

FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY

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UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL INSTITUTE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
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Workshop on Forging Partnerships in Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific

25-26 November 2002

Bangkok, Thailand

FINAL REPORT

1. The Workshop on Forging Partnerships in Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific was attended by representatives of 9 invited countries (Australia, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Turkey) as well as representatives of international organizations (ADB, ASEAN Secretariat, Eurostat, FAO, ILO, SPC, US Census Bureau) and observers from Fiji, Indonesia, Nepal and Thailand. The resource person was the Director of the TES-Institute, while the secretariat was carried out by representatives of the UNESCAP Statistics Division and SIAP.

2. The Deputy Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, Ms. Keiko Okaido, delivered the opening speech in which she welcomed the participants who traveled to Bangkok from a wide range of countries. Ms. Okaido emphasized in her talk the usefulness of human capacity building in official statistics in the ESCAP region and the necessity of further expanding the multilateral cooperation in this field. She wished all the attendants a successful meeting and a pleasant stay in Thailand. She also expressed her interest in being informed on the results of the Workshop.

Introduction

3. SIAP gave, as introduction to the meeting, a short overview on its findings and experiences with regard to statistical training in Asia and the Pacific. The demand side for human capacity building in official statistics is already heavy but continues to grow exponentially, while the supply side is under heavy pressure to be more productive and effective under serious budgetary constraints. By taking the initiative for the Workshop SIAP hopes to initiate enduring partnerships between the organizations involved in the statistical training which will facilitate them in their efforts to meet the requirements of the field.

4. TES-Institute outlined briefly the history and mission of its institute and continued with reflections on motivation, character, prerequisites and conditions for regional and global partnerships in training in official statistics. The suggestions were, amongst others, to ask before a course starts basic information from the participants on their educational and work backgrounds. Details on the practical problems they encounter in their work are also asked, as well as and demand the submission of example data sets and documentation, wherever appropriate. The TES-Institute emphasized the importance of the provision of comprehensive training to statistical staff in order to meet the (quality) requirements as based in international standard. Country courses are mostly considered to be more effective because the target groups are limited and specialized. Statistical offices are in many cases specializing themselves in certain fields (at least in the European practice), which has proven to be very effective. A

consequence however is that the need for international knowledge transfer is growing. Regional training institutes may act as 'brokers' between the expertise available in certain organizations and make that available for the 'others'. In conclusion, the TES-Institute provided several examples of possible future partnership arrangements.

Country reports

5. The representative of Australia explained the various types of technical assistance and training as provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which goes from ABS staff undertaking statistical consultancies or conducting training courses in other countries to providing documentation on ABS practices. An important condition for the receiving country is that it should ensure to have the capacity to maintain expertise developed as a result of assistance (long-term benefit). Many programs of assistance are funded through AusAID, Australia's international assistance agency. ABS gives priority to South Pacific and South-East Asian countries (Papua New Guinea, the Pacific and some LCD countries in East Asia). ABS works closely together with Statistics New Zealand and the Statistics Program of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). The Institute is currently considering a proposal to establish a national training centre, which opens additional possibilities for future assistance projects.

6. The representative of India presented details on the Indian Statistical Education Centre (ISEC) which is a part of the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI). ISEC conducts a 10 months' Regular Course and special courses of varying durations and in different subject-fields. The training at the Centre is given by the faculty of the ISI, coupled with visiting lectures by governmental Statistical Officers. The Centre has various facilities like class rooms, study rooms, a computation and data processing centre and a large library. Hostel facilities are also available (average living costs around 6000 Indian Rupees). On a regular base participants from other countries attend ISEC's course programs. Financial support for candidates is available from Government of India and international organizations such as UNDP. The representative of India provided the workshop for its further discussions a list of course topics which should get high priority, like cross examination, sample surveys etc.

7. The representative of Indonesia gave an overview on the education and training activities in BPS Indonesia. There are two organizations involved, both placed under the Director General of BPS: the Education and Training Center (ETC) and the Institute of Statistics (STIS); the latter being a college with a degree. ETC conducts courses in four categories: Statistics, Computer, Management, and Social-Economy-Demography. The Institute organizes some courses in statistics, computers, and management on a regular base, but, on request, incidental courses take place. ETC and STIS are both facilitated with up to date training accommodation including computer classrooms with (partially) possibilities for Internet access. Furthermore a library room, a cafeteria for 120 students, a conference room for 150 participants and accommodation facilities for 120 students are available. The representative of Indonesia continued his presentation with an extensive list of proposals and suggestions for international cooperation and partnerships, which were considered in the further workshop discussions.

8. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran presented the Statistical Research Center (SRC) of the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI). The institute has good training facilities, including a computer room with PCs loaded with MSOffice and several statistical software applications. Twenty courses have been organized, of which a part had been conducted in English language. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran provided also a list of

suggestions for future enhancement of training programs for further consideration in the workshop.

9. The representative of Japan gave the outlines of the Statistical Research and Training Institute of Japan, which is a subsidiary body of the Statistics Center of Japan. The various types of courses conducted include as principal element the General Course with a duration of 3 months. Additionally the Institute organizes incidental courses on a variety of subject matters in its well equipped training facilities. All courses are only conducted in Japanese language. The representative of Japan gave in conclusion some suggestions as input for the further workshop discussions.

10. The representative of Malaysia explained the organization of the in-house training activities at the Department of Statistics, Malaysia (DOSM) which are coordinated by the Statistical Development Division of DOSM. For the conduct of courses the Division can use well equipped training facilities, including a computer laboratory for 50 participants. Most of the courses are given by officers of DOSM, but incidentally courses and workshops take place in cooperation with international organizations, like ASEAN Secretariat, UNSD and SIAP. DOSM plans to develop a Statistical Training Institute in the near future; a proposal will be submitted to the Prime Minister's department by the end of 2002. The representative of Malaysia provided additional proposals for future international cooperation as input for the workshop's deliberations.

11. The representative of the Philippines gave an overview of the organizational settings of the Statistical Research and Training Center (SRTC), which operates as the focal agency for statistical training for the statistical system of the Philippines. The institute has advanced and training facilities available and modest accommodation possibilities. Many training programmes are organized; participation from other countries is possible (in principle for English speaking participants; however on request are interpretation services possible against payment). Training materials are available over a long range of course years and may be obtained by other institutions. In conclusion, the representative of the Philippines brought up many suggestions for future international collaboration.

12. The representative of the Republic of Korea presented the Statistical Training Center (STC) which has possession on broad facilities for the conduct of courses (including computer classrooms with Internet access, and a dormitory for the accommodation of the participants). The courses offered are mostly in the Korean language, but incidental training in English is provided; especially in the case of cooperation projects with international organizations like SIAP (sub-regional courses). The representative of the Republic of Korea also provided several suggestions for future partnerships for consideration by the workshop.

13. The representative of Turkey explained briefly the history and organization of the State Institute for Statistics (SIS) of Turkey and the relation with its Training Center (TC). The TC conducts a large variety of courses for a broad range of target groups, not only for SIS-staff but also, on a regular base, for participants from other countries. In the international programs special focus is given to Caucasian, Balkan and Central Asian countries. The projects are mostly co-organized and/or funded by international organizations, like OECD, Eurostat and ILO. The center has the possession of well equipped training facilities, including a Computer Laboratory, with internet access for all computers, and a large conference room. The representative of Turkey completed her presentation with an extensive list of suggestions for further discussion in the workgroup.

Reports of other Organizations

14. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) presented the Strategic Plan 2003-2005 of its Statistics Programme. On basis of priorities which are determined for the statistics programme, a large variety of training activities in the Pacific countries will be necessary. SPC looks forward to work together with the other institutes in following up these needs.

15. The FAO outlined the statistical activities as undertaken by the Organization and that are supported by technical assistance visits, expert consultations, workshops/seminars and projects on country requests. The organization would like to involve more of its expertise in international training programs in statistics.

16. The US Census Bureau outlined the history and activities of its International Programs Center (IPC). IPC has a longstanding and wide (12,000 participants from over 120 countries) practice in international assistance in official statistics in workshops and training courses conducted in as well as the US as in the countries. This assistance is coupled with additional activities as the provision of software applications for survey processing, tabulation and demographic calculations, the compilation of training material and assistance with the compilation and analysis of statistical data. IPC is momentary implementing strategic and content transitions, which would deserve attention of the Workshop, because they are based on longstanding practice.

Group discussions

17. The workshop participants discussed in four separate groups specifically assigned themes and reported on the results of their discussions in the plenary meeting. Group 1 elaborated the theme 'Institutionalization of the cooperation between statistical training institutes'. The group concluded that further coordination and cooperation should be promoted despite all connected practical difficulties (large number of organizations, different agendas, different types of funding etc). The organization of an annual workshop was proposed, together with the set up of a subcommittee for accreditation. In order to enable a more focused approach the group suggested to divide the ESCAP-region into sub-regions, each assigned to a combination of existing training organizations in the same geographical area. SIAP was proposed to set up a website on statistical training into which all national and international organizations could tap in and to coordinate all information about supply and demand for statistical training in the region. As far as concerns the assessment of statistical training needs the group preferred to assign the primary responsibility to the National Statistical Organization of each country. A common (standard) questionnaire could for that purpose guarantee the international comparability. Finally, the group proposed to take initiatives to install a clearing house for statistical training (institutes and material).

18. Group 2 discussed 'Practicalities of exchanges between statistical training institutes'. Again, a website was seen as the best solution for the future information provision on (availability of) trainers, courses and training material. The proposal was to set up thematic listings of links and to provide material in a format that would enable translation into national languages. The group suggested also to use existing documentary websites, like that of the Statistics Division of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). The need for registers of experts and institutions (including information on organizational capabilities) was considered to be substantive.

19. The assigned theme for Group 3. was 'E-learning'. To the opinion of the group, the preferred approach for the short term would be courses on CD-Rom and on the longer term web-based formats. SIAP should consider to make a selection of the most demanded courses for its piloting of E-learning. The group proposed to set up mechanisms for coordination between SIAP and the national training organizations, including the local course facilitators. The latter were seen as a necessary element for the support of trainees in the countries and required, consequently, extra attention to be trained for their tasks. Course evaluation and assessment should be implemented by the national organizations on basis of common standards as developed by SIAP. For funding of E-learning it was suggested that SIAP would look for sourcing by International Financial Institutions, like the World Bank.

20. The fourth group discussed the theme: 'Assistance to national training organizations'. The group came up with several suggestions, like the set up of an inventory of countries interested in receiving support and the compilation of a list of potential assistance providers. It was proposed to enable 'starting' organizations to visit existing training institutes with longer experience. Finally the group recommended to train especially the trainers (using as working language English) in order to enable them to spread the knowledge further in their own country (in national languages).

21. The resource person summarized the situation with regard to statistical training in the ESCAP-region by concluding that potential capacity is available to a large extent, but that the question now was how to organize the usage of this potential. For SIAP he suggested the roles of clearing house for the certification and publishing of available course material and of coordinator for quality assessment. He proposed furthermore to set up of an inventory of training needs. As far as concerns the conduct of courses he suggested to extend the outreach programme of SIAP to more sub-regional in-country training, to pay special attention to the training of trainers and to conduct also courses for users of statistics. He considered E-learning especially useful and beneficial for basic courses and preparatory training. International cooperation and global networking should be maximally promoted. The TES-Institute could organize a workshop, especially devoted to systems for networking. Furthermore the resource person proposed to develop joint E-learning courses, based on the needs of the region and using best practice experiences outside the region. For the training of trainers several programs were already existing, like those for National Accounts and Poverty Statistics.

Final discussion and conclusions

22. In a plenary meeting the workshop participants discussed the proposals of the 4 thematic groups and formulated after ample discussions its final recommendations, which have to be submitted in their final form to the organizations and institutions within the statistical systems of the ESCAP region after some (formal) editing by SIAP:

'The participating organizations unanimously supported the conclusions that there exists an urgent need to coordinate more extensively the statistical training in the ESCAP region. More cooperation between the training organizations is needed in order to enable a more efficient and effective use of the (thin) resources.

Recommendations:

1. SIAP to take forward the recommendations of the workshop and organize, in its proposed role of clearinghouse, an annual meeting for organizations involved in statistical training in the ESCAP region.

2. SIAP to take initiatives in the set-up of a Task-force with as preliminary terms of reference for the start:
 - Priorities for implementation of workshop recommendations and facilitation of the communication on the priorities and linking with the broader group of countries/organizations.
 - Set up of a list evaluation principles.
 - Tasks assigned by countries in which the Taskforce could work as communication facilitator between demanders/suppliers and other organizations who could be interested.
 - Elaborate the idea of clearing house for delivery of training material and the conduct of courses (certification)
 - Provision of advise to countries preparing the set up of statistical training organizations, for instance, by advising on organizational aspects and train the trainers programs.
3. SIAP to set-up communication mechanisms through Newsletter and Website for sharing information on training opportunities, experiences and available training material (contents is responsibility of organizations involved).
4. Taskforce to facilitate the definition of tools and strategies that statistical organizations may use for establishing and maintaining quality in areas such as::
 - monitoring training needs;
 - course accreditation
 - entry requirements
 - evaluation systems
 - competence of trainers.
5. Institutions involved in statistical training to share information on the implementation of e-learning.’

23. The workshop was concluded by speeches of the resource person, a representative of the participating national training organizations and the director of SIAP.