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Coordination for statistics development: statistical training

Report of the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific

Note by the secretariat*

Summary

> In September 2013, the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics established the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific. The present paper reports on the activities undertaken by the Network since it was established, namely: an initial organizational meeting in 2014, during which a two-year programme of work was adopted and the Subgroup on Training for Agricultural and Rural Statistics to support the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics was established; and, secondly, an organizational meeting of the Subgroup on Training for Agricultural and Rural Statistics, during which participants agreed on a workplan. The present report also contains the proposed programme of work for the Network and the Subgroup.

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* E/ESCAP/CST(4)/L.1.

** The present paper was submitted late owing to the need to include the issues raised during the latest discussions on the development agenda beyond 2015; in particular, the recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on Statistics and Data for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development.

I. Background

1.   At its third session in December 2012, the Committee on Statistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) endorsed the objectives, strategy and mechanisms for improving regional coordination of statistical training as proposed by the Working Group on the Regional Coordination of Statistical Training, which had been established by the Committee at its second session. At its third session, the Committee decided to establish an advisory group for the coordination of statistical training in the Asia-Pacific region, with the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific as its secretariat. The Committee requested its Bureau to finalize the necessary terms of reference and constitute the group.

2.   In discussing the role and responsibilities of the group, the Bureau concluded that its key role should be to facilitate information-sharing and coordination among statistical training institutions in the region rather than just providing advice; it also redefined the scope of the group's work. In September 2013, the Bureau established the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific, the terms of reference of which appear in annex I.

3.   In accordance with paragraph 7 of the terms of reference, the Bureau invited the following to become members of the Network: (a) heads of statistical training institutions of ESCAP members and associate members with requisite statistical training facilities or active training programmes on official statistics that cater to both national (internal) and foreign (external) clients; (b) representatives of ESCAP members and associate members, regional and international organizations, and subregional cooperation entities that deliver training on official statistics or provide substantive donor resource support to statistical training activities in the Asia-Pacific region; (c) the Chair or Co-Chair of the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific; and (d) the Chair of the Governing Council of the Statistical Institute.

4.   To date, the 24 organizations that appear in annex II have also become members of the Network. The Bureau appointed the representative of the Australian Bureau of Statistics as Chair of the Network.

5.   The present paper is a report, prepared by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific as the secretariat of the Network, on the activities undertaken by the Network since it was established. Those activities include: (a) an organizational meeting of the Network during which members adopted a two-year programme of work and established the Subgroup on Training for Agricultural and Rural Statistics to support the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics; and (b) an organizational meeting of the Subgroup on Training for Agricultural and Rural Statistics during which participants agreed on a workplan. The present report also contains the proposed programme of work for 2015-2016 of the Network and the Subgroup.

II. Activities of the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific in 2014

A. Organizational meeting of the Network

6.   The organizational meeting of the Network was held from 22 to 24 April in Chiba, Japan. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries: Australia; China; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of);

Japan; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; and Thailand. The representatives of the following regional and international agencies also attended: Asian Development Bank (ADB); Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); International Monetary Fund (IMF); International Statistical Institute; Secretariat of the Pacific Community; World Bank; and University of the South Pacific. The main agreements and decisions reached at the meeting are summarized below.

1. Role of the Network

7. The members reviewed the Network's terms of reference and reached a common understanding on its role and mandate, agreeing on the following key functions:

(a) To identify priorities for coordinating statistical training and to agree on the appropriate approaches and processes for coordination;

(b) To share information on the work of statistical training providers, including needs assessments, strategies, programmes and resources;

(c) To review periodically the implementation of the proposed coordination activities, and identify and implement further actions as required.

8. The members agreed with the composition of the Network as defined in the terms of reference and noted that the leader and drivers of the Network needed to be national statistical institutions. Part of the role of national statistical institutions would be to forge links with universities and research institutes as well as to facilitate links among the broader group of agencies that form national statistical systems.

9. Network members noted that a key benefit of membership was sharing information on training initiatives and capacity-building, especially:

(a) Sharing and developing tools for assessing training needs standards to improve and ensure the quality of statistical training and tools and methods for evaluating the impact and effectiveness of statistical training;

(b) Sharing training materials and expertise;

(c) Disseminating information on schedules of planned training activities, including those being carried out under capacity-building initiatives.

2. Coordination: scope and strategies

10. Network members also agreed that coordination should be taken to mean "normative coordination", the objectives of which should be:

(a) To increase demand-driven statistical training and improve its impact on capacity-building;

(b) To facilitate better resource use, planning and effective implementation of training programmes by statistical training providers;

(c) To identify and fill training gaps in statistical capacity-building in the region;

(d) To provide an environment within which recipients and providers of training can use a common language and set of tools to describe priority needs, and identify and fill training gaps in the region.

11. As regards the scope of coordination activities, Network members agreed that they should focus on training activities that are undertaken in

order to build the capacity of statistical staff, with the ultimate objective of improving the coverage and quality of official statistics produced by the national statistical systems, and of improving the other skills necessary for producing official statistics. The Network will not cover the following types of training activities: on-the-job training; training provided in relation to the conduct of a specific statistical survey, census or collection of data that is part of the operational work programme of a statistical office; and non-guided/unstructured self-paced Internet-based learning.

12.   The Network arrived at a consensus on the following measures as mechanisms of coordination:

(a)   Coordinating a regional training needs assessment;

(b)   Maintaining and sharing databases of regional technical cooperation initiatives on statistical training, capacity-building and resource persons;

(c)   Building a database and website for collecting and disseminating information on capacity-building activities, especially training;

(d)   Sharing people, training materials (including translations) and infrastructure;

(e)   Producing popular training materials;

(f)   Acting as focal points for subregional initiatives that bring Network activities to the attention of subregional organizations (for example, the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation).

13.   The Network adopted the following strategies for coordination:

(a)   To improve communication through a common language and the sharing of information in a systematic and organized manner;

(b)   To share and produce common materials;

(c)   To facilitate the identification of training gaps at the regional level through a coordinated regional assessment exercise among training providers;

(d)   To standardize the competencies and classification of tasks and activities of statistical personnel;

(e)   To engage with regional programmes for improving statistics that are prioritized by the Committee on Statistics;

(f)   To establish coordination linkages with subregional training initiatives;

(g)   To establish subgroups on specific statistical areas, starting with a subgroup on training for agricultural and rural statistics that will link to and support the training component of the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

3.   Programme of work

14.   Based on the consensus on the role and functions of the Network and the scope and strategies for coordination, members formulated an initial programme of work. The figure below presents an output-based workplan that defines the outputs and indicative activities, and lists the members who have volunteered to be part of the lead group for the outputs.

15.   The Network agreed that its next meeting will be held in March 2015 and will be hosted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Figure
Initial programme of work

Outputs	Activity	Partners
Training needs assessment tools (for example, core skills framework; methodology; classifications; and questionnaire)	Development (including methodology) Pilot testing Finalization	Japan, Pakistan, FAO, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community
Existing training materials are accessible to Network members	Explore options for storage and searching Classification of materials by using standards, such as the Classification of Statistical Activities Uploading of materials (including guidelines and formats) Explore e-learning options	Australia, China, Indonesia, Republic of Korea and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific
Training materials produced by the Network	(To be determined after the needs analysis)	
Database of experts compiled and accessible by Network members	Compile the list of experts	Japan and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific
Common curriculum for priority statistical training available	(To be developed after the needs analysis)	
Subgroup on Training for Agricultural and Rural Statistics established and working	The Subgroup will support coordination strategies and activities of the training component of the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics Identify members and invite them to join the Subgroup Establish the Subgroup and its workplan at an organizational meeting The Subgroup produces outputs aligned on Network priorities with a focus on training in agricultural and rural statistics	ADB, FAO, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific and the University of the South Pacific

B. Organizational meeting of the Subgroup on Training for Agricultural and Rural Statistics

16. The Sixth Workshop on Forging Partnerships in Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific: Networking and Coordination for Agricultural and Rural Statistics, which was held from 2 to 4 September 2014 in Tsukuba, Japan, focused on organizing the Subgroup on Training for Agricultural and Rural Statistics. Representatives of statistical training institutes and experts in agricultural statistics from China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Sri Lanka and Thailand participated. Japan attended as an observer. ADB, the African Centre for Statistics, FAO and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community also participated in the workshop.

17. The main objective of the workshop was to develop terms of reference for the Subgroup and propose a programme of work. The main agreements and decisions reached at the workshop are summarized below.

1. Terms of reference for the Subgroup

18. Workshop participants formulated the main contents of the terms of reference, as documented in the paragraphs below.

(a) Roles and responsibilities

19. In parallel with Network priorities, the Subgroup shall support the regional development of agricultural and rural statistics by:

(a) Facilitating information-sharing relating to capacity development through training in agricultural statistics;

(b) Promoting coordination among national, regional and international training providers and donor agencies;

(c) Contributing to the improvement of statistical training content, availability and accessibility in the Asia-Pacific region.

(b) Functions

20. In order to fulfil its roles and responsibilities, the functions of the Subgroup shall be:

(a) To formulate and implement an advocacy programme to promote agriculture and rural statistics;

(b) To develop and maintain a database of training resources and experts;

(c) To design an assessment of common training needs;

(d) To recommend a prioritized list of agricultural statistics training for funding based on training needs assessments;

(e) To provide assistance in setting-up the following parameters of prioritized training programmes, such as content, level, profile of participants, minimum requirements in order to participate, duration, language considerations and mode of training delivery.

(c)   Composition

21.   The Subgroup shall be composed of users, producers, trainers and external stakeholders involved in the production of agricultural and rural statistics. Those stakeholders shall include national statistical offices, ministries of agriculture, statistical training institutes, universities offering courses on agricultural and rural statistics and development partners.

22.   In selecting the members of the Subgroup, consideration shall be given to the following:

(a)   Balanced representation of both producers (supply) and users (demand) of agricultural statistics;

(b)   A maximum of 15 participating members shall be selected to participate in the Subgroup. There shall be both institutional and individual expert members;

(c)   The members of the subgroup shall consist of:

(i)   All agricultural statistics training centres and selected universities;

(ii)   Member States representing the four ESCAP subregions and different levels of statistical development;

(iii)   Representatives of the priority countries targeted under the Regional Action Programme;

(iv)   Individual experts with competence in training and human resource development. Specifically, the individual members shall have expertise in curriculum development and delivering training related to agricultural and rural statistics plus proven leadership skills, including development of strategic plans in their respective institutions.

2.   Initial workplan of the Subgroup

23.   The workshop decided on a set of activities and a workplan to guide its operations in order to fulfil key responsibilities and functions, as detailed below.

(a)   Training needs assessment tools and processes

24.   The Subgroup should develop a questionnaire through which information on the availability of and needs for training by topic, types and preferences on agricultural and rural statistics will be collected from ESCAP members and associate members, and subsequently analysed. It will initiate a round of consultations with ESCAP members and associate members on finalization of a core skills framework.

(b)   Model curricula

25.   A literature review to consolidate information on existing curricula for agricultural statistics should be undertaken. A formal degree model curriculum should be developed and a pilot university or training institution will be identified to offer it.

(c) **Advocacy**

26. A regional workshop involving key regional, national and international stakeholders should take place, where priority training areas and the model curriculum will be presented.

III. Updated programme of work

27. The second meeting of the Network will discuss and update its programme of work, including that of the Subgroup, based on the recommendations agreed upon at the fourth session of the Committee on Statistics. Network members will also formalize the terms of reference and the composition of the Subgroup.

IV. Issues for consideration

28. The Committee may wish to discuss and provide its views on the programme of the Network.

Annex I

Terms of reference of the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific[a]

A. Background

1. The ESCAP Committee on Statistics (the Committee) at its third session in December 2012 endorsed the objectives, strategy and mechanisms for improving regional coordination of statistical training as proposed by the Working Group on the Regional Coordination of Statistical Training (WG-RCST), which was established by the Committee at its second session.

2. The Committee decided to establish an advisory group for the coordination of statistical training in the Asia-Pacific region, with the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) as its secretariat. The Committee requested its Bureau to finalize the terms of reference and constitute the group.

3. In discussing the role and responsibilities of the group in February 2013, the Bureau concluded that the key role of the group should be to facilitate information sharing and coordination among statistical training institutions in the region rather than just providing advice. The scope of work was thus redefined and reflected in the current terms of reference, which were endorsed by the Bureau at its meeting in September 2013.

B. Role and Key Functions

4. The overall role of the Network is to implement the recommendations of the WG-RCST, endorsed by the Committee.[b] The Network will facilitate information-sharing and promote coordination among national statistical training institutions, regional and international statistical training providers and donor agencies providing funding for statistical training in the Asia-Pacific region in support of the key regional statistics development programmes pursued by the Committee.

5. Specifically, the Network shall have the following key functions:

(a) Identify priorities for coordinating statistical training among training providers in the Asia-Pacific region, and agree on the appropriate approaches and processes for coordination, including for the development of common training programmes in response to the requirements of the Committee's key regional statistics development programmes;

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[a] These terms of reference were formally endorsed by the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics at its meeting on 26 September 2013. They are reproduced here without formal editing.

[b] The recommendations included the formulation of clear definitions and principles associated with "coordination" and "statistical training." For instance, "coordination" refers to normative coordination. "Statistical training" refers to training activities that are undertaken in order to build the capacity of statistical staff, with the ultimate objective of improving the coverage and quality of official statistics produced by the national statistical systems. For a complete list of recommendations by the Working Group on the Regional Coordination of Statistical Training, refer to the *Report of the Working Group on the Regional Coordination of Statistical Training*, available from: www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/CST3-12E.pdf.

(b)   Share information on the work of statistical training providers, including needs assessment, strategies, existing and upcoming programmes as well as resources available so as to facilitate cooperation among the providers and relevant stakeholders in mobilizing technical and financial resources; and

(c)   Periodically review the implementation of the proposed coordination activities, and identify and implement further actions required.

6.   The initial focus of the Network shall be the implementation of the following coordination mechanisms:

(a)   Upon formation of the Network (refer to para 7a, below, for membership), establishing a plan for maintaining and strengthening the network, including the holding of a regular forum on statistical training, such as the SIAP workshop series on "Forging Partnerships in Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific";

(b)   Regular updating of coordinated training needs assessment, including development of a standard assessment questionnaire and exploring the use of ASTRA or similar software as a tool to manage information on training needs assessment;

(c)   Sharing of information on training programmes and events as the basis for identifying gaps in training opportunities; and

(d)   Supporting the implementation of training component of priority regional programmes identified by the Committee on Statistics, via the coordination mechanisms above, including the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics through a combination of means, including online training.

C.   Composition

7.   The Network shall be composed of:

(a)   Heads of statistical training institutions of ESCAP member and associate member States with requisite statistical training facilities or active training programmes on official statistics that cater to both national (internal) and foreign (external) clients;

(b)   Representatives of ESCAP member States, regional and international organizations, and sub-regional cooperation entities that deliver training on official statistics or provide substantive donor resource support to statistical training activities in the Asia-Pacific region;

(c)   The Chair or Co-Chair of the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia and the Pacific group; and

(d)   The Chair of the Governing Council of SIAP.

D.   Selection of members

8.   The Bureau of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics shall decide on the membership of the Network on the basis of the nominations.

9.   The Bureau shall issue invitations to all member and associate member States falling under (7a) and (7b), institutions that are leading providers and supporters of training on official statistics falling under (7b), the Chair of the Partnership for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific Group, and the Chair of the Governing Council of SIAP to serve on the Group.

E. Functioning, the Chair and Vice-Chair

10. The Network shall conduct discussions mainly through e-mail, facilitated e-discussion groups or webinars.

11. The Bureau will appoint a Chair to guide the work of the Network. The Bureau will also appoint a Vice-Chair to assist the Chair in carrying out the functions of the Network. Both the Chair and Vice-Chair will initially serve until the fourth session of the Committee when the terms of reference of the Network will be reviewed.

12. The Bureau will further appoint a "Core Advisory Group", based on the recommendations of and from among the members of the Network that would constitute the link to and report to the Bureau. The Core Advisory Group would be composed of the chair, vice-chair and members of the Group who are willing and committed to be the "working engine" of the network, developing the strategic proposals for consultation with the broader network and contributing their time and resources for these purposes.

13. For specific tasks, the Network may invite participation of national and international experts and/or form sub-groups as the need arises.

14. The members of the Network will not be paid by the United Nations. Membership to the Network does not make the individual a staff member of the United Nations and thus not entitled to the privileges and immunities accorded to staff members of the United Nations.

F. Secretariat

15. The SIAP will serve as the secretariat to the Network.

16. In this capacity, SIAP will:

(a) Provide secretariat support to the Chair and Vice-Chair in organizing meetings;

(b) Facilitate information sharing on statistical training events through the maintenance of a database and website; and

(c) Provide secretariat support in the implementation of the activities of the Network.

G. Reporting

17. The Network shall report to the Committee through a regular item on the agenda of Committee sessions.

18. In between Committee sessions, the Core Advisory Group shall report on outcomes of meetings and discussions and updates on activities to the Committee through the Bureau.

H. Timeframe

19. The Committee at its fourth session will review the terms of reference and the work of the Network, and decide on the direction and priorities of its future work.

Annex II

List of Network members

Country	Organization
Australia	Australian Bureau of Statistics
China	Statistical Education and Training Centre National Bureau of Statistics of China
India	National Academy of Statistical Administration Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
Indonesia	Education and Training Centre BPS-Statistics Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Statistical Research and Training Centre
Japan	Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
New Zealand	Statistics New Zealand
Pakistan	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (Training Wing)
Philippines	Philippine Statistical Research and Training Institute
Republic of Korea	Statistical Training Institute Statistics Korea
Russian Federation	Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat)
Thailand	National Statistical Office of Thailand

International agencies and university

ADB

Eurostat, European Commission

FAO

IMF

International Statistical Institute

Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21)

Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

United Nations Statistics Division

World Bank

University of the South Pacific

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