

## 6 Identifying strategic goals

Knowing clearly where we stand (Assessment) and where we are heading (Vision), will help to identify the strategic goals and the methods or strategies to reach them. The strategic goals will be all the more relevant, depending on the quality of the assessment exercise (including the SWOT exercise, see ASSESSMENT) and the level of vision sharing.

### STRATEGIC GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Although the National Development Plans and the various regional and international commitments do provide orientation as to the highest priorities, conflicting priorities cannot be avoided, in particular in a context of limited resources: hence the importance of building consensus and making choices through consultative processes. This leads to the definition of absolute priorities/strategic, finalized through political arbitration.

Successful achievement of these strategic goals will then depend on well-thought out mid-term and long-term strategies, broken down into activities/action plans. This does not exclude strategic goals addressing immediate needs. The strategies will build the corresponding necessary strength within the National Statistical System, both in terms of statistical production and statistical capacity. If, for example, it is decided to improve statistical dissemination through timely release of the next population census results in 2018, what would be the strategy in terms of human resources to achieve this? The growth potential of the human resources will determine the statistical production - in other words, progressive building of human resources is crucial. The best strategies will be those which will allow to exploit the existing strengths, use the opportunities, solve the identified weaknesses and ward off the risks (SWOT), thus improving the efficiency of the national statistical system in a context of rationalization of resources. The ultimate result will be the production and delivery of agreed-on statistical data by the National Statistical System (NSS).

Strategic data to be delivered would be presented by statistical domain, producer, delivery mode and timeliness using the UN nomenclature of statistical domains. A strategic censuses and surveys programme for both households and enterprises has to support the **data delivery objectives**. It is likely that access to data by major users needs important enhancements; if so, specific objectives have to be set for data, meta data and microdata adequate access.

### CAPACITIES

The main **capacity** areas of the NSS to which the strategic goals and strategies are related are the **Political and Technical governance (or management), Human Resources, Physical and Statistical Infrastructure, Funding, Statistical policies, Processes, Partnerships**. In practice, these are usually covered/dealt with within the existing NSDSs through a series of strategic axes such as, Institutional and organizational environment; Statistical production quality; Archiving, dissemination and use of statistics; Human resource improvement (including management); Funding sustainability- all broken down into a series of activities (see examples below of Mali NSDS and Senegal NSDS for possible

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breakdown). The specific **sequencing**, **timing** and **cost-effectiveness** of the activities are then developed in the Action Plans.

Although final strategic goals depend on the national context and the administrative set up of a given country, a few recommendations can be provided so as to **what elements to take into consideration within the main capacity areas when reflecting on strategic goals and strategies (with no intention to establish a hierarchy)**:

### Governance

- The **prior importance** of legislation /statistical legislation-all statistical activities should be carried out in an adequate official framework to allow respect of existing constraints in any democracy.
- The role played by the member of the government supervising the NSS or the central statistics office and his/her relations with the ministers at the head of their own statistical departments;
- The adoption of national policies in the field of statistics, the country's commitments to its institutional partners, and their interrelation; adherence to professional ethics and international standards/ existing commitments
- The improvement of regulations in the field of official statistics.
- The setting of annual programmes of statistical production, for the system as a whole and for every one of the units that it comprises, and the allocation, to each of these units, of the resources required to carry out these programmes; professional independence and integrity of the system.
- One of the components of the system must clearly be in charge of NSS coordination.
- The manager of the unit in charge of coordinating the system would be identified as the head statistician of the NSS.
- The unit in charge of coordination should itself be directly answerable for part of statistical production (to buttress its legitimacy).
- Periodically, meetings of all units of the system, chaired by the head statistician, could be held.
- NSS units have to share common tools (directories, nomenclatures, methods, assessments to be requested from consultative councils on statistical policy, etc.).
- Committees and other arrangements for user - producer and producer - producer collaboration should be set up.
- The development of an advocacy strategy to raise the profile of statistics generally.

### Human Resources

- The management of human resources must, if possible, be comprehensive, or at least coordinated, between all NSS units
- The recruitment and retention ( incentive structures, existence of a statistics 'cadre') of staff should be adequate (skills, qualifications)
- A programme of statistical training and continuous professional development should be developed for the NSS
- Consider staff mobility

### Physical and Statistical Infrastructure

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- Premises, transport, equipment (other than software) should be adapted
- Information and communication technology must be considered as a powerful tool to manage information across the sectors
- Links with geographical information
- Statistical classifications should be coherent and consistent with international standards
- Analytical frameworks of statistics
- Management and implementation of surveys and censuses should be improved with a view to meet international standards/consider outsourcing.

### Funding

- All the strategies should be related to funding sources and thus be realistic
- The importance of the national budget, the amount of grants from donors, the sums to be borrowed, should be known
- National budgets (mainly for continuous operations), completed by donors (ex: contribution to census)

### Statistical policies

- Quality policy (relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, comparability),
- Dissemination policy (ex: data release calendars, publish annual reports in line with MDG reports, standard formats and easy access...)
- Statistical confidentiality policy/access to anonymised micro-data
- Standardization policy

### Processes

- Sampling frames and registers
- Data collection (census and surveys) linked to surveys and censuses programme
- Access to administrative data
- Data processing
- Data dissemination and data access
- Data analysis
- Data archiving and documentation

### Partnerships

- External partners should be identified: donors, global partners (UN system, FAO, WB, IMF...), regional partners (ex: AFRISTAT), users (including analysts, media...)

The international or regional statistical operations and programmes, the country is partner with, will provide some of the goals and structure in the sequencing and timing of some sub-strategies.

- Regular consultation with partners providing technical and/or financial aid in the field of statistics should be carried out (ex: Mali, statistical coordination group)
- Possible MOUs with national sources of administrative data

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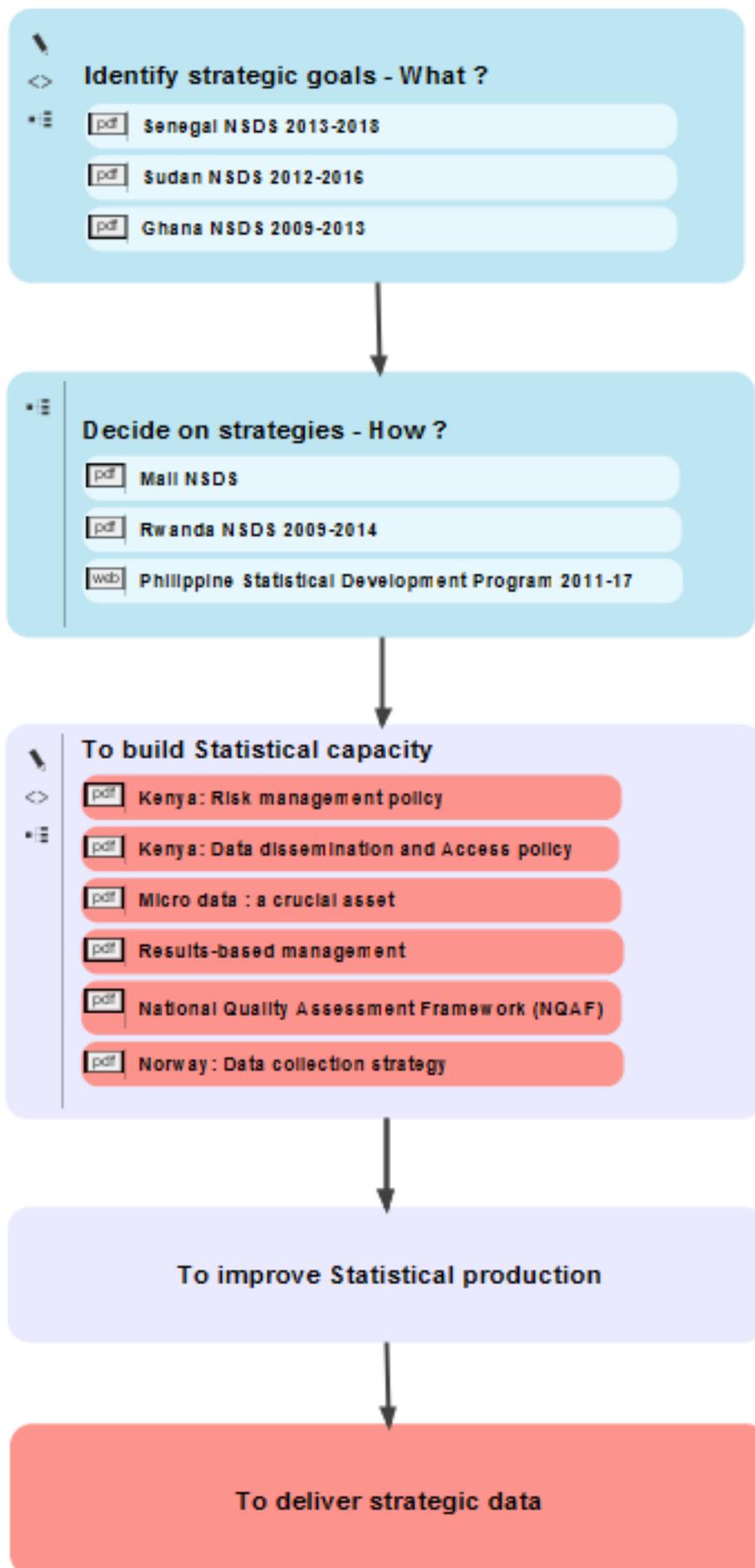
- Good relationship with suppliers of goods and services
- Very good working collaboration with other public sector organizations (finances, legal, diplomatic,...), especially with the data producers (line ministries, agencies) part of the NSS.

The various activities deriving from the above capacity areas will obviously build up to cross-cutting strategies (NSS-wide financing strategy, comprehensive human resource strategy (including training), advocacy/communication strategy, quality management strategy, implementation management strategy, etc...) representing the overall NSS capacity building programme.

Depending on the level of centralization of the NSS, the various reports related to sectoral strategies will obviously be taken into account.

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### Identifying strategic goals in practice

#### Who and When

All the previously identified stakeholders (See PREPARATION) must be widely consulted before the strategic choices are submitted by the design team to higher level validation (See PREPARATION). Each stakeholder, in particular, the users of the statistical products, the resource providers, the statisticians who will have to take action, have knowledge essential to the construction of this part of the strategy.

Formal approval by all stakeholders, including the national authorities, will be a quality factor of success. Adherence by all will help to ensure that the proposals are in line with the national context and that the actors will be ready to take action and engage at the implementation phase. There is need for a realistic balance between the “ambitions” and the “means” hence the importance of getting the opinion of the main contributors before making the proposals.

Once endorsed at high government level, the strategic choices should be widely communicated, as for any step of the design process. Then the action plans will be designed such as to effectively achieve the agreed objectives.

At this stage in the design process, the reference period is necessarily open-ended, and covers the next 5 to 10 years along the path envisioned in the Vision; including two populations and agriculture censuses could be a good compromise.

#### How

Strategic goals should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) and derive from consultations. The strategic goals will not reflect what is “desirable” but what is “absolutely important and feasible”.

A results-based management approach (see figure on Results-Based management in Tools below) can provide a reflexion framework: What are the strategic results we are aiming at? What would be the products needed to obtain these results? What would be the corresponding capacities to reinforce in order to deliver these products? What would then be the capacity building strategies?

Realistically, only a small set of possible strategies should be developed and the advantages, disadvantages, costs and benefits of these strategies determined. What human, financial and technical resources could be “reasonably obtained ” in the future? The problem is that often, not all the information required is available and non-objective considerations may interfere in the strategy-formulation process.

Scenario analyses based on major national problems can help identify the best growth paths to take. It is important that the conclusions, proposed strategic objectives and their

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corresponding resources needs obtain a wide consensus among the various actors and receive clear support from the political authorities. Analyzing strategies that have failed in the past can also be helpful.

The UN Generic National Quality Assurance Framework Template (see Tools) could be very helpful in assisting and boosting reflection at this stage : Managing the statistical system ; Managing the institutional environment ; Managing statistical processes ; Managing statistical outputs.

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