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Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda

**CAPACITY-BUILDING IN STATISTICS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED  
POLICYMAKING**

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR CAPACITY-BUILDING OF NATIONAL  
STATISTICAL OFFICES IN THE ESCWA COUNTRIES: PROGRESS  
ACHIEVED TOWARDS ENHANCING NATIONAL  
STATISTICAL CAPABILITIES**

**Summary**

This study, prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for discussion at the eighth session of the Statistical Committee, sets forth the progress made by national statistical offices in developing their activities. It is based on the results of the 2006 Needs Assessment Survey of the national statistical offices in the ESCWA region.

This study includes an analysis of the progress national statistical offices have made in implementing their work programmes in the framework of the ten Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It also presents an assessment of their needs in three priority areas: (a) providing decision-makers with wider access to Millennium Development Goal indicators and quality data; (b) greater commitment by countries to applying United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2; and (c) applying the System of National Accounts, 1993.

ESCWA's secretariat hopes that this study will prove useful for the development of statistical activities in the member countries and provide a framework for a capacity-building action plan on the regional level in both the short and long terms.

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## **I. ESSENTIAL INFORMATION**

1. the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has prepared a study for discussion at the Statistical Committee's eighth session which sets forth the progress made by the national statistical offices (NSOs) in developing their activities, based on the results of the 2006 needs assessment survey carried out for NSOs in the ESCWA region. The 2006 study includes an analysis of the NSO structure and of the offices' activities and work programmes. It also covers NSO activities in applying international recommendations, standards and classifications, and in taking surveys and censuses, and looks at the extent of NSO reliance on administrative records.
2. In view of the fact that the ESCWA member countries provided all of the requisite data for the 2006 survey, ESCWA reviewed the study presented to the Statistical Committee at its seventh session (E/ESCWA/SCU/2006/IG.1/7) in order to update and reissue it as an essential document among those distributed at the session, with the purpose of completing the overall picture of the region and laying down a basis for measuring NSOs' future progress.
3. Between the seventh and eighth sessions of the Statistical Committee, ESCWA conducted a number of in-depth assessments of priority topics in statistics: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 2010 round of the population and housing censuses, and national accounts. In these assessments, it relied on in-house research, questionnaires and field trips. To see how far countries had progressed in developing their activities and work programmes in line with the ten Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FPOS), ESCWA sent them in 2008 a questionnaire directed at the NSOs. The data was sorted according to the ten FPOS in order to describe the current situation and progress made.
4. ESCWA also sought to spread good practice via its website, setting up its virtual library site for national statistical systems, providing valuable materials from national, regional and international sources. The virtual library also contains relevant international resolutions and declarations and sets of standards and methodologies used, all downloadable at no cost, as well as relevant reports and training materials issued at meetings and workshops. To help foster effective networking, the e-library provides useful links, information on how to contact primary users and producers and coordinating bodies in the statistical field.

## **II. EVALUATING COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION PROCESSES FOR MDG INDICATORS**

5. Member countries face many obstacles in designing and implementing evidence-based policies for attaining the MDGs. Most of these obstacles arise from the ongoing challenges they face in providing data and ensuring its quality. Despite recent progress, many ESCWA member countries still face major challenges in producing and disseminating reliable and up-to-date information on the development indicators. Moreover, there is often poor coordination both between producers of national data within countries and between countries and international agencies.<sup>1</sup>
6. For that reason more effort needs to go into closing these data gaps and ensuring consistency in order to deliver policies that meet people's needs. The process of improving MDG-related data begins with following internationally-used methodologies characterized by transparency in making metadata available to users. For that reason, the availability of good, comparable, high-quality, transparent data covering all strata of society is one of the basis prerequisites for improving the quality of MDG monitoring and evaluation and for activating policies aimed at attaining these goals.

### **A. DATA AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY**

7. There is still an urgent need to provide complete and consistent MDG monitoring in the ESCWA countries. Most member countries notably concentrate on monitoring some of the MDG indicators but not

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<sup>1</sup> See E/ESCWA/SD/2008/IG.1/4.

others, due to the inadequacy of these indicators for the development process or countries' inability to produce them.<sup>2</sup> There are many gaps in the national and international data series, especially those on extreme poverty, tuberculosis, maternal health, environmental indicators, educational achievement and women's empowerment.<sup>3</sup> The 2006 survey results exposed the lack of mechanisms for accessing administrative records to help provide development indicators, including the MDG indicators. The reasons for this deficiency may be: (a) the fact that in some countries it is ministries rather than the national statistical office that assume responsibility for preparing statistics based on administrative records; (b) lack of coordination and cooperation; (c) absence of legal controls; and (d) failure of the bodies responsible to provide these data.<sup>4</sup>

## B. GENDER STATISTICS AND SUBNATIONAL DATA

8. The provision of indicators with a gender perspective and of data classified by sex gives policymakers detailed information and helps them to better target remedial measures. Most ESCWA countries nevertheless continue to compile mostly unsuitable data which are inadequate to reveal various aspects of gender inequality and which fail to provide evidence to support the efforts of decision makers and policymakers seeking to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.

9. This is the situation in terms of both national and subnational data whereby many member countries collect and produce national data which fail to clarify the disparities found on the subnational level and therefore the needed evidence is not available to decision makers who would formulate public policy and channel the resources needed to attain the desired goals. For that reason the NSOs need to design a process for collecting the requisite data and indicators by increasing geographical coverage and adding questions that reflect the gender perspective.

## C. COORDINATION

10. The lack of coordination between statistical agencies, both within countries and between countries and national and international agencies, most often leads to inconsistencies between data sourced nationally and data from international sources. It also gives a picture of progress which differs between the national and regional assessments in MDG reports. This situation creates confusion between data users and undermines the credibility of the regional progress assessment. For that reason it is important to enhance the role of the NSOs as the central coordinating agency for MDG monitoring and reporting, in line with the international statistical system, and to establish a central database at the national level.

## D. METADATA

11. The MDG document presented to ESCWA<sup>5</sup> exposes major discrepancies between the indicators produced by the NSOs and those from international sources, confirming the urgent need for member countries to review their accounting methods and the definitions cited in their sources so as to stay abreast of internationally-recommended standards. The study makes it clear that the reliability of metadata is the responsibility of the countries, inasmuch as these countries are capable of reviewing these data, making adjustments as needed and enhancing their credibility at the national and international levels. ESCWA therefore believes that working to upgrade the capabilities of member countries requires cooperation between such specialized agencies as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the provision of technical support to reduce the discrepancies and bring about a certain level of convergence.

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<sup>2</sup> E/ESCWA/SCU/2006/IG.1/6.

<sup>3</sup> E/ESCWA/SD/2008/IG.1/4.

<sup>4</sup> E/ESCWA/SCU/2006/IG.1/7.

<sup>5</sup> E/ESCWA/SD/2008/IG.1/4.

### III. EVALUATING THE 2010 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS-TAKING PROCESS

#### A. CURRENT STATUS OF ESCWA COUNTRIES IN COMPILING THE TABULATIONS AND CORE SET OF TOPICS RECOMMENDED BY THE UNITED NATIONS

12. In the course of assessing the basic constituents of census questionnaires in the region, ESCWA evaluated ten population and housing census questionnaires according to the core topics and tabulations found in United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2. The evaluation showed that nearly all the countries concerned have covered, with only slight variations, the main topics recommended therein. However, only about half the member countries have covered in their questionnaires the topics of fertility, mortality, female age at first marriage and duration of first marriages.

13. Nor do the census results provide the minimal data for the core tabulations recommended by the United Nations. The rate of coverage is 63 per cent of the core tabulations, indicating shortcomings in either the production or the dissemination of the census data.

14. It appears from the evaluation results that most countries are producing the tables on educational characteristics followed by tables on both economic characteristics and demographic and social characteristics. These are followed by a smaller number of tables on household characteristics, fertility and mortality rates, and internal migration status. The least-produced tables are those dealing with disability characteristics, total international migration and total number of migrants inside the country.

#### B. INCORPORATING GENDER INTO THE CENSUS PROCESS

15. The term “gender” goes beyond the limited concept of data categorized by sex; it is rather the incorporation of a gender perspective into the body of the national statistical system. In view of current deficiencies in data collection frameworks and tools, there should be a comprehensive review that addresses the incorporation of gender in each statistical tool separately.

16. Reflecting gender in population and housing censuses means carrying out a number of activities, which could be implemented in the three phases of the census process. This would be the pre-enumeration phase, where a number of questions relating to each sex could be incorporated into population census tables and the concepts and definitions of technical terms could be appropriately modified and standardized. At the same time, a standard could be prepared for the classification of professions and sectors, and census workers could be trained in methods for observing gender disparities.

17. At the enumeration phase, respondents of both sexes could be educated through publicity campaigns, and census workers could be directed to ensure gender differences are observed in the census process. Then, in the post-enumeration phase, special tables and printed materials could be disseminated in addition to publishing the traditional census results.

18. In order to measure the extent of incorporation of a gender perspective in the census operations in the region, ESCWA prepared a special questionnaire in 2007 which it submitted to member countries. Responses to the questionnaire were received from eight out of the 13 countries. An evaluation of these responses revealed the following:

##### *The pre-enumeration phase*

19. Despite all NSOs’ priding themselves on observing the gender perspective, whether in their national statistical strategies or in their work plans, only half the countries responding had the benefit of a specialized unit to educate staff and address gender issues in the preparatory phase of the census or to organize

educational workshops for upper management. These workshops are meant to define the concept of gender and to highlight the most significant gender-related concerns for statistics and the importance of incorporating them into the census.

20. However, in most countries this awareness-raising was not extended to all people. Indeed, only 38 per cent of NSOs reported using radio and television and publicity campaigns to define gender and gender parity and to explain the concepts and terms on the national and subnational levels. Four countries expressed their desire to incorporate a gender perspective in carrying out their next census.

21. Likewise, only half the countries indicated that they were training census fieldworkers by explaining the gender perspective and highlighting the importance of gender parity, and setting up technical committees or expert teams specialized in dealing with gender issues at different stages of the census. It should be noted here that only 25 per cent of NSOs have organized workshops to clarify gender concepts and spread their use in the population census and made use of experts to help them develop concepts and indicators. However, one NSO mentioned that the National Council for Women had called for workshops to be organized. Most countries expressed the desire for such workshops to be organized in future.

#### *The enumeration phase*

22. Most NSOs have recruited women for census work in the field. The recruitment rate for women ranges from 30 per cent in the United Arab Emirates to 54 per cent in Palestine. A low level of women's participation can be seen in some of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries with Bahrain indicating that 2.5 per cent of census workers and only one percent of supervisors were women. Only 25 per cent of the NSOs indicated an interest in organizing a publicity campaign during the census period about gender issues in order to educate women and men equally. In most of these countries, campaigns were confined to focusing on the importance of cooperating with the census workers. Also, half the countries have applied the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and the International Standard Classification of Industry (ISCI) with the aim of providing detailed analysis (four numbers) on women and men.

#### *Post-enumeration phase*

23. Most countries, as with Jordan, Palestine and Egypt, have indicated that they are publishing the census results classified 100 per cent according to sex. Thirty-eight per cent of NSOs publish special results in order to address gender stereotypes and gender equality at the national level.

### **IV. EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS 1993, IN THE ESCWA REGION<sup>6</sup>**

#### **A. BASIC CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS OF THE SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS 1993**

24. Most ESCWA member countries follow the basic definitions and concepts recommended in the System of National Accounts (SNA) 1993. However, most countries also suffer from a major problem, which lies largely in collecting the data for the national accounts, because they are not available. The countries generally rely on the recommendation of SNA 1993, and use the fundamental definitions and concepts in the context of production in the following areas:

(a) Non-market agricultural output;

(b) Data on life and non-life insurance premiums in estimates of the product (available in most countries);

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<sup>6</sup> Mainly based on a review of the sources and methods of seven member countries.

(c) Production of the special account made up of personal and household services for paid domestic workers.

25. Countries also use the basic definitions and concepts when valuing outputs and recording production coefficients in the following areas:

(a) Valuing industry, sector product and the value added in basic prices;

(b) Valuing non-market agricultural outputs based on the prices of similar products offered by producers in the market;

(c) Return to entrepreneurship of workers as private, self-employed units and the capital of individual enterprises owned by households on an equal basis, described as “mixed income”.

26. It should be observed that the basic definitions and concepts are not used in the framework of production in the following areas:

(a) Activities undertaken in the informal sector and illegal activities;

(b) Activities producing non-agricultural goods within households for own consumption.

27. The reason for this may go back to the absence of an adequate mechanism for estimating the share of these activities in GDP by conducting surveys. Some countries have made attempts to estimate the share of this sector by using measures based on household income and expenditure surveys. In other countries, despite the significant contribution of the informal sector to GDP, sufficient data are not yet available to estimate this element in GDP.

28. It is worth mentioning also that “progress in work” and “change in inventory”, particularly in the treatment of “speculative activities”, especially in the Gulf countries, are not applicable. For example the treatment of “emerging agricultural produce” and “feeding livestock until their slaughter” are applied very little because of the unavailability of statistics.

29. Finally in the cases listed below most countries do not follow the “definition of assets” for lack of data or its insignificance:

(a) Treatment of extraction expenditures in the composition of capital;

(b) Treatment of expenditure on luxury goods in the composition of capital;

(c) Treatment of expenditure on software in the composition of capital;

(d) Treatment of Government expenditure on defence (other than arms) in fixed assets in the composition of capital;

(e) Inclusion of entertainment, literature or art.

#### B. INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR SERIES OF SNA 1993

30. Most member countries try to form a series of accounts, if only partially, for five broad sectors: the institutional sector, namely, non-financial corporations, financial corporations, general Government sector, households, and non-profit institutions serving households (NPISHs). On the whole, the attempts are confined to compiling the production accounts and income accounts and verifying the capital and other accounts.

31. None of the countries adopts the financial accounts, other changes in the size of assets accounts, revaluation of accounts or the general balance sheet. Some countries have tried to aggregate expenditure/employment tables, but most of these tables remain deficient.

32. The main deficiencies are:

(a) The fact that the household sector is not defined in a way that permits an accounts series to be assembled (with the exception of the Sultanate of Oman);

(b) Not dealing with the issuing department of the central bank.

#### C. ESTIMATING CONSTANT PRICES

33. All member countries obtain estimates of constant prices for production categories by using the consumer price index, given the lack of a production price indicator or of suitable tangible indicators. Not one country uses the dual deflation indicator, or any other dual indicator or "retail trade" indicator (conducting annual surveys of retail trade) or the quantitative index for any of the main products, to compile constant prices classified according to production as expenditure, as the entry classified with constant prices in most cases is not compiled.

### V. IMPLEMENTING FPOS APPLICATION IN THE ESCWA COUNTRIES BY MONITORING THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN THE OPERATION OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

34. ESCWA has monitored the progress achieved through the activities of the national statistical system in the member countries. This was done with the aim of assessing the extent of application of the FPOS. Member country responses to the 2006 survey questions were sorted into tables and complemented with the information from the 2008 questionnaire.

#### A. PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN THE ESCWA REGION

35. Member country rates of FPOS application range between average, good and advanced. Table 1 divides the countries into three levels. Marked progress can be seen for three countries, namely, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, whose FPOS application level has moved from "average" to "good". Figure I shows the progress these countries made between 2006 and 2008.

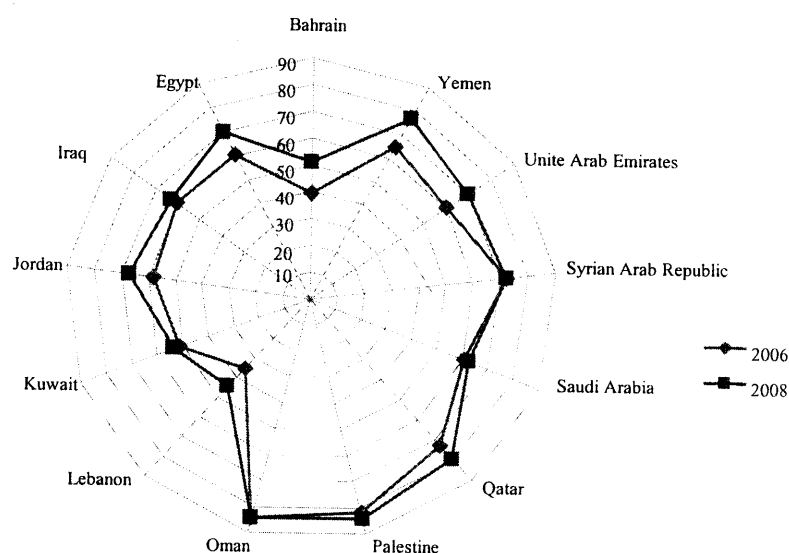
TABLE 1. RATE OF APPLICATION OF FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

| 1    | Average | Good | Advanced |
|------|---------|------|----------|
| 2006 | 9       | 2    | 2        |
| 2008 | 6       | 5    | 2        |

36. It can be seen from table 1 that ESCWA member countries apply about 67 per cent of the fundamental principles overall. The principle with the lowest level of application, not more than 31 per cent, is FPOS 9 concerning the use of international classifications, followed by FPOS 10 relating to bilateral and multilateral cooperation where the application rate reaches 38 per cent. The principle with the highest rate of application is FPOS 3 on transparency and data analysis where the rate is 96 per cent. While these rates may not represent a true measure of the extent of these countries' commitment to these principles and the quality of their application, they do indicate that the level of implemental ranges between "average", "good" and "advanced".



**Figure I. Progress of countries between 2006 and 2008**



37. There is clearly a need to standardize the concepts and applications used, under FPOS 9, for the different statistical topics within a coordinated logical framework. Failing this, it will be impossible either to devise a framework for the statistical data capable of meeting the overall needs of data users or to render the information taken from different sources compatible. The delay in applying international statistics represents a shortcoming in the management of statistical services. In this regard, the organizational considerations that go into coordinating classifications, standards, definitions and concepts should include the establishment of an administration responsible to see that usage on the country level is compatible with international usage. Likewise, the exchange of information and practices and the technical cooperation that one would wish to see applied under FPOS 10 are important for developing the scope of official statistics and improving their quality and organization. This development comes from carrying out joint surveys and projects in order to provide the data needed to satisfy the development indicators, including the MDGs.<sup>7</sup>

#### B. MEMBER COUNTRY PROGRESS IN APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES

38. Member country responses to the 2008 questionnaire have been collected in table 2 to show the progress achieved in applying the prerequisites of the ten principles (see annex I).

39. The numbers in the table show the current situation in each country in terms of applying the ten FPOS in the ESCWA region and the progress achieved compared with 2006. The pale-shaded squares concern achievement in applying the FPOS, while the dark-shaded squares concern progress in applying the FPOS since 2006.

<sup>7</sup> E/ESCWA/SD/2008/IG.1/4.

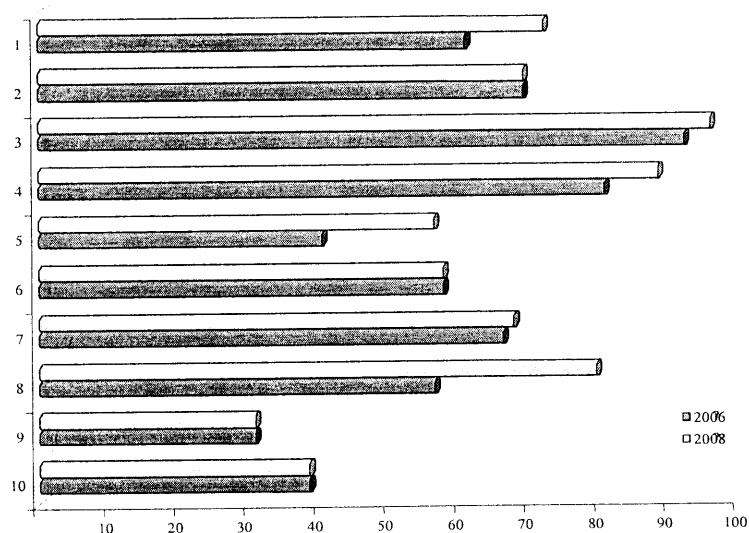
TABLE 2. FPOS IMPLEMENTATION 2008

| Principle                | 1                            | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | Total positive responses | Positive response rate (percentage) |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| No. of questions: 43     | 13                           | 9  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 5  | 3  | 1  | 2  |                          |                                     |
| Country                  | Number of positive responses |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |                          |                                     |
| Bahrain                  | 8                            | 4  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 4  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 22                       | 51                                  |
| Egypt                    | 10                           | 7  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 0  | 30                       | 70                                  |
| Iraq                     | 6                            | 7  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 1  | 27                       | 63                                  |
| Jordan                   | 11                           | 6  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 1  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 0  | 29                       | 67                                  |
| Kuwait                   | 7                            | 7  | 2  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 3  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 23                       | 53                                  |
| Lebanon                  | 7                            | 4  | 2  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 2  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 19                       | 44                                  |
| Sultanate of Oman        | 11                           | 8  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 1  | 4  | 3  | 0  | 2  | 36                       | 84                                  |
| Palestine                | 12                           | 7  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 2  | 36                       | 84                                  |
| Qatar                    | 12                           | 7  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 2  | 4  | 3  | 1  | 0  | 34                       | 79                                  |
| Saudi Arabia             | 8                            | 7  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 1  | 3  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 27                       | 63                                  |
| Syrian Arab Republic     | 9                            | 7  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 4  | 3  | 0  | 1  | 31                       | 72                                  |
| United Arab Emirates     | 8                            | 5  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 4  | 3  | 1  | 2  | 30                       | 70                                  |
| Yemen                    | 13                           | 5  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 4  | 3  | 1  | 0  | 33                       | 77                                  |
| Total positive responses | 122                          | 81 | 25 | 23 | 22 | 15 | 44 | 31 | 4  | 10 | 372                      | 67                                  |
| Positive responses (%)   | 72                           | 69 | 96 | 88 | 56 | 58 | 68 | 79 | 31 | 38 | 67                       |                                     |

40. The data shown in the table indicate that overall progress has been achieved in applying the FPOS, amounting to five percentage points since 2006. Most of this progress can be attributed to the marked progress (a 23 per cent increase since 2006) in applying FPOS 8 concerning coordination at the national level. This improvement is the result of countries' efforts over the past two years to improve the internal coordination between their own statistical agencies. It is worth mentioning that the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Egypt and Yemen shared in making decided progress in this area, especially in their coordination with all their partners in producing statistical data and in standardizing terms, definitions and classifications. Figure II shows the progress achieved on each principle.

41. Despite this progress, evaluation of the MDG indicators shows that there is still a tangible need to enhance the role of NSOs as the central coordinating agencies and to make data available by working to set up a central online database.<sup>8</sup> The best way to improve coordination between the different bodies producing statistical data would be to establish a high-level council for statistics. This council could play various roles, including: protecting fundamental values, such as confidentiality; ensuring the optimum balance among elements competing for statistical attention; incorporating national and regional particularities into statistical work;

Figure II. Progress achieved in applying each FPOS principle



<sup>8</sup> E/ESCWA/SD/2008/IG.1/4.

ensuring reliability, timeliness and impartiality; and offering advice to the relevant decision-making minister or body.<sup>9</sup>

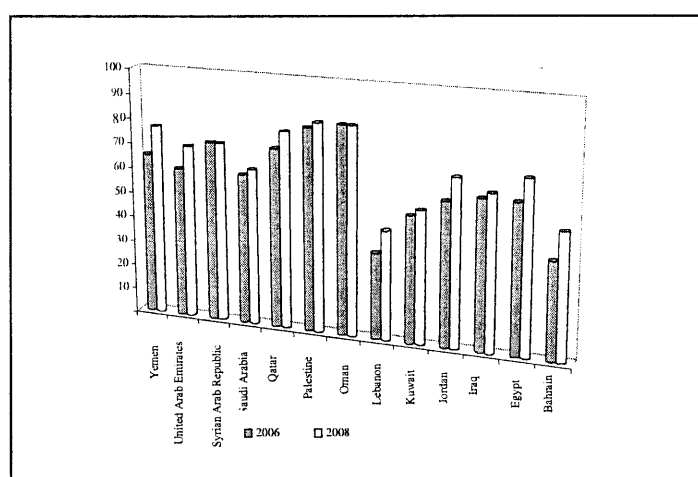
42. Next in line after FPOS 8, in terms of the progress achieved in its application (11 points), is FPOS 1 underlining the importance of official statistics, their impartiality and equal access to them. FPOS 4, on preventing the misuse of statistics, is also high on the list with a seven point gain. Yemen achieved the prerequisites for FPOS 1 in their entirety. Egypt and Lebanon played active parts in the progress achieved on FPOS 4 between 2006 and 2008. These countries undertook additional activities to enlighten users, such as releasing the statistical numbers in workshops, press conferences and radio and television programmes for purely educational purposes. Regarding the implementation of FPOS 3, dealing with problems and transparency, Jordan topped the list of countries achieving the requirements of this principle in 2008.

43. The study indicates that a slight advance, of two per cent, was achieved in the application of FPOS 5 concerning the sources of official statistics. Although some countries, especially those engaging in bilateral and multilateral cooperation, ran numerous surveys and were thus able to obtain a large number of records, they still face many challenges in collecting, monitoring and disseminating the data, especially the MDG indicators.<sup>10</sup> For example, there was only a two per cent rate of progress in applying FPOS 7 on making public the laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate. This highlights the need for countries to work on revising and updating the public statistics law, and to complete the design and implementation of a national strategy for the development of statistics, as recommended in the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, issued at the Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results in Morocco in 2004.

44. It is noteworthy that no progress was made on FPOS 2, concerning scientific principles and professional ethics, or on FPOS 6, dealing with the confidentiality of individual data. Nearly all countries have stated that they do not make individual raw data available to users for statistical purposes. Lack of progress on these two principles goes back to not having a mechanism for treating this data and preserving its confidentiality as provided for in the statistics law. It should be signalled here that both Palestine and Yemen will take part in the Accelerated Data Programme due to be implemented at the beginning of 2009 which includes training in the confidentiality of individual raw data.

45. Oman and Palestine are in the vanguard of countries for applying good principles and practice. Yemen has made remarkable progress in the past two years (registering a gain of 12 percentage points) in all of the principles. Bahrain, as well, progressed by 11 percentage points and both the United Arab Emirates and Egypt have progressed by ten percentage points since 2006, followed by Jordan and Lebanon with nine points each, and Qatar with seven. Figure III shows the progress made during the 2006-2008 period. Despite progress, more can still be achieved in applying the ten FPOS.

**Figure III. Progress achieved by each country**



<sup>9</sup> See E/ESCWA/SCU/2006/IG.1/7.

<sup>10</sup> See E/ESCWA/SD/2008/IG.1/4.

## VI. ASSESSING THE CAPACITY-BUILDING NEEDS OF THE NSOs

46. This section contains the proposals submitted to the Statistical Committee for the capacity-building needs of the NSOs, based on analyses and evaluations in the areas covered by the study and the responses coming from the member countries, in addition to the recommendations issued by the Statistical Committee.

### A. THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

47. The study makes clear the weak points in collecting and disseminating data on the MDGs and indicates the need to improve operations in these two areas by doing the following:

(a) Addressing the gaps in national data series, especially on extreme poverty, disease (particularly tuberculosis), maternal health, environmental indicators, educational achievement and women's empowerment;

(b) Putting a mechanism in place for accessing data from administrative records which could help provide development indicators, including the MDGs;

(c) Coordinating and cooperating with the ministries producing development indicators from administrative records, when the NSO is not the main source of data, and devising a legal mechanism for coordinating between different parties in providing these data from official sources;

(d) Enhancing the role of the NSOs as the central coordinating agencies in reporting on the MDGs to the international statistical organizations, and establishing a central database at the national level accessible on the Internet and allowing for easy storage and retrieval of data;

(e) Reviewing methodology and the definitions stated in the sources, in order to keep pace with internationally-recommended standards, and endeavouring to document the metadata in order to enhance the NSOs' credibility and improve the quality of the statistical record;

(f) Inviting specialized international agencies, such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, to bolster member country capabilities and offer technical support in order to reduce discrepancies and achieve an acceptable level of convergence.

### B. POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS

48. Countries are looking to apply the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2, through a succession of developments taking place on the regional and international fronts. However, there remains a need to address the following topics:

(a) The coverage of the main topics as recommended by the United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2, especially the topics of fertility, mortality, age, at first marriage and duration of marriage;

(b) Providing census results according to the United Nations recommended minimum list of basic tables, especially those on household characteristics, fertility and mortality rates, internal migration, disability and its characteristics, international migration and the size of the migrant population;

(c) Preparing national strategies for the development of statistics with multi-year programmes of statistical activities that include all the elements of the statistical system from data producers, taking into consideration the measures and requirements related to developmental indicators and mainstreaming the gender perspective in them by means of annual action plans;

(d) Mainstreaming the gender perspective in the population and housing census through census activities in their three stages;

(e) Establishing special units to educate employees, treat gender-related issues and organize educational workshops for upper management and all people, training census-takers and supervisors so as to spread the gender perspective in statistical work;

(f) Marking the importance of gender parity by establishing technical committees or expert teams specialized in dealing with gender concerns in different stages of the census: the questionnaire, preparation of a guidebook, using the media, project management, and in occupational and industrial classifications;

(g) Organizing seminars to mainstream the gender perspective in population and housing censuses, engaging experts to develop the concepts and indicators, partnering with the ministries or national women's councils and civil society in conducting a publicity campaign on gender issues throughout the period of the census. The purpose of the campaign would be to educate women and men on mainstreaming the gender perspective in applying international classifications to standardized occupations and industry;

(h) Disseminating the results related to gender stereotypes and gender equality on the national level.

### C. SNA 1993

49. In order to ensure thorough coverage of economic issues in national accounts statistics, the following steps need to be taken:

(a) Covering unregistered units in the economic survey enterprise lists which in turn requires using this dual framework to conduct surveys of enterprises;

(b) Reviewing the economic survey questionnaires in order to adopt the definitions of production and capital formation according to SNA 1993, Revision 2, and the guide to the International Recommendations for Distributive Trade Statistics and the International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics issued by the United Nations Statistics Division (2008);

(c) Compiling the industrial production indicator;

(d) Using the International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC), Rev. 4, and the Central Product Classification, Version 2, and compiling industrial data and product classifications logically, in line with the process of arranging operations and presenting the SNA 1993, and especially designing tables for presentation and use;

(e) Improving estimates of constant prices on the production side, and other methods of estimating dual indicators such as conducting an annual survey of retail trade, and the quantitative index of production of key products;

(f) Developing a production price index separately for particular sets of goods and services, and a wage index (an integrated low-cost mechanism for collecting the data for a production price index and an industrial production indicator);

(g) Compiling constant price estimates on the expenditure side;

(h) Developing constant price estimates for revenue aggregates;

(i) Developing import and export indices and compiling unit-of-value indicators;

- (j) Developing a sequence of accounts;
- (k) Estimating capital stocks and using continuous inventory to estimate the consumption of fixed capital;
- (l) Developing short-term indicators for the compilation of quarterly accounts.

#### D. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS

50. The importance of this analysis lies in knowing the current situation in each country and what progress it has achieved since 2006. This analysis shows each country's strong and weak points, thus providing a strategic framework for ESCWA's future work and highlighting what each member country can achieve given its circumstances and its short- and medium-term priorities for action. Furthermore, this analysis shows each country's relative advantage for exchanging best practices and facilitating the twinning process in the context of south-south cooperation. Among the main points that the countries should take up are:

(a) Work on building national capabilities in the management of statistical offices, prepare national strategies for developing statistics, use information and communications technology in collecting, collating and disseminating data, and follow standardized methodologies in conducting surveys based on international standards and criteria;

(b) Take advantage of bilateral and multilateral international cooperation between and through international agencies and organizations, in order to improve the system of official statistics and to carry out surveys and projects, in addition to developing the administrative records needed to produce the requisite data for measuring developmental indicators, with the condition that international cooperation should be an integral part of the work of the NSOs to improve their capacities and provide them with technical skills;

(c) Standardize the concepts and applications used in association with various statistical topics within the country, through consultation and coordination with partners, such that the standardized concepts gain general acceptance by taking the organizational actions needed to coordinate classifications, criteria, definitions and concepts and to establish an administrative department responsible for coordinating definitions and standards at the national and international levels.

## Annex I

### **THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS AND THEIR PREREQUISITES**

#### **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 honour citizens' entitlement to public information.

- Advisory bodies
- Consultation with users
- Planning and regulatory processes
- Presentation of statistics
- Dissemination and coordination
- Dissemination policies
- Dealing with the media

#### **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.

- Application of statistical methods
- Statistical standards
- Statistical training
- Research and innovation
- Quality management

#### **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.

- Concepts, sources and methods

#### **Principle 4:**

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

- Dealing with misuse
- Educational programmes for users

#### **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.

- Minimizing the burden of reporting
- Designing the samples
- Accessing administrative records

**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.

- Confidentiality
- Access to partial data
- Privacy

**Principle 7:**

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

- Statistical statutes
- Site of the national statisticians

**Principle 8:**

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

- Regulatory arrangements for producing statistics
- Coordination of statistical activities

**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.

- International standards

**Principle 10:**

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

- International activities
- Technical cooperation



## Annex II

### FPOS IMPLEMENTATION 2006

| Principle                | 1                            | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | Total positive responses | Positive response rate (percentage) |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| No. of questions: 43     | 13                           | 9  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 5  | 3  | 1  | 2  |                          |                                     |
| Country                  | Number of positive responses |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | Total positive responses | Positive response rate (percentage) |
| Bahrain                  | 3                            | 4  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 4  | 1  | 0  | 1  |                          |                                     |
| Egypt                    | 8                            | 7  | 2  | 1  | 2  | 1  | 3  | 2  | 0  | 0  | 17                       | 40                                  |
| Iraq                     | 6                            | 7  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 1  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 1  | 26                       | 60                                  |
| Jordan                   | 8                            | 6  | 1  | 2  | 1  | 1  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 0  | 26                       | 60                                  |
| Kuwait                   | 7                            | 7  | 2  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 2  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 25                       | 58                                  |
| Lebanon                  | 5                            | 4  | 2  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 2  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 22                       | 51                                  |
| Sultanate of Oman        | 11                           | 8  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 1  | 4  | 3  | 0  | 2  | 15                       | 35                                  |
| Palestine                | 11                           | 7  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 2  | 37                       | 86                                  |
| Qatar                    | 11                           | 7  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 2  | 4  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 35                       | 81                                  |
| Saudi Arabia             | 7                            | 7  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 1  | 3  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 31                       | 72                                  |
| Syrian Arab Republic     | 9                            | 7  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 4  | 3  | 0  | 1  | 26                       | 60                                  |
| United Arab Emirates     | 6                            | 6  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 4  | 0  | 1  | 2  | 31                       | 72                                  |
| Yemen                    | 11                           | 4  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 1  | 4  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 26                       | 60                                  |
| Total positive responses | 103                          | 81 | 24 | 21 | 21 | 15 | 43 | 22 | 4  | 10 | 28                       | 65                                  |
| Positive responses (%)   | 77                           | 69 | 92 | 81 | 54 | 58 | 66 | 56 | 31 | 38 | 345                      | 62                                  |