

40th Anniversary of SIAP, Tokyo, Japan, 31 August - September 2010
Rebuilding and Strengthening Cambodian Statistical System
in the last two decades

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I. Short History and Background

In the modern period statistical activities began when Cambodia was a French protectorate 1863-1953, however it was only in 1948 that a separate department titled the Statistics Department of Cambodia was formally established as a central statistics office. Since then, the Department has undergone many transformations due to political, economic and social circumstances. Its name, role and activities have changed from time to time. Between 1948 and 1953 it was titled the Statistics Department of Cambodia and from 1953 to 1963 it was named the Department of Statistics and Economic Study and from 1963 to 1975 it was known as the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Research under the Ministry of Planning. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Statistical System in Cambodia had been comparable to those that obtained in small developing economies.

The statistical system had deteriorated in the early 1970s and was dismantled in 1975-1979 in the Khmer Rouge Regime and it was re-established only in 1979. During this period the qualified statisticians and statistical cadres have either died or left the country. The Statistics work came to a complete stop in 1975 to 1979. After the Khmer Rouge Regime, the DOS restarted with new building with 21 young staff in 1979. Cambodia needs to rebuild everything from scratch.

From 1979 to 1981 DOS was under the Ministry of Finance and it was assigned to the Ministry of Planning (MOP) in 1981 under which it continued to function. Since 1979, Cambodia had adopted a decentralized statistical structure. The statistical programmes are administered and operated under the authority of separate government ministries. The statistical system is constituted of the Department of Statistics (DOS) as the central statistics office located under the Ministry of Planning(MOP), with statistical bureaus and sections within planning and statistics departments in ministries, and statistical bureaus in the planning and statistics services in the provinces and districts.

The decentralized statistical units in ministries and departments collected and compiled statistics through periodic reports obtained from enterprises and institutions, and by processing administrative records. DOS was upgraded to NIS in 1994 and its staff strengthened and its functional responsibilities enlarged from one of compiling data compiled by decentralized offices to one of collecting primary data through the development and implementation of household and establishment survey systems and conduct of census operations.

Cambodian Statistical System benefits from the projects on Statistical System Development in Cambodia financed by ADB/UNDP since 1992. This was the first Statistics project in Cambodia after Khmer Rouge. In 1992 when DOS started the first project of ADB and UNDP, its staff strength was around 40 staff at central level and 450 staff at local level (provinces and districts). Now and next year, the significant donors to NIS Cambodia are Japan (Government of Japan and JICA), SIDA and UNFPA. Other donors include

UNICEF, USAID. UNSD provided active participation of NIS staff in international workshop and seminars. At the regional level, ESCAP and SIAP play important role in training of NIS staff. ASEAN will also strengthen ASEAN Framework of Cooperation in Statistics (2010-2015).

In Cambodia, according to the Statistics Law enacted in May 2005, the NIS is the Directorate General of the Ministry of Planning but the technical independence is ensured by statistical legislation. Functioning of the National Statistical System (NSS) has been fully effected in January 2007 by sub-decree on Organization and Functioning of NSS: The Statistics Advisory Council (SAC) and Statistical Coordination Committee (SCC) was established. The Statistics Master Plan (SMP) 2008-2015 was approved by SAC in April 2007. Cambodia participated in the GDDS of IMF since 2001. The Sub-decree on establishment of 3 new Departments of NIS, MOP in force on 11 June 2009. The Sub-decree on Economic Census 2011 in force on 26 August 2009. The Sub-decree on Designated Official Statistics in force on 19 July 2010. NIS has opened policies, NIS website launched in December 2000 and expanded from time to time. NIS disseminates its products to users in various forms including on line dissemination especially 2008 population census and through Data Users Service Center (DUSC), opened to public and mobile teams for dissemination of important products (censuses, CDHS, CAMInfo) to provinces.

II. Achievements of NIS in the past two decades

Cambodia statistical infrastructure and capacity were very weak in the early 1990s after 2 decades of war and internal strife. Starting from 1992, the quality and coverage of economic and socio-demographic statistics have gradually improved. A significant number of donor-led data collection and compilation activities have been undertaken since the country was opened in 1992. Development partners provided significant support to Royal Government of Cambodia enable NIS to rebuild and strengthen Statistics in Cambodia to achieve good results.

The ADB, after a decade of technical assistance, discontinued its support in 2003. The collection of prices in five provinces for the CPI (Consumer Price Index) was started with assistance from ADB but NIS continued to collect these data by Government budget. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have provided extensive support on capacity building and data collections for macro economic and industrial statistics. The Cambodia Socio-Economic Surveys of Cambodia were conducted in 1993/1994 and 1996 with ADB assistance, and in 1997, 1999, and in 2003/04 with UNDP/Sida funding and World Bank execution. Establishment surveys were carried out in 1993, 1995 and 2000 with support received from ADB. Since ADB ended the assistance, JICA assisted in this area starting from establishment listing in Phnom Penh, then expanded to major provinces and the whole country later on.

In January 2001, Cambodia adopted the General Data Dissemination Standards (GDDS) framework on core economic and social statistics, and has commenced implementation of these standards, in order to expand and improve these statistics.

JICA project “Improving Official Statistics in Cambodia started in August 2005 and focused in Phase 1 (August 2005-March 2007) on providing training to about 600

statistical personnel of NIS, line ministries and provinces. Phase 2 (from April 2007 to March 2008) mainly assisted in the preparation of the General Population Census of Cambodia 2008, which was successfully conducted on 3 March 2008. The Government of Japan provided one new building to NIS in 2008. In the same period, the technical assistance was also provided for the establishment survey and 2009 nation-wide establishment listing. With the support of UNFPA and JICA, the NIS has completed dissemination of final results at both national and provincial level, prepared provincial reports (24 provinces), in dept analysis reports (14 topics) and conducted national and regional trainings on the population database. Phase 2 is scheduled to terminate in the end of September 2010 and Phase 3 will continue until 2015.

The SIDA project started in 2006 and lasted 3 years for the first phase. It focused on continuous households survey, IT strengthening and subject matter analyses. The results will be used greatly for the national accounts and monitoring the NSDP. Sida project phase 2 (2009-2011) supported annual Socio-Economic Survey and the CSES 2009- a large scale survey round every five years was successfully conducted and will be released at World Statistics Day 20-10-2010. Sida project supports also on the areas of coordination, human resource development, developing statistical standards and methodologies, writing statistical subject matter reports, strengthening capacity in specific areas: CPI, household income and expenditure and national accounts, NIS website, database development and use SuperCross as a tool for data analysis of CSES.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provided primary support for the 1996 Demographic Survey, the 1998 Population Census, the 2000 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS), the 2004 CIPS and the 2008 Population Census together with JICA, Government of Japan, German Government. The UNFPA, sharing with JICA, supported to the population census 2008 in-dept analyses and dissemination of population database and in-dept analysis reports.

USAID, UNFPA, UNICEF, DFID/ADB and CDC/GAP financed rounds of the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) in 2000 and 2005. The CDHS 2010 is being supported by UNFPA, USAID, UNICEF and JICA. CDHS is implemented with cooperation between NIS/MOP and MoH.

CAMInfo was used to disseminate data and to monitor the progress of CMDG since 2003 and is supported by UNICEF.

III. Some prerequisites of Statistics

A. Legal and Institutional Environment

The Statistics Law was enacted in May 2005, the two Sub-decree on Organization and Functioning of the National Statistical System and Sub-decree on designated official statistics are now in force so that the legislation is fully enforced especially for the coordination of the NSS. The Sub- decree on establishment of 3 new Departments of NIS, MOP in force on 11 June 2009. It is the basis for the present reorganization of NIS. This will allow NIS more power and responsibility to do more analyses e.g. poverty analyses, to strengthen national accounts and prices as well as statistical methodology. The Sub-decree on Economic Census 2011 in force on 26 August 2009 is the necessary legislation to conduct the Economic Census.

Policies on dissemination has been strengthened to serve the users especially those who involved directly in the preparation and monitoring of NSDP and Cambodian MDG.

Efforts have been made relating to implementation of legislation in terms of ensuring data confidentiality and greater cooperation from survey respondents. In Cambodia, the response rates from the household surveys are high: more than 95% and for establishment survey in 2010 for big establishments only 78% and for small and medium establishments almost 100%. These rates for establishments have increased after the enforcement of statistics legislation in 2005. The online dissemination for important products of the 2008 population census (Win R+) using CELADE and CAMInfo received support from users inside and outside the country.

The Statistics Advisory Council (SAC) had only 2 meetings especially to approve the Statistics Master Plan (SMP). The next meeting of SAC (Senior Minister of Planning is Chairman of SAC with Secretaries of State of line ministries, members) will invite also donors to discuss the funding of designated official statistics of the whole Government. The Statistics Coordination Committee (SCC) had 5 meetings especially to prepare SMP and to discuss the implementation of sub-decree on designated official statistics. The next meeting of SCC will discuss, among other things, the inventory of existing surveys including costing to submit to the Government as well as templates that designated statistics units must send data and metadata to NIS. In the long run, the Statistics Clearing House has to be established. In this sense, the Statistical System of Cambodia is moving to a partly centralized system.

B. Resources

The staff level of NIS central has increased considerably to 310 staff at central level and reduced to 315 at the local offices. The salaries of statistical staff have increased by 20% every year since 2004. In addition, staff working in cooperation projects with development partners can receive priority operating costs ranging from 150US\$ to 300US\$ from respective donors. Besides, there have been significant increases in TA and financing provided to NIS by Government of Japan, JICA, UNFPA, SIDA Sweden, UNICEF, USAID and other donors described above. As mentioned in Statistics Master Plan 2008-2015 the financing from the RGC will be significant, if not fully, in 2015.

The Statistical Master Plan (SMP) sets out a longer term, prioritized plan for Cambodia's national statistical system (NSS). It covers the whole of the NSS including the National Institute of Statistics (NIS), statistical units in line ministries and the National Bank of Cambodia. The Statistical Master Plan provides the strategic long term view and longer term financing plan needed for planning statistical activities. NIS need to do mid-term review of the SMP late 2011.

The number of staff has increased particularly at central level and the budget has reached 6 million US\$ in 2010 (2011 is the Economic Census year). The Government budget for NIS increased from 0.25 million US\$ in 1999 to 2.1 million US\$ in 2010 (including local offices, statistical bureaus) . Donors budget for NIS increased from 0.7 million US\$ to 4.0 million US\$ including consultancies during the same period. The NIS has a total staff strength of 310 at central level and 315 staff at local offices (provinces and districts) in 2010.

IV. Challenges

1. The financing of statistical activities still relied significantly on external sources, especially for the operations of censuses and big surveys. However, the Government has increased the funding for statistics for the recent years at a higher rates

especially to increase staff levels, salaries and infrastructure (cars, buildings at local offices, computers for central and local level, etc.).

2. The strengthening of local offices is necessary to serve the requirements of statistical data at sub-national level. Our local offices are weak after the shift from centrally planned economy to the free market economy. NIS/MOP still have many statistical staff at the local offices but they need more statistical work, training and equipment to be able to work in new environment. The Phase 3 of JICA project will address these issues.

3. Agricultural census: Cambodia has conducted successfully the population censuses in 1998 and 2008. We will conduct economic census in 2011. We have plan to conduct agriculture census in 2012, but no commitment of funding yet. However, the Government has plan to strengthen agriculture sector, especially to promote rice export in the future since we have potential in this sector. Hence, the agriculture census will be realistic in the near future.

VI. Lessons learnt

- The policies “outward look policies” were successful in case of Cambodia for rebuilding the statistical capacity because of the openness of the statistical system which allow consultants do first in very sophisticated statistical methods and then the transfer of knowledge took place.

- Improving the integration of National Statistical System in the region and in the world by participating actively in international workshops, meetings, study tours overseas and in various short term, medium term and long term training. The knowledge creation occurred subsequently.

- The strengthening of statistical legislation as statistical prerequisites works well.

- Increase the credibility of NIS, improve the quality of official statistics released.

- Increase the commitment of Government in financing the statistical capacity.

- The most efficient and organized way to develop the National Statistical System is the Statistics Master Plan.

- Using population census to strengthen further the National Statistical System.

VII. Future directions

The Sub-decree on Designated Official Statistics need to be implemented fully and without delay. This sub-decree allows also create new designated statistics units as necessary by Sub-decree. As example of this, a Sub-decree on collection and compilation of labour market information that is now being discussed at Council of Ministers.

A number of statistics units do not have adequate staffing levels to effectively coordinate, collect, compile, analyze and disseminate statistics. Some ministries do not have adequate number of trained statistical staff. Staffing levels need to be improved in order to handle ongoing statistical activities and to develop the outputs to meet priority emerging needs. We need to strengthen statistical coordination through Statistical Advisory Council (SAC), Statistics Coordination Committee (SCC), Statistical technical Working Group (STWG) and SMP and continue regular meetings of SCC and SAC.

Developing and implementing an improving national data dissemination policies for official statistics is another high priority project.

CAMInfo need to be continued and strengthened.

There is also considerable scope to improve buildings, equipment, facilities, and technology infrastructure, especially for NIS provincial and district offices and in establishing new RGC statistics units. Office space for statistics units need to be improved to provide good physical security and there are needs to be fully protected computer facilities and procedures. Office furniture and equipment (desks, chairs, filing cabinets, computers and related equipment, software, telephones, etc.) need to be adequate to perform required statistical tasks.

Improving institutional capacity development at local offices is one of the target of future JICA project. Preparation with JICA for Economic Census 2011 is underway. Phase 3 of the project will start from October 1, 2010 to March 31, 2015 and will support the Economic Census 2011, improving capacity of statistical staff in NIS and provincial planning departments to analyze population census and economic census e.g. small area statistics as well as to conduct inter-censal population survey, economic survey and other statistical activities.

SIDA project will continue annual Cambodia Socio Economic Survey (CSES), strengthen subject matter analysis, poverty, statistical methodology, human resource development and statistical coordination.

UNFPA will assist, among other things, in the next inter-censal population survey 2013 with JICA and the CDHS 2015.

NIS needs to mobilize resources for agriculture census 2012. It urgently needs to conduct agriculture census. The censuses are critical as they have never been conducted in Cambodia, and this lack of benchmark data has significant implications for the accuracy of GDP levels estimates in current prices. Similarly, the lack of producer and trade price indices brings into question the quality of GDP constant price estimates.

These are mentioned in the Sub-decree on designated official statistics that we need to conduct in the future.

The NIS was moving from a decentralized statistical system to a partly centralized statistical system by conducting all censuses and important, basic statistical surveys. In the Sub-decree on designated official statistics the workload of NIS is significant and a clearing house of statistical activities is ultimately planned for the long term.

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