

**Ninth Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical
Offices in the Asia and the Pacific Region- 31 August – 2
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Country Paper

Bhutan

I. Recruitment

- 1. Do the recruited staff possess the professional skills generally needed by NSO? Or is significant additional training required? Which skill area is the greatest ongoing problem?**

Most staff join the NSO fresh after completing their degree courses and have only theoretical knowledge and therefore they need a lot of training, both on-job and in training programs. The biggest problem is the subject matter skills e.g. poverty.

- 2. Do you use or have used any special strategies for recruitment to ensure new staff have required skills? Please list the strategies and indicate which ones are successful and which ones have not been successful and why?**

A few years ago there were hardly anyone opting to go for statistical courses because the entry level into the civil service for statistical graduates was the same with a graduate in general course. The engineers, doctors, agriculturist etc. had an advantage of one grade when entering the civil service. With the granting of equal entry level for statisticians to that of engineers and doctors, we have now a good number of qualified students opting for statistics degree.

- 3. Have you worked closely with universities to ensure graduate programs meet the skills needs of NSO? Please briefly describe any arrangement.**

No, we do not have statistics course taught in the country.

II Development

- 4. Do your NSO have staff development plan that is linked to goals and objectives of the long-term strategic plan or National Strategy for Development of Statistics?**

Yes, we have recently developed a NSDS wherein the Human Resource Development has been incorporated.

- 5. How does your NSO integrate the need of professional development of individual employees into the long term plan?**

We basically have the list of the employees and their academic qualifications and training background and the division/section they are currently working in. We also assess the data situation – available data, data gaps and future data needs. We then try to identify the capacity development needs of each individual based on their area of work and the responsibility they shoulder.

6. How does your organization identify the need for professional capability building of each individual employee?

Please refer above in no. 5.

7. What are the main means used for development of professional skills of staff? Which means are considered to be the most effective and why? Which means are considered to be the least effective and why?

We have found that all types of training are useful and effective particularly when given appropriately, depending on their education and training background, their experience and skills. Also, individuals should be made to apply their new gained knowledge after they return to office.

8. How does your organization select employees to participate in training or other capacity building activities, especially funded by international organizations?

We have a HRD Committee with the Head of the NSO as the Chairperson. When we receive an invitation for a training/workshop the Committee meets and the Head of the Division, for which the training is relevant, proposes a candidate. The committee also reviews the proposal based on the job responsibility of the person, past training etc. and then decides the outcome.

9. What performance measures does your organization use to assess the effectiveness of capacity building efforts? Please describe the key indicators that you found useful in measuring the success of capacity building initiatives supported by your NSO or by others.

We do have, as required by the Civil Service rules and regulations, performance evaluation every six monthly for every staff but we do not have particularly for measuring capacity building efforts.

III. Organizational Strategies

10. Are there special career paths for professional staff? Please describe the arrangements

Yes. The civil service system is based on the Position Classification System, whereby civil servants at the senior levels are categorized into Executives and Professionals. People from both the categories can rise to the position of a government Secretary level. Also there is a banding system at the lower levels for lower levels of the staff to progress in their career.

11. How does your NSO determine the professional skills its employees need in order to meet current, emerging and future statistical information requirements?

Please refer to no. 5 above.

12. Are competencies for various positions spelt out and do incentives exist for staff to obtain new competencies? Please describe the arrangements, if yes.

Yes. Besides the basic qualifications, competencies and work experiences are spelt out in each position level. Therefore in order to enter a particular level of position one needs to meet the requirements in that level. Besides the in-service training through the government and the developing partners/ international agencies, the civil service rules allows a person to pursue higher academic qualifications related to ones work by taking study leave. The duration of the leave is dependent on duration it takes to complete the course or the degree. The study leave is with full salary.

13. Is staff membership of professional associations encouraged? Is there active NSO participation?

Yes, we would welcome staff to join professional groups/bodies/organizations. No, we do not have active participation at present.

14. Have decisions on organizational and job structure been made to address capability? Please provide details, if yes.

Yes. Bhutan is a small country with relatively a small system of government. Having independent statistical offices in various ministries and departments is not a very good idea. As it is, even in a small system like ours, we are already facing problems of coordination, leading to problems in standards and methodology leading to data duplications and inconsistencies etc. Also, many of the organizations have only one or two statistical persons who cannot handle all the jobs required while conducting surveys – e.g. data processing, where it requires a team with different expertise. Also, being a small country, there has been several instances where enumerators from different surveys have clashed visiting a sampled household.

Recently, the NSB has submitted a proposal to the Cabinet, as per stated in the NSDS, to reorganize the statistical system in the country for partial centralization. Under the proposal which has been approved, all statistical staff will be accountable to the NSB for all HRD functions in terms of appointment, transfers and promotions. All nationwide surveys will be coordinated with the NSB by drawing up annual statistical plans. All data processing will be done at the NSB

by strengthening the present capacity of the NSB's Data Processing Section and making it into the national data processing centre.

15. Does the range of work available in the organization attract and retain qualified staff?

Yes, besides the regular statistical data production and compilation activities, we have also initiated a research and analysis division within the NSB which is also attracting people from other agencies to join our office. However, the reality is that we tend to lose people when jobs with much higher salaries are offered elsewhere.

16. Is there a formal regular program for particular categories of staff to broaden their knowledge and skills?

No, we do not have a regular program. We depend entirely on programs offered by international institutes and donor funded trainings.

17. Are professional skills obtained regularly by contracting in staff or contracting out work?

We do not have a regular system as such but skills are obtained from on the job trainings provided by experts hired by the office to do some work e.g poverty analysis.

IV Other

18. Have developments in IT made the development and maintenance of the capability of national statistical services easier or more challenging? How?

Development in IT has definitely made the capability of the national statistical services easier in terms of efficiency and effectiveness e.g easier data collection and transfers and also in the timely production of results. However, there are also problems related to IT in statistical services e.g Different use of softwares leading to incompatibility and hence making sharing of data/information difficult.

19. Are the professional requirements of NSO acknowledged in your government? Or is there no special recognition and allocation of staff occurs without consideration of the professional capability of the NSO?

The government has quite recently recognized the professional requirements of the NSO and has full support in helping to develop the capability of the staff, particularly for sending them for higher studies.

V. Capability of National Statistical Services

20. What is the general level of professional capability of the national statistical services as a whole compared with that of the NSO? Lower, the same or higher?

The capability of the national statistical services has in the last few years has improved with placement of qualified university graduates in the various organizations. The situation is, however, far from satisfactory as almost all are facing severe shortage of staff. In fact some of the organizations have only a single person looking after the statistical needs. Most organizations rely on the NSB to support them technically.

21. Does the NSO or some other government body have strategies for developing the professional capability of the national statistical service?

No, there is no comprehensive strategy in place. With the recent approval of the government for all government statistical personnel to be accountable in HRD functions, we intend to build such a strategy in the future.

22. Which professional capabilities are the most challenging to develop and maintain?

For us developing professional capabilities is itself a major problem as funds for higher studies is hard to come by from the government and also most donors do not provide funds for long-term studies. Without proper qualifications it is difficult to develop professionals and hence we have to rely on outside experts most of the time.

Part B.

Please provide details of one or two strategies that have been used with the aim of improving or maintaining professional capability. In doing so please place an emphasis on what worked or did not work and why?

Shortage of capacity or capability is one of the major drawbacks in the statistical system in the country. Although the system is, in recent years, receiving an increasing number of university graduates in statistics, they are mostly young and inexperienced and lack confidence. One of the strategies to build their capability was to train them practically on the job. After having some experience in their job we arrange to sent them, through donor assistance, on an apprenticeship course to some other statistical system – the NSO Philippines. Besides gaining knowledge

and enhancing their capabilities, the exposure and the confidence they gain adds a lot of value to their working attitude.

Many a times we try to cut costs and increase participation by conducting in-country training courses, which makes a lot of sense in terms of savings and larger number of people trained with less resources. However, we have learned that staff who train outside the country with people from other countries, doing similar jobs, gain better confidence in their work and also tend to take more initiatives at work. Also, with easy communication facilities, many keep in touch and exchange views about their work.

Another strategy that we have used to develop the capability is to keep a training component whenever we hire a consultant or an expert either from within the country or from outside for a work, e.g. poverty analysis, so that transfer of knowledge takes place. This also allows us to continue and also provide explanation to queries of data users on the subject even after the expert leaves. The strategy is to first, before the consultancy begins, train the counterpart staff and then work together. This allows better understanding and easier grasping of the subject and methodologies applied in the process. Also, keep or make sure the trained persons remains on the same job for sometime so that they pass on the knowledge to younger and junior staff.