

D. Advocating

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The NSDS is a fantastic opportunity for statistical advocacy, in particular during its design phase where issues such as ownership, actors involved, dialogue between producers and users, political support, funding and governance of the National Statistical System are debated. Advocacy has always been under-estimated and needs to be considered as a strategic component of the NSDS and as a continuous activity for raising the profile of statistics.

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1. DEVELOPING AN ADVOCACY STRATEGY

Statistical development is important to all members of society whether they are users or producers of data. There is need for vigorous and effective advocacy to enable each group to understand and play an effective role at first in the NSDS design, and then in the NSDS implementation. Advocacy should be undertaken before and throughout NSDS design. It needs to be maintained during implementation and seen as a continuous activity. An advocacy strategy will thus be helpful and will need to be drawn carefully, be supported by staff time and a budget. Ideally, efforts will be made to instill a culture of constant effort to justify and explain statistical activities to all stakeholders on a continuous basis.

Objectives

The general objectives of the advocacy strategy are to reinforce public confidence in the NSS (independence, transparency) and in the use of statistics, raise awareness on the relevance of quality statistics for development, on the need for an NSDS (**A. ACKNOWLEDGING**), and fully inform relevant stakeholders (**C. PREPARATION**) on the prerequisites and challenges in designing and implementing a quality NSDS.

It is also about obtaining change, such as commitment at high-level for the design of an NSDS, in the short term, or allocation of more national resources to the implementation of the NSDS in the longer term. Furthermore, it requires that the NSS itself be open to criticism (both internal and external) and that it be open to changing data needs. It is important to have a clear vision of what is to be achieved and over what time frame (short/medium, long) to set realistic objectives.

Targets

In order to identify targets, it is essential to understand the process through which policy decisions concerning statistics are made in each country. Official commitment to embark on the design of an NSDS being the first step in an ongoing process of engagement over the whole NSDS cycle (**B. COMMITTING**), primary targets would be those who can ensure political support at national level, such as the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance/Economy, the Minister in charge of Statistics, members of Parliament.

Advocacy targeted at policy-makers at the very top is therefore a must to launch the process, but secondary targets such as top and middle managers within the NSS also need to be sensitised and well-informed about the process and what would be expected from them (management and staff of the NSO and sectoral level, heads of Sectors particularly Permanent Secretaries and Chief Executive Officers, heads and staff of sector planning departments, NSDS coordinators) (**C. PREPARATION - Identification of stakeholders**).

It is also important both to solicit various opinions and show willingness to communicate openly in order to build commitment and ownership of the process beyond those directly involved in the design process. This may appear to slow progress in the short term but can yield longer term benefits. Media and non-governmental organisations, including the business sector, civil society organisations and academia as well as umbrella organisations such as civil society federations, chambers of commerce and trade unions should also be considered as partners. Donors, bilateral and multilateral organisations should be kept informed from the very beginning of the NSDS process.

D. Advocating

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Messages

Messages should be tailored according to each target and their knowledge and official position on the subject. Concise messages can be built on themes such as the importance of statistics for planning, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects; the increasing demand for statistics to support the national and international development agenda; the integration of statistical development into national development plans; the NSDS as a comprehensive and co-ordination framework for statistical investment, development and donor contributions; the added-value of a well-designed and well-funded NSDS.

The messages should not only mention intentions, objectives of the NSS, but also be based upon the actual outputs of the NSS which are already available (IPC, surveys...).

Champions

Experience in a number of countries shows that advocacy carried out by a senior political champion (or preferably champions) yields better results. Champions may be cultivated as NSDS process allies in convincing the stakeholders to get actively involved and to maintain the momentum. Identifying, from the beginning of the NSDS process, high-level policy or decision-makers who are sufficiently interested in statistics and willing to champion the NSDS and statistical development in general in the country is certainly a great advantage **(A.MANAGING)**. One-on-one advocacy meetings can be more effective than a general presentation to the masses. Sub-champions/ambassadors at the expert or subject matter level could also be considered.

Action plan

The objectives need to be translated into detailed action. An action plan can be drawn addressing the following questions: What advocacy activity will help achieve the selected objectives? Who is responsible for which specific activity? Along what timeline? What message? Where? How? Each person involved should have a clear description of what they are supposed to achieve. The action plan should be realistic and easy to understand. The activities are then recorded in a calendar or timeline.

Tools

There is a wide range of possibilities to help implement the advocacy action plan, from organisation of workshops, user-producer dialogue meetings and media conferences, to various hard and soft copy materials (information bulletins, inserts in newspapers, special broadcasts, commercials, posters, brochures and flyers, video clips, press releases, etc...). A selection can be made from the Country-level Advocacy Toolkit. See Good Practices.

Costing and monitoring

Whilst it is not a natural or core part of NSO/NSS work, it is recommended to consider a strategy for advocacy, which should be part of a communication strategy for the NSS. An advocacy strategy requires technical, human and financial resources to be successfully

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implemented. Typical advocacy activities such as meetings, workshops or the production of advocacy materials all require financial support. It is therefore important to know what are the existing advocacy resources, how they could be used more efficiently and what are the limitations, before working out a final budget for all the relevant activities. Although measuring the impact of advocacy is difficult, monitoring the effectiveness of the strategy will show if work is headed in the right direction.

2. A SUB-STRATEGY IN THE NSDS

The National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) concentrates on many organisational and management areas, such as statistical legislation, human resources, infrastructure, funding and reporting. Advocacy and communication should be recognised and addressed alongside the other strategic issues within the NSDS.

In practice

Who and When

The advocacy strategy should be prepared and followed-up by a communication unit, with frequent consultations with the NSDS co-ordinator. Each stage of the design phase of the NSDS should be used to improve internal and external communication (C. PREPARATION) and to implement the advocacy strategy accordingly. Assistance may also be provided from a consultant but it is highly recommended that the brainstorming and first steps are carried out and led by the country.

How

The key to successful advocacy is to be persistent and innovative in selecting the advocacy activities to reach target audiences and achieve the set objectives. It should be stressed that advocating is a continuous effort. Environments can change, each situation is different and sometimes major successes can emerge from minor actions.

The main proposed steps for designing and implementing an advocacy strategy, focused more particularly on the NSDS, are the following: Assessment of existing advocacy activities and resources; Developing a vision and action plan (objectives, targets, messages, selection of advocacy activities); Implementing the advocacy action plan; Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy. These steps are described in detail in the Country-level advocacy toolkit (See Tools below).

It must be noted that the satisfaction of users is a strong argument in any advocacy strategy in statistics. In this sense, a linkage with a quality assurance framework is necessary. The more "quality focused" the producers of statistics are, the better and easier is the promotion of statistics to their specific targets.

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