

40th Anniversary Celebration of SIAP

**Ninth Management Seminar for the
Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific
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“Developing Professional Capability for National Statistical Systems”

Country Paper, TONGA

PART A

Recruitment

Tonga Statistics Department wishes to acknowledge with thanks for the training assistances rendered by SIAP to its staff members since 1984 (according to my own record). Staff members of the department are allocated into three major levels,

- (i) Professional,
- (ii) Semi-professional, and
- (iii) Non-professional.

Staff members from these 3 levels have participated in SIAP training, thus gained more statistical work experiences. Those at semi-professional level have advanced their skills up to the professional level after attending the SIAP training. Similarly for those at non-professional level. Training in most areas particularly in IT are needed to counteract with staff turn-over, staff shortages and increasing demand of the statistics users for statistics information.

Recruitment of staff members is currently according to the vacancies and new posts requested in the annual budget according to the statistics strategic plan. Sponsored scholars of the department are included in the new posts in the annual budget. However, the department will be lucky if it is offered one scholarship @ year due to high competition for government scholarships.

Recruitments to each level are as follows;

- (i) the background education for non-professional level is a pass at school certificate and university entrance from secondary schools. Pass in relevant subjects, higher qualification and previous work experiences are advantages.
- (ii) For semi-professional level are those from tertiary level with relevant subjects but yet to complete a bachelor degree. Those with good work experience at non-professional and have attended statistical trainings can be promoted to this level.
- (iii) At professional level, the returned scholar/s are recruited at this level. Those with good work experience at semi-profession level and have attended statistics trainings are also promoted to this level. When a vacancy is advertised at this level, graduates in other field of study and work experience outside statistics were also considered.

There has been an informal communication with a lecturer of a University about its graduates program for official statistics. I advised the younger statisticians to participate in such program, but not success due to funding.

Development

Staff development plan has been in place but did not work well due to staff turn-over and lack of resources and training availability, particularly at university level. The NSO has prioritised its training needs, but it depends on the training availability from the regional and international organisations.

The department tried to upgrade the current post at senior levels to create a better career path to its staff members particularly at professional level in order to retain the well trained and qualified staff members. This was not success due to budget shortages which is in line with the current global financial difficulties.

The need for professional capability building of each individual employee can be identified by his/her work performance. There has been a limitation according to background training and work experience, but has to consider from here whether he/she be awarded a professional training.

This NSO has no budget to train its staff members, thus it relying on training awards from foreign countries, regional and international organizations. The listed trainings are all important according to its purpose and attended trainees. The NSO has received most training conducted by regional and international organizations. Thus, more staff members attended trainings in different fields gaining more experiences (most effective). Of the listed trainings, the study tour is the least effective, due to time constraints.

The nomination of participant/s to an international funded training is depend on the following; (i) requirement from the participant; work on the field (division) of the funded training, (ii) meet the background requirement, (iii) good work performance, (iv) if the first 3 points are not met, look to staff members of other divisions with intension of staff reshuffle in the future.

Work performance is used to assess the effectiveness of the individual, division, group and the NSO capacity building efforts. Each staff members/post has a job description which would be used to assess his/her work performance. This has shown particularly the quality of outputs and timeliness/deadline of his/her statistics output. In each division, the aggregate of the work of those who work for, to attain the quality and timeliness of the division's output/s, then for the group and to the NSO as whole.

Organizational strategies

A complete career path is looked impossible to success in any of the annual budget, but a step by step being submitted thus not success in recent budgets. As such one step was tried for this fiscal year but was deferred due to budget constraints. That is, upgrade the most senior posts to enable a wider career path to the more professional staff members.

The graduates are recruited to the professional level of the NSO, but they need work experience. At the same time they need to attend a statistical training relevant to each field of work (division). On the job training in a bigger NSO is an advantage. Staff members at semi-professional level were allowed to takeover the duties at professional, thus advanced their skills to that level.

It is not written, but the individual work performance is recorded, thus incentives for staff members are based from such record. Incentives are limited to promotion and nomination to other statistics training due to budget constraints.

NSO is a member of SIAP and ISI, and one staff member is a member of the RSS in the UK. Such membership is discouraging due to funding and background requirements.

The organization chart of the NSO shows its job structure it carried out each year. It is divided into 3 main groups of a number of divisions within each group. Group's divisions are reported to the head of each group, then heads of groups are report to the head of NSO.

To some extend, some qualified staff members are dedicated to the works of NSO, while others of the same level will leave if they find better employment outside NSO. For those who left, a former head of NSO was called by authority to head other Govt department, then up to a Minister, then a former Deputy Prime Minister. Few took further studies, then much better employment elsewhere. However, of the qualified staff who dedicated themselves to work at the NSO, they have gained very professional expertise which are not available locally

In addition to on-the-job training within the NSO, the department relying *in toto* on funded training awards available from regional and international organizations. Government scholarship is highly competitive with larger ministries, thus resulted to a low success for the NSO.

Within the country, professional skills can be obtained by contracting with staff members rather than outsider.

Other

The developments in IT are the major step forward of the NSO which resulted to expedite the official communications, processing of statistical outputs and disseminating of statistical releases. This development has improved the quality of statistical output and timeliness. Some senior officers have able to access to website of larger NSO to learn from. However, NSO still need training on development in IT.

Partly acknowledged and partly not. Some organizations (users) offered a warm acknowledgement for the NSO statistics outputs and some not. NSO often requested to increase its budget but no success, after that users demanded more statistical outputs.

Capability of the national statistical service

The national statistical service is dominated by the NSO, so the rate of the NSO national statistical service is **higher/better**. Such that, recent Census and Surveys reports have published earlier than the previous ones.

The NSO has a strategy of service-wide training to develop the professional capability of the national statistical service, despite its budget constraints. Once, the staff members have higher training, they might be available for secondment, outposting, fellowships thus further their expertise when return

A professional data processing is the most challenging to develop. The data processing system of each division was established years ago and most by foreign experts, thus need update. The data processing of recent Censuses and surveys were relying on foreign experts. The NSO is looking for more surveys in the future. Therefore, its data processing is deeply needed to develop to carryout these tasks rather than continue relying on foreign expert.

PART B

Staff training;

In addition to the trainings available from funding agencies and Govt scholarships, the social club of the NSO raised fund in mid 1980s to pay the staff members who wished to take (and passed) the University extension studies prior to complete a degree at the campus in a year or two. Some staff members were successful, unfortunately, they received scholarships of other agencies to complete each degree and returned to those agencies. After few years, leaders of the NSO social club of that time left, thus this project/strategy ended with low success to the NSO.

One larger NSO offered an on-the-job-training to regional smaller NSOs. My NSO is one of those who had shared in this project by allowing some of its staff members to take turn in attending this on-the-job training, but has been stopped in recent years, due to funding shortages.

Few staff members have been allowed to have internal on-the-job training within the NSO particularly at non-professional and semi-professional levels in order for each staff member to enable to carryout the duties in other division/s. This limitation is due to the staff shortages given its current heavy workload. At the same time, the NSO accepted training invitations from regional and international organizations. In addition to Government scholarship, some staff members were able to receive post-graduate scholarships from other donors. Thus, the NSO has also benefitted from these scholars.

In contrast, some well trained statisticians at professional level have left the NSO particularly on migration abroad and last voluntary redundancy in 2006. Therefore, the NSO needs its staff trainings to continue to counteract its staff turnover. Thanks, the SIAP has provided the most training opportunities to this NSO. Hence,

***“CONGRATULATION TO THE SIAP 40TH
ANIVERSARY, and LONG LIVE THE SIAP”***
