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Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific

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Towards a Strategic Plan for 2025-2029 for the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific

Towards a Strategic Plan for 2025-2029 for the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific

1. The document outlines the strategy for drafting the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan for the consideration of the Governing Council.

Introduction

2. The United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) is a professional statistics training centre for government officials and others working on official statistics with a mandate to strengthen, through practically oriented training of official statisticians, the capability of developing members and associate members. SIAP offers short and long-term specialized trainings to strengthen knowledge and build skills of national government employees to produce, use, and share reliable statistics, including for the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and the development of fact-based policy making. SIAP is a regional training arm of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

3. ESCAP has two overarching commitments for advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community, endorsed by the Committee on Statistics at its fifth session, in 2016, and the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, endorsed by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) at its 75th session, in 2019.

The changing data landscape

4. Since the adoption of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan by the Governing Council at its 15th session in 2019, several decisions by members of the United Nations at the global and regional levels have been made on official statistics for tracking progress towards sustainable development.

At the global level

5. The United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) has developed a transformative agenda for official statistics with a view to having modernized national statistical systems in place that produce official statistics more efficiently, more cost-effectively and in a sustainable, integrated and internationally coordinated way, based on an inclusive partnership.

6. The UNSC in its 54th session held in March 2023 emphasized the following among others:

- a) Continuation of regional and global consultations on shared statistical priorities and collaborative arrangements;
- b) Collaboration on the use of administrative data for statistical purposes as this initiative is important for the improvement of data, especially for the SDGs
- c) Partnership, coordination and capacity-building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- d) Emphasized the need for capacity-building including small island developing States, in particular those that have not yet implemented the 2008 SNA, to facilitate the implementation of SNA;
- e) Work related to beyond GDP;
- f) Increase in country implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, and tools to support implementation, as well as the use of partnerships and regional collaboration to accelerate implementation;
- g) Reiterated the importance of Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics to promote the production and dissemination of relevant, impartial, objective and reliable official statistics;
- h) Emphasized the importance of capacity development to improve and maintain statistical capacity in national statistical offices and other institutes within the national statistical systems;
- i) Need for capacity-building and training for the implementation of a national quality assurance framework, sharing of best practices and the development of additional materials and guidance, such as on the quality assurance when administrative or other data sources are used;
- j) Recognized the need of national statistical offices for capacity-building activities on big data and data science and supported using the opportunities offered by the regional and sector hubs, including training in the use of artificial intelligence for ecosystem accounting, the use of mobile phone data for official statistics, the use of scanner data and web scraping for the calculation of the consumer price index.

At the regional level

7. The Committee on Statistics (CST) of ESCAP in its eighth session held in August 2022 discussed statistical development in the region, regional cooperation and the formulation of regional positions to advance official statistics in line with existing commitments, including the collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community, endorsed by the Committee at its fifth session in December 2016 and supported by ESCAP in May 2017, and the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, adopted by the Committee at its sixth session in October 2018 and endorsed by ESCAP in May 2019.

8. Subprogramme 7 pertaining to Statistics of UNGA 1/77/6 (Section 10) has the objective to improve the availability, accessibility and use of quality data and official statistics in support of sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. To contribute to the objective, the subprogramme will:

- a) Support statistical development in the region, regional cooperation to advance official statistics in line with existing commitments, including Advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community, the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind;
- b) Provide technical assistance, training and capacity-building support, in collaboration with the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific;
- c) To enhance national statistical capacities to produce, disseminate and communicate statistical products and services, including but not limited to gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated data and statistics, with an emphasis on those countries left further behind, such as the least developed countries and small island developing States;
- d) To modernize national statistical systems and empower national statistical offices in the region to benefit from the data sources generated by the various components of national data ecosystems, including administrative data and big data produced and owned by other governmental agencies and the private sector;

9. As per SDG progress Report for Asia and Pacific 2023, given the slow rate of improvements in data availability, the Asia-Pacific region will not have sufficient data availability to measure every SDG indicator by 2030. Although between 2017 and 2022, the number of indicators with sufficient data availability almost doubled from 63 to 128, the rate of increase in data availability and sufficiency continues to slow down, with only a 4 per cent increase in sufficient data availability in 2022.

10. Given the Institute's mandate and the global and regional priorities for official statistics, the Institute in the next five years, will support the strengthening of skills of staff of national statistical systems in the region to meet the demand emanating from the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs for high-quality and disaggregated statistics, with focus on the required modernization of statistical business processes, and tailored to the specific demand of countries with developing statistical systems.

General strategic outline for 2025-2029

11. To respond to the new requirements in the 2025-2029 Plan period, the Institute proposes to align its activities:

- With the priority areas of work expressed by ESCAP member States through the Committee on Statistics that have a well-defined training component;
- The training needs assessment of the member states to facilitate monitoring the 2030 Agenda on SDGs;
- Data requirements for monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and tracking progress towards the SDGs based on the SDG progress Report for Asia and Pacific 2023.

12. The Institute will continue to play a key role in designing and delivering training in priority areas of work identified by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics. Such priorities might include the regional, sub regional and country-level (countries in special situations) implementation of global strategies and programmes in partnership with international and regional organisations. In this context, collaboration with relevant subregional organizations, especially in Central Asia and the Pacific, will be intensified.

13. The design and development of training materials will be in partnership and collaboration with international, regional and subregional organisations and other relevant partners. Post COVID-19 the delivery of courses will shift to a face to face, blended and hybrid mode depending on resources available and topic of course.

14. The workplan of the Institute focuses on the methodologies for SDG indicators along with other relevant topics. In the last five years in collaboration with its partner, the Institute has delivered training on specific SDG indicators, in the format of long-term courses in collaboration with JICA (with focus on SDG indicators) and through dedicated short courses (both face-to-face and web-based including Self-paced courses). The Institute expects to continue collaborating with partners in the implementation of its 2025-2029 strategic plan. In doing so the institute will collaborate as in the past with international organizations and regional organisations such as the World Bank, IMF, International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Women, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNIDO, ESCAP particularly SD, UNEP, UNSD, World Health Organization (WHO), PARIS 21, SPC, ECO and others.

15. The Institute will also further cooperate with relevant partners in modernizing statistical business processes to improve the use of new data sources such as using geographical information systems (GIS) for statistical purposes, and statistical business registers and big data. There is considerable scope for widened and deepened collaboration in these areas, involving additional partners, and covering more indicators and data sources.

16. Asia and the Pacific is a vast and diverse region, with national statistical systems facing distinct challenges and at different levels of development. The consequent statistical training needs are thus most effectively addressed at the country and subregional levels. A subregional approach could be particularly useful in Central Asia, for reasons of common history and language, and the Pacific, due to geography and the lack of national training capacity.

Implementation

17. The 2025-2029 Strategic Plan will focus as per the Resource Mobilisation Strategy of SIAP on strengthening partnerships to build capacity, e-learning, blended learning especially with existing or new training institutes and with UN agencies and other development partners and diversifying the resource base.

18. The Institute will also consider SDG progress Report for Asia and Pacific 2023 to identify the areas SIAP realistically can provide capacity building assistance aligned with the priorities of ESCAP so as to facilitate the member states in monitoring the SDGs

19. The Institute will endeavor to conduct Training Needs Assessment Survey subject to available resources, on a regular basis, and will encourage countries and regional organizations to complete the survey.

20. Multiple training modalities - E-learning, face-to-face and hybrid depending on topic and resource availability will be adopted. For certain topics such as leadership and communication, and quality of statistics, among others, face-to-face training is more appropriate. Several criteria such as degree of interaction, level of training and topic will be considered when determining the appropriate training modality.

21. More and more of the Institute's training materials will be made accessible on Learning Management System (LMS) of SIAP website.

22. Recognizing the challenges National Statistical Offices are facing when disseminating data to the public, decision makers, media and other users, the Institute will focus on conducting further trainings on communication, development of user-friendly outputs and statistical literacy.

23. Trainings on machine learning, data integration, big data, artificial intelligence are expected to continue.

24. The Institute will continue to collaborate with all its development partners i.e., international and regional organizations, Institutes and universities for delivering the strategic plan.

25. The enhanced subregional approach needs to focus initially i.e., the first 2 years of the Strategic Plan on training needs of priority subregions, Central Asia and the Pacific, to be extended thereafter to the other ESCAP subregions, based on experience gathered and lessons learnt.

26. To better address national, subregional and regional training priorities to build capacity on the Sustainable Development Goal indicators. It is proposed to setup a "Friends of the Chair" (FOC) group "... consisting of representatives of not more than seven member States at least one from each region, that would take stock of progress made on the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan and facilitate in developing the 2025-2029 strategic plan.

Action requested from the Council

27. The Governing Council is invited to:

- a. Endorse the formation of Friend of the Chair group
- b. Inputs and suggestions on the proposed strategy
- c. Provide guidance on the preparation of the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan.

Attachment: Report of the Review of the Implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2020-2024

I. Introduction

1. The Governing Council of the Institute endorsed the current Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 guiding the work of the Institute at its fifteenth session in December 2019. Since then, the Institute has had to respond to major developments and changes in official statistics priorities and prominence given to statistics in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to track progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. Since 2019, the world has been hit by COVID-19 pandemic, and the Institute's activity was severely affected. Most of the planned in-person courses were cancelled due to the restriction of travel, forcing a significant change in the plan to which the Institute changed the delivery modality of training courses to e-learning during most of 2020-2022. After travel restrictions were lifted, the Institute re-introduced face-to-face courses while also conducting hybrid courses to maximize the training resources. Development of e-learning courses continued after COVID-19 became endemic. The delivery modality of the course was decided considering the content, level of the course and the needs of the participants.

3. The Institute needs to ensure that its work programme is attuned to the training requirements of region-wide initiatives on capacity building. It must also ensure that it is able to deliver on its mandate as the ESCAP regional training centre while balancing the demands on its services and the resource constraints under which it operates. This is an opportune time for its review to take into account the Regional Road Map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and for formulating the next 5-year strategic plan for 2025-2029.

4. This report reviews the implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2020-2024. Members may take note of the findings and request FOC to consider the findings while preparing the Strategic Plan 2025-29.

II. Key elements of the 2020-2024 plan

5. The key elements of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan were a set of four institutional goals, each associated with an outcome, an output, key activities and indicators.

6. The institutional goals by which the Institute was to be judged were:

- Improved availability and quality of official statistics for SDG monitoring in ESCAP members and associate members
- Improved coverage and quality of national statistical systems to deliver training
- Improved coverage and quality of statistical training through enhanced partnership and innovation
- Sustained increase in financial and human resources, and improved statistical training and other services provided and coordinated by SIAP

Reviewing the implementation of the plan

Summary

7. The review, which covers the years 2020-2022 and 2023 partially (until 30 October), can be summarized as follows:

- During COVID-19 pandemic when face-to-face courses not being feasible, the Institute was able to be flexible while maximizing the capacity of the teaching staff, thus face-to-face courses were replaced by e-learning courses developed by the Institute.
- As a result, the number of e-learning courses and the number of participants far exceeded the target, which also included many participants from the Central Asia and Pacific region. The Institute focused its resources on improving the design, content and interaction level of e-learning courses. These e-learning courses were also highly evaluated in their effectiveness, which was a great improvement compared to the e-learning courses conducted by the Institute prior to COVID-19.
- The Institute actively collaborated with national training institutions in conducting several sub-regional training programmes.
- The Institute actively collaborated with international organizations, holding training courses with them, participating in meetings virtually and inviting experts as resource persons of training courses.
- The Institute drafted a Resource Mobilization Strategy to which got reviewed and approved in the Council and has been implementing the strategy through its partnerships in conducting training programmes.

Key results and accomplishments

Goal 1: Improved availability and quality of official statistics for SDG monitoring in ESCAP members and associate members

8. The Institute held 91 training courses¹, workshops and seminars during 1 January 2020 to 30 September 2023. These were attended by 11,827 participants, of which 11,430 (97%) were in e-learning courses. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute could not hold face-to-face courses from March 2020 to September 2022. Most of the courses were implemented in collaboration with national or international organizations, research institutes or universities. These courses were at basic and advanced levels, relating to economic, social, agricultural and environment statistics. The courses also covered subjects such as training of trainers, data governance, statistical methods, data collection and building business registers. After the adoption of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 and the subsequent entrusting of responsibility for the monitoring of SDGs and targets to national statistical systems, the focus of statistical training has changed towards compilation of SDG related global indicators.

¹ Training course “Theory and Practices in Official Statistics for Monitoring SDGs” in collaboration with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) from 21 August to 1 December 2023 was also counted for the number of courses and participants.

Number of courses

9. The institute conducted 91 courses, of which 75 were e-learning courses, 16 face-to-face/2 blended courses. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the courses were conducted as e-learning courses.

10. In the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, the Institute is expected to conduct 8 e-learning courses and 26 face-to-face/blended courses every year. Due to the pandemic, the number of face-to-face courses was less than the expected number, however, the number of e-learning courses surpassed the expected level.

11. Disaggregating the number of courses by the type, the Institute was expected to conduct 2 SIAP-JICA courses, 8 regional short courses, 10 subregional courses and 6 country courses every year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of face-to-face courses was below compared to what was initially planned.

Table 1. Number of courses

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	15	31	18	28
e-learning/webinar	14	31	14	14
Country-specific	0	7	2	1
Face-to-face/blended course	1		4	14
SIAP-JICA course				1
Regional short course	1		1	7
Subregional course			1	4
Country course			2	2

Number of participants

12. The Strategic Plan sets targets for the number of participants of e-learning courses. The target number is 1,000 every year. The number of participants surpassed the target every year. During 2020-2022, most of the courses were conducted as e-learning. Even in 2023, when the Institute resumed face-to-face courses in Japan and about half of the courses were conducted face-to-face, the number of participants of e-learning courses is more than double of the target.

Table 2. Number of participants

Year	Target	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	-	2,709	3,102	3,431	2,593
e-learning/webinar	1,000	2,685	3,102	3,267	2,303
Face-to-face/blended course	-	24	-	164	290
SIAP-JICA course	-	-	-	-	(10)
Regional short course	-	24	-	73	178
Subregional course	-	-	-	18	61
Country course	-	-	-	73	51

Percentage of participants who report much improved confidence in applying training received in their job

13. According to the Strategic Plan, the number of participants who report much improved confidence in applying training received in their job should be monitored. The target is 80%. The percentage of participants indicating “improved confidence” by year is 83-91%, surpassing the target.

Table 3. Percentage of participants who report much improved confidence in applying training received in their job (%)

Topic	Target	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	80	91	86	83	89
Principles and Practices of Official Statistics		92	88	-	-
Strategy and Management		-	-	78	98
Population and Social Statistics		92	59	83	83
Economic Statistics		86	91	-	88
Environment and Disaster Statistics		-	87	83	84
Methodology and Statistical Process		96	89	88	97
Country-specific courses		-	80	-	96

Training programmes for Central Asia and Pacific Countries

14. According to the Strategic Plan, the number of government officials from Central Asia and Pacific countries should be monitored. Around 100 from Central Asia, and 160 from the Pacific participated in the Institute’s courses. The Institute held several sub-regional face-to-face courses for the Pacific after travel restrictions were relaxed.

Table 4. Number of participants from Central Asia and Pacific countries

Area	2020	2021	2022	2023
Central Asia	60	200	104	118
Pacific	43	97	164	171

Training of trainer courses

15. Based on the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, the number of statistical trainers trained and certified for delivery of further training also should be monitored. In 2020, the Institute planned a training course on trainers (ToT) on gender statistics but it was cancelled due to the pandemic. In 2021, the Institute conducted two ToT courses, one on gender statistics for monitoring the SDGs (7 participants) and one on telephone surveys (20 participants). In 2022, one ToT course, improving facilitation skills (12 participants) was conducted. The Institute will be conducting an additional ToT related course in December 2023.

Table 5. Details of Training of trainer courses

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of courses	0	2	1	(1)
Number of participants	-	27	12	

Management related training programmes

16. For the management related programmes, such as leadership/quality, the number of participants and the percentage of participants who report much improved confidence in applying training received in their job should be monitored according to the Strategic Plan. As face-to-face was the suitable delivery modality for these management related training programmes, they were not conducted by the Institute during 2020-2022. In 2023, the Institute conducted a course on Statistical Leadership for Heads of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) in Asia and the Pacific in which 16 officials participated. 100% of the participants evaluated the programme as very relevant for their work and 93% of the participants reported much improved confidence in applying training received in their job.

Management seminar for heads of national statistical offices

17. According to the Strategic Plan, the Institute should hold a management seminar for heads of national statistical offices (1 per year), and the number of participants and the percentage of participants who find the programme useful should be monitored. The Institute held the Management Seminar every year, and both the number of participants and the percentage of participants who find the programme useful surpassed the target.

Table 6. Details of Management Seminar result

	Target	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of Management Seminar	1	1	1	1	(1)
Number of Participants	50	76	81	73	
Percentage of participants who reported the seminar met the needs and priorities	80%	82%	83%	100%	

Goal 2: Improved coverage and quality of national statistical system to deliver training

18. According to the Strategic Plan, the Institute should support the conduct of sub-regional training programmes by the national training institutes, and the number of sub-regional training programmes conducted by national training institutions should be monitored.

19. The Institute developed a database for such activities and asked member countries for information. Information was received only from 5 countries. As per information received the national institution of these 5 countries Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, and Russian Federation conducted such activities in 2020-2023 as shown below.

Table 7. Number of subregional training programmes conducted by national training institutions

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of programmes	6	6	2	6

Goal 3: Improved coverage and quality of statistical training through enhanced partnership and innovations

20. Under Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan, the number of training programmes organized jointly with national statistical training institutions and/or international organizations, and the number of events in which SIAP is represented, are monitored.

21. The number of training programmes organized jointly with national statistical training institutions and/or international organizations fell short of in some years the target except in 2021, as some of the planned face-to-face programmes were cancelled because of the pandemic. On the other hand, the number of international events in which SIAP is represented surpassed the target, as during the pandemic, most of these events were held virtually and participation was easier.

Table 8. Number of training programmes organized jointly with national statistical training institutions and/or international organizations and number of international events in which SIAP is represented.

	Target	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of training programmes	26	11	29	15	25
Number of events in which SIAP is represented in international events	24	41	49	34	41

Goal 4: Sustained increase in financial and human resources, and improved statistical training and other services provided and coordinated by SIAP

Resource mobilization strategy

22. Under Goal 4, the Strategic Plan states that the resource mobilization strategy should be finalized and implemented, and that the number of resource mobilization activities/events should be monitored.

23. The Institute submitted the draft resource mobilization strategy at the sixteenth Governing Council in 2020. Based on the discussion at the Governing Council, the Institute revised the resource mobilization strategy, and re-submitted it as information to the seventeenth Governing Council in 2021.

24. The Resource mobilization strategy included several (face-to-face) events which at first were delayed due to COVID-19 pandemic, but the Institute was able to be implement the strategy from 2023 (e.g., Gender Statistics for the Pacific in partnership with UN Women and Big Data course with Statistics Korea).

Enhancement of e-learning course quality

25. Within the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, it requested the Institute to review the present system of delivery of e-learning courses and if possible, to improve the IT setup with collaboration of the host government. Although COVID-19 pandemic was not anticipated when the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan was finalized, due to face-to-face training not being possible, the pandemic motivated the Institute to focus its human resources in upgrading the quality of its e-learning courses. The Institute worked on the e-learning courses to be more visual-friendly and to deliver its content in various ways (e.g., voice-over delivery, webinars, non-moderated courses) to suit a wide range of participants.

Table 9. Number of e-learning programmes

	2020	2021	2022	2023
E-learning programmes with voice-over	8	13	10	9
Webinars*	6	18	4	5
Non-moderated courses	7	17	29	32

* Not including webinars that were held in the facilitated e-learning courses.

26. As part of the Institute's Communication and Advocacy strategy, SIAP's official website (<https://www.unsiap.or.jp>) will be re-designed for the content to be more user-friendly and accessible. As an in-kind contribution, the Government of Japan has agreed to provide experts to assist in the revamping of the Institute's website and discussions on specific design layouts etc. matters have been discussed from 2023. The Institute's renewed website is planned to be re-launched in 2024.

Lessons from implementing the plan

27. When the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan was devised, a pandemic like COVID-19 was not foreseeable and the Institute's main training courses, which are delivered via face-to-face were not possible for approximately three years. The Institute took these unexpected changes into opportunities and focused its resources to enhance the quality of the e-learning courses and continue to deliver its mandate. Through this challenge, the Institute has been able to show its flexibility and adaptability, which will continue in the next 2025-2029 period.

28. Through COVID-19 pandemic, participants have acknowledged the benefits of e-learning training delivery modality, in that it gives flexibility in when, from where and how to access the training material. Also, what was perceived as e-learning downsides, e.g., lack of interaction, lack of visual material etc. was able to be addressed during the pandemic. Even with the current return of face-to-face courses, it is clear that e-learning/hybrid training modality will continue in the future. The Institute is planning to conduct training programmes via various modalities whether it is face-to-face, hybrid, or e-learning, based on the training course content, level and intended audience.

29. Based on the SDG progress Report for Asia and Pacific 2023 and the training programmes conducted at the Institute, within the Asia-Pacific region training needs and demands vary widely depending on region. To customize the training programmes for the participants, for face-to-face courses, the Institute has moved from conducting regional courses to focusing more on sub-regional and country courses and this trend is expected to continue in 2025-2029.