

MONITORING THE PRODUCTION OF STATISTICAL INDICATORS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: TIMOR-LESTE COUNTRY STATEMENT

I. National and international development agendas

1. What role does statistics play in monitoring the achievement of your country's development programme?

Timor-Leste has a relatively immature national statistics system, but there is very strong Timor-Leste Government support to establish a credible, independent, national statistics office by 2015.

Recent years have seen major statistical achievements in Timor-Leste, including:

- conduct and dissemination of the living standards and monitoring survey in respect of 2007;
- demography and health survey in respect of 2009-2010;
- the successful conduct and dissemination of the 2010 census of population and housing;
- conduct and dissemination of the labour force survey in respect of 2009;
- commencement of an annual household income and expenditure survey, the first reference year being 2011;
- the conduct of the first ever business activity survey in respect of reference year 2010, the results of which are expected to be published in January 2012;
- compilation of complete production and expenditure-based national accounts estimates, in both current and constant prices, for the period 2000 to 2010, which are expected to be published also in January 2012.

The successful conduct of these activities has demonstrated the emerging capacity of the National Directorate of Statistics (NDS) to conduct large statistical projects on schedule and within budget. It must be recognized, however, that each of these activities has been oversighted, and technically back-stopped, by a development partner. It is doubtful that the NDS would have been able to successfully deliver on such activities without this support.

Within the context of the available statistics, the Timor-Leste Government is a very strong user of statistics. Quantitative targets have been set for a number of national development goals, based particularly on data available from the 2010 population census. The imminent publication of the national accounts and the business activity survey will represent a major milestone in informing on the national economy. The availability of these statistics is eagerly awaited by government, non-government organizations and the business sector.

2. Does the NSO provide/coordinate the statistics used for monitoring the above programmes? If not, who does?

All of the statistics cited in response to (1) above were compiled and published by the NDS, with support from development partners. The Timor-Leste data in respect of the Millenium Development Goal indicators are supplied by the relevant line ministries, based on the available data.

It is the Government's intention that an independent national statistics office should have a very strong statistical coordination function. This matter is currently under consideration in the context of proposed new statistics legislation for Timor-Leste.

II. International standards

1. Do you find international standards useful and do you try to apply them whenever possible? If not, please indicate why, and in which areas they are not being applied.

Yes. Timor-Leste will release a time series of national accounts statistics for the period 2000 to 2010 in January 2012. The series will be based on the *System of National Accounts 2008*, meaning that Timor-Leste will be one of a very small number of countries that compiles its national accounts in accordance with this revised standard. The first-ever business activity survey, conducted in respect of 2010, has used SNA data and units concepts and it adopted the International Standard Industrial Classification. The labour force survey used International Labour Organisation (ILO) standard concepts. The household income and expenditure survey also uses ILO standard concepts. The census of population and housing was based on United Nations recommendations for population censuses.

2. Do you have an effective way of coordinating and imposing standards for statistics within your own country?

The Timor-Leste Government is intending to enact new statistics legislation in the near future, which, among other things, will vest a strong coordination role with the national statistics office. In the meantime, there has been good cooperation between the NDS and the tax and customs authorities on statistical matters.

3. In what area would you like to have more standards developed?

None, at this stage. Given the relative immaturity of the national statistics system in Timor-Leste, the immediate priority is to expand the available range of statistics using standards that already exist.

4. Do you think the views of developing countries have been taken sufficiently into account in developing and agreeing on international statistical standards? If not, please suggest a mechanism for improvement.

Yes. Particularly through the auspices of the United Nations Statistics Division, developing countries do have the opportunity to express their views as standards are being developed.

The bigger issue is the implementation of the standards in developing countries, where often the support of development partners is necessary. It is noted that all of the key international statistical standards allow flexibility in implementation in countries, in accordance with national circumstances.

III. Microdata dissemination

1. Do you provide the following microdata sets?

1) Population censuses

2) *Household surveys*

3) *Establishment/enterprise surveys*

(if yes, specify)

No. Given the limited statistical capacity in Timor-Leste, the emphasis has been on disseminating the aggregate statistics and having them used in policy making and for other analytical purposes.

The new statistics law will be framed in such a way as to legally enable release of unidentifiable microdata sets. That law will need to be complemented with detailed policies and procedures. That said, it can be expected that, for the foreseeable future, release of microdata sets will continue to be of a relatively lower priority.

2. *What kind of disclosure control do you employ?*

As noted above, no microdata sets are released in Timor-Leste. Aggregate statistics are vetted before release to ensure that the activities of individual persons, households or businesses cannot be discerned from the statistics.

3. *Do you have a microdata dissemination policy?*

Yes, in the sense that there is no release of microdata sets. Timor-Leste does not currently have the statistical capacity to facilitate such releases and the higher priority has been to expand the range of available aggregate statistics and to have them used for policy and other purposes.