

Documenting and Replicating Statistics Innovation in Asia and the Pacific



Accelerating innovations in statistics

CHALLENGE

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) struggle with compiling the required statistics for national development planning, including the statistics needed to implement and monitor progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SAMOA Pathway recognizes that improved data collection and statistical analysis are required to enable SIDS to effectively plan, follow up, evaluate the implementation of and track successes in attaining internationally agreed development goals.

Much innovation is taking place in countries all over the world to increase the availability, accuracy and relevance of statistics for development planning and monitoring. Sharing and transferring these innovations is a challenge, as statistics production is often highly context-dependent, with solutions tailored to national legal and institutional situations. Well-documented success stories in statistics by developing countries are much more effectively replicated by statisticians in other developing countries working in similar conditions.

TOWARDS A SOLUTION

The Documenting and Replicating Statistics Innovation through South-South co-operation in Asia and the Pacific project accelerated innovations in statistics in the project countries through documenting successful projects and facilitating their replication in other project countries. The methodology adopted was a combination of: (a) supporting successful statistics projects in six developing countries; (b) strengthening the capacity of national statisticians to document and communicate the projects; (c) supporting the layout and publishing of the results in replication studies; and (d) facilitating communication of the projects through a series of online events and the production of a video. The statisticians involved in the project were the main authors of the studies and were the main resource persons speaking at the events and in the video.

This project addressed the priority area of data and statistics in the SAMOA Pathway (means of implementation, including partnerships (data and statistics)).

NOMINATED BY

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

COUNTRIES/REGIONS/TERRITORIES

Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS TARGET(S)

17.18, 17.19 (The initiative also supports the monitoring of 44 SDG indicators, spanning SDG 1-16)

RELEVANT PRIORITY AREA(S) OF THE SAMOA PATHWAY

Means of implementation, including partnerships

SUPPORTED BY

the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

IMPLEMENTING ENTITIES

ESCAP and the national statistical office of the five countries involved

PROJECT STATUS

Completed

PROJECT PERIOD

2017 – 2020

URL OF THE PRACTICE

Documented innovations [2017-2020]:

– <https://bit.ly/3gRcE34>

SSC events to share for replication [2020]:

– <https://bit.ly/3wYyNBY>

– <https://bit.ly/35YtFlr>

– <https://bit.ly/3ddBx6Q>

Training in documenting successful projects [2019]:

– <https://bit.ly/3x955u4>

Video describing the projects [2020]:

– <https://bit.ly/2Sp4iWS>



This case study focuses on one of the participating countries, the Maldives, a Small Island Developing State. An international assessment team, jointly with the National Bureau of Statistics of the Maldives, conducted a review of the country's national statistical system, assessing institutional, organization, legal and technical aspects against the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The assessment team included a senior statistician from the Mongolian National Statistical Office which had a few years earlier gone through a similar assessment and was able to share Mongolia's experience and lessons learned during this process. The review resulted in several recommendations for improvement of the national statistical system of the Maldives, including the preparation of new legislation and establishment of a national indicator set to produce high-quality statistics necessary for formulating and monitoring national development plans, including for achieving the 2030 Agenda. (The report is available at: <http://statisticsmaldives.gov.mv/nbs/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/NSS-Review-Report-Maldives-FINAL.pdf>)

The National Statistics Bureau of the Maldives documented the process and results of the national statistical system review for the benefit of national statistical offices of other countries wishing to undergo a similar exercise. Staff from the National Statistics Bureau of the Maldives received tailored communications training from ESCAP, which enabled them to document the review process. This result of their efforts were published in a step-by-step 'replication' study *Reviewing the National Statistical Systems of the Maldives 2020: Documentation of process and results* (www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/National_Statistical_System_of_Maldives_2020.pdf).

The study formed the basis for a regional knowledge sharing (virtual) Stats Café entitled "The good, the bad and the ugly: Revelations from reviews of national statistical systems," hosted by ESCAP (www.unescap.org/events/asia-pacific-stats-cafe-series-good-bad-and-ugly-revelations-reviews-national-statistical). The Chief Statistician of the Maldives participated as a resource person in the Stats Café which was attended by several other chief statisticians from interested countries of Asia and the Pacific. Another resource person was the Chief Statistician of Sri Lanka who had requested a similar review of the Sri Lankan statistical system following the lead of the Maldives (www.statistics.gov.lk/Resource/reference/SriLankaNSSReviewReport). The links, collegiality and collaboration between Sri Lanka and the Maldives were further strengthened through the invitation and participation of the Chief Statistician of the Maldives in the launch event for the final review of the Sri Lankan statistical system.

This initiative was innovative as the involved statistical offices took the lead in documenting and sharing their experiences through South-South cooperation with minimal reliance on external advice and as a result fully owned the results. In addition to the concrete technical results of each project, the sharing has raised the profile, visibility and professional status of several statisticians from least developed and developing countries vis-à-vis their peers in the regional statistical community. These professionals are now paying it forward by sharing and supporting peers in other countries wishing to implement similar projects, making the initiative sustainable with cascading effects.

The initiative has resulted in several new statistical products and services being available: (a) new statistical legislation in the Maldives and in the Lao People's Democratic Republic; (b) new price indices in Bhutan; (c) new GDP estimates in Cambodia; and (d) a statistical business register in Myanmar. These successful projects have been documented in replication studies, making them easy to pick up by other interested countries through South-South cooperation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Lululeen Santos
Women's Interest Coordinator,
Pohnpei State Social Services Division
Lsantos2@fsmhealth.fm