikke Munk Hansen
16:30-16:45 hours Rapid reflections by international organizations

Representatives of international organizations will form a panel where each organization is invited to speak to the following question:

How would you – IN ONE MINUTE - summarize the ambitions and challenges voiced by countries in the Asia-Pacific region during today's Management Seminar?

16:45-17:00 hours Recommendations to the Committee on Statistics

Country representatives are invited to identify one topic they feel should feature in future regional collaboration to strengthen the agility of national statistical systems.

Representatives will write down their preferred topic on a color card and hand it in to the secretariat. The color cards will be placed on a board in the room and form the basis for the summary.

Summary and closing

Session moderator: Rachael Beaven

17:00-17:15

Rachael will summarize the recommendations on the board [color cards from previous session] into key messages to relay to the main Committee session as part of the introductory statement for agenda item 3.

Rachael will then hand over to Shailja Sharma, Director, SIAP, ESCAP, to formally close the seminar.