

Prepared for the Ninth Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and Pacific, 31 August – 2 September, 2010, Tokyo, Japan

Mongolia: Country paper

“Developing Professional Capability for National Statistical Systems”

1. Background

In this globalized world where there have been exceptionally rapid changes and reforms in economies and societies, national statistical offices have to take much responsibility for identifying trends in development of countries and efficiently providing users with necessary information and data. For Mongolia, these obligations are becoming much important for us.

Statistics, the mirror of development of a country, has to objectively and expeditiously look into changes in and phenomena of the economy and the society in response to growing data needs of users. In other words, official statistics need to be updated and augmented frequently by reliable, objective, and timely data which meets user needs in response to emerging changes in social and economic life of a country rather than by a few number of data and indicators produced in conventional formats.

2. Mongolian National Statistical System

Following the standard practice of regulating statistical activities through a special law in developed economies, the work to develop the draft of the Law on Statistics commenced in Mongolia in 1991. In 1994, the State Great Khural passed the Law on Statistics of Mongolia, which was an act of great significance for creating a favorable legal environment to allow for transparency and professionalism of statistical activities in Mongolia.

According to provision 2 of Article 11 of Chapter 4 of the Mongolian Law on Statistics, the structure of the statistical organization in Mongolia comprises an independent, centralized national statistics office with a statistics department in the capital city and divisions under the supervision of the Governors of provinces and districts in the capital city. Statistical activities are managed at sub-provincial level by deputy governors or administration staff, and at bag or khoroo level (the smallest administrative level inferior to sub-provinces) by their governors. The National Statistical Office is defined as a state institution which reports to and is supervised by the State Ikh Khural, the national Parliament.

The NSO is authorized to perform a total of 26 main tasks including provision of integrated professional management and coordination in overall national statistics activities, development of data collection methodology, rules, classification and

standards, improvement of scientific bases, analyses and inferences on collected data, production estimates and models using long and mid-term economic and social indicators. The NSO is responsible for ensuring that the statistical information and data by the Government, its ministries and agencies do not overlap and duplicate with the official statistics, ensures the integrity of methodological support, approves and endorses indicators, methodologies and procedures, and evaluates the coverage and accuracy of statistical information.

The NSO, as provided in the statistical law of Mongolia, is responsible for disseminating statistical information and data and results of surveys; ensuring transparency of statistics; providing statistical information to government organizations free of charge; actively participating in events organized by foreign countries or international statistical or other specialized organizations; establishing cooperation with them to the extent provided in Mongolian laws and multilateral treaties; and sending them statistical information regarding the country's economy and society. To ensure these tasks to be achieved, it collects 74 statistical data from each aimag (province) and the capital city, and 173 from government ministries and agencies on annual, quarterly, and monthly bases.

As of 2009, there are 227 members of staff working in the national statistical system. Out of this, 92 are working at the NSO Headquarters and 135 are in municipal statistics department, and district and regional statistical divisions. Of the total employees, 14.1 percent have worked for more than 26 years in the civil service while 58.8 percent have worked for 10 years. Of the total staff in the statistical system, 81.9 percent have bachelor degrees, 13.7 percent master degrees, and 2.6 percent doctoral degrees.

120 officers in 11 government ministries and agencies are also in charge of statistical reports in their respective areas.

The development of official statistics service in Mongolia has been consistent with the country's overall social and economic development. Reforms and changes in the statistics organization of Mongolia aim at the following important goals:

- To conform statistical information to international standards;
- To introduce advanced techniques and technologies in statistics services and create national standards;
- To conduct a management reform to develop and enhance professional cadre and human resources capacities; and
- To expand bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistical services.

Development of official statistics will necessitate full introduction of the National Accounts System in the nearest years, enhancing the quality of data and information surveys, attaining international standards in data processing system and implementing reforms at the statistical organization.

3. Enhancement of the capability of human resources of the Mongolian national statistical system

We are aiming to increase efficiency of our activities by confirming achievements and success in the national statistical system; to make available a wide range of economic and social data meeting user needs by paying special attention to enhancing quality and accuracy of primary data and improving coordination between official and administrative statistics; and to timely provide users with data showing objectively the situation of the economy and the society of the country.

Therefore, we, the National Statistical Office, are paying great attention to developing our official statistics system and strengthening the capacity of the national statistical system. To achieve the above-mentioned goals, the NSO is closely collaborating with many international organizations such as the United Nations and its specialized organizations, and the IMF, the ADB, the WB, the WHO, and the ILO. The SIAP is one of the organizations with which we have close collaboration.

The National Statistical Office of Mongolia (MNSO) has actively been cooperating with the SIAP since 1990. The SIAP has been playing an important role in enhancing capability of staff in the Mongolian national statistical system by regularly involving MNSO officials in its TMA-based courses, regional and sub-regional training courses, management seminars, and outreach training programmes.

The training courses, workshops, and seminars provided by the SIAP have made tremendous contributions to enhancement of the capability of staff members in the national statistical system, improvement of our statistical methods and their scientific basis, development of analytical capacity of our officers, and further improvement of coverage of censuses, surveys, analyses, and data disseminated to users.

Since 1990, over 80 officials (with double counting) from the NSO have attended short and long term training courses organized by the SIAP for statisticians in official statistics.

In particular, 48 officials from the NSO participated in four TMA-based courses, namely the Group Training Course in Modules on Core Official Statistics, the Group Training Course in Application of Information and Communications Technology to Statistical Process, the Group Training Course in Analysis, Interpretation and Dissemination of Official Statistics, and the Research-based Regional Training Courses, and 31 officials from the NSO attended other training courses such as Poverty Measurement, Sampling Designs for Household and Enterprise Surveys, and Integrated Economic Accounts.

The NSO officials, who participated in the training courses, have been taking part in numerous exercises such as introduction of international standards and methodologies into Mongolian economic statistics, national accounts, and population statistics,

preparation and development of the country-specific new methodologies, generation of internationally-comparable data, and implementation of the SNA and conduct of censuses and surveys in economic and social statistics to ensure the implementation of the SNA.

Over the last 20 years the SIAP has been making invaluable contributions to the development of the national statistical system of Mongolia by enhancing knowledge and capability of the NSO staff members.

In particular, many persons amongst the participants of the SIAP continued enhancing their knowledge and skills and earned master and doctoral degrees, and have productively been working and holding high-level positions in the central and regional statistical offices, government and international organizations, foreign organizations abroad.

The SIAP not only involves its participants in its training courses, but also supports them to increase their knowledge and capability by having close contact with them, sending latest statistical publications, and even rendering assistance to them in undertaking graduate studies in their professional areas in foreign countries.

4. Pressing issues

The most pressing issues facing developing and low-income countries are to improve their statistical coordination and build their statistical capacity. To this end, it is necessary for national statistical offices to involve not only data producers, but users of statistics in the exercises; improve their knowledge of statistical methods and application of IT; strive to be a learner/innovator; enhance their staff's capability to make analyses to meet the growing data demands of users; and strengthen communication between data users and data producers/respondents which requires better understanding and identification of user needs from data producers, well users' awareness of statistics, sound application of IT advances, strengthening of equipment and technological capacity of regional/local statistical offices and narrowing of technological gap between central and regional statistical offices, introduction of cost-effective and efficient technological advances in data collection, processing, and dissemination processes, improvement of data availability and services, and creation of a complex information system meeting international standards. In addition, it is needed to improve the ways and forms to disseminate data.

Here we identify some gateways to the pressing issues. They are:

- Consider the enhancement of analytical skills of regional statistical officers as one of priorities to develop the statistics;
- Improve data availability and develop the ways to disseminate data;
- Meet increasing demands for data;

- Support other data producers (including NGOs) and encourage them to use same concepts and definitions at the national level; in case that they do not employ same concepts and definitions, advise them to provide data sources, concepts, definitions, and methods they used; and
- Raise politicians' awareness on the strength of being independent for the national statistical offices.

At the same time, we have commenced undertaking some exercises in the following areas towards enhancing the capacity of our human resources at the national level.

a/ on-the job training;

b/ increase of foreign language knowledge and skills of the staff and support of their interests in further studying and improving their education;

c/ collaboration with academic and research institutions, inter alia, the National University of Mongolia;

d/ conduct of examinations aimed at testing theoretical and methodological knowledge of the staff in conjunction with the National University of Mongolia to identify needs for necessary knowledge and skills on the working place and thereby enhance the professional capability of the staff; and

e/ assessment of capability of staff members in regional statistical offices for define their special needs.

National Statistical Office of Mongolia