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STATISTICAL DATA COLLECTION IN SMALL COUNTRIES

Supplementary report submitted by the Statistical Administration of Kyrgyzstan

1. The Kyrgyz Republic has a total area of 199,900 km². It could easily accommodate the Baltic or Caucasian republics, or Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal and Switzerland taken together. The Kyrgyz Republic is a mountainous country with very complex terrain. Human settlements are located very unevenly and far from one another. The population of the Kyrgyz Republic is only 4.9 million.
2. Kyrgyzstan has a relatively small number of business entities, which are unevenly located and developed.
3. In view of the above, Kyrgyzstan fully qualifies as a small country.
4. Kyrgyzstan has a quite organized and efficient system of official statistics which is successfully following international practice and applying the statistical standards accepted worldwide.
5. Under the Official Statistics Act, the State statistical bodies can obtain reliable statistical information from all business entities, whatever their form of ownership, and collect information from private individuals relating to their socio-demographic situation and entrepreneurial activity by means of questionnaires.

6. A sound legal framework consisting of laws, decrees and regulations is being created with the support of the President, Parliament and Government of the Kyrgyz Republic for carrying out large-scale statistical inquiries.
7. The system of official statistics in the Kyrgyz Republic relies on a vertical structure of information flows and centralized data collection in line with the functions of the National Statistical Committee at central, regional and local levels.
8. The data collection procedure follows the “enterprise - district - oblast republic” scheme.
9. Although Kyrgyzstan has embarked on market-oriented changes in the economy, its system of official statistics still retains the data collection methodology characteristic of a planned economy and administrative-command system of management. Complete statistical enumeration therefore continues to be the principal means of obtaining statistical information.

I. Particular features of sample surveys in small countries

10. A non-public sector of the economy has grown up with the transformation of State ownership in Kyrgyzstan. The increasing number and rapid development of businesses and frequent demographic changes, as well as the need to obtain information promptly, have given rise to many problems in statistical accounting.
11. The key to dealing with the problems of obtaining statistical information has to be a policy of active data collection involving the wide-scale introduction of sampling methods into statistical practice.
12. A major concern in switching to sample surveys is that of ensuring continuity in the statistical data gathered “before” and “after” the transition and reflecting changes therein. It would be wrong to allow a difference in the values obtained because of a change in methods of calculation to be interpreted as a real decrease or increase in any given indicator.
13. The introduction of sample surveys firstly involves changing the direction of information flows, meaning that some statistical information will arrive at the regional statistical bodies in aggregated form from the central office. This will reduce the influence of the leadership of the regions on the completion of statistical indicators, and may initially create some difficulties in the relations of these administrations with the statistical services.
14. Since Kyrgyzstan is an agrarian republic, the main producers of goods are peasants or farmers. In view of the large number of agricultural holdings and the diversity of their output, sample survey methods are being introduced widely for data collection. The high reliability of the results at regional level, including in the smaller regions, is ensured by the methods of stratified and multi-stage sampling. In order to define the general population of farming enterprises more precisely, a first agricultural census is to be held in 2002.
15. In the last few years, the National Statistical Committee has gained a certain amount of experience with holding sample household surveys. Such surveys have included the “Poverty Monitoring” project. Its methodology and organization have served for carrying out sample

household surveys on a regular basis. Notwithstanding the higher actual cost in terms of financial and human resources, this approach has made it possible not only to increase the quality of statistical information on standards of living countrywide, but also to obtain representative data at regional level.

16. A particular feature of statistical inquiries in other sectors of the economy of the Kyrgyz Republic is the small size of each general population being studied. This results in a high sample proportion, which for all practical purposes limits the benefits of using sample surveys.

17. In such cases, with a view to obtaining full and objective information serving as the basis for analysis and forecasting of the development of the economy, the official statistical system uses an optimal combination of sample surveys and complete enumeration for the collection of statistical data.

18. A pilot survey of small enterprises was conducted in 2000 to test the combined methods of observation. The general population was divided into strata according to regional and sectoral characteristics. In order to ensure high-quality statistical information the method of sample surveys was applied in all regions and branches where the population as a whole was sufficient for sampling purposes. Complete enumeration was undertaken in the remaining cases. This made it possible to reduce the costs of organizing a survey on average by 30%.

19. Complete statistical inquiries covering all kinds of economic activity and all regions are conducted once a year to update the sample.

20. Surveys of individual businesses using questionnaires are undertaken on the basis of a statistical register employing the method of simple random sampling. The confidentiality of the information obtained is guaranteed so as to enhance confidence in the statistical services. The sample size depends on the administrative status of the region and the number of topics to be examined.

21. The main problems which have to be addressed for the purpose of conducting sample surveys in our country include:

- Lack of coordination and incompleteness of methodological support for sample surveys and the processing of their results, and shortage of practical experience in holding sample surveys;
- Lack of computerized systems for keeping records of businesses at local level and other difficulties of a technical character;
- Rapid development of businesses and frequent demographic changes.

II. Use of administrative data in official statistics

22. I would like to consider in more detail the role of the administrative data collected and processed by the relevant public administrations, as part of their functions, in the compilation of official statistics.

23. About 10% of all statistical information is produced on the basis of data from administrative sources.
24. This information is supplied to the statistical services, in aggregated form, in two ways: for the central office - from the central ministries and government departments, in order to compile macroeconomic indicators; and for regional statistical bodies - from the regional departmental structures, for the purpose of analysing the socio-economic development of each region.
25. It should be noted that joint work by government departments and their regional structures on the basis of bilateral agreements relating to cooperation with the National Statistical Committee under the Government-approved statistical work programme allows this to be done in practice.
26. With a view to eliminating useless and unnecessary information the National Statistical Committee, exercising its powers under the Official Statistics Act, defines the minimum set of statistical indicators and duly introduces departmental reporting for statistical purposes.
27. In order to avoid duplication of information we are endeavouring to delimit clearly the functions to be performed in the collection and processing of statistical and of administrative data.
28. The system of official statistics in Kyrgyzstan uses administrative statistics for producing macroeconomic indicators and building statistical databases. The widest use is made of banking, financial, tax, customs and other forms of administrative statistics.
29. However, the process of data interchange between the National Statistical Committee and the various government departments is giving rise to a number of serious problems and these call for improvement of the legal framework and the development of unified methodological approaches to the compilation and transfer of data.
30. Addressing these issues is, for the time being, made difficult in part because of the technical and informational incompatibility of the information resources of the various departments.
31. It should be noted that work on this matter is already being pursued. Kyrgyzstan has set up a unified system of classification and coding of technical, economic and social information.
32. There is also a need to ensure the technical compatibility of government department databases. For this purpose a unified information system for public administration is being established to facilitate access to the information resources of the executive bodies.
33. Wider use of administrative data in the system of official statistics is therefore helping to improve the quality and timeliness of statistical information and to reduce the burden on respondents and economize resources.

III. Management of costs

34. Statistical activities are planned on the basis of the statistical work programme, which is drawn up taking account of proposals from the central executive and administrative bodies, as well as international information obligations and various groups of external and internal users.

35. The main sources of funding for the system of official statistics of the Kyrgyz Republic are the State budget appropriations made for the maintenance of the central office and regional offices and for the implementation of statistical work programmes, as well as international grants and project resources.

36. The system of official statistics today is a most important component of the Kyrgyz Republic's information infrastructure and serves to meet the needs for statistical information of all segments of society, i.e. both the executive and administrative bodies, and agents of the new market relations - entrepreneurs, civil society, the mass media and the general public.

37. In pursuing a policy of reform and improvement, the system of official statistics in Kyrgyzstan has moved onto the third phase of its development, where the main goal is to provide for the comprehensive development of the statistical information system on the basis of a further strengthening of its regional structures and branches, the transition to sample survey methods and the use of modern information technology for the collection, processing and transmission of statistical data.

38. A programme for the development of statistics in the Kyrgyz Republic covering the period 2001-2005 has been adopted to enhance strategic management in the field of statistics based on the principles of independence and regularity. This will meet the requirements of a wide range of users and comply with international standards.

39. The large variety of forms and methods of statistical observation and an optimal combination of complete and sample inquiry methods will help to raise national statistics to the level needed for the functioning of an efficient and transparent statistical information system meeting the requirements of a market economy and complying with international rules and standards.

40. Further development of official statistics will be aimed at improving methods of data collection on the basis of the wide use and optimization of sampling methods.

41. Of the commonly used methods of data collection we consider the most promising to be:

- Censuses (population, agricultural holdings, trade enterprises, hotel services, etc.);
- Sample surveys;
- Sociological and market surveys;
- Integrated forms of reporting.

42. An optimal choice of statistical information sources will, in our view, help to save resources and reduce the reporting burden on respondents.

43. We believe that one of the priorities for the further development of official statistics in Kyrgyzstan is to create a unified information space and build confidence in official statistics.

44. To this end the National Statistical Committee has sponsored the establishment of a Statistical Society, whose members may include representatives of State institutions, national or international non-governmental organizations, research institutes, commercial organizations and private individuals.

45. We hope that support for dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation between producers and users of official statistics will help to improve general knowledge about and facilitate the preparation and dissemination of statistical information, and that the use of their professional expertise in the organization and conduct of statistical inquiries, including surveys and monitoring, will guarantee the quality of statistical data.
