A. Managing

Managing, which implies both leadership and management, is a key essential step in the NSDS process – a process which brings change that has to be managed adequately. Effective leadership and good management are thus required at the political level, with efficient NSDS champions, but also at organisational and operational levels, with a well-managed and co-ordinated National Statistical System (NSS), aiming at a successful NSDS.

MANAGING CHANGE

Design and implementation of the NSDS might require that a number of changes be made — changes in work ethic, mindsets, organisational culture and structures, procedures in doing things, etc. Understanding and managing these changes and adopting a positive
attitude towards them will enhance the chances of successful implementation of the strategy.

In reality, rather than being seen as a positive opportunity, change is most often resisted by people involved at various levels and this resistance is a threat to successful strategy implementation. Fear of failure in a new situation, insecurity when faced with new methodologies, lack of understanding of the need for change, and feeling of loss of status are among the leading causes for resistance to change. This is all the more true in developing countries where national statistical systems are often fragile, vulnerable, and understaffed.

Therefore, while planning change properly through clear identification of the areas to be improved and a realistic set of desired goals is important, it is not enough. Managing change is about managing people. It is about dealing with the skepticism of those to be affected by it — they should be given complete information and enough time to prepare effectively. People should have a chance to comment on the proposed changes and contribute to the planning. A convincing rationale for change should be proposed. Specific attention should be paid to those who think they will not benefit from the change or will lose out. Throughout the whole process, and at all levels, managing change will have to be considered as an essential part of the NSDS. Issues that are slowing down the development of the NSDS should be identified and solutions adopted by the NSS to move forward effectively.

Effective leadership is also required for managing change. Leadership — the art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal — involves communicating with enthusiasm, inspiring and supervising, engaging in a strategic vision and planning, and setting an example to anticipate and embrace the necessary changes.

The NSDS process requires leadership and management at different levels – the political level, organisational level, and operational level.

Political level
Leadership at the political level is required to advocate for statistics, to create greater political will to develop and use statistics, to ensure that the NSDS process is relevant, and to make or endorse major decisions, for instance on reforming and restructuring the NSS, revising the statistical legislation, creating co-ordination arrangements, and investing in statistics. The level of engagement of high-level officials will depend on decision-making processes in each country. It is therefore key to find the right high-level policy or decision-makers who are sufficiently interested in statistics and willing to champion the NSDS and the various changes it implies for improving statistical development in the country. It requires a sensitisation to the role of statistics in decision-making vis-à-vis key members of the government.

Once the champions at this level have been identified, they should be encouraged to develop their interest in the NSDS processes. It is the NSO Director’s responsibility to manage relationships and interface with political leadership about the NSDS process, getting the identified champion(s) to attend one of the NSDS workshops and managing to keep interest high throughout the whole process. The NSO Director should seek to get involved and participate in national development discussions. His participation at this stage should aim at conferring to the development of the NSS a status of priority in the development strategy. There should be a focus on engaging primarily with the Minister of Finance and/or Planning, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and/or Planning,
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the Minister in charge of statistics (See D. ADVOCATING) as champions of statistical development as their agencies are among the main government users of statistics in the country.

Organisational level

There is a need for strong leadership at the organisational level. After commitment at the highest level has been secured, the Director of the NSO must show strong leadership and take on the NSDS as a key process, and use appropriate co-ordination, technical management and leadership skills to establish the necessary institutional arrangements for the NSDS design (see C. PREPARATION).

Requirements on his/her time and efforts do not only concern the design phase but also the NSDS implementation stage when further management skills and new management styles will be required. It is the permanent responsibility of the Director of the NSO to internalise and champion the NSDS as a framework that will, if properly implemented, improve the entire NSS and change the course of statistical development in the country. As a manager, he/she will have to plan, budget, allocate necessary resources (through Project Management Tools), recognise skills, delegate responsibility and authority, establish structures and develop procedures to guide people. As a leader, he/she will have to establish and communicate direction, then develop a vision and the strategies to achieve it, inspiring commitment and delivery from staff.

Good management will include readiness to change a particular organisational culture - or “the unconscious forces that shape a workplace” - when necessary. In particular, the design of the NSDS should aim to build upon aspects of an existing culture that supports proposed new strategies. Those aspects of the existing culture that are antagonistic to the NSDS proposed strategy should be identified and changed. NSDS implementation could involve creating a new set of values (e.g. work ethic), value systems (e.g. code of conduct) and a performance-based culture that focuses on results and links everyone and every unit in the organisation to unique features of the strategy. Different techniques are available to alter an organisation’s culture including recruitment, training, promotion and positive reinforcement, etc.

Operational level

At the operational level, the NSO Director is unlikely to be able to work on the NSDS full-time and should select one of his/her more enthusiastic and able senior members of staff to head the NSDS design team (NSDS coordinator, to act as a “change agent”, an example and stimulus to others). The Director will ensure that the Terms of Reference of the NSDS co-ordinator are well defined, including frequent reporting to the Director, and that he/she has the necessary time and co-ordination skills to monitor the organisational design structures (ad hoc and permanent) and to keep all key stakeholders consulted and informed. Processes for consultation should be managed so as to build consensus progressively. Consulting services might be hired to support the team, but not to substitute for it.

The NSO Director will thus make those key decisions that will lead to a well-co-ordinated operational NSDS design team, in relation with all committees and working groups (See C. PREPARATION). It is also important that the selected team is able to work on the NSDS with passion and creativity. The very good staff members who would be available to work on NSDS full-time should be re-assigned to NSDS.
This is where the managing role of the NSO director is all the more important. He/she will have to manage staff efficiently and continuously, an important step to ensure successful strategy design and implementation. Managing people involves deciding on staffing needs, how to fill positions within budget, recruiting, orienting and training employees, and ensuring that they perform well.

The NSDS process is a good opportunity for the NSO director to tackle problems such as high level of staff turnover - a paralysing issue in statistical offices in developing countries- and poor motivation, and find adequate solutions through an adequate human resources approach. Staff who are motivated are more productive and are more likely to stay within the NSO.

Apart from financial factors of motivation (wages, overtime, perks), there are also self-esteem needs that have to be taken into account. Improving the status of the statisticians or create a specific status for them could be helpful. Ongoing communication at all levels and with all staff should be ensured - allow for questions and comments; encourage innovation/diversity of views and accountability - to create an overall attractive work environment.

In practice

Who and When
Effective leadership of the NSS, including the NSO, being critical for the design and implementation of the NSDS throughout the entire National Statistical System, the NSO Director has a fundamental role to play, in particular in a centralized statistical system. The Statistics Act should provide legal safeguards to prevent arbitrary appointment and dismissal of the NSO Director. He/she should not only be proficient in statistics but also embody managerial instincts and leadership skills, and maintain good relations with the government. The NSO Director should set the example, reflecting the image, integrity and professionalism of the NSO and NSS.

A manager is not necessarily a good leader and vice-versa. If the NSO director is a good leader but cannot manage certain issues, part of the strategy would be to identify the right person to help him/her (ex: a deputy director with good management skills).

Managing is a essential task, going from the design phase to implementation of the NSDS.

How
The organisational arrangements, developed in detail in the C. PREPARATION chapter are a very good start to ensure leadership and management styles supportive of the NSDS strategy, encouraging cross-functional and problem-solving teamwork. After the design phase of the NSDS, permanent teams with regular meetings can be internalised within the NSO such as Management teams comprising heads of departments and specialized units under the chairpersonship of the Director of the NSO; Departmental Teams, comprised by the Head of the Department (as chair) and Heads of Divisions and Sections ; Standing Committees and specific working groups can be established to handle specific cross-functional tasks, such as trade statistics and agricultural statistics (see SPECIFIC ISSUES). A full time Strategic Planning Division in the NSO could also be created as strategic planning is an on-going function. Apart from serving as Secretariat for the preparation of the NSDS, it will monitor and review its implementation.
The NSO Director should apply result-based management principles to the NSDS design and manage its implementation with performance indicators (ex: user satisfaction, support to national policies, governance…) and with a reporting, monitoring and evaluation plan (see E. MONITORING, EVAL. REPORTING).

A good understanding of the principles of motivation will be necessary – participation (staff should be involved in decision-making and in matters which directly affect them); communication (staff knowing the context in which they work is important for them to understand and be incentivised); recognition (if staff members receive recognition for work done, they will be inclined and motivated to work harder); and delegated authority (enhances the position of staff, contributes to personal development). The NSO Director should bear these factors in mind when approving programmes to motivate staff.

Change does not lead to immediate improvements as new procedures need to be developed and tested, resources need to be obtained, etc. “Quick wins” will therefore add credibility to the decisions of a process where immediate improvements cannot be expected. Early successes should not only be rewarded (internally) but also promoted (externally) throughout the evolution of the project.

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