Guide for first-timers

About a hundred countries prepared and implemented National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDSs) since 2003 (see the NSDS Status Report). It may be that you are one of the few that have not or perhaps it has been some time since you have revisited the process and have been tasked to produce an NSDS. This section explains why it is important to implement an NSDS, describes briefly what an NSDS is, and explains the main steps of the NSDS. Users more familiar with NSDSs can go directly to the next section The NSDS Guidelines update process.

What is the NSDS?

A National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) is a national framework, process and product for statistics development aimed at mainstreaming statistics into national policy and planning process; producing information responding to the needs of the various users; mainstreaming sectors and other players into the National Statistics System (NSS); coordinating the entire NSS; responding to data challenges; delivering a country-led data revolution; and building statistical capacity across the “the statistical value chain”. The process to elaborate and implement an NSDS is consultative and inclusive; it should involve all the major actors from the NSS: producers and users of statistics, decision makers, technical and financial partners, civil society, private sector, universities, etc.

Why do we need to implement an NSDS?

Countries need to have an overall vision of the development of their national statistical system which will include the national, regional, and international needs; address the data requirements of the national development plan thus becoming a part of the national development process and poverty reduction policy; identify the priority statistical development programs rationalizing thus the conduct of statistical activities and allocation of funds; serve as a framework for international and bilateral assistance; include all parts of the data production units and address issues related to the analysis and use of data; follow the international standards including quality; and build on all past and existing activities and experiences.

Benefits and advantages of having an NSDS

- NSDSs are instrumental in the promotion of statistics as a major tool in the development process. It gives more visibility to the role of information in development. It aims at establishing statistics as one of the priorities in this process. It implies a strong political commitment for statistics at the highest level and it relies on the participation of the data users in the definition of the objectives of the NSS and in their implementation.
- As the output of a participatory process, NSDSs intend to mobilise all the stakeholders around the promotion of a performing NSS. The NSDS approach insists on the importance of demand oriented data and promotes the users as a major
partner in the NSS.

- As an inclusive approach, an NSDS involves all the components of the official statistical system. It implies harmonising and coordinating the activities and objectives of the components, and the development of a common programming tool.
- As a demand driven process, NSDSs intend to respond to the needs of the various categories of users. It means that analysis of data and its dissemination to all users through the most convenient instruments of communication will be priorities for the NSSs. This will strengthen the support for a strong statistical system.

To succeed in the preparation and implementation of a NSDS, you will need

- **Strong political support** and an explicit recognition of the role of statistics in development, confirmed by its mention as a priority in the most important national development strategy document;
- **Dialogue with the main categories of data users** (government, private sector, civil society) in order to respond to their needs;
- **Integrate all the components of the NSS** in a common strategy responding to the needs of the users and to the requirements of the monitoring and evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- **Mobilise government funds**, and, as a complement, get support from coordinated partners.

The main steps of the NSDS

The first step will be to define a technical framework to prepare the new strategy, following a participative approach and benefitting from a strong political support. It will lead to a **road map**. The main steps will then include: the preparation of a diagnosis of the NSS; the definition of a medium and long term vision of the NSS; the definition of a medium term strategy; and the preparation of action plans taking into account the resources available. These Guidelines will help you following each of these different steps, providing concrete examples and tools – See **Methodology** and **Structure of the Site**.

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