Country Paper on Experiences on Training in Agriculture and Rural Statistics in the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) - Sri Lanka

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1. Introduction

As the national Statistical Organization (NSO) in Sri Lanka, the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) is responsible for the collection, compilation and dissemination of all types of agricultural and rural statistics, and social and economic statistics. DCS is also responsible for all major national censuses and surveys in Sri Lanka and collects other important national statistics and compiles Sri Lanka's National Accounts. For the purpose of carrying out and coordinating all relevant training activities within the DCS and outside, we have a separate Training Division headed by a Director and staffed with 1 Senior Statistician, 1 Statistician, 2 Statistical Officers, one Statistical Assistant, 3 ICT Assistants and 1 Data entry operator.

2. Training programmes

The following are the main training programmes s implemented / coordinated by the training division of the DCS.

   I. Induction Training Programme
  II. In-service training programme
 III. Post Graduate training programme

2.1 Induction Training Programme

This is a two weeks programme conducted for new recruits to the DCS, for the posts of Statistical Assistant, Statistical Officer and Statistician. Through his programme, the recruits are given an exposure to the activities undertaken by the different Divisions of the DCS, followed by short training on data collection, tabulation, processing, data analysis, data interpretation, presentation and dissemination. This is a compulsory programme for all new recruits to the positions indicated and is carried out by senior DCS officials.

2.2 In service training programme

A number of short training courses aimed at the following categories of DCS officials are carried out by the Training Division of the DCS right through the year.

    A. Management Assistant
    B. Development officer
    C. Data entry operator/Coding clerek
    D. Statistical Assistant,
    E. Statistical Officer
    F. Statistician/Senior Statistician

The following are the training courses currently being implemented by the Training Division, for the aforesaid officials.

a. Sampling methods
b. Report Writing
c. Research Methodology
d. Operational Research
e. Human Resource Management
f. Presentation Skills
g. Project Management
h. Leadership and Team building
i. Computer applications

2.3 Post Graduate training programme.

Opportunities for post graduate training are facilitated by the DCS for officials holding positions of Statistician and above, up to Ph.D level, in both local and foreign universities. Most of the training slots are related to Master's degree programmes of 1 – 2 years duration, in relevant fields of study, with costs totally met by the foreign donors or the Government of Sri Lanka, as the case may be. At present, a number of officials are participating in this programme and they are very useful for sharpening and updating the skills of our officials while also enabling them to get an exposure to the latest state of the art technologies in statistical analysis and interpretation.

3. **Future Training Strategies being adopted by the Department of Census & Statistics (DCS) , Sri Lanka**

The DCS has decided to provide a high priority for training in view of its importance and accordingly a decision has been made to adopt a set of strategies with respect to training in the future by the Department. Hence, the following strategies of relevance as identified through a recent systematic assessment that was carried out by the DCS are now being adopted. This is with the important purpose of enabling staff at all levels to meet the current needs and keep abreast with the emerging requirements to be met by the Department in serving effectively as the country's National Statistical Organization (NSO).

a) determine the requirements for a network of statisticians and supporting staff in the DCS, line agencies and field offices to implement the improved agricultural statistics system;

b) determine the most suitable organizational arrangements for this network, including the role of the DCS in coordinating agricultural statistics work, the relationship between the DCS and line agencies at all levels of administration and the steps that can be taken to improve these relationships, and the roles and responsibilities of line agencies in the collection of agricultural statistics;

c) evaluate the skills and training of existing agricultural statistics staff of the DCS and line agencies taking into account future changes in the approach to collecting agricultural statistics, the wider scope of statistical activities, the emphasis on statistical coordination, the greater use

of advanced statistical methodologies, improved data processing methods, new technology for the collection and transmission of data, the need for more analysis of data, and better data dissemination practices;

d) identify gaps in the capacity of existing agricultural statistics staff of DCS and line agencies, especially in areas such as questionnaire design, sample design, data processing, data management and data analysis;

e) develop and implement a training plan for statistical officers in the DCS and line agencies to further develop the required skills, with emphasis on, i) paddy crop cutting/yield assessment, ii) yield assessment of crops, the harvest of which is through a number of picks,& iii) use of new technology for field data collection and transmission (e.g. use of tabloids) ;

f) provide training to statisticians in the DCS and line agencies in the preparation of statistical reports, focusing on analyzing and interpreting the data and presenting results in the form of tables, charts, maps and commentary to highlight the main issues and findings;

g) provide training to senior agricultural policy makers and senior DCS staff on the use of agricultural data for policy making;

h) assess the need for computers, software and other technical equipment in the DCS, line agencies and field offices required to improve the agricultural statistics system.

In addition to the foregoing, I will also recommend to the DCS to make use of the opportunities provided by organizations like SIAP to forge partnerships with National Statistical Organizations (NSOs) specially in the Asia-Pacific Region, to facilitate professional enhancement of officials and get an exposure to approaches being made by other NSOs in the Region with respect to training in Agricultural & Rural Statistics.

Thank you.