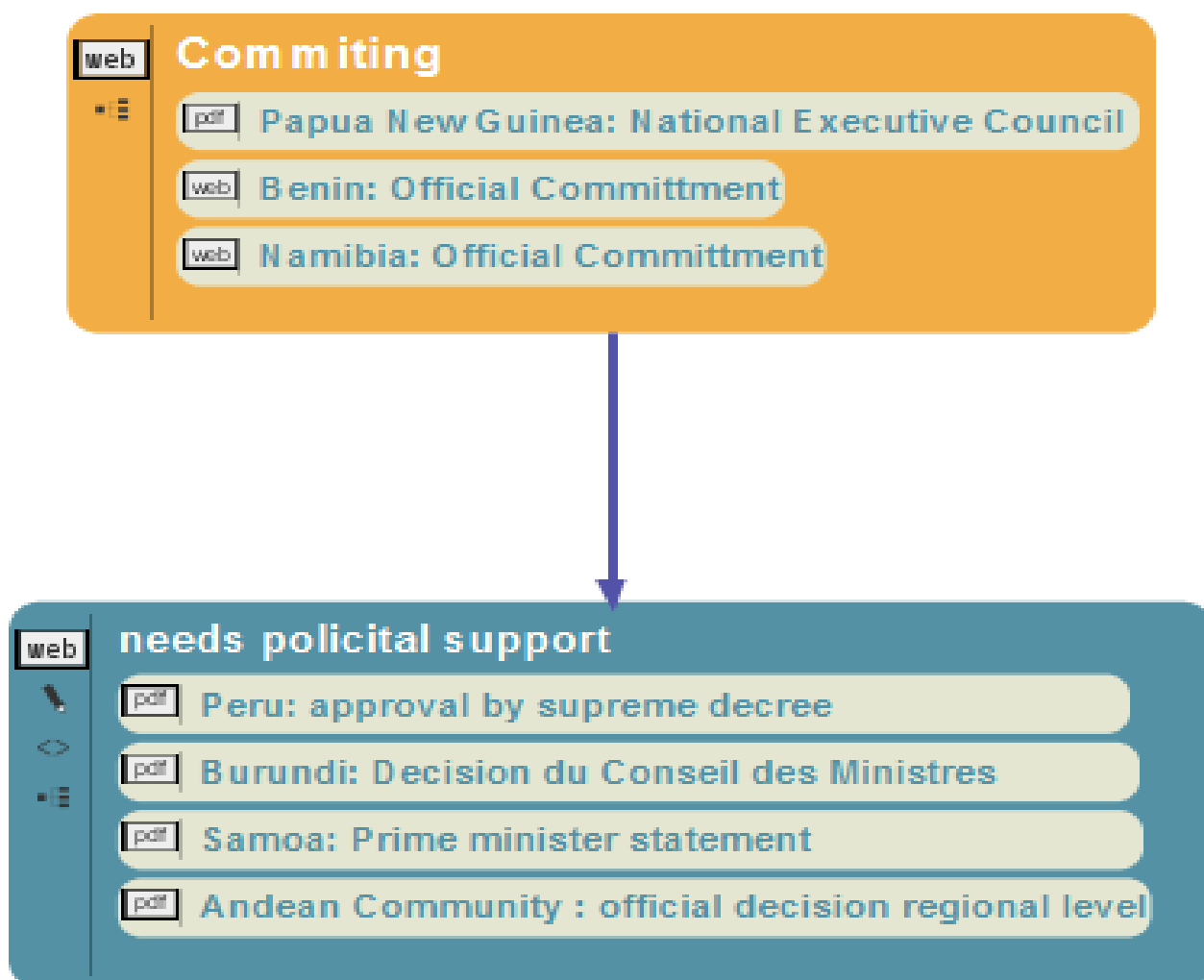


B. Committing

NSDS GUIDELINES (<https://nsdsguidelines.paris21.org>)

B. Committing

High-level political commitment is needed, not just for launching the NSDS process or for increasing funding but also for increasing the use of statistical information for policy and decision making. Leadership at political level will be required throughout the design phase but also during implementation. It will also be necessary to ensure that all major decisions are endorsed at the same level. The most challenging issue will be to obtain lasting political commitment.



POLITICAL SUPPORT NEEDED

For an NSDS to be “backed by political support, be nationally led and owned” (See 2.

B. Committing

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UNDERSTANDING) there is a need for lasting high-level commitment. However, even if the importance of country ownership and leadership in the NSDS process is widely recognised, some countries have designed their NSDS in isolation from the nation's overall development programme and priorities. In some cases, NSDSs were prepared by National Statistical Offices without widespread consultation. Political instability, staff turnover at all levels, and difficulty in dealing with hierarchy are all factors that make lasting political commitment difficult to obtain in developing countries.

The fact remains that official commitment to embark on the design of an NSDS is the first step in an ongoing process of engagement over the whole NSDS cycle. It is important that once the need to design a strategy is acknowledged by national authorities, the commitments are strongly relayed to senior political levels through efficient communication and advocacy. The NSDS should have political support and commitment and be championed by high-level national officials from the very beginning (**See D. ADVOCATING; A. MANAGING**).

During each important phase of the NSDS design itself, all major decisions and reports should be approved at a high political level (**see 3.PREPARING**) within the national government. Often documents have been drafted by consultants, and it is only at a later stage that high-level support has been sought. This makes it extremely difficult, even impossible, to obtain consensus and initial efforts are lost. Hence the necessity to take the time to undertake a genuinely nationally led, owned and inclusive participatory process. Moreover, when the preparation of an NSDS has come from within the government at a high level and where the process has a clear mandate, a system-wide approach, not only NSO-focused, is likely to be more feasible.

Without high-level lasting commitment supporting NSDS implementation, the tendency will be to carry out isolated activities, funded by donors and in line with their needs but not necessarily in line with country needs and with the statistical priorities defined in the NSDS. This does not, obviously, preclude countries from seeking technical and other forms of assistance to help design and then implement strategies and in many cases this kind of support will have an important role to play. Furthermore, attracting the attention of the donor community at an early stage enhances success and increases the chances of commitment on the donors' side at well.

In practice

Who and When

From the beginning of the process, high-level political commitment can be made explicit through a decision at the council of ministers level, by the minister in charge of statistics or through the national parliament, depending on the situation of the country. This will reflect the willingness of the country to use statistics for policy and decision-making and add credibility to the NSDS process in the eyes of all stakeholders.

Official commitment must be maintained throughout the whole process and beyond, ideally renewed (ex: public statement) and reflected in the involvement of the highest authorities in approving the main reports at the various stages.

How

For the official decision to be taken, some preparatory advocacy work is necessary: a meeting could be organised by the NSO or other high-level authorities of the NSS with the government to reiterate the importance of having a national statistical system matching the national data requirements. This should result in the preparation of a document which

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will be used as the basis of the decision to be endorsed.

Consensus-building mechanisms and clear processes for consultation should be set up, and advocacy activities carried out, in order to maintain political support and country ownership and continue building commitment and partnerships throughout the whole process, including implementation. Any opportunity for the government to reiterate its commitment throughout the whole NSDS process and beyond should be exploited. It is of the utmost importance that Statistics be recognized as a key variable and a priority in the development process when new development strategies are being prepared.

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