



Supporting the Dialogue between the Users and Producers of Statistics

with a special focus on social statistics
in the Southern & Eastern Mediterranean Countries



The Medstat III programme in brief

Medstat III is the statistical cooperation programme with the European Union's partner countries of North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean and is financed and managed by EuropeAid. The programme, which was officially launched on 28 April 2010, will run until the end of 2013, and has a budget of seven million Euros. It aims to strengthen the capacity of the statistical authorities of the EU's Mediterranean partners (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia) to collect up to date, timely and relevant statistics, ensuring the reliability and coherence of available information.

Objectives

Medstat III builds on the achievements of the Medstat I (1996-2003) and Medstat II (2006-2009) programmes. It seeks to promote evidence-based policy-making and to foster democratic development through the use of robust statistical data. The programme aims to improve the quality and availability of data in six priority thematic sectors - agriculture, energy, migration, social statistics, transport, and trade and balance of payments - and will promote the increased dissemination and use of this data.

What does it do?

Medstat III is designed to strengthen the national statistics institutes and national statistical systems in the Mediterranean Partner Countries by improving their capacity to collect timely, relevant, and high-quality data necessary for political decision-making and good governance. Furthermore, it promotes the harmonisation of statistical data with European and international standards, and consolidates the exchange of data between partners.

The Medstat III experts work closely with their counterparts in the partner countries to carry out the project's activities and to transfer know-how and best practices. This is done through targeted technical assistance, and a series of workshops, seminars, training courses, and study visits.

Other activities include promoting a more user-friendly dissemination of statistics and a better understanding of the importance of statistics among the final users (politicians, governments, administration, private sector, journalists, universities, civil society, EU bodies, and international institutions).

Data availability

In a complementary activity, Eurostat collects annually a wide range of data from the Mediterranean partners.

These data can be consulted on-line at:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/european_neighbourhood_policy/enp_south/data_1/database

A synopsis of this data is also available in .pdf version in the Eurostat country profiles that can be consulted on-line at:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/european_neighbourhood_policy/enp_south/data_1/country_profiles

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Foreword

The value of a national statistical system (NSS) lies not in the quantity of data released, nor even in its quality. The value – for society – of an effective statistical system stems from the improvement it generates in informing debate and decision-making: statistics are only useful if they are used. That is not to say that statistics that are not used are necessarily useless: rather they may represent a wasted opportunity to shed light on important issues. It follows, therefore, that statisticians have a duty to ensure their numbers are used. That, in turn, requires engaging with users of statistics, to ensure that the following holds true:

- ▶ the outputs of a NSS are relevant and of appropriate quality for users' needs, and
- ▶ users are aware of those outputs and are able to use them appropriately.

The Medstat III programme considered that improving the dialogue between users and producers of statistics is a priority objective aiming at strengthening the capabilities of national statistical systems in the Mediterranean Region and enhancing the quality of statistical outputs. The Social Statistics Sector of the Medstat III programme initiated this process by incorporating specific activities related to this objective in its work programme.

A workshop on developing the dialogue between users and producers of social statistics was convened on 10 November 2010 in Paris. This workshop was the first attempt to bring together users and producers of social statistics from the Mediterranean partner countries in order to familiarise the two groups with their respective needs and the constraints associated with the production process of social statistics on one side, and the utilisation of these outputs in an effective way on the other.

Representatives from the producers – mainly from the national statistical institutes (NSI) – and from a variety of users such as decision-makers in the central government, academics, and non-governmental organisations – explored the potential and limits of the dialogue. The decision was taken then to draft guidelines that could help professionals from the region to initiate or improve an ongoing dialogue in a national context.

A group of six participants from the Mediterranean partner countries volunteered to support the task of drafting of such guidelines; the drafting itself was assigned to Jon Hall, an international consultant and expert in communication. A team of international statisticians assisted Jon in his endeavour under the auspices of the Medstat III programme. The first draft was tested in a real environment during a consultative workshop hosted by the Central Administration of Statistics of Lebanon in Beirut. Representatives of national and international stakeholders were invited to discuss the subject matter and provide advice and recommendations.

The outcome of this consultation was subsequently submitted to a team of three peer reviewers internationally recognised for their experience and wisdom. The revised version of the Guidelines was then shared with Eurostat and the Directors of the NSI in the Medstat III partner countries for their review and comments. This final version has been adopted by the Directors General of the NSI in the Medstat III partner countries.

For more information:
Eurostat website <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>
For 'user support', you may visit the Eurostat's website:
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/help/user_support

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List of acronyms

Adetef	The international technical assistance agency for the French Ministries for the Economy and Finance, Industry, Crafts and Tourism, Sustainable Development and State Reform – France
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics – Egypt
CAS	Central Administration of Statistics – Lebanon
CNS	Conseil national de la statistique (National Statistics Council) – Tunisia
DOS	Department of Statistics – Jordan
DS	Direction de la Statistique, Haut Commissariat au Plan – Morocco
EC	European Commission – Brussels
Eurostat	European Statistical Office – Luxembourg
ENP-South	European Neighbourhood Policy for the South region that covers nine non-EU Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia
GDDS	General Data Dissemination System (IMF)
HCP	Haut Commissariat au Plan (High Planning Commission) – Morocco
ILO	International Labour Organisation (UN)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INS	Institut national de la statistique (National Institute of Statistics) – Tunisia
INSEE	Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies) – France
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
Medstat	Statistical cooperation programme with the European Union's partner countries of North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean Region
MPC	Mediterranean partner countries of the ENP-South
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSC	National Statistical Council
NSI	National Statistical Institute
NSS	National Statistical System
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ONS	Office national des Statistiques – Algeria
PARIS21	Partnership In Statistics for the 21st Century
PCBS	Central Bureau of Statistics – Palestine
SDDS	Special Data Dissemination Standard (IMF)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

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This publication is also available in French and Arabic.

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These Guidelines should evolve over time. If you have comments on this publication, or suggestions for additional material that should be included, please send them to:

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Executive Summary

Statistics are lifeblood of democracy. Citizens should rely on solid and impartial evidence for assessing the performance of the government. A strong relationship between users and producers of statistics in general, and social statistics in particular, goes hand in hand with the participatory approach to development.

Portraying the users and producers

While there is a widely understood need to improve the user-producer dialogue on statistics, much less work has been done about how to run successfully such a dialogue in practice.

Productive relationships require mutual trust and understanding. They take time to develop and can be challenging. Both statisticians and policymakers often have preconceived ideas about the difficulties of working with their counterparts on the other side of the statistical office wall.

Statisticians are often viewed by users as slow to embrace new ideas and demands, slow to produce data, and generally insensitive to the high-pressure demands of policymaking and to the need for timely data. Sometimes this view is fair. More often, it is not. Policymakers (and other users) are usually unaware of the constraints faced by data producers – whether they collect data within the national statistical institute (NSI) or in a line ministry – and they have a poor understanding of the complexity and the cost of collecting and compiling quality statistics.

Similarly, statisticians often view users – especially policymakers – as overly demanding data-users, with a tendency to accidentally, or even deliberately, use statistics to back up their political agenda rather than to inform the public. While this may be an accurate portrayal of a minority, it is not a true picture of the majority of users.

Moreover, policymakers often work under great pressure, and are rarely able to enjoy the luxury of waiting for official data to become available. Instead, they might fall back on using already available data, frequently from international sources, or ‘quick and dirty’ information from non-governmental sources. This data may be helpful at first sight but could reveal inappropriate to the policy issues at hand and lead to poor policy decisions.

However, whether statisticians like it or not, the reality is that policymakers often have to make decisions quickly and under pressure. If statisticians cannot provide data sufficiently fast, policymakers can be forced to make decisions based on no data, or on inappropriate data. This is neither good for statisticians, nor policymakers, nor society at large.

These misperceptions often come from the lack of experience of working closely together. In countries where the two groups engage in an open and candid dialogue, statisticians receive regular feedback on the relevance and usefulness of their output, on the way it is disseminated, and quickly learn of new demands for data. Meanwhile users better understand the constraints faced by the national statistical system (NSS), and are more likely to know which statistics are available and the purposes for which they can – or cannot – be used. Ultimately, a stronger relationship improves the quality of a NSI's output, and increases statistical literacy and capability.

Improving the dialogue

Properly handled, a dialogue can improve the production process of statistics, strengthen trust and understanding among the stakeholders, forge new networks, and educate all those who take part. This ultimately increases the use of statistics.

An implicit challenge is to align resources with demands; and a better dialogue between users and producers is instrumental to achieving that. Subsequently, the key questions in a dialogue are: What to talk about? With whom? How to structure the dialogue? However, these are not straightforward questions.

The users of statistics are diverse, they span the traditional users, such as government ministries and academics, through an ever more diverse set of non-traditional users, who are more difficult to identify yet alone reach. The public too is an essential stakeholder. Therefore, the key questions must ultimately consider what package of statistics and statistical products are the optimum to fulfil a NSI's – or NSS's – role, bearing in mind the constraints upon it (resource, legislative, political) and the impact of not producing certain data.

Of course, there are risks too in running a dialogue. These range from allegations of political bias – which might stem from creating a closer relationship with government during the dialogue – to an overall worsening of relations between users and producers, which might stem from a dialogue that raised expectations but did not deliver.

The choice of social statistics

There are several reasons to focus on social statistics:

- ▶ Unlike economic statistics, social statistics lack a single agreed and unified framework. This can make discussions about them more challenging as the legitimacy for producing some indicators cannot be justified by appealing to an internationally agreed framework;
- ▶ There are many new and emerging demands for social data and indicators driven by the considerable changes underway in many societies. Socio-political changes and increased globalisation are two major drivers;
- ▶ Demands come also from calls to develop better measures of progress and, in particular, the strong and growing calls to ensure social issues feature prominently in thinking about sustainable development, as well as governance issues, and what are the indicators that are adequate to measure it. These are legitimate demands that need to be understood and met if national statistical institutes wish to remain relevant;
- ▶ Ongoing social changes and moving political environment in the Mediterranean Region are overwhelming grounds for advocating for greater transparency in the governance process and political accountability for social issues.

Although most of the information here is relevant to the social statistics sector, the principles behind the proposed modus operandi can be applied easily to every sector of statistics.

These Guidelines suggest a variety of approaches to answering the three meta questions – who to talk to, what to talk about, and how to talk about it – as well as illustrating approaches to setting up and successfully running a dialogue that must be borne in mind. These considerations range from how to build support to launch a dialogue, how to create effective governance for the process, and how to ensure the outcome is embedded within the broader national statistical service.

The authors have used real life practical examples from the Mediterranean partner countries and beyond to illustrate their ideas.

How to use these Guidelines

I. Objectives of the Guidelines

These Guidelines describe why a dialogue between users and producers of official social statistics is beneficial, offer advice on how to assess whether a stronger dialogue is required in any particular situation or society, and suggest ways to conduct the dialogue.

These Guidelines have two main objectives:

- ▶ Advocate for a better integration of social statistics in the policymaking process by motivating statisticians to improve the use of their output through developing candid relationships with national and international stakeholders;
- ▶ Provide a tool kit that offers a variety of options for improving discussions between users and producers of official social statistics.

The Guidelines have been designed for the Mediterranean countries included in the European Neighbourhood Policy¹ for the Southern countries (ENP-South). Countries around the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean are part of a very diverse region and some of the proposed tools will be more useful to some countries than to others. Nevertheless, there should be enough information in these Guidelines, and enough options, to help set up a successful dialogue that learns from other practices. The tools described in the Guidelines could and should be adapted to fit the specific context and needs of each country.

Moreover, in some cases other approaches, not mentioned here, might complement and work better than those proposed here. These Guidelines simply provide a starting point and suggestions for a way forward. They do not set out a mechanical process that will automatically guarantee an improved dialogue between users and producers. Nor should they suggest that this is something that can be addressed quickly. The process takes time and energy to achieve results.

Nor are these Guidelines exhaustive. They may highlight some of the key issues but they are not meant to cover every aspect that might be relevant to every consultation. They should also be looked at in the context of the existing and much broader material that relates to the production and use of official statistics. Some key material is listed in Appendix 8.

II. The audience of the Guidelines

Producers of social statistics

First and foremost, these Guidelines are addressed to officials operating in the framework of the national statistical systems² in the ENP-Southern partner countries, and particularly in the national statistical institutes (NSI) in the production process of official social statistics. Thus, engaging with users in a regular dialogue should be core business for a NSI.

Key people who should be interested in these guidelines include:

- ▶ the Director of the national statistical institute;
- ▶ the Chairman of the national statistical council – where it exists;
- ▶ the heads of statistical units in the national statistical system (NSS);
- ▶ the staff responsible for dissemination of social statistics; and
- ▶ the producers of social statistics in line ministries.

¹ For more information on the European Neighbourhood Policy, see http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm

² The national statistical system encompasses all stakeholders, national and international producers and users, in the public as well as the private sector.

Users of social statistics

At the other end of the spectrum, users of social statistics should be interested too in the dialogue with the producers. But who are the main users of statistics and how do they use data? This may vary from country to country, with users increasingly coming not just from the governmental and policymaking sectors, but also from civil society, academia, the private sector, Parliament, and the media, as well as international organisations. Some producers of data – including policy departments and national statistical institutes – are also users of data. A typology of users is considered in more detail in section 2.4.

Different users have different uses for data and access it in different ways.

For example, the nature of data that policymakers request may be very different from the data that academics, civil society members or the media need to access to. In addition, policymakers have different constraints in comparison to other users: they might be willing to attend a short session on short-term forecasting, whereas academics might attend all-day workshops to discuss their data requirements; and it is unlikely that journalists or people from the private sector would spare so much time.

Therefore, different engagement strategies will be necessary if a NSI wishes to have a dialogue with various types of users.

III. Structure of the Guidelines

The Guidelines are organised in three parts:

Part 1: Dialogue: what is at stake? Part 1 is an introduction to the issues at hand. It presents the importance of “user-friendly” social statistics and some of the challenges in producing and disseminating them.

Part 2: Understanding the environment and the actors. Part 2 focuses on assessing the need for a dialogue and how to start one. It begins by describing the importance of social statistics (both official and unofficial) and their place in the overall statistical system.

It then examines what is meant by “dialogue” and how a dialogue can both raise the quality and the use of social statistics. Then it talks about who should be involved in the dialogue, and how to assess the gap between those who produce and those who use social statistics.

This part concludes by looking at how to choose the topics for discussion within a dialogue, starting from the premise that a dialogue should ultimately explore the needs and constraints of both users and producers, and consider how they can work together more effectively to inform decision-making and the national debate.

Part 3: Running the dialogue. Part 3 sets out a suite of practical considerations and approaches for conducting a dialogue, as well as how to manage and run the overall project and its components. It discusses the importance of embedding the results within a national statistical system, includes tips for success, and gives a set of key references. Special attention is given to improving dissemination through a statistical dissemination policy. It aims at inspiring national dialogues that adapt these Guidelines in the light of local conditions.

PART

1

Dialogue: What is at Stake?

1.1 - Why social statistics?

What are social statistics?

While economic statistics have benefited from an established framework – built around the System of National Accounts (SNA) –, thinking about what comprises a set of social statistics is still a work in progress.

There are various frameworks for social statistics around the world. Although many have been developed independently by different countries, there is considerable overlap in the areas covered and in the ways in which they are laid out. The Australian Bureau of Statistics, for example, has a framework built around nine areas: Population; Family and community; Health; Education and training; Work; Economic resources; Housing; Crime and justice; and Culture and leisure.³ While Mongolia lists nine broad domains for their social statistical system: Population; Health; Education, culture, art and science; Labour; Household income and expenditure; Poverty; Social insurance and welfare; Housing; and Crime and justice.⁴

Nevertheless, whichever framework is used, social statistics are, essentially, data about people’s lives, living conditions and activities. Some of the key areas of social statistics include:

► **Demography and population:** how many people live in an area? What are their age, sex, marital

status, and, sometimes, ethnic background? How people form households and families? How many will they be in the future?

► **Migration:** the determinants (where do people move from and to, and why do they move?) and the consequences. Who are they?

► **Education, training, and vocational training:** what qualifications and how much schooling people had or are undertaking?

► **Health and well-being** (which might be both objective and subjective): how long can people expect to live and what are the levels of disability or disease and illness in a country? What do we know about reproductive health, nutrition, or vaccination rates? What are levels of self-assessed health?

► **Living standards, poverty, vulnerability, inequalities, and social exclusion:** what do we know about people’s income, consumption patterns, and their demand for goods and services?

► **Social protection, vulnerability, and resilience:** what do we know about access to pensions, retirement schemes, health insurance, and maternity leave?

► **Housing conditions:** what sort of accommodation do people live in? Are they living in overcrowded accommodation? To what services (water, electricity, telephone...) can they have access?

► **Labour** (employment, unemployment, and under-employment) and salaries: are people working, looking for work, studying, or retired? How many

³ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4160.0>

⁴ <http://www.unescap.org/stat/social-stat/meeting-Sep2011/session2-Mongolia.pdf>

hours do they work and what wages do they earn? Are they engaged in 'decent' work?

- ▶ **Public services:** availability and access to public services (education, health, sanitation, public transportation, communication, and utilities); quality of these services.
- ▶ **Crime and justice:** what are the rates of the different types of crime in a society? How many people are incarcerated?
- ▶ **Culture and leisure:** how do people spend their free time? What are the levels of participation in groups and organisations?
- ▶ **Democracy & Governance:** what is the rate of participation in elections? What are the quantitative features of participative democracy? What information is disseminated about tax collection and budget expenditures?
- ▶ **Cross-cutting issues such as youth expectations, gender** (violence against women, female participation in social and professional life), the information society, quality of life, happiness, and life satisfaction.

Several of these domains have both a social and economic aspect, and indeed some of them, such as labour force statistics, are considered in the statistical standards of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as economic statistics. This gives social statistics a particularly broad and complex set of users who are often using the same data to look at very different questions. Central Bankers will monitor the unemployment rate carefully as part of a national macroeconomic management strategy, whereas social scientists might use it to help understand levels of social cohesion in a society.

BOX

1

Relevance in social statistics: an example from Lebanon

Although statistics are not valuable unless they are used, it is important to remember there are often statistics that may become valuable even if they are not used at the moment.

A good example in the Mediterranean region comes from Lebanon: When an old building collapsed in Beirut in January 2012 and a number of people were injured and killed, the media complained that the Central Administration for Statistics (CAS) failed in providing the relevant statistics on the current "age of buildings" in Lebanon.

Indeed, that indicator was available from the Census of Buildings, Dwellings and Establishments and other household surveys conducted by the CAS in 2004, even though it was not often used.

The NSI was conveniently able to provide on the spot statistics unused until that time but relevant to meet those unforeseeable needs.

Moreover, the users candidly thought that the fall down was due to the age of the building. The CAS rightly provided an "educated" reply by underlining that there is a very weak correlation between the age of a building and its propensity to collapse, and that other explanatory parameters should be taken into account.

Of course, in cases such as this one, where there is a danger of people leaping to the wrong conclusions, it would be good practice for the NSI to observe that there are always more than one factor behind observed facts, and that correlation and causation should not be confused. It should be left to experts in the community – engineers and architects in this case – to interpret the data and pronounce on what the statistics say about social issues.

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

Moreover, it is increasingly seen as important in many of these domains to collect subjective data to complement the objective data that are traditionally collected. Interview surveys gathering subjective data on the perception of poverty and inequalities are more and more promoted to understand how people feel about aspects of their lives. Although the official crime rate is clearly important for policy makers, it is equally – if not more – important to understand people's fear of crime. Completely different policy responses are required for societies where the crime rate is low but people are afraid, as opposed to those in which the crime rate is high but people are less worried. It is very likely that the fear of crime ultimately affects behaviour and influences well-being more than the official crime rate. There are also international frameworks that cover social statistics, such as:

- ▶ The World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), that assess poverty and its key determinants, set targets for poverty reduction, identify priority public actions, and establish a systematic monitoring and evaluation tools;
- ▶ The Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which cover several "social" areas that are measured by indicators on poverty, employment, nutrition, education, health, and gender equality amongst other issues (see Appendix 7);
- ▶ The International Labour Organization (ILO) statistical framework, which gives also a solid set of labour market indicators.

One of the prime objectives of the Medstat III programme is to support the efforts of NSIs and line ministries to build their capacity to improve the production and dissemination of social statistics that meet international standards, and are comparable with other countries.

After considering international and regional frameworks and national best practices, the Medstat III programme has developed a common set of regional harmonized social indicators that the

Mediterranean countries would commit to establish and disseminate.

This set of indicators covers the following areas:

- ▶ **Population:** population characteristics, and population dynamics;
- ▶ **Education:** literacy, general education, higher education, education quality, technical and vocational education and training, education resources and expenditure;
- ▶ **Health:** status, determinants, maternal and reproductive health, healthcare and services, health expenditure;
- ▶ **Living conditions:** poverty and inequalities, basic services and housing, communication;
- ▶ **Labour:** employment, unemployment, under-employment, informal employment, and wages;
- ▶ **Gender:** empowerment, well-being and poverty, education, economic participation, and wages.

There is also a growing understanding that indicators of sustainable development need to give far more prominence than it has hitherto been the case to social issues, including measures of current, inter and intra-generational equity. This was a key theme in the recommendations of the 2012 report by the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Global Sustainability.⁵

Finally, it is important to emphasise that, to date, there is no exhaustive list of social statistics on which everyone agrees. However, there are partial lists of internationally agreed indicators that are regularly discussed. In every country, the issue for social statistics is to have internationally agreed indicators produced following agreed methodology. Also, even more challenging for the NSS, to have additional indicators to reflect more closely on the national social issues. There are diverse sets of data that might be labelled "social statistics", thus diverse sets of possible users. What is important, in any country, is that appropriate social data are available to understand the key relevant issues.

⁵ http://www.un.org/gsp/sites/default/files/attachments/GSPReportOverview_A4%20size.pdf

Deciding what data is vital though requires engagement between users and producers of social data. Experience has shown that it has to reflect the diversity of concerns within a society.

Why social statistics need to be user-friendly?

Statistics are less useful when they are less used. Even the most accurate and high quality statistics have limited value if they do not inform decision-making, research, or debate in a society. All too often they do not. Considerable resources are often invested in collecting, compiling, and publishing

statistics that are then left to gather dust on library shelves, or sit unused on a national statistical institute website, or a line ministry website, buried in pages that are never accessed.

In line with the official mandate assigned to most national statistical institutes, many statisticians felt that their job was complete when a set of statistics were published. If the statistics were accurate, then the NSI's work was considered to be done: it was the responsibility of others to ensure the numbers were used.

BOX

2

Official statistics and otherwise

Rapidly evolving technology gives opportunities to collect data faster than ever before and to present more sophisticated statistical stories in compelling ways. The expectations of users are changing and statisticians need to embrace these technologies to remain relevant. That said, one key aspect that sets official statistics apart from the rest is the expectation that they will be of very high quality, and comparable from one year to another. Users sometimes forget this in their quest for a "quick and dirty" solution. Timeliness is a dimension of quality and so an appropriate balance needs to be struck between the effective and rapid response and a "perfect" solution.

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

However, in recent years an increasing number of NSIs have begun to understand their role rather differently. They think now of their work in terms of the outcomes they are trying to achieve (better decision-making) rather than just in terms of their statistical outputs. As a result, NSIs are advocating for a change in their responsibilities and putting increased amounts of effort into ensuring that their statistics are used. Many countries have initiated a national debate on the design and validation of a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) along the lines developed by the PARIS21 consortium. Articulating such a strategy has the advantage of formulating medium-term objectives and the way to reach these objectives.

The development community has also recognised the role of good statistics, for example in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of social policies, especially in Poverty Reduction Strategies. Much of this effort however is done on an ad hoc basis, triggered by a new survey for example, rather than through systematic and regular discussions between those who produce and use social statistics.

Of course, statisticians are unlikely to be able to insist that anyone uses their statistics. However, they are able to encourage their use, in part by ensuring their statistics are user-friendly.

How can they do this?

-First, statisticians need to ensure they are producing relevant statistics, with the correct

timeliness, frequency, and level of detail that are useful to users;

- Second, those statistics need to be well presented, explained, and communicated, so that users can easily understand them, and analyse them appropriately;

-Third, they need to be effectively disseminated so that users can find and access them, or – better – so that the statistics find the users.

These three factors, in turn, require a solid understanding of what users want:

- ▶ Which statistics are relevant to current policy concerns?
- ▶ What level of timeliness, frequency, and detail is needed by the users?
- ▶ What styles of statistical communication can help – not hinder – understanding?
- ▶ What methods of dissemination are effective?

These are not decisions that statisticians can take for themselves without seeking the opinion of users. Statisticians therefore must engage with users in a dialogue to understand the sort of statistics that are most useful, and the best ways to communicate and disseminate them. As we will discuss later, such dialogues can bring many other benefits – to both the users and producers – beyond more user-friendly statistics.

For their part, users must also take responsibility for ensuring they get adequate data. In a dialogue with producers, it is important that users are able to:

- ▶ Express their specific needs: what numbers do they need, and for what purposes?
- ▶ Understand the constraints of a NSS, and what is realistic and feasible;
- ▶ Understand the different roles of official and unofficial statistics.

What are the challenges and constraints for producing user-friendly and relevant social statistics?

There are many challenges and constraints for producing relevant and user-friendly social statistics. They are often misunderstood by both producers and users.

Maintaining Relevance

Societies change quickly and new issues frequently emerge that require policy responses. In turn, new policies require evidence to inform their design, their implementation and the measurement of their outcomes. But it takes considerable time and resources to collect new social data. Questionnaires must be written and tested. Sample surveys have to be designed. Data need to be collected, compiled, cleaned, analysed, and finally released. It can take many months – or years – and requires considerable human and financial resources. Moreover, the data are often relevant only when a time series is available, showing trends as well as the state of the indicator.

Users may express an urgent need for new social data in response to a current political issue and can become frustrated that the statisticians cannot provide them with the answers they require more quickly. This frustration often arises from an imperfect understanding of the statistical collection process.⁶

Even in cases where relevant data are already collected, it may become apparent that these data are imperfect. Data might not be recent enough for policymaking purposes. Alternatively, they might not be available at the appropriate level of geographical detail to inform policymakers. National level estimates, for example, are often not sufficient for a government trying to set up regional policies.

Administrative data are also important and relevant to these Guidelines. Those institutions that produce administrative data include line ministries and government agencies. Such data have their own challenges. The producers face constraints (such

⁶ That is not to say that NSIs could not do better in releasing data more quickly, and sometimes they might be a little puritanical about what is released: even provisional data from a pilot survey might be of better quality than leaving policymakers to rely on unofficial statistics.

as maintaining privacy) or specific objectives for collecting the data that may not align with the interests of the decision-making or research communities. Indeed the data collection may not have been designed in the first place with traditional statistical needs in mind. For instance, the ministry responsible for labour statistics might not collect information on unemployment registrations broken down by sex or age because it is not necessary for administrative purposes, even if researchers and policymakers would welcome that information to make full use of the data set.

Although policymakers should understand better the constraints that NSIs and other producers face, it is also imperative that data producers invest in understanding users' needs to respond better to them.

Making social statistics more user-friendly

Social statistics often deal with complicated concepts that can be challenging to explain. Ideas that seem at first glance straightforward can prove difficult to measure and explain simply. Many policymakers might want to know, for example, how many poor people there are in the country. Yet, statisticians know that answering that question is far from straightforward. They should decide whether it is more appropriate to measure poverty based on income, expenditure, or on broader measures taking into account other resources. If income-based measures are presented, then should they consider absolute or relative poverty? And how does one determine what is an absolute or relative poverty line in a country? How does one adjust the measures of income to take into account households of different sizes with their different economies of scale? And so on.

Even statistics on the number of children with unemployed parents can be difficult to present simply. Some 'children' have a job at 16-year old and are self-sufficient. Others are still in education at age 25 and rely on their parents. Some live with one parent, or other family members. What seems at

first glance to be a relatively simple question can be quite complicated to answer in a way that is readily understandable yet accurate.

Even when users know the precise data they require for their analysis, there can be frustration. Finding the data they are looking for can be time-consuming. In addition, even if they can find the data they are looking for, it can be complicated to extract it from a website or database in a convenient format.

It is important that those whose job requires using statistics have some statistical literacy.⁷ At the same time, statistical products should be aimed at the non-expert as well as the expert. It is also important that statisticians do all they can to assist users. The key message here is that different users require different information in different ways. Statisticians should use a variety of methods to help ensure that users receive the data they need in a way that is fit for their purpose and easy to use.

Indeed, as resources (both financial and human) are scarce, a well-handled discussion of users' demands should end in a consensus between producers and users about priorities for producing and disseminating key statistical outputs. Such a process should be continuous, with frequent contacts between the NSIs and users in different ways, each year, to ensure that they are quickly aware of emerging issues.

1.2 - The benefits of dialogue

Why the dialogue between users and producers may improve the quality and use of social statistics?

Official statistics are trusted only if they are credible and produced impartially. There are several reasons why dialogue is important.

- First, every NSS has to make choices about what it does and does not measure. Those important choices are inherently political, not least because "what gets measured gets done". These choices should not be made only on technical statistical

grounds, and a broader consultation outside of the NSS is vitally important if the NSS wishes to be seen as an impartial producer of official statistics that are a common good for all the society;

- Second, every NSS struggles to remain relevant (particularly because of increasing competition from other organisations that collect and disseminate data, which gets easier every year). New policy issues emerge each year that require new data (consider all the recent work to collect better statistics on greenhouse gas emissions for example). If a NSS is to remain relevant, it needs to discuss its overall work programme with users to identify what they think are the new demands and priorities for statistical activity. NSSs need to demonstrate their public value: which has to be, essentially, the provision of trusted, impartial, accurate, and relevant information;
- Third, there is a growing and more diverse body of sophisticated data users in many countries: improvements in technology and education mean an increasing number of people and organisations who want to access data for their decision-making. These new users generate demands, and want to access statistics in different ways. A good relationship between them and the statisticians helps NSSs react to new requirements;
- Fourth, a stronger engagement with users can lift the quality of official statistics in ways that go beyond improving their relevance. Dialogue can lead to new conversations about existing statistics that help to uncover problems. Users are often experts in particular areas and can be quicker than a NSI at spotting discrepancies in the data;
- Last, but by no means least, and as we already argued, statistics are only valuable if they are used. A NSS can only truly be successful if national statistics are used to take better decisions and inform debates. There is a growing understanding that a statistician's work does not end when the numbers are released; statisticians need also to

work to make sure the data they produce are understood and used. A close relationship between users and producers can help. It can help users discover that data are available and help them to find the data. It can help producers to ensure that the data are disseminated in such a way that they will be used, and used appropriately.

⁷ This is not the place for a detailed discussion on statistical literacy. For more information see The International Statistical Literacy Project of the IASE (International Association of Statistical Education) <http://www.stat.auckland.ac.nz/~iase/islp/home>; www.StatLit.org; or the "Data Journalism Handbook" <http://datajournalismhandbook.org/1.0/en/>

BOX

3

Statement by the Chairwoman of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

Ms Ola Awad, Chairwoman of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, kindly agreed to answer few questions submitted by Mr Bahjat Achikbache.

Q: How important for PCBS and other producers of social statistics to discuss the statistical output with the users in Palestine? In other words, is this dialogue bringing a value added to the quality of the data produced and its relevance in the national context?

A: The user-producer dialogue is an essential tool as it bridges the gap between the data user and producer and allows them to work together to define the priorities for the country in general and for the relevant institutions and individuals in specific. Also, such dialogue enhances and forecasts the spirit of partnership between all components of the national statistical system and helps in creating harmony among them. Moreover, the user-producer dialogue is considered as an accumulative process that follows the project from the preparation stage up to the dissemination of final results stage to ensure that users' requirements are fulfilled as well as to ensure that the produced data is used by the relevant institutions for their development plans and monitoring progress made.

Q: What are the main difficulties you have to overcome in order to make this dialogue more effective?

A: The main challenges and difficulties that we have to overcome are:
Enhancing the data users' awareness of statistics and its importance and how they can benefit from the produced statistics in drawing their policies and development plans;
Unifying definitions and classifications and making data users committed to using the same definitions and classifications adopted and used by the Statistical Office;
Reaching a consensus in terms of the priorities of the Statistical Office from one hand the Data User on the other hand.

Q: Do you feel you are meeting the needs of the numerous groups of users (policymakers, academics, researchers, the media, the public opinion, regional and international organisations)?

A: Yes, the results of the 2010 User Satisfaction Survey showed that the Statistical Office has produced and provided data that met the needs of numerous groups and the percentage of using the statistical data by different user's groups was as follow:
The regular use of statistical data regardless of how often represented 60% of users. This is a good indicator that high percentage of users is depending on PCBS data for planning, decision-making and studies.
The results showed also that the use of PCBS output increased through the years, which reflects that the PCBS is providing more comprehensive data. Forty three % of users started using the PCBS data between 2000 and 2005. Results showed that the use of PCBS data were mainly for studies and research with 80.2%, followed by 47.3% for planning purposes, then 42.1% for decision making. For controlling and monitoring purposes, the percentage of use was 31.8%. Social demographic statistics were the most used by the different types of users, followed by economic statistics, then geographic statistics. Three quarters of users (76.2% institutions, 70.5% individuals) preferred PCBS data to other sources of data. User's satisfaction of PCBS data was between 80% and 93% for all related measurements.

Q: How useful do you think these Guidelines will be to the Medstat III partner countries? Do you think they are worth implementing at the national level, and for the other sectors of statistics?

The Guidelines will be of great benefit and importance to Medstat III partner countries and they are worth implementing at the national level in all components of the Statistical System as such Guidelines would absolutely contribute to the development of the relevant institutions work.

Source: the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS).

Why the dialogue between users and producers may improve relationships and increase public and governmental support to official statistics?

More interaction between users and producers may build understanding between the two groups. The stereotype of the unresponsive puritanical statistician still holds sway over many users. Similarly, statisticians often have negative opinions about users, seeing them as statistically ignorant or people only looking for facts that back-up their prejudices.

In a number of societies, there is a lack of public trust in public institutions, and consequently in official data. Building a closer relationship between statisticians and users – especially users from outside of government – can help improve the trust in the official numbers. Trust will come from seeing that the numbers are both credible and produced with strong "statistical ethics".

BOX

4

Issues with the statistical systems and the need for dialogue; the example of the UN-ESCWA Region

One expert sees that statistical stakeholders in the UN-ESCWA region can be characterised in 3 key groups, as in any region: national users, national producers, and international organisations. Some of the weaknesses in the system at the moment are:

- ▶ User demands are scattered and uncoordinated;
 - ▶ Producers do not respond to the demand in a coordinated way;
 - ▶ Insufficient coordination and discussion between users and producers; and
 - ▶ Poor coordination between international organisations.
- All these weaknesses call for a better dialogue.

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

A stronger relationship that helps build trust and understanding may help ensure statistics are used. It will demonstrate the value of statistics to civil society and may be instrumental in helping gather support for a NSI and its work program. Dialogue may

help create champions for official statistics within the user community. When the NSI budget is being threatened, or when the value of the NSS is being questioned, these champions will be invaluable.



The risks of dialogue

If the dialogue is beneficial, it implies some risks as well. The first one is that by entering into a process of dialogue, producers will raise expectations among users. These expectations need to be carefully managed. If producers do not react to users concerns, and do nothing to address them, the “dialogue” can actually lead to a worse relationship than before the process started.

Another risk is the possible perception that the NSI – by forming a closer relationship with policymakers – has become politicised. There is a danger that a NSI’s reputation might be tainted, but this risk can be managed by being transparent about the dialogue process and ensuring that all stakeholders – not just the government of the day – can take part and have a voice.

Social statistics – which deal with issues of fundamental importance to people’s lives – may often come under heavy political pressure. Statisticians need to guard against this – a job made more difficult because many areas of social statistics lack an internationally agreed framework that can be used to shield data collections from political manipulation. These issues may be raised in dialogue but they are unlikely to come as a surprise to statisticians: ensuring the transparency of the process is the best defence. “Sunlight is the best disinfectant”.⁸

Expectations within the NSI should also be managed. Building a stronger relationship will take time. Data producers should not expect to see dramatic results after weeks or months. The outcome of the process will materialise in the long term. Although effort does not necessarily need to be intensive, it does need to be sustained.

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

PART

2

Understanding the environment and the actors

2.1 - Setting the scene: supporting the production and use of social statistics

“Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens’ entitlement to public information”. (United Nations’ Fundamental Principles for Official Statistics.)

Official statistics are vital for democracy and informed decision-making. Social statistics, which in a broad sense deal with people’s living conditions and lives, are a key part of any official statistical system. Section 1.1 outlined some of the many statistics that might be considered part of a country’s social statistical system. Their uses are many and range from macroeconomic policymaking using unemployment statistics, to detailed policy interventions in areas such as education and health using survey and census data.

Changes in the way people engage in the labour force; an aging population; and greater demands for education are all major policy shifts in many countries, which have required new data sources before they could be properly understood.

Statistical data collections do not happen without considerable effort. They require investment (technical, financial, human), planning and work by a national statistical organization or other bodies. It is increasingly important for official statisticians to strengthen their engagement with the key users of their statistical outputs for at least two emerging reasons:

- ▶ First, in rapidly changing societies, demands for data are evolving, and statisticians need to react to these demands as early as possible to remain relevant. If a NSI becomes irrelevant, it is likely to lose the support of government and society, which could ultimately spell the end of the NSI;
- ▶ Second, the Internet in particular has made easier than ever before to collect and disseminate data from outside of the national statistical system (using web-based surveys for example). Although such data can be useful for some purposes, they are often of relatively poor quality – at least for many governmental purposes – and therefore not always suitable to be used in decision-making that can affect the lives of millions of people. Yet, policymakers may be tempted to turn a blind eye to such quality concerns, especially if no better alternative data exists. This is of great concern to anyone with an interest in ensuring policies are well-built.

Non-official statistics can be of good quality of course, and can be useful in some circumstances.

⁸A phrase attributed to US Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis.

But it is vital that those who use them understand their adequacy for their purpose and do not misuse them. A high quality, impartial and trusted set of data is important for democracy and accountability and official statistics should set this benchmark.

2.2 - Making the case: setting up the structure of the dialogue

A user-producer dialogue can take many forms. Broadly speaking, it means that the two groups communicate about issues of common concern and

forge a stronger relationship. A dialogue might take place in a formal institutional framework or it could adopt 'informal' ways of communication. It could comprise regular meetings, workshops or training courses, face-to-face ad-hoc meetings, newsletters or satisfaction surveys. In addition, as the users are diverse (spanning the public, private and citizen sectors), the dialogue may occur en masse, or one group at a time. However, in every case it should involve the transfer of information from one side to the other and vice versa.



A formal dialogue: issues at stake

If a formal dialogue takes place, it must be within an institutional framework. Whether – and how – this should happen will depend on the answers to a number of questions such as:

- ▶ What is the legal environment in which the NSS operates?
- ▶ Does this legal framework set the proper conditions for engaging the dialogue?
- ▶ If yes, is there an institution such as a National Statistical Council that is considered legitimate by stakeholders (including non-traditional users) and that ensures a productive coordination between users and producers?
- ▶ Is this institution operational? Has it been playing its role effectively?
- ▶ Is the current authority of this institution adequate? What is its mandate?
- ▶ Is there another coordination unit that discusses and validates the national strategy for producing and disseminating social statistics at the national level?

Different dialogues can occur simultaneously: formal meetings could occur between one set of actors, while informal, working level meetings might be held for others elsewhere.

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

2.3 - Making the case: improving the quality in statistics

As we argued in section 1.2, the dialogue may raise the quality of official statistics and increase their use. There are many definitions of statistical quality and Eurostat,⁹ for example, discusses six dimensions:

- ▶ Relevance;
- ▶ Accuracy;
- ▶ Timeliness and punctuality;
- ▶ Accessibility and clarity;
- ▶ Comparability; and
- ▶ Coherence.

Although some dimensions, such as accuracy and punctuality, lend themselves well to objective measurement, there is an inherent subjectivity in many

of the other dimensions. Quality considerations in these dimensions raise questions that must be answered with users.

For example:

- ▶ Social statistics should be relevant to whom?
- ▶ When is a statistic timely?
- ▶ Can users access and understand social statistics easily?

Aspects of quality often trade off against one other. For example, a larger sample allowing more detailed and accurate results might take longer to collect and will be more expensive. A simple, accessible, timely statistic useful for a user might be insufficiently detailed for another. These issues also

⁹The Eurostat web page on quality reporting (http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/quality/quality_reporting) contains useful material, such as the Handbook on data quality assessment methods and tools, Eurostat, 2007. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/quality/documents/HANDBOOK%20ON%20DATA%20QUALITY%20ASSESSMENT%20METHODS%20AND%20TOOLS%20%201.pdf>

require consultation before a NSI can optimise its output. Users often want greater precision or a finer level of detail in survey data but are not willing to pay for it. Alternatively, they may request surveys with both greater coverage and more timely data. Such requests – which are a matter of balancing competing demands and limited resources – are obviously better dealt with through dialogue.

It would be risky for a NSI to decide alone, and

without consultation, what statistics they should produce. Without consultation, the NSI is not in a position to decide which data are most relevant to society and policymakers. Deciding which series or collections to drop in order to free up resources to meet new demands also requires extensive consultation.¹⁰ Dialogue is a vital tool to both assessing the relevance of a NSI's output and raising the quality of social statistics.



Alternative measure to GDP: the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission

The relevance of statistics was very much in the mind of Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi when they were commissioned in 2009 by the President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, to look at measures of economic performance and social progress. Many observers had commented at that time that there was a disconnection between the story told by the headline aggregate data on the French economy and the everyday experience of citizens. Statistics were needed to describe people's day-to-day experience of life. Basic statistics are more relevant than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The report of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission made a number of recommendations including:

- ▶ the need to emphasise the household perspective through better statistics on income and consumption;
- ▶ to give more prominence to the distribution of income and wealth;
- ▶ to pay more attention to non-market activity; to look at both objective and subjective measures of well-being, and
- ▶ to look at inequalities in all quality of life measures.¹¹

These recommendations were meant to complement the existing set of indicators, rather than replace them.

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

User-producer dialogue should lead to higher quality statistics; and higher quality statistics are more likely to be used.

Dialogue can lead to increased use of statistics in many ways.

It may forge better relationships between statisticians and policymakers. This, coupled with the creation of networks, will lead to mutual knowledge and trust. If major users know staff from the statistical office they might be more likely to pick up the phone to ask, "Where can I find statistics on such and such?"; "How do I access the data?"; and "These numbers are not clear to me, can you explain?" It will also provide users with more regular means to communicate their needs to a NSI, which can help

ensure statistical needs are raised more quickly, and so improve the NSS's relevance.

Stronger relationships may also help address concerns around perceived partiality in the numbers, which can be another barrier to their use. Once users understand better the work of statisticians, they are less likely to jump to the wrong conclusion.

Dialogue may also raise issues that might uncover anomalies in existing collections that statisticians had not spotted, as they might be less familiar with the area than their counterparts who use the data. It is also a means of ensuring that money is allocated optimally across the national statistical work program.

Last, but not least, improved dialogue can help generate resources for statistics. Too often official

¹⁰ The experience of the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC), which advises on the European Statistical Programme, might be of interest in this regard. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/esac/introduction>

¹¹ http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/documents/rapport_anglais.pdf

statistics are trapped in a vicious circle where insufficient funding results in poor quality data. The data is not used, which in turn leads to questions about the value of official statistics. This can reduce funding even further. Dialogue is a way to break through this cycle. It can raise awareness among users of the importance of data and the complexities in producing it, which can lead to more suitable budget allocations.

2.4 - Getting started: mapping social statistics stakeholders

Once a NSI is persuaded that a strong user-producer dialogue is worth considering, a key first step is to think about whom to involve. Who are the users of social statistics? The following lists are not exhaustive but provide a starting point for countries wishing to map their key social statistics stakeholders.

Major users of data include:

- ▶ **Official policymakers** from every line ministry (at all levels of government) are key users of social statistics and require data for a variety of purposes: informing, designing, assessing and reporting back on the implementation of policies, either to their ministers or to citizens;
- ▶ **Civil society, including NGOs**, can play a crucial role in helping to achieve good governance. To do this, “Civil society must demand that the government provide it with the information it needs to carry out its checks and balances. Civil society can intervene to ensure that building a satisfactory economic and social information system is set as a priority.” (Le Nay, 2009¹²). NGOs work in many fields and might specialise in health, education, gender, violence, and many other areas. They often use data for their internal discussions too, for example when deciding on their position regarding a policy;
- ▶ **Academics** – teachers, students, and researchers – require data and its associated metadata, often

at the unit record level. When the data exists, concerns over data sharing and over confidentiality are obstacles often put in front of the research community;

- ▶ **Think tanks, research institutes, and political parties** often use data – and increasingly run their own surveys – to inform the public opinion on relevant issues;
- ▶ **Parliament and parliamentarians** are important data users, which they use to design policies, to hold the government accountable or to investigate the impact of legislation;
- ▶ **International and regional organisations** are data users (either for comparison, for research or for policymaking) as well as data producers and data disseminators (through the international lists of indicators they compile);
- ▶ **The private sector**, including both local and multinational firms, is also a key player in decision-making and development, and a key user of statistics. Yet, in most developing countries, the NSS provides limited useful information for businesses (Le Nay, 2009);
- ▶ **Labour unions and economic and social councils** are often keen users of social statistics when designing their internal policies or lobbying for change;
- ▶ **The media** is an important user of social statistics and a vital contributor to public debate. The media is the usual means through which the public learns about the key “statistical” stories, though different people with different political viewpoints often chose media that aligns with their views. Therefore, all the media should be engaged if one wants to inform all sides of a debate. This requires more than simply providing data to the media. It requires working with them to develop media releases that they can use. There are many types of media of course and the needs of a journalist looking for a quick story will be very different from those of somebody writing a detailed research-style article;

¹² <http://paris21.org/sites/default/files/strategy-LeNay-Consortium09.pdf>

- ▶ **Data intermediaries**, either individuals or businesses, are important players. These “statistical story tellers” can be experts in repackaging data and bringing it to a wider audience;
- ▶ **The public** most often access information indirectly (through the media) and have a keen interest in social statistics, both to help inform their own decision-making (such as “What are the characteristic of where I live or the school I send my children to?”) as well as enabling them to hold decision-makers accountable. Such facts are keys to exercising citizenship;
- ▶ **Official statistical offices** are among those who produce and also use statistics. The NSIs and the community of official statisticians use data for many reasons, a major one being to have benchmarks to validate their own data. An example of internal use of social statistics is the use of labour force data in the compilation of National Accounts.

Different users want to access data in different ways.

Various engagement strategies will be necessary if a NSI wishes to have a dialogue with users: some users would like to start with a presentation of what exists; others would prefer to start from their demands. Some are ready to exchange in length when others would be reluctant to spare so much time. Some will come with a hope of influencing the data products when others will only check for what seems available.

It is not easy to classify the way users want to access data. Users may want to access three main categories of data (bearing in mind that some users may be interested in more than one category depending on their need at the time):

- ▶ Users who simply want access to the basic facts (politicians or mass media journalists for example – who in turn provide citizens with the data they need);

- ▶ Users, such as academic researchers, that might want access to the full micro data sets for modelling or other research and analysis;
- ▶ A third group – policymakers for example – may want access to summary data sets in order to understand better the story behind the data, without requiring full micro data sets.

There are as many different uses for data as there are data users.

It is also important to understand that what might work – or have worked in the past – for traditional users may not be an appropriate vehicle to involve the “non-traditional” users in a dialogue. This will require special attention. The public too need to be considered. They are users of statistics both in their daily lives as well as – ultimately – to hold their policymakers to account in a democracy. Yet the “public” are unlikely to be invited to – or attend – a consultation. Will there be groups – NGOs perhaps – who speak on their behalf? These are broad questions. It is not sensible to attempt to answer them here, as what works in one country or sector may not work in another. But they should be considered by those organising any dialogue.

The table below shows just some of the different data users in society, the data they require, its source and their preferred means of output.

BOX

8

Examples of data needs by different users

Category of Users	Example of data needed	Source of data	Use for the data
1. Government			
A vertical ministry – e.g. Ministry of Health	Vital statistics on births and deaths	Administrative records	Indicators for monitoring and data for policy planning
Regional & local administration	Small-scale data at local levels	Administrative records and household statistics	Detailed data for local policy and planning
2. Research			
Academics & students	Microdata	Household statistics	Academic studies
Think tanks & research institutes	Microdata	Household statistics	Socioeconomic studies & forecasts
3. Organisations			
Multilateral & regional organisations	Standardised data	Administrative records and household statistics	Standardised indicators
4. Businesses			
Business	Labour force data	Administrative records and household statistics	Planning where to start a new business
5. Civil Society			
Non-governmental organisations	Indicators on key areas of concern	Household statistics	Lobbying and research
6. The Public			
Individuals	Education statistics	Administrative records	Information on the quality of schools can help parents
The media	Current statistics or ad-hoc information	Administrative records and household statistics	Socioeconomic information (charts and stylised) for news reporting

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

BOX

9

Best practices in organising the dialogue in the region

- ▶ In Palestine, one good practice worth mentioning is the approach adopted by the Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in conducting the dialogue with the users. The PCBS maintains a list of “department friends”: individuals with an interest in social statistics who can be contacted to discuss a new data collection, invited to a workshop and so on. This list is organised according to the statistical sector each person is interested in.
- ▶ In Morocco, a three-step approach is proposed by the Ministry of Health to design key health indicators:
 1. Mapping stakeholders, which would lead to the establishment of a National Committee for political issues and thematic sub-committees to deal with technical matters;
 2. Assessing users needs and the final output, that should be based on MDG indicators;
 3. Setting up a road map to establishing the dialogue with the users.

The outcome of this process should lead to answering the following questions:

- ▶ Who are the stakeholders?
- ▶ What can the NSI produce?
- ▶ What are users' needs?
- ▶ How to identify a set of core indicators on health at the national level, and who can produce them?

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

2.5 - Making a business case for a dialogue: is this an issue for statisticians?

After having recognised the role of a constructive user-producer dialogue, the questions that naturally follow are these: “Is this an issue in the country?”, and “What should be done more or better than has already been done?”

Those are not questions that are easily answered. There is always room for improvement in any country, but where resources are limited, it can be necessary to make a business case justifying the need for increased and more effective dialogue.

How to build up a business case?

Step 1: Address the size and the nature of the inevitable gap between users and producers.

Some of the questions to consider are:

- ▶ How often does the dialogue between users and producers occur?
- ▶ What form does this dialogue take?
- ▶ Which producers and users are involved?
- ▶ How useful are the discussions?
- ▶ Are the two groups of partners on the same pace or even on the same planet?
- ▶ How supportive or critical is the user-community of the current set of social statistics?

More specific questions could be asked, depending on what activities are planned by producers, such as:

- ▶ Is there a forum that can be used to discuss survey questionnaires with users?
- ▶ Is the format of the publication discussed with users?

It can also be useful to appeal to statistical business process models, both to consider at which stages of the statistical process the dialogue is important and to assess what is currently done in the country. The UNECE's Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) presents such a process.¹³ Dialogue could be considered at many stages of the process model. Dialogue should be more effective if it is carried out at least during one of the following steps of the GSBPM:

- 1.1 Determine needs for information
- 1.2 Consult and confirm needs
- 1.3 Establish output objectives
- 1.4 Identify concepts
- 2.1 Design outputs
- 6.1 Prepare draft outputs
- 6.2 Validate outputs
- 7.2 Produce dissemination products
- 7.4 Promote dissemination products
- 9.2 Conduct evaluation
- 9.3 Agree on an action plan

Diagram 1: the UNECE's Generic Statistical Business Process Model (levels 1 & 2)

Quality Management / Metadata Management								
1 Specify Needs	2 Design	3 Build	4 Collect	5 Process	6 Analyse	7 Disseminate	8 Archive	9 Evaluate
1.1 Determine needs for information	2.1 Design outputs	3.1 Build data collection instrument	4.1 Select sample	5.1 Integrate data	6.1 Prepare draft outputs	7.1 Update output systems	8.1 Define archive rules	9.1 Gather evaluation inputs
1.2 Consult & confirm needs	2.2 Design variable descriptions	3.2 Build or enhance process components	4.2 Set up collection	5.2 Classify & code	6.2 Validate output	7.2 Produce dissemination products	8.2 Manage archive repository	9.2 Conduct evaluation
1.3 Establish output objectives	2.3 Design data collection methodology	3.3 Configure workflows	4.3 Run collection	5.3 Review, validate & edit	6.3 Scrutinize & explain	7.3 Manage release of dissemination products	8.3 Preserve data and associated metadata	9.3 Agree action plan
1.4 Identify concepts	2.4 Design frame & sample methodology	3.4 Test production system	4.4 Finalize collection	5.4 Input	6.4 Apply disclosure control	7.4 Promote dissemination products	8.4 Dispose of data & associated metadata	
1.5 Check data availability	2.5 Design statistical processing methodology	3.5 Test statistical business process		5.5 Derive new variables & statistical units	6.5 Finalize outputs			
1.6 Prepare business case	2.6 Design production system & workflow	3.6 Finalize production system		5.6 Calculate weights		7.5 Manage user support		
				5.7 Calculate aggregate				
				5.8 Finalize data files				

The dialogue should be maintained both to ensure that intelligence remains accurate, and to encourage a strengthened relationship between users and producers, which can lead to greater mutual trust and understanding.

A natural place to begin with is the main national institution that manages statistical activities, such as the National Statistical Council (NSC) if it exists. In particular, it is important to understand that the dialogue should be an integral part of the national statistical strategy (if there is one) which should set out the perceived national needs for information.

¹³ <http://www.unece.org/stats/gsbpm.html>

Step 2: Pondering if no dialogue at all is not better than having one.

Again, this is a difficult question, but if there is an active civil society and media, there should be expectations of a dialogue. If contact with users is infrequent, with some potential users partially or

completely excluded, and if there is relatively low satisfaction with the overall system of social statistics, then it seems likely that improving dialogue will be a cost-effective strategy for improving data use, including in decision-making.



Dialogue process over the 2012 time-use survey in Algeria

The Algerian Government has signed with the United Nations a "Joint programme for equality between gender and the empowerment of women" in February 2009. This programme is in support of the policies and national strategies developed in this area. The selected action plan includes a national household survey on time-use (Enquête nationale sur l'emploi-temps, ENET), and the task is entrusted to the Office National des Statistiques (ONS), as the official responsible for the production of statistical information, in cooperation with ONU-Femmes. This operation, first of its kind in Algeria, carried out in 2012, identifies daily activities of the population, time allocation and its distribution between professional work, domestic work, free time, and physiological time.

Because the field covered by this type of survey is very wide, the ONS adopted an implementation strategy based on an inclusive approach of key potential users of the survey results, throughout the successive phases of the project.

Selected users were identified from the following administrations: the Ministry responsible for Family and the Status of women, the Ministries of National Solidarity, Agriculture and Rural Development, Small and Medium-size Businesses, Youth and Sports, Foresight and Statistics, as well as officials from ONS in charge of national accounts.

This dialogue process had two main objectives:

The first objective is to be responsive to the needs of users, primarily in the areas of design, implementation and monitoring of socioeconomic policies, statistics related to the subject matter; including gender statistics, economic employment in the non-market sector and its specific features, statistics related to the needs of the youth in matters of sports and cultural activities, but also statistics related to the community life of Algerian households.

The second objective is to popularize this survey with users in order to raise awareness of optimal use of the survey results, each in his area of interest, and to be aware of the potential use of the survey output.

Potential users of the ENET survey were associated to discuss and adopt the survey questionnaire, from the outset of the project, in April 2011. The dialogue process took place through technical workshops to discuss the questionnaires, and improve them for a better response to the needs of the different sectors. In addition, these users were involved in meetings and methodological seminars organized by the ONS to benefit from international experiences in the field (including the workshop organised in the framework of Medstat III on "the establishment and treatment of time-use surveys in countries of the European Union", held on 18 and 19 December 2011, in Geneva).

(...)

BOX 10

Dialogue process over the 2012 time-use survey in Algeria

(continued)

The dialogue evolved into a permanent and continuous process that was maintained throughout the project, at the level of the survey design, field implementation, as well as the presentation of preliminary and final results. The dialogue process provided ONS the opportunity to improve its capability to respond to the needs for specific statistics and in-depth analyses.

This consultation has been most beneficial in many aspects:

- ▶ Users learned more about this type of survey, considering it was the first survey of this kind in Algeria. This should promote a larger use of the survey results, due to the awareness of the expectations it raised;
- ▶ Concerns related to this type of investigation were taken into consideration, and the survey questionnaire was altered accordingly. Proposals were presented by the users in a technical workshop; some proposals were integrated in the questionnaire, and some were not because of their non-compliance with the objectives of the survey. This workshop created a climate of healthy and transparent exchange between partners. Ultimately, the questionnaire was revised based on these exchanges, as well as on discussions with experts who have worked on similar investigations in other countries.

In general, as it is the case for the ENET, ONS consults with users on an ad-hoc basis and not as part of a general institutional framework.

Source: *The Algerian Central Bureau of Statistics (Office national des Statistiques, ONS).*

Users have a keen interest in data and will often welcome the opportunity to discuss their needs if they think those discussions will be worthwhile. Although statistics may not have been sufficiently valued in the region until recently, this now appears to be changing, for example in the Gulf States, where more resources are allocated to social statistics in

2.6 - The dialogue itself: what are we seeking to discuss?

There are many approaches to running a dialogue, as we will see in Part 3. But essentially any dialogue seeks to better align the production of social statistics with the needs of those who will use them.

There are three key steps:

1. Users' needs must be identified and articulated to producers;
2. Producers' objectives, methods, capabilities and constraints must be identified and articulated to users;

recognition of the importance of using evidence in social policy.

It is also important to remember that dialogue would not necessarily lead NSI to changing its business process. Sometimes the dialogue may be only a means of explaining NSI's strategy to stakeholders.

3. A permanent dialogue must take place between users and producers to better align their requirements and bring them closer together.

This ought to lead eventually to the production of more relevant and useful social statistics, and to a more realistic understanding by users of what producers can achieve. It should also ensure that the users have a better grasp of social statistics, and of their usefulness for decision-making.

2.6.1 - Understanding and articulating users' needs

Various approaches are possible to understanding what users really require and some might work better with some users than with others.

It is often useful to discuss each broad area of social statistics (health, education, labour etc.) on its own, with different groups of users. This process is the most natural to manage, and easier than to discuss globally on "social statistics".¹⁴

Two sets of conversations are fundamental:

- **The first set** relates to users' views on the current statistics available in each area.

These dialogues can be organised around the quality dimensions:

- ▶ Are statistics relevant, timely, accessible, and so on, and what do users mean by those terms?
- ▶ Which of the quality dimensions are important to each user?
- ▶ Which statistical outputs are used most and least (bearing in mind that resources are limited and additions in one area might lead to cuts elsewhere)?

It is likely that many potential users will not know the information exists in the first place (and informing this group about existing data can be an added benefit of the dialogue).

The sorts of questions one might ask will depend on the circumstances. A different set of questions will be needed within the context of a regular user-producer forum compared to those in response to ad hoc requests.

Where a regular forum already exists, it is a natural place to begin discussions. An important question to ask is "Is relying only on this forum sufficient to legitimately and inclusively discuss priorities for this sector of statistics?" And it may well be that a broader audience of users – broader than those who attend the regular forum – must be consulted,

hence the need for another complementary ad hoc dialogue. For statistical areas in which no regular forum exists an ad hoc approach is needed.

Moreover, different styles of dialogue will suit different types of users. These might range from a structured survey of users' views to an open dialogue.

- **A second set** of dialogues should consider users' priorities for new statistical outputs.

This might cover:

- ▶ Emerging areas that require – or are likely to require – brand new data collections tools (such as a time use survey);
- ▶ Refinements to existing collections (to produce more highly disaggregated data for example);
- ▶ New products or tools that help users to better get the data they require (do they require remote access to anonymised micro data for example?); or
- ▶ New methods of communication, data access, or dissemination.

The dialogue on "new" needs has an importance beyond stocktaking of demands and existing data. It is also about discussing the place and value of new data within the overall output of official statistics (bearing in mind that official statistics are a public good, especially when they are financed through public funds). The dialogue gives legitimacy to the decisions on data production that follow. If new needs are identified then they will often require to be met at the expense of existing work. Again, it is better to take the decision on which work to stop doing – which can be a sensitive one – after careful discussion with users.

¹⁴Although such dialogues will be needed if, for example, the NSI is discussing plans for undertaking an omnibus social survey.

BOX

11

The structure of dialogue

The dialogue could be organised in three main stages:

1. The **Establishing Stage** is where dialogue begins. It is important here to explain the process and the purpose of the dialogue as well as to manage expectations. In short, the dialogue is a way to better serve users while recognising that it is expensive and complex to collect data. This stage is where a relationship is established.
2. The **Clarification Stage** is a key to better understanding user's requirements and producer's capabilities. At this stage, it is important also to try to understand better how users make the most of the existing statistics. What do they actually use them for? It is often the case that users think they need certain statistics, whereas in fact they need other information (possibly from other producers).

Key questions to ask at this stage will cover aspects such as:

- ▶ Is this an occasional request or are data needed more regularly?
- ▶ Who is the target population?
- ▶ What level of disaggregation is needed?
- ▶ How timely should the data be, and are the users aware of the time lag?
- ▶ What level of accuracy is required?
- ▶ Do users need help interpreting the data?
- ▶ Are there alternatives for producing more suitable data?
- ▶ Who will pay for the new data and services?
- ▶ Will it be at the cost of other statistics production?
- ▶ Is the level of analysis (if any) undertaken appropriate and sufficient?

3. During the last stage, the **Way Forward Stage**, the dialogue initiator should explain, at each step of the process, what the next steps are and how and when a decision will be taken as well as how to establish a mechanism for further discussion.

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

BOX

12

The Clarification Stage: A Bolivian Example

If users have requested data, it can be important to understand why they want the information and what they intend to do with it. In Bolivia, for example, the Ministry of Planning requested the NSI to provide local level data on education and health. The data came from the Census and was used to allocate resources. It was only later that the Ministry realised that it would take another 10 years for new data to become available – a timeline which was unsuitable for updating the information the Ministry needed. The NSI had not explained the limitations of Census data and the Ministry had not thought to ask about the longer term.

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

These dialogues can take place in different ways. One way that has proven useful is to survey user needs.

A starting point might be to begin by sending a written questionnaire to a broad group of users and ask for a written response, before following up with key users in more detail. It is important to encourage users to respond to the questionnaire and express their needs coherently.

Various incentives – explaining the benefits of the process – might be set out to encourage them to take part in the exercise.

The process could lead to a number of advantages, such as:

- ▶ An easier access to database and statistical outputs;
- ▶ An interactive relationship that allows users to provide input into determining statistical priorities and to improve the ways in which their requests are dealt with;
- ▶ A commitment by data producers to comply with a pre-established dissemination calendar;
- ▶ The supply of data users with detailed metadata;
- ▶ A transparency on data compilation methods and methodological changes; and
- ▶ Technical advice on the use and analysis of statistical outputs.

BOX

13

Good Practice from the UN Handbook on Census Management for Population and Housing Censuses, 2001

"The first step in the user consultation process is to determine the census agency's position on census content. Although the intention of the consultation process is to satisfy user requests as far as practical, it is necessary to first determine which topics are suitable for inclusion in the census. When assessing potential census topics, the following broad criteria could be used as a guide.

- (a) Is the topic of major national importance?
- (b) Is there a need for data on the topic for small groups in the population or for small geographic areas?
- (c) Is the topic suitable for inclusion in the census?
- (d) Are there sufficient resources available to collect and process the data for that topic?
- (e) Does it allow for international comparability?"

This quote highlights the major elements of many dialogues: what questions are of common interest, what disagreement is sought, what are the cost/benefit trade-offs of the different options, and if there are internationally agreed rules that should be followed.

Source: UN Handbook on Census Management for Population and Housing Censuses, 2001.

Once the needs have been articulated, there are very likely to be competing requirements, so priorities should be established. There is no simple way to do this and the statisticians' judgement is required. Priorities will eventually depend on the level of

demand for competing ideas (bearing in mind the importance of both the user and the use to which they put the statistic in question), as well as on the cost.

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics user satisfaction survey

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) conducted a survey in 2008 in order to measure users' satisfaction and identify what users need from PCBS. A paper version as well as an online version are available from PCBS (<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps>)

In addition, PCBS uses the DESAP (Development of a Self-Assessment Program), a detailed questionnaire for survey managers designed by EUROSTAT to assess their survey. It is one of the procedures used by PCBS to deliver accurate data to the users.

Source: the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS).

Once the intelligence is gathered, the NSI might feel ready to identify changes in the statistical work programme. But, before changes are made, it needs to explain its position to users.

This stage is a key step in the process. As we have already discussed, consultation with users is core business for a NSI. It is vital to ensuring statistics remain relevant and are used. But, the consultation needs to be genuine – the NSI must be ready to listen to users and to respond. Consulting with users and not responding appropriately is worse than not consulting at all. Users who might already be sceptical about a NSI's willingness to listen will have their fears confirmed if a NSI asks for their opinion and then ignores it. That does not mean that every comment should be agreed to, but rather that each comment must be responded to. This is a simple courtesy.

2.6.2 - Assessing producers' capabilities and constraints

A useful first step is to assess users' satisfaction with the system of social statistics. Satisfaction can be assessed with a survey for example. The "Data user satisfaction questionnaire" designed by the Department of Statistics in Jordan is one approach to gather information. (This questionnaire is in Appendix 4.)

The next step is to identify producers' capabilities and constraints in terms of data quality, confidentiality, cost, and so on. This should include all of those who produce social statistics and should be shared with the users involved in the dialogue; a basic condition for good outcomes.

Users are often surprised by the outcome of the assessment that describes the complexity of the statistical cycle, and so it is good practice for a NSI to explain the cycle, e.g. the statistical work phases, the different inputs needed (design of questionnaire, sampling frames...), and the limited numbers of skilled personnel available to undertake work.

It can be also equally important that a NSI explains its constraints about respecting privacy and limiting response burden, as well as the fundamental principles of official statistics (see Appendix 2), such as impartiality, while recognising that they do usually form a part of government, albeit an apolitical part.

The production of social statistics cannot meet every user's demand. So it can be helpful for statisticians to clarify – at the outset – which social statistics are produced according to internationally agreed frameworks and where scope for change is limited.

Nevertheless, when responding to a specific request, the first thing to do is to see if data are already available. If not, what is possible? Is a new

survey required? Can data be collected by modifying an existing instrument? Or is data available from administrative sources?

That said, providing users with easy to understand metadata can often be a useful investment, as it will foster a more informed dialogue and a broader use of data.

It should be stressed that the dialogue is not about protecting a NSS from reacting to users' calls for

change. If so, it would be useless. The dialogue is about helping to ensure that users' proposals are better in phase with the producers' capacities and constraints.

Producers must take this opportunity to respond positively to criticism, accepting or questioning each piece. If the NSS has no flexibility to change on its side, then the dialogue can become counterproductive.

Preparing producers for the dialogue

Bringing producers together to discuss their capabilities and constraints offers an opportunity to strengthen cooperation and collaboration between them. There are often overlaps between the statistical outputs and duplication of efforts by different producers. This is both a waste of resources and puts an unnecessary burden on respondents. It can also be confusing for users who seek the single 'correct' number.

In many countries, there are multiple statistics from different sources (sometimes different data collection processes on the same topic within the NSI) that purport to measure phenomena that seem similar at first glance but may lead in the end to different results.

Reasons for the differences can be of many sorts, of course, and range from statistical noise (error) to the use of different concepts and different population groups. Many social statistics are gathered using two sources: household/individual-based surveys usually undertaken by the NSI, and administrative records usually compiled by line ministries. But in many cases users will want that differences be either corrected, highlighted and/or better explained. This requires cooperation between producers and dialogue is an opportunity to facilitate it.

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

2.6.3 - Bridging the gap

Once the various needs, capabilities, and constraints have been assembled, a further dialogue is required to decide what can – and cannot – be done differently by both users and producers. Users should understand by now that not everything is possible and that the NSI has neither infinite resources nor infinite flexibility. Producers should be ready to listen to users' concerns and to explain their position, while being ready, as statistical professionals, to address those concerns.

The dialogue is important for mapping the way forward. But it also serves as a tool to strengthen

the links and the network between the users and producers.

Experience shows that users can have many suggestions and criticisms and it may be useful for a NSI to prepare responses before a meeting. Some of the comments commonly expressed include:

1. Low levels of trust because the NSI is perceived as politically biased and subject to government interference;
2. Data are hard to interpret or access and/or boring¹⁵;
3. Data are not properly explained, and their

¹⁵ NSIs are increasingly responding by releasing smaller, more interesting publications rather than the traditional thick volumes. For example, in late 2011, the Lebanese CAS started publishing a series of new publications known now as Statistics In Focus (SIF). These short publications seek to provide statistics about one topic at a time shifting from a presentation of survey results to analysis and descriptive statistics.

- background methodology (metadata) including new changes is not available;
4. Data are not fit for purpose in terms of level of disaggregation or timeliness;
 5. Data released are not fit for in-depth analysis, thus requiring users to apply to the NSI to process data;
 6. Microdata, even anonymised, are not accessible to researchers;
 7. Data for key issues are lacking;
 8. Indicators are not culturally appropriate;
 9. Data are incoherent, with different numbers available that seem to measure the same concept;
 10. Data are not released publicly and without explaining why: this may be justified but the producer needs to explain his reasons (lack of accuracy, confidentiality concerns, etc.);
 11. Data are disseminated in a not user-friendly format;
 12. International Organisations use inappropriate data – often adjusted according to external modelling – that either is out-of-date, or does not reflect the data supplied by the country, or is simply incorrect when reporting on a country.

In summary, the user-producer dialogue can cover many issues, ranging from governance of the statistical system, to detailed technical issues and dissemination, and that means that producers need to prepare beforehand. Clearly sensitive and high profile data are more likely to be discussed than other data.

The dialogue process should then at least lead to changes in:

- the quality and type of data available to users;
- the means by which the users access data (including the way in which it is communicated);
- the mechanisms by which users and producers will work together in the future, both formally and informally, or the changes in the way the NSS is organised.



This part of the Guidelines looks at the suite of approaches that might be undertaken to run a dialogue in practice.

3.1 - How to conduct the user-producer dialogue

There are many approaches to running a dialogue and it is likely that a NSI will want to use more than one. The decision will be taken according to what might work best in each country.

In general, it would be preferable to organise **several separate conversations**, each based on a different statistical theme. Trying to include all social statistics in one dialogue would lead to a very complex discussion, many aspects of which would be of little interest to most users: for example, someone working with labour statistics is unlikely to be very interested in statistics on culture and leisure.

It is important to remember that **different users may want to express their views in different ways**. This will depend on their resources and capabilities and on their favourite ways to work.

Some of the tools for conducting the dialogue include

- ▶ Thematic workshops, i.e. ad hoc meetings where a diverse group of users of a certain statistical subject area – health or education, say – meet with the producers of those statistics for a day or two to discuss their views;
- ▶ Technical committees or permanent thematic working groups, which meet regularly and bring together the more sophisticated users with the

producers to discuss their detailed requirements. These might focus on a particular survey during the survey design stage;

- ▶ Focus groups that bring together a cross section of users for a few hours and give them an opportunity to express their views. Their purpose is mainly to gather intelligence for the NSI rather than draw conclusions;
- ▶ Internet-based forums that offer a way to gather information from a broad range of users, particularly from those who might not have the resources to attend workshops or meetings.

A number of other strategies can be a useful way at least to begin a dialogue and bring together a group of interested participants:

- ▶ User support groups are another way to assist users and to gather information. The groups would typically be facilitated by a NSI and based around an email mailing list that enables participants to send (or answer) questions to the whole group;
- ▶ Satisfaction survey questionnaires are a relatively cheap way to gather information from a broad range of users. Of course, response rates might not be high;
- ▶ Social networking sites – such as Facebook or LinkedIn – are another way to raise awareness and form an online community of interest;
- ▶ Other new media tools might be useful in some countries, including putting information on YouTube, Twitter, etc.

Other ways to strengthen links between producers and users in a broader sense include:

- ▶ Secondments, where statisticians are out-posted to a policy department for several months or years to assist the department with its statistical work. This will help not only to ensure a more informed use of statistics by policy departments, but to form stronger ties between the NSI and other agencies, as well as provide statisticians with a better understanding of the work the users do;
- ▶ Interagency training courses or projects that bring together colleagues from the NSI and policy departments may help create new networks of statisticians and policy people;
- ▶ Special events such as the international days of

statistics, workers, children or women, serve as an opportunity to bring together users and producers. They are a way to raise awareness and promote the latest news or display data. Many special days relate to social statistics and maintaining a calendar of international days can be a useful way to spot opportunities. The media will also often call the NSI seeking data on the topic of the day, so fact sheet can be prepared in advance. A nice example is a press release on Palestinian Women, published by PCBS on International Women's Day, on 8 March 2012 (Appendix 6).

All of these approaches may help bring users and producers closer together and help articulate new priorities for statistical production.

BOX 16

Innovative engagement

Joint training courses run with the media are becoming a popular way to promote dialogue. The German capacity building organisation InWent, now a part of GIZ, the German government's development organisation, ran a three-week workshop for African participants: "PR and Statistics: Building Bridges between Users and Producers". Throughout the first week, producers and users, such as journalists, policymakers and NGOs' staff, were trained on a parallel basis. Data users on their statistical literacy and data producers, such as representatives of NSIs, on communication skills and media work. During the course participants had to change perspectives, with users of data becoming statisticians and vice versa. The user group for instance prepared a statistical yearbook for the illusionary country "Bophana" and presented it to the producers. The statisticians had to put themselves in the shoes of a journalist, a NGO's member, or a businessperson. The many role-plays enabled participants to learn from each other, create a fruitful dialogue and "build a bridge" between themselves.

The **Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics** has interesting experiences of engagement with users. In 2011 for instance, they responded to criticism from users and ran a user-producer workshop on statistical story telling and technical support to local trainers in cooperation with InWent and Adetef through the Palestinian Finance Institute. Benefits from the work are already apparent in terms of improved press coverage of statistical stories. For instance, data on household expenditure on tobacco in Palestine had been available for some time but it was only when the PCBS pointed out that Palestinians spent more on cigarettes than they did on education that the story made the headlines. The press release is here

http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/EXpend&Consm2010E.pdf

In **Morocco**, published information is directly accessible on the website of the Haut Commissariat au Plan (HCP, High Planning Commission), through press conferences, and using the "Statistics window" managed by the HCP to study the requests and the needs of users in terms of statistical information. Also, the Direction de la Statistique (DS), which is responsible for collecting statistical data, is in connection with the main users through the organisation of meetings or by correspondence, for the design of each statistical operation. Such a coordination process aims at identifying the users' information needs.

However, for some surveys, users have specific information needs that require their participation through a broad consultation and their direct involvement in the design of methodological materials. Worth mentioning here the experience of surveys on Social Mobility, Child Anthropometry and Subjective Well-being, Violence against Women, etc. involving the Observatory of Living Conditions, the CERED, UNICEF, UNIFEM, the civil society and the DS.

Sources: The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the Moroccan Direction de la Statistique (DS), and Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

The following table looks at different segments of society and at the specific stakeholders from each one that could be engaged in a dialogue.

BOX 17

Organising the users groups

Segment of society	Who speaks on their behalf
Government (national)	Top managers from different ministries Statistical experts in line ministries National Statistical Council
Non-governmental (national)	Academics Media, especially journalists interested in statistics, such as those from the economic press or association of economic journalists NGOs representatives might come from peak bodies that represent coalitions of NGOs Business people might come from business councils Representatives of labour and employer unions might come from research departments, from organisations like the confederation of workers or trades union congress Representatives of lobby groups and political parties might also come from research departments Think tanks or policy institutes
International organisations including the UN and its specialised agencies, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the European Union, and OECD	Statistical departments at Headquarters or in member states Country representatives UN Regional offices such as ESCWA and ECA, ILO, UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA The UN Statistical Commission is also an opportunity to debate issues
Regional organisations including the League of Arab States, Arab Labour Organization, Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS), Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESTRIC) & Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)	Statistical departments at Headquarters or in member states Country representatives

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

Such an approach not only helps ensure you have met with the key stakeholders; it can help also to stratify, prioritise, and understand the different needs of different segments.

Of course, one will want to consult with different segments at different times in a dialogue, depending on what is being discussed. In section 2.5, we discussed the Generic Statistical Business Process Model and highlighted some of the stages in the business process where consultation might be important. However, while senior policymakers might want to be consulted on their information needs, they are unlikely to want to discuss draft outputs in detail, preferring to leave that to the statistical experts in their ministries.

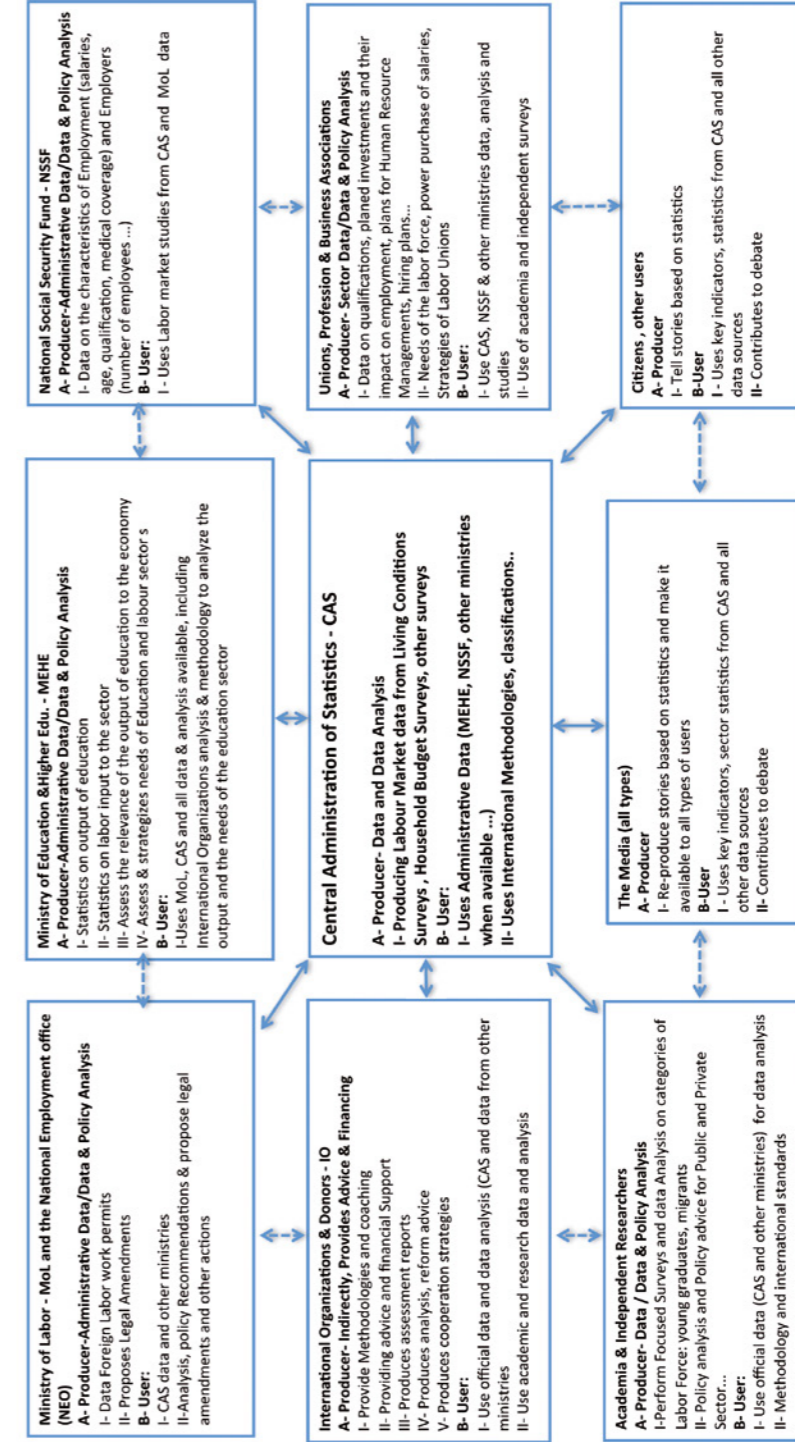
Likewise, different segments will have varying amounts of time to spend, and different preferred ways to engage with each other. Senior policymakers might prefer to have a brief conversation or

attend a short meeting to air their views. Academics might be happy to attend a lengthier technical workshop. Perhaps the best approach is to discuss with the different segments, at the start, their preferred *modus operandi*.

It is not always straightforward to identify all those who use and produce the statistics of one particular sector. It can be a complex picture with many stakeholders. It may therefore be important to invest time mapping out the variety of stakeholders before beginning a dialogue.

The following example, from the Central Administration of Statistics in Lebanon, maps the users and producers of employment indicators in Lebanon. It demonstrates how complex the picture is, even for just one sector, and reinforces the importance of dialogue amongst all stakeholders, both as a way to advise the NSI on priorities and as a way to improve sector-wide coordination.

Diagram 2: Mapping the producers and users of labour market statistics in Lebanon



Source: Central Administration of Statistics, Lebanon, 2012.

3.2 - Governance arrangements

No matter what tools are used, it is necessary to set up some institutional arrangements for user-producer dialogue. Although it might be ideal to envisage running the process through a National Statistical Council, within a supporting institutional framework, such a process can be complicated to implement. An easier, more tractable way to begin would be to adopt a more limited step-by-step approach to test the system and demonstrate its value. In either case, important questions to consider include:

- ▶ Who will take the lead for each approach?
- ▶ Who will coordinate the user-producer dialogue overall, to guard against “dialogue fatigue”? If several groups are working independently and targeting the same set of users, then they may have a negative reaction.

Should the relationships be informal or more formal? Should there be any attempt to obligate users and producers to talk? In general, it is not advisable to make dialogue compulsory. It is far more likely to be successful if it is voluntary and if people involved are persuaded of the importance beforehand, and then have their initial goodwill reinforced by the (hopefully) constructive outcome that follows.

The risks around dialogue are considered in section 1.2. Some of these should be addressed in the governance arrangements. **The risk of real (or perceived) politicization needs special attention:** that is the possible perception that the NSI has – by forming a closer relationship with policymakers – become politicised. Ensuring that the consultations and decision-making are undertaken openly and transparently is important. Whoever takes the final decision about the statistical work programme should be able to explain the reasons for that decision and the governance arrangements should include a strong defence to guard against political interference in that decision. Ensuring that all stakeholders have

a voice in the process (although not necessarily an equal voice) is also important to guarding against the perception of undue influence by one political party or group.

Of course running a dialogue means added effort. However, the risk of doing nothing – of “being an ostrich with its head in the sand” – runs a far greater risk of the NSI losing relevance and support.

How to integrate at best the user-producer dialogue in the structure of the National Statistical System? Different groups will have different ideas and the final decision – which will be taken in part on the level of overall resources – must be a coordinated one within the context of the NSSs. National Statistical Councils (NSCs) or National Statistical Advisory Bodies should play a key role here – acting as the lead bodies to assess the recommendations from the different social statistical themes. Indeed, it can also be useful to involve NSC in the process.

If the NSC coordinates a dialogue between users and producers, then the process might be more complex and lengthy, but the end result might last longer. Much of the information in these Guidelines is relevant to a NSC or a NSI taking the lead. If a NSC takes the lead, then the body of producers of data will be wider, and so governance and decision-making may be more complex. The work on designing National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDSs) is particularly relevant here. These strategies aim to establish a permanent dialogue between users and producers across the NSS.¹⁶

The following examples from Palestine, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia, and France describe different approaches.

BOX 18

Palestinian CBS: permanent Advisory Committee for Labour Statistics

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) conducts the Labour Force Survey programme. The survey aims at giving to researchers, scholars and decision-makers an opportunity to become acquainted with the labour market and with the unexpected changes that happen during different times of the year in addition to observing changes during similar times in consecutive years.

In fact, the strong connection of labour statistics to international recommendations, the need to modernise and improve the quality of data and labour market indicators and to assess them in a scientific manner require a technical body of labour support personnel in the Department. This body must be tantamount to a technical and academic authority, which recommends, advises and provides feedback to all departments to insure that data quality is better and that indicators are logically and scientifically consistent.

Accordingly, the PCBS formed an advisory committee of local experts to help it in discovering and improving indicators that reflect the current economic and social situation of the Palestinian labour market.

What the Advisory Committee for labour statistics helps improving:

- ▶ Expanding the base of participation when preparing statistical figures, which increases the reliability of the data issued by the PCBS;
- ▶ Creating a technical team able to constantly review and assist in adapting and calculating the various labour market indicators, especially since Palestinian society is highly susceptible to political and economic fluctuations;
- ▶ Ensuring that the needs of economic and social policymakers are met;
- ▶ Ensuring compatibility with the concepts and definitions used in international recommendations and standards, with special consideration to Palestine;
- ▶ Ensuring that the data and results issued comply with statistical requirements.

The summary role of the advisory committee in providing technical advice on a permanent basis aids in:

- ▶ Examining the survey questionnaire in terms of adaptation to labour market indicators that are used or intended to be expanded;
- ▶ Identifying the needs of labour market indicators so as to meet the requirements of data users;
- ▶ Participating in workshops and various activities related to the labour market;
- ▶ Examining and critically reviewing various working reports and studies issued by the PCBS.

Source: *The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)*.

BOX 19

Morocco: preparation of the national human development report on MDG

The High Planning Commission (HCP) regularly reports on national achievements with regard to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The last report was elaborated with the cooperation of the relevant ministerial departments and in dialogue with the United Nations Agencies accredited in Morocco, as well as with civil society and representatives of social, economic and university circles.

After several meetings with stakeholders, a version of the report was prepared and sent to them for comments. Then, the revised version was sent for comments to employers' federations, labour unions and to parliamentary groups.

The preparation of this report involved the organization of three regional workshops held in Marrakesh, Tangier, and Meknes, to widen the debate and the dialogue across the country.

Finally, the HCP organised a workshop with the cooperation of all the economic and social partners. Its recommendations included, besides the need to prepare regional reports, to prepare a national communication plan for the report, make sectoral strategies more coherent, breakdown by gender all the indicators, and place more importance on gender-sensitive indicators.

The communication plan aimed at raising awareness among decision-makers, non-governmental organisations and the general public about the MDG and the need to mobilize everyone to meet the 2015 deadline. A wide dissemination of this report, which was translated into Arabic and into English, ensured that all users as well as the general public benefit from its lessons.

Source: *The Moroccan Direction de la Statistique (DS)*.

¹⁶ <http://paris21.org/NSDS>

BOX 20

Spain: Decentralisation of the formal user-producer dialogue

The formal dialogue between users and producers of statistics in Spain reflects the decentralized organization of the statistical system, which consists of the State statistical system and the regional statistical systems of the 17 "autonomous communities". At the State level, the High Council on Statistics (Consejo Superior de Estadística) is a consultative body of the State statistical services, which allows for the social participation of the public, producers, and users of statistics. The Council is chaired by the Minister of Economy, and the President of the NSI is its Vice-President. The other members must belong to trade unions, business organisations, or other social, economic, or academic institutions.

The mission of the Council is to harmonise statistics, improve the use of resources to adapt to users' needs for information, and to make easier for respondents to supply primary data. Its specific functions are: to improve existing resources; to provide consultations to autonomous communities and local governments (municipalities and provinces) on relevant matters; to pass judgement on the draft of the National Statistical Plan and its annual programmes; and to compile proposals and recommendations on Spain's statistical needs. As an example, the Council made proposals on technical changes to the European Health Survey 2009 by including the collection of data on domestic violence through a new specific section of the survey, taking as model the Spanish National Health Questionnaire.

The regional Councils on Statistics operate in a similar fashion but at their geographic level, set up by the respective laws. It has to be noted that the regional statistical institutes are fully independent of the National Statistical Institute, and discussions between the State and regional authorities take place in the Inter-territorial Statistical Committee. The activity of the regional Statistical Councils reflects the specific interests of each territory and their economic and social specialization.¹⁷

Source: *The Spanish Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE).*

BOX 21

Tunisia – multiple indicator cluster surveys – Round 4

A national survey dedicated to children's health and well-being was run on a sample of 9,600 households in over 480 clusters.

Given its cross-sectional field of investigation, the presidency of the steering committee of the survey is housed at the Ministry of Regional Development and Planning. The committee includes representatives from various ministerial departments interested in the subject matter, namely the Ministry of Social Services, the Ministry of Women and Childhood, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Environment. Non-governmental organizations also took part.

The main partners for this survey were UNICEF (for technical and financial support), and the National Statistical Institute of Tunisia as the main actor in the realization of this work (sampling, listing, fieldwork, data processing and dissemination of the results).

The Ministry of Regional Development and Planning chairs the steering committee and supports the various committee members in piloting the questionnaire. This questionnaire, initially a standard one, was slightly modified after discussion with various stakeholders.

A smaller technical committee, drawn from the steering committee, was set up to participate in the preparation and translation of the questionnaire in dialectal Arabic as well as for the training of field staff and for the supervision of fieldwork.

These committee members also participate in the preparation of the report on data analysis and outcomes of the survey.

Source: *the Tunisian Ministry of Regional Development and Planning.*

BOX 22

France: Preparing for the Homeless Survey

Following numerous requests for information from various partners and associations on the population of the homeless, the National Council of the Statistical Information (CNIS) (*) recommended in 1993 to undertake a methodological research and experimentation on the homeless population in order to prepare the ways of a better knowledge of these populations. A working group on homelessness was created for this purpose within the Demography-Living Conditions Unit within the CNIS. This group included, next to researchers and statisticians, representatives of social administrations and local authorities, social workers and representatives of associations working for the homeless. A technical subgroup met in intervals to deepen the research, prepare proposals, and develop a survey methodology.

The working group, which operated from 1993 to 1996, was mandated to explore a field of study still little known in France statistically. Bringing together 200 people, it included representatives of major public associations, professional organizations, civil society, and researchers.

A steering committee composed of several associations dealing with the homeless addressed the closely linked methodological and ethical aspects in this type of survey. These associations have thus contributed to the development of the questionnaires, to exploring how to locate the homeless and interview them, how to thank them with a symbolic gesture that would not harm their sensitivity, how to define the survey scope, and how to avoid damaging questions. The steering committee also greatly facilitated contacts at the outset of the investigations.

The working group first questioned the reasons pushing different partners to ask for figures at the national level. If, indeed, at the local level, it were necessary to identify situations of exclusion in order to remedy this, what would be the meaning of compiling singular cases at the national level? However, experience shows that when the statistic is deficient, the public debate focuses on the figures and not on the issue. The working group quickly understood that the diversity of figures was greatly due to the diversity of situations: there is not a single category of homeless, but a continuum from the one who lives on the street to those whose housing situation is precarious.

Subsequently, INSEE invited associations and public entities who had already participated in the working group of the CNIS to participate in a public meeting on the draft survey. All associations attended the meeting. The contributions took place in a constructive climate; participants seem for the most part already convinced of the merits of the operation. Most wished to participate in the consultation on the questionnaire. In March-April 2000, fifty associations and public bodies were consulted on the draft questionnaire. Ten very unequal volumes of responses were collected.

In conclusion, in this type of surveys about people in great difficulty, for which the best conditions for possible inquiry must be guaranteed, in an environment far away from that of researchers, and on- which there is little work done, the partnership with associations is absolutely necessary. In this case, they brought both the first pulse, their knowledge of the environment, and their contribution during the different phases of the work, and particularly during fieldwork. Subsequently, their questions and their reactions have often led to refine and clarify the analyses, and the interpretation of results.

(*) The Conseil national de l'information statistique (CNIS) is a dialogue forum between statisticians from the public sector and users of public statistics: associations, Government, trade unions, employers and employees, researchers.

Source: *The French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE).*

The European Statistical Advisory Council is another model and details of its legislation are available online.¹⁸

¹⁷ Instituto Nacional de Estadística – High Council homepage - http://www.ine.es/en/normativa/leyes/cse/cse_en.htm

¹⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:073:0013:0016:EN:PDF>

3.3 - Operational arrangements for organising different approaches

Clearly, **resources** are a key issue for any organisation. The time required and the financial costs for arranging workshops, committee meetings, and virtual Internet exchange groups are quite different.

On one hand, even though formal actions are costly, they are necessary to perform because of the concrete results they can bring. On the other hand, informal arrangements between statisticians and their client groups play a complementary but important role to more formalised arrangements, and have little or no resource implications apart from the time involved on both sides.

Once the resources required have been calculated, those responsible for carrying out these activities may need to raise additional funds.

With funding in place, one needs to decide **how to organise the meeting**. Who will draw up a participant list and ensure that key invitees are able to

attend? When, where and how often will meetings be held? Who should set the agenda and chair the meeting? Who will write meeting minutes and keep track of action items?

Ideally, questions like this will be considered with colleagues from the user side. Involving them early on – and ensuring they have ownership of the process (perhaps by having joint or rotating meeting chairs from the user and producer side for example) – will lead to a stronger process.

A kick-off workshop can be a useful way to begin any dialogue and discuss the goals, timetable, and process. It is also important to maintain a log of user requests so that each can be addressed systematically.

Eurostat undertakes rolling reviews of sectoral statistics, which include a review of the process of production as well as user satisfaction.

BOX 23

Eurostat's user satisfaction surveys and rolling reviews

Eurostat's mission is to be the leading provider of high quality statistics on Europe. In order to measure the degree to which it meets its obligations towards its users, Eurostat carries out a number of reviews. General User Satisfaction Surveys (USS) were conducted biennially until 2011 but will now be conducted annually from 2012 onwards. Thematic user satisfaction surveys and rolling reviews in a number of selected statistical areas are also tools used as part of Eurostat's evaluation programme.

The latest general USS was conducted in the spring of 2012. It was based on the agreed model questionnaire for the European statistical system and was designed to obtain better knowledge about users, their needs, and their satisfaction with the services provided by Eurostat.

The 2012 general survey covered five main aspects:

- ▶ information on types of users and the uses of European statistics;
- ▶ quality aspects;
- ▶ trust in European statistics;
- ▶ the dissemination of statistics, and
- ▶ the overall quality of Eurostat's data and services.

About 86,000 registered users of Eurostat's website were e-mailed, informing them about the 2012 survey. Through the Eurostat website a total of 3,101 replies to the survey were received, less than the 4,247 replies for 2011, but still about twice as many as replies in 2009, reflecting the wider publicity campaign and a growing number of registered website users. In order to enable comparative analysis over time, the last general surveys have been very similar, with small adjustments generally reflecting changes in Eurostat's dissemination policy and cross-cutting issues.

(...)

Eurostat's user satisfaction surveys and rolling reviews

(continued)

To gain a better overview of the types of users, different user groups were defined in the survey:

1) students, academic and private users, 2) EU, international and political organisations, 3) business, 4) government, and 5) other users. Contrary to the USS in 2011, no separate analysis was done of replies from press and media users, because their low quantity and quality was judged not to be statistically significant. Their replies were incorporated in the group "other users". A way to increase the number of replies from journalists will be considered in the next edition of the survey.

The extensive evaluation of the USS is publically available on Eurostat's website.¹⁹ The main findings are presented under general aspects and quality aspects (overall, timeliness, completeness, comparability, and dissemination).

Importantly, each process has resulted in a number of proposed improvements. Regarding the aspect of dissemination, the 2011 and 2012 USS have included a number of proposals:

- ▶ to improve the accessibility to European statistics, by reducing the steps needed to access the data, improving the search facilities and offering more guidance to users;
- ▶ to add a page of acronyms and abbreviations and to draw users' attention on it;
- ▶ to extend the coverage of the wiki-type Statistics Explained pages;
- ▶ to make available more anonymised microdata;
- ▶ to increase the visibility and content of the release calendar and to update it in a timely fashion;
- ▶ to improve the search and navigation facilities for users working in languages other than English;
- ▶ to improve the language of metadata in making it more user-friendly, with easier explanations;
- ▶ to increase the visibility of metadata and their navigation; to include links among metadata files of statistics which are connected and links from the data to the metadata.

Rolling reviews

Rolling reviews are one of the key tools used to carry out a more complex assessment of the performance of a specific statistical domain, with a view to defining targeted improvements. These reviews not only assess the statistical data produced but also the processes behind their production, the interactions with data providers and with users of the data, and data quality. A rolling review is therefore a formative evaluation that assesses how the process of collecting, processing, and disseminating statistical data in a specific statistical area can be made more efficient (cost/benefit) and effective. Each rolling review is conducted using different tools, among which are thematic user satisfaction surveys and targeted user interviews. Rolling reviews form part of the Quality Assurance Framework developed by Eurostat in 2007. A list of rolling reviews and corresponding assessments are free to view on Eurostat's website²⁰. Nine rolling reviews were conducted between 2009 and 2011 for topics within social statistics.

Source: The European Statistical Office – Eurostat.

3.4 - How to integrate the results of the user-producer dialogue into the national statistical system (NSS)

It can be useful to set up an appropriate legal and institutional framework within which the dialogue between users and producers can be organised. Before doing this it will be useful to assess existing institutions and legislation, and see if anything needs to change. For instance, one might:

- ▶ assess existing institutions, their effectiveness, and their relevance to the dialogue;

- ▶ review the adequacy of the Statistical Act for providing an effective framework for the dialogue;
- ▶ propose a revision of the Statistical Act to promote the dialogue;
- ▶ propose an operative process to organise and carry out the dialogue.

Whatever results come out of the dialogue, it is important to integrate them into the national

¹⁹ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/quality/evaluation/general_evaluation_results

²⁰ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/quality/evaluation/domain_specific_results

statistical system in order to have a genuine outcome on bridging information gaps. There are several ways to do this. How to do it will depend on the organisation of the NSS within each country: who takes the overall decisions? How are they taken?

Some countries organise their NSS using a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) initiative. Initiated by PARIS21, these strategies are long-term plans (typically 5 to 10 years), designed

for a national statistical system, and put considerable emphasis on appropriate consultation between users and producers in the preparation, implementation, and evaluation stages. If a NSDS exists in the country, it would be sensible to discuss at the outset the user-producer dialogue with those who manage the strategy and to work with them to embed the discussions within the overall strategy for statistical development.

BOX 24

The Dialogue in the NSDS framework

A strong dialogue between data users and producers is essential to ensure that the statistical system delivers what society requires of it. This dialogue should take place within an organised framework defined by a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). While this dialogue may be facilitated by the National Statistical Council (NSC) or the National Statistical Institute (NSI) within the National Statistical System (NSS), the design process of an NSDS provides the opportunity for making this dialogue operational with a wide range of national partners.

A NSDS enables developing countries to build a reliable statistical system that produces the data necessary to design, implement, and monitor national development policies and programmes. A NSDS provides a country with a vision of the development of statistics and a detailed action plan over a 5 to 10 year period that covers the production of all official statistics. In other words, a NSDS is a platform on which statistical capabilities and infrastructure, as well as field activities, can be planned. This platform also enables stakeholders in the NSS (sectoral ministries, central bank, national statistical institute, etc.) as well as technical and financial partners (TFPs) – such as bilateral donors, multilateral institutions, and other external actors supporting statistics in the country – to co-ordinate their efforts through appropriate mechanisms.

It is crucial to involve not only producers but also users in the NSDS designing process. Users are consumers of statistics, and a statistical system will be viable only if the outputs and services it provides meet users' needs. There is a host of data users in every country. They include policymakers, but also researchers, analysts, the private sector, regional and international organisations, donors, the media, citizens, and civil society organisations.

The NSDS should be designed through a participatory process led by national authorities, a close collaboration with key actors in the national statistical system. Whether the NSDS approach is successful or not depends to a great extent on: 1) a significant political commitment at the highest level; 2) the degree to which the country is committed to this approach and the intensity of the dialogue between producers and users; 3) the mobilisation of necessary resources; and 4) the quality of the dialogue with TFPs.

During the NSDS design process, discussions should encompass:

- ▶ national and external partners, to ensure greater coherence and efficiency of the development of the statistical system;
- ▶ users and producers, to take better into account users' expectations and producers' capabilities, for enhancing mutual understanding and providing a more effective management of results;
- ▶ units of the production system, to align their products with international standards and to co-ordinate programmes for greater efficiency;
- ▶ domestic and external technical managers, to rationalise the allocation of resources.

Through an effective NSS and a well-designed NSDS, countries would create a sustainable feedback loop in which users express their needs, producers outline what they are capable of producing to meet those needs, and the two groups thrive to developing appropriate solutions for achieving national goals.

Source : PARIS21 Secretariat, www.paris21.org.

As a first step, the results of the dialogue and the ensuing plan need to be documented. It should be recognised early on that implementation, undertaken either solely by the NSI or jointly with other stakeholders, would take time. Expectations need to be managed among those involved. Regular progress reports that monitor implementation are a useful way to maintain momentum and allow all those involved a chance to keep track of the project.

There is no single “one-size-fits-all” way to implement a project for change. Different approaches and reporting arrangements will work, depending on the country. Governance of the process and overall accountability are as important here as they are to any project, and thoughts should be given to this early in the piece, thus ensuring that arrangements are clear and appropriate.

In some countries for instance, decisions about the NSS are taken by a statistical council or an advisory board. When this is the case, it would be appropriate to brief that committee at the beginning of the dialogue process to inform it of the plans and seek its comments and endorsement.

3.5 - Dissemination of statistics

Better dissemination and communication of social statistics are likely to be an outcome of the dialogue. This section looks at how to produce a dissemination policy and presents some of the different approaches to dissemination in the region.

Four questions are central to any statistical dissemination policy:

- 1. What numbers should be disseminated?** What is the most appropriate form –predetermined statistical tables, derived indicators, and/or raw data – that could be processed by users to suit their own needs?
- 2. Who is the target audience to disseminate to?** The media? Academics? Policymakers? They might have different preferences.

3. How should the numbers be disseminated?

What means can be used – detailed publication, brochure, press release? What graphics are most appropriate for “telling the story” to the target audience? What channels can be used – online, television and radio stories? Should special events be organised to advertise highprofile releases?

4. How to strengthen the national capabilities to improving staff skills for the dissemination of social statistics?

There are three ways to disseminate data:

- 1. Anonymous raw microdata** can be distributed under some conditions. This carries risks of breaching institutional confidentiality. It is only suitable for experts, statistically literate users who have time to undertake analyses. They would have a good deal of freedom to interrogate the data as they wish. However, in some countries, this is not happening or not possible;
- 2. Statistical output and publications** – such as web pages, online data for download, thematic notes, brochures, and Year Books – serve a broader group of users. They have a relatively high fixed cost to produce, but for online data and publications at least, a marginal cost of zero thereafter. Although they prevent users from looking at the data in all the ways they might like to, they do enable the NSI to control the quality of data, and ensure its fitness for purpose;
- 3. Ad hoc data dissemination** undertaken by the NSI in response to specific requests. This allows information to be tailored to the exact demands of the user but each separate request puts a drain on NSI resources; it would be made available at cost price.

The Statistics Norway publication *User-friendly presentation of statistics: A guide to creating a dissemination strategy and dissemination guidelines for developing and transition countries* is a useful reference.²¹

²¹ http://www.ssb.no/int/pres_stat/pres_stat.pdf

BOX 25

Medstat programme training courses for data dissemination: a tool to help promoting the dialogue between producers and users

In order to strengthen the capacities of the NSIs in the ENP-South partner countries (MPCs) for the dissemination of their statistical output as well as for dealing with the users, six courses (four basic training courses and two training of trainers courses) were organised throughout the Medstat programme. Importance of designing a dissemination strategy and the strengthening of relationships with the users were the pillar topics of the training courses.

Two basic training courses were organised by Medstat II: one regional course for the MPCs in 2006 in Amman and one sub-regional course for French-speaking countries in 2007 in Marrakesh. Methods and tools to identify users' needs and to follow up their satisfaction over time in order to build durable relations with them were exposed to participants. In addition, participants acquired competencies in writing user-friendly statistical reports and in drafting attractive press releases.

Two training of trainers courses were also organised by Medstat II in 2008 in two sessions (in Malta and Rome): training future trainers enables to enhance NSIs training capacities by developing a pool of trainers able to share and spread their knowledge within the National Statistical System (NSS). The course objective was to enhance the practical skills necessary to produce user-friendly statistical reports and to communicate statistical information to the appropriate user groups.

Two basic training courses were organised by Medstat III in Tunis (in French) and in Madrid (in English) in 2012, targeting NSIs staff responsible for statistical dissemination policy and experts in electronic dissemination tools. The objective was to bring together these two groups of staff in order to develop a common understanding about the basic principles of publication and dissemination, and to stress the importance of dealing with user's needs in statistics, and of better meeting these needs.

The dissemination culture and proactive relationships with the users must still be spread more widely to all staff of the NSS. Furthermore, higher priority should be given to organising courses at the national level in order to reach a larger number of stakeholders. For better effectiveness and sustainability, these actions need to be strongly supported by the top management of the NSIs.

Source: Medstat III Key Expert for Training.

BOX 26

In Morocco: Memorandum of understanding with local partners

In the process of developing and strengthening its relationships with its partners, i.e. the users and producers of statistical information, the High Planning Commission (HCP, Haut Commissariat au Plan) has formalised its relationships with some local partners by signing written agreements. The agreements define mutual commitments for collecting, analysing and disseminating data. These Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) for scientific co-operation were signed with the World Bank, UNICEF, the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises (CGEM), the Office for Foreign Exchange, the University of Mohammed V-Agdal- Rabat, and the National Fund for Social Security. The MOU give the possibility to those partners to access relevant microdata for the purpose of research that have been discussed with the HCP and the *Direction de la Statistique*.

Source: Information shared during meetings of the Guidelines Working Group.

Both communication policy – which deals with raising product awareness – and a dissemination policy – which deals with getting the product to the user – are useful.

Key questions to consider for the **communication policy** include: What are the objectives? Which users are to be reached? What channels should be used?

Key questions to consider for a **dissemination policy** include: What is the purpose of disseminating data? How to do it? What are the constraints? Is it the right format, level of detail, appropriate explanation, and commentary? Is the timing right? Is the product accessible and affordable (or, ideally, free)?

Eurostat has developed a broad communication and dissemination policy that provides a useful model.

BOX 27

Eurostat's communication and dissemination policy

A communication and dissemination policy for statistics should help bridge the gap between what producers are able to provide and what users want, when they want it, and the form in which they want it. Eurostat has had a number of communication and dissemination strategies over the years. Each one has built on previous successes and adapted to, among other things, changing technological developments, emerging needs and budgetary constraints.

The building blocks

A key development in Eurostat's communication and dissemination strategy was the decision taken in 2004 to make all non-confidential data free-to-view and free-to-download through its website. This "free of charge" principle, and the technological developments that facilitated it, resulted in considerable changes to the entire dissemination process and the available channels of communication with users.

Underpinning the policy, at the time, were three key objectives:

- to be the first-choice source for European statistical data;
- to increase Eurostat's level of service to users, and more specifically to maximise the exposure of Eurostat data in general with a public service approach favouring free charge access, and
- to represent Eurostat figures attractively and, as far as possible, accompany them with clear and objective comments.

The objectives were supported by a number of actions that remain relevant today:

- setting priority target groups and prioritising information carriers;
- ensuring that the dissemination of statistics is an integral part of the work of each production unit;
- establishing a system for monitoring the levels of use and satisfaction of various users groups;
- better linking dissemination to specific events and current topics;
- ensuring that Eurostat's website is the main dissemination / communication tool;
- ensuring that the system of paper publications is developed to increase the relative importance of simple publications dealing with data selected for users' broad interest;
- establishing an active policy for "training" Eurostat users, and
- establishing follow-up, feedback mechanisms

The new strategy

Eurostat's latest dissemination and communication strategy for 2010-2015 translates the mission of Eurostat, the basic principles of its Code of Practice, its vision and its principle of free dissemination into concrete objectives and actions.

The vision is that official statistics play a fundamental role in today's society. The availability of impartial and objective statistical information is essential for all decision-makers. Statistical information underpins transparency and openness of policy decisions, and official statistics therefore represent a public good providing a basis for the smooth functioning of society.

(...)

BOX

27

Eurostat's communication and dissemination policy

(continued)

This led to four basic objectives for dissemination and communication at Eurostat and in the wider European Statistical System (ESS):

- A. serving the needs of users by providing high-quality official statistics;
- B. supporting policy making and civil society as a whole by making statistics available to all actors in an open way;
- C. helping all users to understand statistics and to use them correctly;
- D. making users aware of the added value of statistics from the ESS.

A number of actions were launched to support this strategy:

- reworking bulk download services;
- improving access to metadata;
- extension of dedicated pages of the Eurostat website to sections on Europe 2020 indicators and for GDP and Beyond;
- rewriting "web-style" the existing pages;
- expansion of the wiki-type "Statistics Explained" articles and the use of these articles to draw up selected paper publications like the *Yearbook*;
- a continuing reduction in the number of paper publications – Eurostat will produce less than 20 paper publications in 2012;
- use of new data visualisation tools;
- end of charging for microdata, and
- promotion of Eurostat data as "open data", for example via the Google Public Data Explorer.

Two new areas for possible or enlarged actions with national statistical institutes (NSI) have been agreed:

- co-operation in the development and use of common tools and services for dissemination, and
- common ESS conditions for free access to and free reuse of data.

New communication tools are also being developed, such as mobile phone/tablet apps for country profiles and Statistics Explained, RSS/Atom feeds, and the use of Twitter. Forms and styles of communication are also changing to ensure high ranking on search engines. In this way, Eurostat's communication and dissemination strategy should be seen as dynamic and responding to ever-changing trends and requirements.

Source: The European Statistical Office – Eurostat.

Whatever strategy is used, it is important to remember that the media need to be engaged. The media are the most important way of informing the public of the main statistical stories (if the public is the audience one wants to reach). This requires more than simply providing media releases and hoping that the media will pick them up. The media strategy may comprise a mixture of the following:

- Contacting key journalists to inform them of the forthcoming release of publications; offering to assist them to produce media articles (a NSI should maintain a release calendar that should be publicly available and users should be aware of it);
- Preparing media releases, attaching some interesting story lines that journalists might possibly use, and,

- Providing a list of some well-briefed people that journalists can contact to assist them with their articles. Increasingly, the Internet is where people will access the data, so a well-designed website is important. However, different styles of websites can be used for different purposes. Allowing users to interrogate the data and to extract information at different geographical levels is one clear advantage the Internet has over print. This is particularly useful when data are available at a local level. Training about Internet is increasingly available, as it is considered a very important area.

3.6 - Access to microdata

Access to microdata is also an issue that many NSIs discuss.

There are clear technical and legal restrictions in many countries around granting access to microdata, but there is also a growing demand, among more sophisticated users, to get access. An increasing number of NSIs are responding positively. While some argue that access to data should be restricted lest it is misused for drawing conclusions for which it is not fit, others argue that statisticians have no role to police data users.

If a NSI releases data that is appropriately "confidentialised", with adequate warnings about fitness for purpose, the burden of responsibility to use it suitably rests on the user (just as when a doctor prescribes medication, the responsibility is on the patient for following the instructions on the medicine bottle). Solid and up-to-date metadata is important in this regard, as well as to offer advice on how the data should be used for modelling or other purposes. How, for example, should survey weights be used in a regression model? Morocco is one country where

statisticians coach users in how to analyse the microdata.

This particular type of dialogue has technical but potentially high rewards. There is a need to be prudent, at least in the early stages of microdata release, to ensure data is used appropriately. Moreover, although it is difficult to generalise, if data are misused and there are significant consequences of the misuse, the data producer might need to react promptly to provide clarifications. This is tackled by the International Statistical Institute (ISI) in its 2010 declaration on professional ethics, which notes: "the statistician should guard against predictable misinterpretation or misuse. If such misinterpretation or misuse occurs, steps should be taken to inform potential users."²² This should be considered beforehand as a part of the risk management strategy.

BOX

28

Microdata access in Palestine

In Palestine, the PCBS provides well thought-out access to microdata. They see the following benefits:

1. To support the use of raw data by public researchers and decision-makers;
2. To strengthen PCBS's relationship with the public, in particular with scientific research and academic centres;
3. To help ensure scientists can generate research that serves policymaking;
4. To save PCBS staff time in not having to answer to too many data requests;
5. To enter data into statistical databases available on the Internet.

For each dataset a Public Use File (PUF), for researchers and libraries, is made publicly available. A PUF+, for universities and graduate students (especially the Labour Force Survey data and the Health Survey data), may also be made available sometimes.

There are two key rules:

Rule 1: PCBS must eliminate all variables that lead the user to extract results that are not validated by the Bureau of Statistics. The variables thought to threaten the validity of the data are recombined through trial and error. Some of the variables are deleted from the PUF file because the data cannot be published due to quality or validity issues. This is always at the discretion of the Bureau of Statistics.

(...)

²² <http://www.isi-web.org/about-isi/professional-ethics>

BOX 28

Microdata access in Palestine

(continued)

Rule 2: Only a part of the contents of the original files can be put in PUF files. When deciding what raw data are eligible for public use, the PCBS typically:

1. studies the raw data files in detail and specify the indicators and variables that must be included in the raw data files;
2. studies the possibilities for publishing, at the very least by studying weights and ensuring that the sample allows for publishing at the specified levels;
3. adds a new data key to indicate original informational data in case the original data needs to be referred to in the future;
4. computes statistics and makes comparisons to ensure conformity with published data.

The following data are eligible for public use:

1. Data surveys and censuses carried out by the Bureau of Statistics;
2. Data handled according to specific standard procedures;
3. Data whose validity can be ensured;
4. Data that contain selected variables from the original data;
5. Data that contain 10-20% of the census data;
6. All metadata required to enable the user to use the data correctly and easily.

Source: The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS).

3.7 - Tips for success

Here are the five fundamental tips recommended to help ensure the dialogue is successful:

1. First and foremost, it goes without saying that **there is no point in embarking on a dialogue if one is not prepared to take the views of others into account.**
2. Social statistics are a broad area. Rather than try to cover everything at one, it might be prudent and more tractable to **start a user-producer dialogue covering one particular theme.** In part, this can be a learning process.
3. **The pace of collaboration can be a significant determinant of success.** The speed of a dialogue process depends on many factors, such as the diversity of stakeholders, the political environment, and the complexity of the topic. However, because the process of collaborating can inculcate a sense of ownership in a project, it should not be rushed. If users feel collaboration was

initiated too late or undertaken too quickly they might react negatively.

4. **One needs to guard against over-consultation,** which if extensive, can lead to stakeholder's "fatigue" and may create frustrations if a project is stagnating.
5. Moreover, **the way in which collaborators interact is also important.** Many of the behaviours that determine the effectiveness of collaboration between government and others apply equally to other successful relationships. In successful collaborations, partners listen to one another; are open to new ideas and act on them. They also understand the wider systems in which their partners operate. These facets in turn help build a shared trust. And when collaborators feel that they have genuine influence over an initiative, they bring a greater energy and enthusiasm to the collaboration.

Ten more tips for success should be considered:

1. **Do not start too ambitiously.** Begin with a pilot (for example, a dialogue around a new statistical survey) and try to work within existing structures of government;
2. **Understand the authorizing environment.** Take time to identify the right stakeholders and involve key decision makers early. Take into consideration the constraints that a NSI faces for modifying the statistical programme;
3. **Do not try to work alone.** Find partners who are committed and involve others if help is required (including international partners);
4. **Make sure that you finish what you begin.** Make a road map and anticipate what might happen (for example, the modification of a questionnaire, the re-design of a statistical publication, etc.). Be prepared to follow up and to act with a clear timeline;
5. **Remember there is a cost** (monetary and time) attached to the process; the necessary resources need to be found – even if the cost is a relatively small part of the whole statistical cycle it needs to be factored into the process;
6. **Include training and capacity building** for users and producers within the dialogue;
7. **Do not expect immediate results** – the process itself is beneficial;
8. **Inquire about users' needs.** It can be difficult for users to express their wants, so asking them to react to a draft proposal or publication can be useful;
9. **Be ready to improve your communication and marketing.** These are important to the success of the venture. Choose appropriate channels for different users. A mixture of approaches will often be required;
10. **Document what you do.** Written evidence is useful.

Appendix 1: The Medstat III Working Group on User-Producer Dialogue

In order to draft the regional Guidelines a Working Group was established in November 2010, in Paris, France. It is composed of:

Expert Group (EG). This group is particularly responsible for drafting the Guidelines, and composed of:

▸ National Experts (7):

- Producers: Ms Fidaa ABATLI, Central Bureau of Statistics - Palestine;
Mr Amer Al-JAMAL, Department of Statistics – Jordan;
Ms Lara BADRE, Central Administration of Statistics – Lebanon;
Ms Amal LAKEHAL, Office National des Statistiques – Algeria;
- Users: Prof. Tanios GERGES, Université Libanaise - Lebanon;
Mr Wissem ROMDHANE, Ministère du Développement régional
et de la Planification – Tunisia;
Mr Abdelkader TETO, Observatoire des conditions de vie –
Haut Commissariat au Plan – Morocco.

▸ International Experts (4):

- Short-term Expert: Mr Jon HALL, Statistician, Expert in communication;
Eurostat: Mr Edward COOK, Unit A6;
Medstat III: Mr Bahjat ACHIKBACHE, Key Expert for social statistics;
Mr José CERVERA-FERRI, Team Leader.

Reference Group (RG). This group has the responsibility to provide comments and advice on substantive issues. The RG operates on a voluntarily basis and is consulted quarterly. It is composed of:

- Director General of the National Statistical Institutes in the Partner countries of the Medstat III programme;
- National Principal Coordinators and Social Statistics Sector Coordinators in the Partner countries of the Medstat III programme;W
- Participants in the November 2010 workshop non-members of the Expert Group.

Peer Review Group (PRG). This group is responsible for reviewing the final draft of the Regional Guidelines produced by the Expert Group. It is composed of 3 independent international specialists from European countries who were selected to stand for users and producers of social statistics:

- Mr Jan Robert SUESSER, senior statistician, civil servant, former director of Adetef, and currently head of the Property Registration Office, Ministry of Finance, France;
- Mr Jean LE NAY, freelance macro and development economist, retired from University and the UN Secretariat, with 25 years of experience in the use of economic and social data. Currently on assignments for the UN and PARIS21;
- Mr Roger EDMUNDS, freelance senior statistician with extensive international experience and deep knowledge of the Medstat III programme as well as of the statistical environment of the European and the Mediterranean regions.

Appendix 2: The United Nations fundamental principles of official statistics

Principle 1. Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the Government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honor citizens' entitlement to public information.

Principle 2. To retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to strictly professional considerations, including scientific principles and professional ethics, on the methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.

Principle 3. To facilitate a correct interpretation of the data, the statistical agencies are to present information according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures of the statistics.

Principle 4. The statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.

Principle 5. Data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.

Principle 6. Individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether they refer to natural or legal persons, are to be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes.

Principle 7. The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are to be made public.

Principle 8. Coordination among statistical agencies within countries is essential to achieve consistency and efficiency in the statistical system.

Principle 9. The use by statistical agencies in each country of international concepts, classifications and methods promotes the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels.

Principle 10. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contributes to the improvement of systems of official statistics in all countries.

Appendix 3: The National Statistical System in Tunisia

Main principles of the statistical activity in Tunisia

The law no. 99-32 of 13 April 1999 concerning the national statistics system refers to certain basic principles and ethical rules that govern national statistical activity. Respecting these principles and rules:

- ▶ guarantees the production of credible, quality statistical information;
- ▶ guarantees access to statistical information for all users;
- ▶ maintains these users' confidence in the statistics that are produced and disseminated.

The **mission of the NSS** is to provide public administrations, enterprises, organizations, media institutions, researchers, and the general public with statistical data concerning the economic, social, environmental and other fields. In particular:

- ▶ Collecting data from households, enterprises, administrations and all other units that may be the subject of a statistical survey, and processing and recording such data;
- ▶ Publishing and disseminating the statistical information to all public and private users, and developing it by means of the new information and communications technologies. Users may be required, in certain cases, to pay a contribution to the collection and distribution costs;
- ▶ Making, on the basis of the available statistics, preliminary analyses concerning various development-related fields;
- ▶ Coordinating the activities of the various structures and bodies in charge of statistics, and planning statistical activities;
- ▶ Defining concepts, terminology and standards and adopting the statistical methods currently in use at the international level;
- ▶ Organising consultation between the producers and users of statistical information to meet data needs and guarantee that the demanded statistics are available;
- ▶ Providing initial and in-work training to the staff working in the field of statistics, promoting research, and disseminating the culture of statistics.

The **Tunisian National Statistics System (NSS)** is composed of the structures and bodies in charge of collecting, processing, storing, analysing, and disseminating official statistics and of coordinating statistical activity:

- ▶ The National Statistics Council;
- ▶ The National Statistics Institute;
- ▶ Other specialized public statistics structures;
- ▶ Statistics training institutions.

These structures enjoy scientific independence and carry out their missions in compliance with the concepts, methodological rules, and techniques commonly accepted in this field. Private bodies and structures can also collect and use statistical information that is not available and is necessary for the analyses and studies they are conducting as part of their activities, but must inform the National Statistics Council of their activities in this field.

The National Statistics Council (CNS) was created by Law no. 99-32 of 13 April 1999 relating to the national statistics system. It is the main body in the national statistics system. Its purpose is to advise, coordinate, consult, follow up and assess. It activates the whole system provided for by the law, by drawing up a program to develop statistical activities and by reinforcing consultation between users and producers of statistical information, which will constantly improve the system. The CNS:

- ▶ proposes the general orientations of national statistical activities, priorities and instruments for coordinating the activities of the national statistics system;
- ▶ makes sure that the ethical rules of the profession and the basic principles of statistical activity are observed;
- ▶ gives its opinion on statistical information development policy and on measures likely to direct and promote statistical activities;
- ▶ makes sure statistical work is coordinated and suggests tools for statistical coordination;
- ▶ is responsible for examining the statistics programs of public statistics structures and bodies in order to suggest a National Statistics Programme covering the period of the Development Plan;
- ▶ ensures the necessary consultation between producers and users of statistical information;
- ▶ is consulted on draft legal texts, rules, and regulations pertaining to statistics.

Composition of the CNS

The National Statistics Council is made up of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the following 28 members:


- ▶ **Fourteen ex-officio members:** Officials in charge of statistics, studies, and planning in the main ministries and public institutions;
- ▶ **Ten appointed members** representing major users, chosen from civil society and the private sector: UTICA, UGTT, UTAP, UNFT, the Consumer Rights Organization, the Engineers' Association and the Employers' Federation of Research and Counselling Departments;
- ▶ **Four es-quality members** representing the university, research, and expertise in the field of statistics, data analysis, and economic and social studies.

The CNS Chairman and Vice-Chairman, and the appointed members are named by decree for a period of four years, renewable once only. The CNS Chairman may invite, when necessary, to the various sessions of the Council, appropriate people, to hear their opinion. The General Director of the National Statistics Institute (INS) acts as permanent secretary to the National Statistics Council.

For more information;
<http://www.tunisie-statistiques.tn>

Source: The Tunisian National Statistics Council (CNS).

**Appendix 4:
 Jordan: Data user satisfaction on-line questionnaire**



Department of Statistics

Data user Satisfaction Questionnaire

Identification data :

Name / Party (mandatory):

Phone number (optional):

E-mail (Optional):

Type of the employing party:

Government Sector

Private Sector

Individuals

International and Diplomatic organizations

Other

Field of interest in the statistical data:

Population and Social Economic Agricultural Other

Means of data provision preferred :

Phone Fax E-mail Post Personal

Type of statistical data you are interested in (you can choose more than one service):

Copies of the statistical publications or photocopied portions (wether hard copies or electronic)

Using the references and publications in the DoS library

Conducting of surveys or specialized studies for a particular institution

Preliminary Row data for researches and studies

Consultations /assistance in the process of the statistical analysis

Design / selection of samples

Geographical data systems

Other services

Now, Please indicate the extent of your satisfaction with the information and services provided to you by the Department of statistics (DoS) .

1- The raw data and indicators produced by the DoS are highly accurate

2- The publications and reports issued by the DoS are comprehensive and meet the needs of data users

3- The process of updating and development of indicators and data produced by the DoS is good

4- The DoS provides raw data and indicators in different formats to facilitates its re-use such as: PDF Files,EXCEL

5- The website of DoS allows ease and quick access to the information

6- The DoS responds quickly and effectively to complaints and queries of customers

7- The badges of the DoS staff are clear, legible and facilitate access to the concerned employee

8- The service providing staff is continuously available for help

9- The response of the service providing staff to the service recipients and their degree of cooperation is good and satisfies all their needs

10- The DoS building plan ensures quick access to the required information

11- The geographic location of the DoS is suitable for the data users

12- Completion of this form was easy

Your rating of the services provided by the DoS in general:

Other comments:
 Please write down any notes not mentioned in the questionnaire or any suggestion that you fmd suitable to improve the performance of the DoS.

1 SEND 1

Source: The Jordanian Department of Statistics (DOS).

Appendix 5: How the Guidelines relate to other material on official statistics

There are several important sets of principles and guidelines relating to official statistics. These guidelines are meant to complement all of these and at times, we refer to some of them in the text. They include:

The United Nation's Fundamental Principles of official statistics: a set of 10 principles that outline the importance and role of official statistics. They define the importance of official statistics and seek to explain why official statistics must meet certain general criteria. These Principles were put in place to "assist heads of national statistical offices to defend the position of their institutes". The principles are at Appendix 2 of these guidelines.

(UN 2012, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/fundprinciples.aspx>)

The United Nation's official statistics: Principles and Practices, Organization and Management webpage contains a variety of material useful for official statistical practices. The site includes a Good Practices Database, containing reference material covering countries' experiences in implementing the UN's Official Principles as well as a Handbook of Statistical Organization, which deals with many aspects of running a national statistical system including data collection, respondent policies and data dissemination guidelines.

(UN 2012, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/statorg/default.htm>)

The European Statistics Code of Practice sets the standard for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. It builds upon a common European Statistical System defining statistical quality and covering the institutional environment, the statistical production processes, and the European official statistical output. The Code of Practice sets out 15 key principles for the production and dissemination of European official statistics as well as the institutional environment under which national and Community statistical authorities operate. A set of indicators of good practice for each of the 15 principles provides a reference for reviewing the implementation of the Code.

(EU 2012, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/quality/code_of_practice)

The IMF's Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) comprises five dimensions of data quality: assurances of integrity, methodological soundness, accuracy and reliability, serviceability, and accessibility. The DQAF, which is used for comprehensive assessments of countries' data quality, covers institutional environments, statistical processes, and characteristics of the statistical products.

(IMF 2012, <http://dsbb.imf.org/pages/dqrs/dqaf.aspx>)

PARIS 21 Guidelines on preparing National Strategies for the Development of Statistics pay particular attention to the importance of users' consultation and how to go about it. They have also produced a manual on user-friendly statistical presentation.

(PARIS 21, 2012 www.paris21.org)

The Amman Declaration on Statistics - Fifth Forum on Statistical Capacity Building for Arab Countries specifically mentions the importance of meeting the needs of data users; increasing users' – especially the media's – confidence in official statistics; increasing transparency in all stages of the statistical process; and helping planners and decision-makers to use statistical data by bridging the gap between them and NSI. The Declaration encourages the NSI to build relationships with the media in particular, as the media are the main provider of information to the general public. The declaration also discussed ways to increase their statistical literacy. (Fifth Arab Forum on Statistical Capacity Building for Arab Countries, Amman, July 2011.)

Appendix 6: PCBS: International Women's Day 2012.

(Press release issued March 2012.)

Source: The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS).



International Women's Day 2012

Issued on 8/3/2012

About half of the Palestinian society is females

The estimated population at end of 2011 was 4.2 million in the Palestinian territory of whom 2.2 million are males and 2.0 million females. In addition, males comprise 50.8% of total population compared to 49.2% for females. In other words; for every 100 person, there are 49 females. Thus, the sex ratio was 103.2.

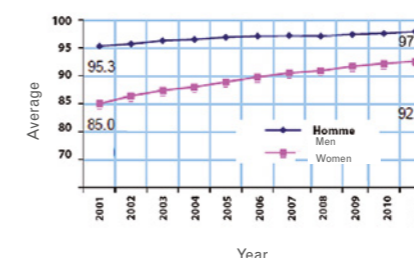
More than half of the females aged 15 years and above are married

Of every 10 females aged 15 years and above, there are 6 of them got married. Conversely, there are 3 women out of 10 are never being married, 6.1% are widowed, while 1.3% are divorced, 1.8% are engaged for the first time and not yet married and 0.2% are separated.

Decline in illiteracy percentages among women

Illiteracy percentages among females are three and a half times higher than among males, the rate of illiteracy among males reaches 2.1% compared to 7.4% among females in 2011, while the literacy percentages among females was 15.3% in 2001. On the other hand, the percentage of women with associated diploma and above was about 17% in 2001.

Literacy rate among men and women aged 15 years and above during 2001-2011

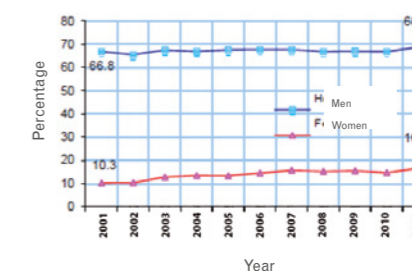


Limited participation of women in the labor force

Despite the rise in the participation rate of women in the labor force during the past ten years, still the rate is considered low; 16.6% out of females in the labor force in 2011 compared to 10.3% in 2001. Participation rate of men in the labor force is still four times higher than that of females.

On the other hand, there is a gap in the average of daily wages between men and women; i.e. the average of daily wages for women represents 84% out of the men's average of daily wage in 2011.

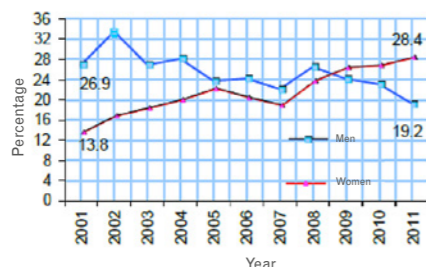
Participation of men and women 15 years and above in the labor force during 2001-2011



Higher unemployment percentage among women

Participation of women in the labor force is considered important for sustainable development. But the unemployment percentages is still increased between women. It was 28.4% in 2011 compared to 13.8% in 2001. It's worth to mention the unemployment percentages was the highest among women with 13 schooling years; 38.8% in 2011.

Unemployment rate among men and women 15 years and above 2000-2011.



Higher poverty percentages among female-headed households

The proportion of deep poverty among households headed by women was about 15% in 2010; 20.6% in Gaza Strip compared to 12.5% in West Bank. On the other hand, poor households in the Gaza Strip are more impoverished than those in West Bank, since absolute poverty percentage was 3.2% and 2.2% respectively.

Percentage of deep poverty rate By sex of household, 2010

Sex of Household	West Bank	Gaza Strip
Males	8.6	23.2
Females	12.5	20.6

Multiple sources of violence against women

37.0% of ever-married women were exposed to one form of violence by their husbands in 2011. The highest percentage of violence that had been directed against wives by husbands was in Jericho & Al- Aghwar governorate in West Bank at 47.3% and the lowest percentage was in Ramallah & Al Bireh governorate at 14.2% while in Gaza Strip, this percentage reached its highest in Gaza governorate at 58.1% while the lowest percentage was in Rafah governorate at 23.1%.

On the other hand, 5% of women were subjected to psychological violence in streets by

other individuals and 1.3% were subjected to sexual harassment while 0.6% of women were subjected to physical violence in the same place, compared to 4.0% of women who were exposed to psychological violence by service providers and other individuals who were present at such places of public services whether health, social, and cultural services.

Women suffer more chronic diseases than men

20.1% of women at age 18 and over suffer from at least one chronic disease, compared to 16.2% among men in the same age group, the prevalence in West Bank is higher than in Gaza Strip: 21.5% and 17.6% respectively. Obviously, hypertension, diabetes, and arthritis diseases are the most prevalent among women.

Women and men 18 years and over with certain chronic diseases, 2010

Disease	Sex	
	Females	Males
Hypertension	9.8	5.7
Diabetes	6.6	5.3
Ulcer	1.6	1.8
Cardiac	2.4	2.7
Cancer	0.4	0.2
Arthritis	5.8	3.2

Palestinian women in public life

13.2% of the members of the Legislative Council in 2010 were women. And the percentage of women in the Legislative Council in Gaza Strip is more than in West Bank: 14.9% and 12.1% respectively. 11.3% of judges are women, and the percentage of female judges reached almost 12% in West Bank and about 10% in Gaza Strip. Only 10% of editors of daily papers in the Palestinian territory are women.

For more details, please contact: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics Ramallah-Palestine
 Phone: ++ (970/972) 2 – 298-2700
 Fax: ++ (970/972) 2 – 298-2710
 Toll-Free: 1-800-300-300
 Email: diwan@pcbs.gov.ps

Appendix 7: The official list of Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

Effective 15 January 2008

Millennium Development Goals (MDG)	
Goals and Targets (from the Millennium Declaration)	Indicators for monitoring progress
Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	
Target 1.A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day	1.1 Proportion of population below \$1 (PPP) per day ²³ 1.2 Poverty gap ratio 1.3 Share of poorest quintile in national consumption
Target 1.B: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people	1.4 Growth rate of GDP per person employed 1.5 Employment-to-population ratio 1.6 Proportion of employed people living below \$1 (PPP) per day 1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment
Target 1.C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	1.8 Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age 1.9 Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	
Target 2.A: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling	2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education 2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary 2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	
Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015	3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education 3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector 3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality	
Target 4.A: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate	4.1 Under-five mortality rate 4.2 Infant mortality rate 4.3 Proportion of 1 year-old children immunised against measles

²³ For monitoring country poverty trends, indicators based on national poverty lines should be used, where available.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health	
Target 5.A: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio	5.1 Maternal mortality ratio 5.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
Target 5.B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health	5.3 Contraceptive prevalence rate 5.4 Adolescent birth rate 5.5 Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits) 5.6 Unmet need for family planning
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	
Target 6.A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	6.1 HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years 6.2 Condom use at last high-risk sex 6.3 Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS 6.4 Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years
Target 6.B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it	6.5 Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs
Target 6.C: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases	6.6 Incidence and death rates associated with malaria 6.7 Proportion of children under 5 sleeping under insecticide-treated bed nets 6.8 Proportion of children under 5 with fever who are treated with appropriate anti-malarial drugs 6.9 Incidence, prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis 6.10 Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	
Target 7.A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources Target 7.B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss	7.1 Proportion of land area covered by forest 7.2 CO2 emissions, total, per capita and per \$1 GDP (PPP) 7.3 Consumption of ozone-depleting substances 7.4 Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits 7.5 Proportion of total water resources used 7.6 Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected 7.7 Proportion of species threatened with extinction
Target 7.C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation	7.8 Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source 7.9 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility
Target 7.D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers	7.1 Proportion of urban population living in slums ²⁴

²⁴The actual proportion of people living in slums is measured by a proxy, represented by the urban population living in households with at least one of the four characteristics: (a) lack of access to improved water supply; (b) lack of access to improved sanitation; (c) overcrowding (3 or more persons per room); and (d) dwellings made of non-durable material

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development	
Target 8.A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally Target 8.B: Address the special needs of the least developed countries. Includes: tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction Target 8.C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly) Target 8.D: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term	Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the least developed countries (LDCs), Africa, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Official development assistance (ODA) 8.1 Net ODA, total and to the least developed countries, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income 8.2 Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation) 8.3 Proportion of bilateral official development assistance of OECD/DAC donors that is untied 8.4 ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national incomes 8.5 ODA received in small island developing States as a proportion of their gross national incomes Market access 8.6 Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and least developed countries, admitted free of duty 8.7 Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries 8.8 Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product 8.9 Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity Debt sustainability 8.10 Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative) 8.11 Debt relief committed under HIPC and MDRI Initiatives
Target 8.E: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries	8.13 Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis
Target 8.F: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications	8.14 Fixed telephone lines per 100 inhabitants 8.15 Mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants 8.16 Internet users per 100 inhabitants

Supporting the Dialogue between the Users and Producers of Statistics with a special focus on social statistics in the Southern & Eastern Mediterranean countries

“Coordination of statistical programmes, both internationally and in countries, must be strengthened and consultation between statistical producers and key user groups must be improved at all levels, making use of existing institutions, partnerships and forums, wherever possible”. (The Dakar Declaration on the Development of Statistics, November 2009.)

There is a growing recognition that the relationship between statistical users and producers needs to be improved, and that a broader definition of who the “users” actually are needs to be proposed. In part, this is a reflection of the realization that statistical outputs do not generate better decisions alone. They need to be used appropriately to become outcomes. The OECD, especially through its *World Forums on Statistics, Knowledge, Policy*, is among those institutions that have recognized this. In part too, it is in recognition of the changing role of national statistical systems (NSSs), shifting from something seen primarily as a tool of government to something that serves all citizens.

Statistics are lifeblood of democracy because informing citizens should rely on solid and impartial evidence with which to assess the performance of their government. Yet how does one have a dialogue with “the public” on such issues?

In an attempt to answer such a question, the Medstat III programme – funded by the European Union – organised a workshop in Paris in November 2010 that brought together statisticians and users of social statistics from countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region. The idea to produce these Guidelines came out as a recommendation of the workshop for providing operating tools for organising and running the dialogue between stakeholders of the national statistical system.

These Guidelines address the issues surrounding the dialogue between users and producers of statistics in a regional Mediterranean perspective, with a special focus on social statistics. They attempt to answer the questions: why, how, when, by whom, and for whom this dialogue may be organised.

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