

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

*DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITY  
FOR NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEMS*

By

The Department of Statistics, Malaysia

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents strategies undertaken by the Department of Statistics, Malaysia (DOSM) in planning, developing and sustaining the professional capabilities in the National Statistical Systems. These strategies are needed to enable the statisticians to produce high quality statistics in a cost-effective and timely manner.

DOSM is the main government agency entrusted with the responsibility to collect, interpret and disseminate the most up to-date statistics for the purpose of monitoring national economic performances as well as social development. Since its inception, DOSM discharges its duties in accordance to the Statistics Act 1965 (Revised 1989).

As of May 2010, DOSM has a total number workforce of 3,148 persons, comprising of 356 professionals and 2,792 supporting staff. The increase in the number from 2,289 persons in year 2006, emphasized the Government's recognition towards statistical service. To remain relevant, DOSM must continue to strive to produce high quality statistics which are cost-effective and in timely manner. Thus, DOSM embarks on a strategic programme that relates to capacity building.

## 2. PART A

### 2.1 RECRUITMENT

Generally, the recruitment of personnel into the government services is subject to the rules and regulations of the Public Service Commission of Malaysia under Article 144 (1) of the Federal Constitution.

Within the Statistical Scheme, the posts of the statistician are offered to those who graduated in the field of Statistics, Mathematics or Economics.

These new intakes are then required to attend an Orientation programme during their first year in service to familiarize themselves with the roles and functions of the Department. In addition, they are also required to attend an Induction Course – an introductory course that introduces them to the work procedures, rules and regulations within the civil service. Furthermore, they are required to undergo compulsory courses during their first three years in the statistical services to better equip themselves with the knowledge needed to perform their tasks and responsibilities.

The Department also works collaboratively with universities and colleges. The students of these universities and colleges from the schools of Statistics, Economics and Mathematics are given the opportunity to attend a practical hands-on training in the department for a duration of between 2 weeks to 3 months.

## 2.2 DEVELOPMENT

DOSM aspires to be a leading statistical organization internationally by the year 2020. As the main producer of national statistics, DOSM realizes its role in providing statistical services of international standards through its vision and mission.

In meeting its vision and mission, the strategies are outlined in a Five-Year Corporate Plan. The first Corporate Plan commenced in 1988. Recently, DOSM has concluded its Strategic Plan for the year 2010 – 2014. The plan charts the direction of DOSM which is aligned with the National Agenda. The Strategic Thrust 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014, highlight strategies that will be undertaken by the Department to enhance the capacity building. The strategies are:

- i. to improve capabilities of the staff to do research and analysis;
- ii. to inculcate the innovation culture in producing and delivering statistical products and services;
- iii. to develop competent human capital resources with high level of professionalism; and
- iv. to enhance the human resources management.

Under the direction of the Committee of the Training Plans which designs comprehensive training programmes for all statistical staff throughout their services using a balanced approach in the development of human capital, the programmes encompass personality, physical traits and spiritual values. This is in tandem with DOSM's training policy which focuses on development of attitudes,

relevant skills and knowledge through a structured, competency and a life-long learning culture.

The objectives of the policy are:

- i. to develop staff who are skilled, versatile and competent to produce quality products and services that meet the set standards;
- ii. to develop experts in statistics and ICT and well equipped staff in financial and administrative services management;
- iii. to develop skilled trainers;
- iv. to instill positive values and ethics; and
- v. to value add to the products and services of the Department.

The training programmes are conducted in-house which emphasises on four core areas namely functional, ICT, generic and behavioural. Meanwhile, the training modules are divided into three phases:

- **Phase One (Basic)** focuses on the development of technical skills for statisticians who have served between one to three years; eg. Introduction to Economic & Social Statistics, Basic Research Methodology and Introduction to Sampling Techniques.
- **Phase Two (Intermediate)** focuses on development in knowledge and skills in subject matter areas and also exposure at the international level. This is targeted for statisticians who have served between four to ten years. Among the trainings offered are Technical Report Writing

- **Phase Three (Advance)** focused on the development of a pool of experts who will serve as think-tanks in the Department and consultants to other agencies as well as international organizations. This is targeted for statisticians who have served eleven years and above. The trainings conducted by the Department include Case Studies on Sampling Techniques and Time Series Analysis with Multiple Variables.

Effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005, the Government has introduced the Public Sector Human Resource Training Policy that enforces all civil servants to attend a minimum of 7 days training during a year. Every civil servant must equip themselves with appropriate attitude, skills and knowledge through structured human capital development programme which focused on the development of competency and on-going learning process.

The training programme does not only confine to the structured or scheduled programme organized by the Department, but also include any formal learning sessions such as knowledge sharing sessions as well as self learning programmes. To ensure that every staff fulfills the minimum of 7-day training policy, the Department has introduced the system of training log book which will record all the training and capacity building activities attended by the staff.

In 2009, a number of 115 internal courses were conducted by the Department relative to 108 courses a year earlier. The Department

also sent staff of all levels to attend 155 courses in total conducted by other government agencies and private sectors. Officers are given the opportunities to attend meetings/seminars/workshops at international level for exposure and exchange knowledge with other foreign participants.

The officers are also given the opportunities to participate in attachment programmes with other sister agencies on specific subject matter to broaden their knowledge and skills. Among the agencies are Australia Bureau of Statistics, Statistics New Zealand, *Badan Pusat Statistik* Indonesia and Department Of Statistics Hong Kong.

Upon their return, it is compulsory for these officers to share and impart the knowledge to their colleagues. The knowledge is usually shared in small group during the Knowledge Sharing Session.

The selection of the officers is based on their job specification requirements and the related subject matter areas. These are the desk-officers of the subject-related. However, the participation for each subject matter is rotated between a senior and a junior officer to ensure continuity in the subject matter, should one of the officers no longer serves within the respective division. Furthermore, the selected participants must have the capabilities to actively participate during the sessions. These officers are expected to impart their knowledge to the colleagues.

The effectiveness of the in-house training is measured through an evaluation programme. The participants are then assessed by their respective superior in terms of work performance, personality traits as well as knowledge and skills, should there be any improvement 3

months after attending the training. The officers are expected to apply the knowledge gained in their daily routine work.

To further enhance knowledge and experience, officers are transferred on job rotation basis to diversify expertise and knowledge. Every officer must have the knowledge and experience in both the collection and completion processes of statistics.

### **2.3 ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES**

With the fast changing economic situation, DOSM plays vital and significant roles to equip the staff with required professional skills in order to meet current, emerging and future statistical information requirements. In determining the career path of the staff, the management forms “Search Committee” which is responsible to identify and determine any potential staff for their career development including the succession plan.

Currently, any staff who will be promoted to higher position and salary movement must sit for the Competency Level Assessment (CLA) - an assessment that was introduced since 1 November 2002. The purpose of implementing the CLA is to assess the competency of the staff which is a requirement to fill higher positions, and also to provide exposure to the staff on the knowledge, generic and functional competencies as well as personal attitudes so as to enable them to perform their job responsibilities effectively.

Other than providing opportunities to the staff to attend designated courses and other capacity building programmes, the Department also

encourages the staff to pursue for further studies in the related fields especially for masters and doctorate degrees.

The Department always encourages the staff to be involved in any related professional associations such as Institute of Statistics Malaysia. Being involved in the professional associations will provide the opportunity to the staff to establish networkings between DOSM and the respective association, through which the staff would be able to participate in any activities conducted by the associations. In addition, it could be a venue for the staff to stay abreast relating to any current developments especially in statistical matters.

The institutional structure of DOSM is towards functional approach where each division at DOSM is dedicated with specific area of task. In this regard, the restructuring exercise which took place in 2007, saw the expansion of 19 subject matter Divisions at Headquarters, 14 State Offices and 28 Operational Centres. As there are more demands for more specific and detailed data, few posts are upgraded, not only to motivate the officers but to create more opportunities to develop layers of expertise within the division.

## **2.4 OTHERS**

In the early stages of development, data collection and processing were mainly done manually. The Department's computerization programme continued to expand in line with the progress of ICT as well as user's demand. The usage of ICT was not only limited to data processing and tabulation but also in data collection. Commencing 2008, the Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) was used to expedite and facilitate the

collection of consumer prices and its usage will be extended to other surveys in the near future.

Most recently, DOSM has taken new initiatives to integrate the different system applications in the Department known as the National Enterprise-Wide Statistical System (NEWSS). The new system which upgrades the current system is a central database. It serves various purposes such as to standardize, consolidate and improve the existing system/application to support the strategic requirement and the operation of DOSM. In line with the initiative to integrate the system applications, DOSM also initiated the implementation of e-survey and e-census.

With increasing uncertainties of the globalized economy and day-to-day advancements in the ICT, the Government recognizes the importance of national statistical office, where DOSM produces the official statistics for the benefit of national planning and policy formulation. Realizing the significant roles and responsibilities, the organization of DOSM was restructured in 2007, the creation of 10 additional Operational Centres and 1,033 new posts as well as higher posts.

Recognizing the important contributions of the statistician to the development of the country, the Government has given its consent to reclassify the statistical service scheme from 'N' (Administrative and Support Scheme) to that of 'E' (Economic Scheme). The reclassification enhances role of the statisticians in providing broader scope of statistics which are of quality, user-oriented and timely to assist in the formulation of policies. The new classification also provides better pay to the statisticians.

## **2.5 CAPABILITY OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SERVICES**

The Department is the premier Government agency entrusted with the responsibility to collect, interpret and disseminate statistics for the benefit of economic planners, policy makers as well as private sectors. DOSM plays a role as the national depository of statistics for the whole country. To comprehend the fast changing of the economy, many departments of the Government agencies have established their own statistical units. The Department has worked closely with other Government agencies to position DOSM staff at those agencies through cadre programme. The functions of these cadre officers are primarily to fulfill the needs on data collection and statistical analysis of these agencies. This is to ensure there is one common source, common reference point as well as standardized techniques, which are comparable across space and time. Furthermore, the cadre officers play the role as little ambassadors of the Department at those agencies.

## **3. PART B**

Realizing the importance of capacity building programme towards improving professional capabilities of the staff, there are strategies set up by DOSM in designing comprehensive training programmes. The training programmes include in-house trainings, external trainings conducted by the other Government agencies and private sectors, international trainings and other attachment programmes.

The Department acknowledges the importance of training and practical hands-on experience among its officers. In this regard, the Statistical Training Division (STD) has been given the mandate to manage and carry out the training programmes in order to enhance the professional skills of the staff.

To oversee the development of DOSM capacity building, a Training Planning Committee was set up to take the responsibility with respect to the implementation of the training programme. The Committee, which is chaired by Deputy Chief Statistician are made up of members comprising the Divisions Directors which meet quarterly. Among other things that are discussed in the meeting include training needs analysis, status of the budget allocated, training competency plan and an on-going progress of the courses conducted throughout the year.

It is a practice that by the end of the year, all division heads are required to identify the kind of trainings needed by their respective division. These proposed training programmes will be discussed at length including its priorities and implementation period.

One of the strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014 is to develop a competent, creative and innovative human capital with positive attitudes and values. This is translated through the establishment of various programmes:

- i. Continued strategic and well-planned development of human capital with a strong mind, physical and spiritual aspects.

It is implemented through the understanding and practicing of DOSM's core values, knowledge enhancement and leadership-

shaping cultures. The training and courses are detailed out in the Training Competency Plan which encompasses Functional, Generic, Behavioural and ICT. In addition, the Department also closely monitors and focuses on activities relating to paper presentations either domestic or international.

- ii. Continued technical consultancy services according to the subject matter to the domestic and international agencies.

To better equip the staff for the services, the Department continuously provides trainings to the potential trainees/facilitators; conduct discourse on specific subject matter; and invite prominent speakers to give talks.

- iii. The implementation of the Knowledge Management System that pools knowledge obtained from all sources.

The system is currently underdevelopment.

- iv. Setting up of the Statistical Training Institute.

Realizing the need to enhance for capacity building, the Statistical Training Division will be upgraded as a Statistical Training Institute. Its building is currently under construction. With the existence of the institute, the solid programmes and modules are prepared, which will cater the needs of the future statisticians and other supporting staff.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The current global scenario has given significant impact to the development of the capacity building in the statistical services. The emergence of new areas and industries impose greater needs for new statistics. With strategic planning programmes in place, the Department is confident that the professional skills attained among the staff can be assured and that the Department will continue to stay relevant.