Subnational Strategies for the Development of Statistics

In the NSDS Guidelines, the term "subnational" relates to a region or territory within a nation, below the national level. By contrast, the term "regional" is used to characterise a group of nations (see [Regional Strategies for the Development of Statistics](#)). For countries with varying size and administrative arrangements, a subnational statistical system can be an important element of the National Statistical System. The importance of subnational statistics relies on the existence of subpopulations. A subpopulation can be relevant to the statistical system if it is part of the national population that lives within the same identifiable geographical and/or administrative subdivision of a national territory. Depending on the administrative arrangements of the country, subnational territories can be referred to as federal states, counties, governorates, provinces or districts, amongst other terms. In some circumstances, these subnational entities can be sovereign from the national government and contain their own set of priorities, have different types of institutions and have different levels of capacity. Therefore it is important that each of these subnational territories develop its own strategy for the development of statistics to better address issues unique to their territories. Cross cutting issues from the territories will then be addressed at national level through the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS).

Why subnational statistics systems matter ?

- Development strategies are increasingly prepared and implemented at the subnational and local levels.
- Global, regional, national and local level development strategies rely on the precise profiles of the population.
- There is strong demand for disaggregated data to provide a sound base for policies that target specific segments of the population.
- Poverty eradication strategies require precise documentation of the identity and location of the poor to determine long-term and programmatic decisions targeting specific geographic areas.
- If not properly identified, rapid economic growth may hide incidences of poverty and inequality that can be prevalent at the subnational level.

How to develop a Subnational Strategy for the Development of Statistics

As indicated earlier, subnational territories have different set-up from one country to another. This may also mean differences between subnational development plans and subnational statistical development plans. Without necessarily implying that one size fits all, the Subnational Strategy for the Development of Statistics may be developed in five steps and incorporated in the NSDS process by: (i) building partnerships and adopting strategic principles; (ii) classifying territorial units; (iii) creating needs assessments;

(iv)setting the production framework; (v) integrating the Subnational Strategy for the Development of Statistics into the NSDS.

1. Building partnerships and adopting strategic principles

Developing subnational data should be a collaborative endeavour where flexible yet effective partnerships can be built. Such partnerships will promote local participation and increase the use and supply of community data while taking into consideration differing needs, circumstances and capacities. All parties involved will be expected to adhere to principles of subsidiary when implementing subnational statistical activities. The process of forming collaborative endeavours includes:

1.1. Partnership process

- Reviewing all pieces of legislation that have explicit or implicit bearings on subnational statistical systems
- Defining categories of major stakeholders: decision-makers at national, sectoral, local levels; data users and producers at all levels, including international, regional and foreign organisations; local institutions – formal and informal; academia and research groups; media and communication experts
- Identifying and enlisting potential partners within each category
- Leveraging community based management systems
- Preparing a partnership framework.

1.2. Strategic principles

Under the co-ordination of the NSO, a number of guiding principles will be agreed upon by partners to complement and reinforce the development of the subnational statistical system consistently with the country's statistical and institutional arrangements.

1. **Jurisdictional delineation** – A subnational system may be defined by geographical area, groups of interest or institutional set-up
2. **Legal recognition** - National or subnational statistics operate acknowledging the existing of subnational statistical agencies as primary compilers and/or custodians of subnational statistics
3. **Two-way subsidiarity** - Identifying activities that are better conducted by subnational agencies and those better conducted by the NSO or sector statistics offices
4. **Statistical participation** - Recognising the roles of various groups of local society in collecting and producing data whether done formally or informally
5. **Local relevance** - Assessing the availability and quality of subnational data with respect to meeting subnational development objectives.

2. Classifying territorial units

Subnational strategies will be designed on the basis of the hierarchical structure of local administration. Existence of such classifications makes it easier to identify subnational areas and assess the availability of subnational statistics. It is important to determine whether such classifications:

- Cover all territorial units in the country

- Are not limited to a particular level in a country's administrative stratification
- Are not redundant
- Cover and treat territorial units equally

3. Needs Assessment

Development of a subnational statistical strategy should ensure that the needs of statistics users are met by:

1. **Identifying users of subnational statistics**: those already identified in the national statistical system; local users interested in local statistics; international organisations interested in community development; regional economic communities whose mandate include cross-border activities such as trade, migration, health epidemics, peace and security, etc.
2. **Establishing categories of needs**: In addition to the needs identified in the NSDS, special local areas needs must be identified with the intention of covering all development and management objectives. In doing so, a balance can be struck between global, regional, national and local agendas
3. **Subnational indicators to be generated**: For each need or category of needs, a list of indicators and metadata should be prepared. It is important to note that a particular need may require several indicators and one indicator may also have several needs
4. **Identifying data gaps**: Identify which indicators can be generated among those selected above while determining whether the indicators are available on a regular basis or at a particular spatial or subnational level. Data may be obtained from the administrative records of public institutions or from privately owned records of public data and information. The data needs to undergo quality assessments and confidentiality checks before use
5. **Verification of needs**: A verification process of local needs should be done at the local level

4. Setting the production framework

In determining the framework for the production of subnational statistics there is a need to recognise the differing strengths and weaknesses of the various statistical agencies across the country in terms of staffing, expertise and statistical and technical infrastructures. Furthermore, opportunities and threats may arise from different roles performed by the various institutions across the national statistical system.

For instance, regarding a survey conducted in a specific local area, the methodology can be designed at the NSO central level; field data collection can be carried out by the local area statistical agency; survey supervision can be performed at a higher level by a subnational statistics office; validation and processing can take place in a different subnational entity, etc.

5. Integrating the Subnational Strategy for the Development of Statistics into the NSDS

While identifying the needs for subnational data, a distinction should be established

between two categories of intersecting needs: those of local interest and those of national relevance. For the first category, local governments should be encouraged to develop their own Subnational Strategies for the Development of Statistics (SubNSDS). This may also include local entities that are sovereign from the national government. The SubNSDS will ultimately feed into the NSDS process.

The second category includes needs that are common to all or several local areas or are related to one specific area that is deemed of national interest. These needs should be identified at the national level in consultation with subnational and local bodies. The overall subnational component of the NSDS will result from both the consolidated Subnational Strategies for the Development of Statistics and the subnational component developed at the national level.

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