

## **Report of the Seventh Meeting of the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific**

### **Summary**

The Seventh Meeting of the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific was held through video conferencing on 7 December 2021 which was attended by fifty participants from fifteen countries and FAO, ILO, SESRIC, UNSD, UN Women, ESCAP-SD and SIAP as well as the Chair of the Network.

The Network reviewed the performances of the sub-groups on gender statistics and on economic statistics. Afterwards, the Network showed appreciation to the subgroups for their work in developing training materials and promoting e-learning courses with partners.

The subgroup on gender statistics, reported that the accreditation process started for those trainers and experts who received training at the regional level. While the accreditation process for training conducted at the national level would have to be considered and that would necessitate further discussion among UN Women, SIAP and other partners to ensure the same quality standards are applied at that level.

For the purpose of further justified prioritizing regional trainings in environment statistics, ESCAP-SD and SIAP were to consider renaming and expanding the focus of the subgroup of economic statistics as well as the possibility to set an additional subgroup to cover environment statistics.

The Network approved the proposal of SIAP to transfer the contents of the database of training information to a Microsoft® Excel file, which is to be shared with member states of the Network for easy access and for them to add information if needed.

The Network noted that, under the COVID-19, there were challenges in conducting trainings which were handled efficiently by the national training centers with an added advantage of extended reach to gain more participants. But there are some problems still to be resolved such as less social interactions, less hand-on exercises and weak internet access.

In closing the members of the Network agreed to have the Eight Network Meeting in the week beginning 12 December 2022.

### **Contents**

I. Background.....	1
II. Summary of Proceedings .....	2
III. Organization of the Meeting .....	7

### **Annex**

#### **Schedule of Activities for the Seventh Meeting of the Network**

#### **I. Background**

1. In September 2013, the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics established the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific, with a mandate to act as a facilitator of information-sharing and of coordination among statistical training institutes in the region. Since

then, the Network has been in touch with its members through its meetings to plan and implement activities to meet its mandate.

2. The fourth meeting of the Network was held in Chiba, Japan, on 12 September 2018. During this meeting, the Network approved the terms of reference of the subgroup on gender statistics, reviewed the possible development of the training needs assessment survey and discussed the modality of accreditation of training on official statistics.

3. The fifth meeting of the Network was held in Chiba, Japan, on 10 December 2019. Reports on the activities of the subgroup on gender statistics as well as that of the subgroup on economic statistics were considered by the Network. The Network recommended the creation of a small group to initiate discussion on accreditation and standardization of the training curriculum in the subgroup on gender statistics. Likewise, the Network supported the 2020–2024 Strategic Plan of SIAP.

4. The Sixth Meeting of the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific was held through video conferencing on 2 December 2020. Reports on the activities of the subgroup on gender statistics and the subgroup on economic statistics were highly appreciated by the Network. The members of the Network stressed the importance of integrating gender perspectives to other thematic areas of statistics and suggested that accreditation of courses and certification of experts should be carried out internally at an initial stage and would consider the need for its expansion after thorough assessment. Likewise, the subgroup on economic statistics presented an update of its activities which include a virtual training program for trainers and an e-learning course on labour accounts which was jointly being developed with SIAP.

## **II. Summary of Proceedings**

### **Session 1: Report of the Subgroup on Gender Statistics**

5. UN Women, the secretariat of the subgroup on gender statistics training, reported that all of the activities outlined in the subgroup's Terms of Reference for delivery in 2020 and 2021 had been successfully completed, hence that the subgroup had not convened any recent meetings. The completed activities and deliverables included: a repository of training experts on gender statistics; training curriculum on gender statistics; accreditation; and promoting the implementation of training on gender statistics across the region. UN Women announced the availability of the gender statistics curriculum online, highlighting the efforts at operationalizing the materials through the conduct of a virtual Training of Trainers (ToT) for members of the subgroup and subsequent conversion of the training materials from the ToT into e-learning courses. Since the launch of the gender statistics training curriculum, several countries, training institutes and universities had either used or adapted the resources. The following training offerings were proposed for 2022: integrating gender statistics in other policy areas and courses; virtual training for the Pacific island countries and territories based on the gender training curriculum; and training on Time Use Surveys for the Asia and Pacific region. The delivery of face-to-face training would also be explored, provided that travel restrictions are lifted, in 2022.

6. Maldives requested guidance on the approach to be used for accreditation of trainees who complete approved courses based on the gender statistics curriculum, at the national level. In response, UN Women indicated that, at present, accreditation was offered only to trainers and experts who received training at the regional level. The accreditation process for training conducted at the national level would have to be considered and that would necessitate further discussion with SIAP and other partners to ensure the same quality standards are applied at that level.

- Mongolia sought clarification on the selection criteria for trainers and target institutions. UN Women explained that, to date, training courses have been open to all organizations, noting that the last ToT attracted participation from national statistical training institutes, national statistics offices (NSOs) as well as universities.

## **Session 2: Report of the Subgroup on Economic Statistics**

7. ESCAP-SD reported on the main activities and achievements of the subgroup on economic statistics, noting the goals and deliverables set for 2021 were delivered within the year. The main outputs included a basic training package on economic statistics, which has been integrated in the training offerings available from SIAP; and a series of ToT courses. ESCAP-SD emphasized the increased reliance on e-learning and highlighted the regional and national training offerings, completed in 2021, in the areas of labour accounts, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 9 on industry, statistical business registers, National Accounts and International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) among others. As it relates to planned activities, ESCAP-SD mentioned the effort is underway to develop a new course on the impact of COVID-19 on National Accounts as well as research topics for the System of National Accounts (SNA) 2025. ESCAP-SD noted the intention of the subgroup to continue using available electronic mediums such as webinars and communities of practice to advance knowledge exchange and its plans to complement the existing short-term courses with longer-term programmes. ESCAP-SD concluded by eliciting feedback from the Network on a series of pointed questions on training and knowledge exchange.

8. The Chair emphasized the strengths and weaknesses of the shift to online and virtual training and made a strong recommendation for the use of a blended approach for the delivery of future training, citing that mode as more appropriate for training and knowledge sharing.

9. Members of the Network have concerns and clarifications in the report as given in the following discussion.

- UNSD drew attention to the two types of coordination: national (within National Statistical System (NSS)) and international coordination (facilitated by SIAP/ESCAP). Emphasis was placed on the critical coordination role played by NSOs within the NSS, which extended to the coordination of training. UNSD invited input on approaches for enforcing the role of the NSO as the national focal point. In response, ESCAP-SD suggested that international organizations should take advantage of opportunities to remind governments to give mandates to NSOs to play that coordination role and encouraged members of the Network to reinforce the message from UNSD. On that point, UNSD also cited the global impact and use of trainings designed for the Asia and Pacific region, and thanked SIAP and ESCAP for collaborating to make courses available for statisticians in the region and beyond. In response, the Chair recognized the role of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training (GIST) in the global coordination of statistical training, while also applauding the ongoing coordination within Asia and the Pacific.
- Lao People's Democratic Republic concurred on the effectiveness of virtual training; noted an interest in continuing the training on Export and Import Price Indices (XMPI) and fully supported the continuation of training for junior staff of NSO and other institutions in NSS, with courses offered at the introductory and intermediate levels. ESCAP-SD expressed interest in holding further discussions with Lao People's Democratic Republic on the continuation of in-service training in XMPI.

- Maldives proposed to develop crediting system from universities. The Chair acknowledged the system and elaborated on the crediting system being explored by the University of the Philippines Los Banos through which master's and PhD's candidates with certification in short- and long-term statistics courses would be eligible for a validation exam as a means of obtaining credits for equivalent courses in their respective programmes and pointed out that the roll-out of similar crediting programmes in other universities can potentially serve as an incentive for staff of NSO to pursue advanced degrees. ESCAP-SD supported the conduct of webinar to further share this experience and explore the possibility of replicating the crediting system in other countries and universities.

10. Lao People's Democratic Republic recommended expanding the training areas to include environment statistics. It was acknowledged that SIAP has made significant progress in offering a range of courses in environment statistics, however the sustained interest and limited capacity of NSOs further justified prioritizing regional trainings in that area. ESCAP-SD and SIAP were to consider renaming and expanding the focus of the subgroup of economic statistics as well as the possibility to set an additional subgroup to cover environment statistics.

### **Session 3: Progress of the database of training information**

11. SIAP put forward a proposal for the storage and maintenance of the database of training information, which was developed in 2019 through funding and technical support from the Government of Japan. The proposal tabled by SIAP entailed to transfer the database content to a Microsoft® Excel or simply Excel file and share the Excel file with member states of the Network for easier access. Likewise, SIAP requested member states to continue adding information in the Excel file. SIAP also proposed to discontinue managing the database and, instead, proposed to upload the Excel file on SIAP website, where it could be easily accessed by all members of the Network.

12. Japan supported the proposal advanced by SIAP and called on the members of the Network to consider the best approach in line with the present situation.

13. China welcomed the progress achieved with the database and endorsed the proposal by SIAP to upload the file to the website for greater reach. China committed to continue sharing updates and contributing to the further development of the Excel file, while also playing a greater role in the coordination of the statistical training.

14. Members of the Network endorsed the proposal presented by SIAP on the future of the existing database.

### **Session 4: Report from countries on challenges of COVID-19 to training and how to overcome them**

15. Under this agenda item, member states reported on challenges of the COVID-19 and shared their national experiences with pursuing or offering national training towards overcoming those challenges.

- China International Statistical Training Centre actively participated in GIST online meetings and provided training materials to the GIST platform, including two courses and eight micro-learning items. China works with UNSD and other international organizations to facilitate the statistical capacity building of developing countries, under the China Trust Fund project. The Centre successfully held the second International seminar on Big Data of the United Nations Global Platform for Big Data China Hub, as well as the International Workshop on the integrated use of international trade statistics and economic statistics. In total, approximately 300 hundred participants with 120 international participants from over 20 countries and regions. Two more workshops will be conducted in the areas of: Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) and statistical monitoring of the 2030

sustainable development agenda. As it relates to regional training, 1,836 participants, applied to participate in 13 e-learning courses provided by SIAP, however, only 60% were admitted to the course. China is interested in the rationale for the low participation rate. China also intends on translating one of SIAP's e-learning courses into Chinese language and uploading it to their Centre's training platform. To date, this online training platform has conducted 697 training courses which account for over 1.6 million learning hours by more than 100,000 staff in the NSS. In light of the COVID-19 challenges, future international training will be diversified, and offered online, in-person or in a blended mode. Training themes will focus on big data, SDG monitoring and other priority areas specified in China UN Trust Fund project. China will do its best to the current network platforms to develop or collect model training resources on statistics, and to share them with the GIST. China emphasized the commitment of the Centre to continue supporting the capacity development of developing countries particularly Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

- The National Statistical Systems Training Academy (NSSTA) of India is committed to building official statistics capacities at national and international levels. NSSTA provides training to statistical personnel from both national and overseas participants. Training is provided to both professionals and in-service officers of NSO, State governments, professors of statistics of different universities, and international participants which, inter alia, includes students of International Statistical Education Centre. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the academy to move to online and virtual trainings. Prior to the pandemic, the Academy was moving towards adopting e-learning technology and infrastructure. The pandemic accelerated this transition. In April 2020, NSSTA started an online training on Machine Learning using Python in collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology Madras. Since then, approximately 600 participants were trained in five rounds of the course. Specialized training was conducted on core IT in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), big data and blockchain in collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology Madras. The pandemic affected not only the mode of delivery but also the number of course offerings. All training programs shifted to online mode, including the induction training of Indian statistical service officers. From April 2020 to March 2021, NSSTA organized 23 trainings which add up to 51,496 participant-days. In-service trainings for officers of NSO; 12 weeks online course on machine learning using Python; demand-based trainings from central and state government offices. Activities are underway to develop an online course for the purpose of creating a pool of trained statisticians in theoretical and applied statistics to manage emerging challenges of data collection, collation, analysis and dissemination for better policy formulation.
- The Statistical Research and Training Institute (SRTI) is the only public institution in Japan that specializes in statistical training for staff of national and local governments, including teachers, as well as staff and other public organizations. In the fiscal year 2020, the number of trainees increased to over 12,000, representing an increase of almost 3,000 over 2019. In addition, face-to-face, group trainings were cancelled or postponed and replaced by trainings in live-streaming. E-learning training that was in place before the pandemic was also utilized. The Institute expects to implement the postponed trainings online or by other means possible. Although new trainings based on new statistical needs have not been developed, the Institute recognizes higher demands for data utilization, especially human mobility data and other big data. Training on big data utilization will be developed and to be offered as an e-learning course in 2022. There are challenges in offering the courses online as it makes it difficult for the lecturer and the participants to interactively communicate. In addition, it is difficult to offer courses with complex exercises in that format. The Institute will try new tools to solve the issue and will offer a live stream training using a statistical analysis software on a trial basis next year.

- Like other NSOs, the Malaysia Department of Statistics was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of those impacts included hampered capacity of the Department to execute conventional statistical work comprising data collection operations and the implementation of human capital development programs. As a result of the restrictions on face-to-face events, the Department of Statistics adopted two types of online methods: synchronous learning through webinars, seminars and lectures; and asynchronous learning using web-based e-learning platform. Furthermore, there was a move to realign the process of statistical production. This in turn caused a change in training needs, with a greater demand for training in statistical methods for producing statistics using administrative data as an alternative to primary data sources, as well as fostering the use of big data analytics and statistical modelling.
- The Philippine Statistical Research and Training Institute adjusted immediately to the Zoom platform in June 2020 and conducted a ToT for the Institute's resources speakers. In 2020, the Institute had all trainings in virtual. For 2020-2021, the Institute conducted 44 capacity building for subnational and national government agencies and three-day training for all 17 subnational regions of the country. In 2021, 71 (one to five day) courses were conducted ranging from basic statistics to more advanced statistical trainings. The Institute tried to make the courses as participative as possible using tools such as Mentimeter™ and Slido™, in addition to breakout rooms, icebreakers and Padlet™. The key challenges were poor internet connection in certain regions of the country as well as the lack of social interaction and camaraderie. The Institute received very good feedback on all the courses conducted.
- In 2021, the Statistical Training Institute of Republic of Korea planned to conduct 151 face-to-face courses and 112 e-learning courses. During the pandemic, face-to-face courses targeted internal employees only. In the third quarter, 92 courses were conducted (10 face-to-face courses and 82 virtual seminars). It is expected that the number of face-to-face trainings will increase as the national vaccination rate approaches 80%. To facilitate face-to-face courses, the Institute implemented several measures and protocols including the mandatory presentation of vaccination cards and/or negative PCR test results. In addition, mandatory medical checks were required for participants to avoid potential infection.
- In compliance with the national measures to reduce face-to-face interaction, the NSO Thailand initially adopted different approaches for delivering its on-site training courses. This involved reducing the number of participants per course and also running courses in several rounds with smaller groups of participants. Eventually the NSO was obliged to switch to online training and to deliver the courses outlined in the human development plan. NSO staff and other agencies in the NSS also participated in e-learning courses offered by UN agencies and development partners.
- The COVID-19 pandemic posed a major challenge to the Training Centre of the Statistical Centre of Iran, forcing the Centre to transform face-to-face trainings into virtual trainings. Challenges related to this transition include the lack of proper infrastructure for virtual courses within the Centre and for trainees; the lack of knowledge of training software; the high costs of meeting and webinar services; unavailability of tools to monitor the attendance of participants in courses; and lack of access to high-speed Internet and certain platforms due to sanctions. Notwithstanding, there were several advantages including: decreased spread of COVID-19 among the staff; reduced urban traffic, training costs to the organization and improvement in administration of the courses. The Centre adopted best practices for organizing virtual training of enumerators and census takers/trainers involved in the pilot population and housing census as well as regular training for staff involved in surveys. The Statistical Centre of Iran collaborated with Statistical Research and Training Centre (SRTC) to organize regular trainings for staff and conducted 32 webinars on statistic

and economic surveys for 31 provinces as well as training courses for staff and external participants based on approved training programmes.

16. In summary, the Chair mentioned that there were challenges which were perfectly handled by the national training centers with an extended reach. But still some problems left unresolved such as less social interactions, less hand-on exercises and weak internet access.

17. Lao People's Democratic Republic congratulated all presenters for great achievements in the area of capacity building and development with diversified training modalities and approaches despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Special thanks were extended to China, Japan and Republic of Korea for the training support provided to Lao People's Democratic Republic before and during COVID 19. Lao People's Democratic Republic looks forward to continued support in 2022 and years ahead.

- In response to the presentation by the China International Statistical Training Centre, Maldives inquired whether the courses offered by the Centre were available to other countries and requested further information on how to participate in those trainings. China indicated that workshops and courses developed under the UN Trust Fund project were open to all the international participants. However, the UNSD was responsible for sending invitations to the participants from the Asia and Pacific region. In some past trainings, priorities were given to developed countries and African countries. UNSD confirmed that invitations to and enrolment for courses organized under the auspices of the China-UN Trust Fund Project were managed by the Division. Some of the courses are available through the SDG: Learn platform.

### **Session 5: Other matters**

18. The Network noted the eighth Network meeting will be held in the week beginning 12 December 2022.

### **III. Organization of the Meeting**

#### **A. Opening of the Meeting**

19. The seventh meeting of the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific was held through video conferences on 7 December 2021.

20. The Chair of the Network, Ms. Zita Albacea officially opened the Seventh Meeting of the Network.

#### **B. Attendance**

21. The meeting was attended by fifty participants from: China, Georgia, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam, FAO, ILO, SESRIC, UNSD, UN Women, ESCAP-SD and SIAP as well as the Chair of the Network.

#### **C. Adoption of the Agenda**

22. The meeting adopted the agenda as presented as follow:

- Opening
- Report from the subgroup on gender statistics
- Report from the subgroup on economic statistics

- Progress of the database of training information
- Report from countries on challenges of COVID-19 to training and how to overcome them
- Other business
- Closing



Annex.

**Seventh Meeting of the Network for  
the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific  
via videoconferencing (MS Teams)  
7 December 2021  
Schedule**

Tokyo Time	Sessions	Presenter
14:00-14:10	<b>Opening</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome message from SIAP</li> <li>• Welcome message from the Chair of the Network</li> <li>• Adoption of the Agenda</li> </ul>	<b>Ms. Shailja Sharma</b> <i>Director, SIAP</i>  <b>Ms. Zita Villa Juan Albacea</b> <i>Chair of the Network</i>
14:10-14:40	<b>Session 1: Report from the subgroup on gender statistics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report of activities and perspectives</li> </ul>	<b>Ms. Sara Duerto Valero</b> <i>Statistics Specialist, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, UN Women</i>
14:40-15:00	<b>Session 2: Report from the subgroup on economic statistics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report of activities and perspectives</li> </ul>	<b>Ms. Rikke Munk Hansen</b> <i>Chief, Economic and Environment Statistics Section, Statistics Division, ESCAP</i>
15:00-15:15	<b>Session 3: Progress of the database of training information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report of the progress and perspective</li> </ul>	<b>Mr. Makoto Shimizu</b> <i>Deputy Director, SIAP</i>

Tokyo Time	Sessions	Presenter
15:15-15:50	<p><b>Session 4: Report from countries on challenges of COVID-19 to training and how to overcome them</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing practices</li> <li>2 minute intervention per member state</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ms. Song Shaoying</b> <i>Deputy-Director-General , Statistical Education and Training Cener, National Bureau of Statistics of China</i></p> <p><b>Ms. R. Savithri</b> <i>Additional Director General, National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, India</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Orie Hirano</b> <i>Director for International Statistical Affairs, Office of Director-General for Policy Planning on Statistical Policy, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan</i></p> <p><b>Mr. Mohd Ridauddin Masud</b> <i>Director of Malaysia Statistical Training Institute</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Josefina Almeda</b> <i>Executive Director III/Head of Agency, Philippine Statistical Research and Training Institute</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Jeongran Kim</b> <i>Division Director, Training Planning Division, Statistics Training Institute, Statistics Korea</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Hataichanok Chinauparwat</b> <i>Director of Statistical Forecasting Division, National Statistical Office, Thailand</i></p> <p><b>Mr. Ashkan Shabbak</b> <i>Head of Statistical Research and Training Centre, Statistical Centre of Iran</i></p>
15:50-15:55	<p><b>Session 5: Other business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The date and venue of the eighth session of the Network</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mr. Makoto Shimizu</b> <i>Deputy Director of SIAP</i></p>
15:55-16:00	<p><b>Closing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closing message</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ms. Zita Villa Juan Albacea</b> <i>Chair of the Network</i></p>