Workshop on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind: Regional Cooperation to Strengthen National Statistical Systems in Asia and the Pacific

Session 1: Monday 10th May 2021
Session 2: Tuesday 11th May
Session 3: Thursday 20th May
Online, via Microsoft Teams

Concept note

1. Background and rationale

Data is vital for good governance, policy development and monitoring, and follow-up and review processes for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Data contributes to inclusive development and poverty reduction, regulating the climate and are essential for a more sustainable future. In 2020, sufficient data to monitor progress with the 2030 Agenda was available for less than half of the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators in the Asia-Pacific region.

The 2030 Agenda agrees to support developing countries, particularly African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices and data systems to ensure access to high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data.

Although each country has a national statistical office, the strength and capacity of the offices varies widely across the five subregions in Asia and the Pacific. Responding to new and emerging data demands such as those arising from COVID-19 requires a strong and agile national statistical office. Strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices requires national policy support, resources and transformative actions that can be accelerated and amplified through regional collaboration and targeted intervention.


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Commencing in 2021, ESCAP is implementing several projects to support countries address four of the nine commitments contained in the Declaration. The commitments have been chosen for their relevance to the 2030 Agenda and COVID-19 socio-economic response as well as their current priority within the global statistical system:

- Commitment a: integration of statistics development with national development policies and plans
- Commitment b: development of national monitoring frameworks and indicator sets
- Commitment f: strengthening of legislative provisions and institutional mechanisms to enable national statistical systems to take advantage of new data, data sharing and innovative technologies
- Commitment h: advocacy for the expanded use of official statistics for evidence-based policymaking and transparent governance

The projects will build on the experience of ESCAP and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in supporting member States to strengthen national statistical systems and will leverage ESCAP’s membership of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) and lead role in the Asia-Pacific Regional Collaborative Platform Working Group on SDG Data and Statistics. Subregional organisations, particularly the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the ASEAN Secretariat, will also be partners.

The projects will engage national, regional and international experts to support countries developing their own capacity. The countries will each identify a commitment (or commitments) to focus on to effect sustained change. They will support each other to share experiences and lessons learned and lead regional dialogues at the conclusion of the projects to share their experiences and lessons with the wider Asia-Pacific statistical community.

The selection of target countries will be made in consultation with national chief statisticians and United Nations Resident Coordinators, encouraging alignment as much as possible with the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework priorities agreed between the United Nations and relevant national Governments.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the workshop are:

- To introduce and discuss progress with Asia-Pacific regional frameworks for strengthening national statistical systems
- To assess national priorities and development needs in relation to four prioritised commitments in the regional framework for strengthening national statistical systems known as the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind
- To gather information on country needs and potential activities in line with the national commitments of the Declaration

3. Participants

The workshop is designed for countries strengthening their national statistical systems in one or more of the following areas:

- **the integration of statistics development with national development policies and plans.**

  For example, countries currently reviewing existing national statistical development strategies or developing a new strategy and countries wishing to nurture engagement with users and improve investment in statistics including for disaster, climate change and gender-related policies.

- **the development of national monitoring frameworks and indicator sets.**

  For example, countries reviewing monitoring frameworks, countries wishing to nurture engagement with users or improve national planning and monitoring systems by developing a monitoring framework for a national policy such as a women’s economic empowerment policy or a sector plan such as tourism.

- **The strengthening of legislative provisions and institutional mechanisms to enable national statistical systems to take advance of new data, data sharing and innovative technologies.**

  For example, countries wishing to embrace big data for official statistics, countries currently reviewing legislation, countries engaging in data stewardship discussions, countries strengthening institutional arrangements across ministries such as national mapping ministries and countries modernising national data and metadata infrastructure.

- **Advocacy for the expanded use of official statistics for evidence-based policy making and transparent governance.**

  For example, countries addressing data gaps with the SDG indicator framework, countries contributing to their Government’s Voluntary National Reviews of progress towards the 2030 Agenda
Nations Country Teams, ECE, PARIS21 and the Pacific Community and ASEAN Secretariats.

ESCAP has been developing and testing a toolbox of resources to support strengthening of national statistical systems for the 2030 Agenda. The tools align with the priorities outlined in the regional *Collective Vision and Framework for Action* thus facilitating countries’ enactment of the commitments contained in the *Declaration*. To support the workshop, details of these tools will be circulated in advance of the workshop as background and to facilitate discussion on the way forward for follow up and planning purposes.

4. Workshop design and contents

The workshop will be online and feature presentations and discussion. The workshop will comprise three sessions of three hours each over the course of three weeks (3x3x3).

**Session 1**

Session 1 will be an introductory session covering the following topics:

- Overview of the *Declaration*
- Overview of tools and assistance available in relation to the four prioritised commitments in the *Declaration*
- Introduction to the new technical assistance projects available to countries to support the strengthening of national statistical systems
- Country presentations for strengthening national statistical system priorities and needs
- Discussion on purpose and preparations for session 2

**Session 2**

Session 2 will build on session 1 and more deliberatively consider each of the four prioritised commitments which are the focus of the new technical assistance projects available to countries. Countries will be invited to interact on each of the four commitments and learn more about the tools and technical assistance supports available. The session will focus on

- The four prioritised commitments and tools and assistance available to countries
- Objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities of a new technical assistance projects
- Country presentations on experiences and lessons learned from technical assistance projects
- Discussion on purpose and preparations for session 3

**Session 3**

Session 3 will be the final session of the workshop and aims to identify target countries, commitments from the *Declaration* countries wish to focus on and the tools available to support those choices, and commitment to support national implementation of the new technical assistance projects over the coming years. More specifically the session will focus on the following topics:
• Country interventions expressing interest to participate in the new technical assistance projects
• Further clarification, if needed, on the objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities of the new technical assistance projects
• Outcomes from the three sessions and agreement on next steps