

Building a Strong Community of Innovative and Forward Looking Leaders in Official Statistics

ISI Workshops on Leadership and Management

Background

The International Statistical Institute (ISI) has a long tradition of supporting the development of statistical systems throughout the world. Development of knowledge and exchange of new methodologies and good practices are fundamental aspects of the ISI's activities. The ISI High Level Workshops have been an important part of achieving the ISI's mission to promote the understanding, development and good practice of statistics worldwide. Four workshops have been organized in the past few years (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in March 2011, Daejeon, Republic of Korea in November 2012, Dakar, Senegal in December 2012, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in April 2015). They were supported by funds from the World Bank, and African Development Bank, and other sources. The workshops received favourable reviews from the participants. They also suggested the development of a workshop for middle management that can lead to the development of future leaders.

Although the Millennium Development Goals have greatly contributed to the overall development of statistical capacity in developing countries, many challenges remain concerning the development and sustainability of statistical systems. The Post-2015 Development Agenda stipulates that statistics would be mostly produced by national statistical organizations, which are to replace the estimation done by international organizations. Also, as long as the requirement to protect the confidentiality of individuals and firms can still be met, statistics should be more disaggregated and micro-data should be made available. Responding effectively to the Post-2015 Development Agenda will require a significant cultural change in official statistics. Both top and middle managers will have crucial roles to play.

The Data Revolution raises many opportunities and challenges. In particular, this revolution calls for innovative use of modern technologies in data collection and data presentation, and use of new data sources, all with the aim of producing good quality and timely information. The UN Seminar "Managing the Data Revolution: Integrated Statistics and Partnerships in Data for Statistical Organizations in the Post-2015 Era," which was held on 28 February 2014, emphasized that:

NSOs need to prepare themselves for the high demands that will inevitably arise from the post-2015 development agenda for integrated economic, social and environmental statistics. They should introduce innovations in their structures, systems and processes to increase their efficiency and ability to adapt to new requests. Moreover their adoption of the corporate business architecture based on standardized statistical information models will enhance the flexibility in

business operations and enable the sharing of methods, components, processes and data repositories within their organization and across statistical organizations. Also, advancing open and easy access to micro-data will increase the relevance and value of the official statistics, and will further the NSOs in delivering their mission in the post-2015 era.

The need for good governance, ethical leadership and accountability in building institutions that are transparent, capable and responsive to users is also one of the recommendations of the UN High Level Panel's Report.

To continue building the necessary technical and strategic capacities for top and middle management of statistical organizations, the ISI plans to organize a series of workshops, followed by a programme to support participants in implementing what they have learned during the workshops.

The ISI depends on resources of voluntary work of its members and international and local donors like World Bank and African Development Bank. The ISI would like to strengthen the partnership with local statistical organizations like the offices of the UN Statistical Commissions and others interested in good quality statistics. Working together over a longer period will help us to build a community of innovative, ethical and forward looking leaders of statistical organizations.

Participants

In the past, the workshops focused on heads of NSOs or their deputies. For the next phase, the ISI is planning separate workshops aimed at two different groups of participants.

A. Workshop for top management

Objectives

The objective is to build a strong community of innovative, visionary and ethical leaders in official statistics who will be able to respond to the demands of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and develop innovative strategies for structural improvements of statistical offices and systems. Hence, the workshop will focus on enhancing the leadership and managerial skills of top managers and offering them a platform for exchanging best practices and innovations amongst their peers and discussing the latest developments to enhance the quality of national statistical systems.

Programme themes and topics

The workshop will start with an open discussion to identify key challenges for official statistics and data producers in the region. The preparation of the statistical systems to fulfill the Post-2015 Development Agenda, to deal with the data revolution, including big data and to meet the specific needs of the region will be the common thread during the discussions at the workshop.

The workshop for top management would focus on strategic issues such as: estimation of regional needs for statistical capacity building, ethics in the statistical practice, managing the change process in data revolution era, organizing and operationalizing a national statistical system (NSS) and cooperation with researchers and academia. There will be also a discussion on how to organize the efficient process of statistical capacity building.

B. Workshop for middle management

Objectives

The objective is to build an innovative environment for middle managers in official statistics. The workshop will focus on enhancing the leadership and managerial skills of middle management in implementing innovative approaches for organizing their departments and managing staff and processes. It will also provide a platform for exchanging best practices and innovations.

Programme themes and topics

The topics will include: implementing effective operational rules; tools for streamlining the organization and production processes; programme planning and project management; ways to maintain good relationships with important stakeholders like data respondents; the media and researchers would also be important as might be a case study developed by invited speakers.

Preparation of statistical production systems to meet the Post-2015 Development Agenda and to take advantage of the data revolution and big data sources in the region will be the common thread in all themes of the workshop.

The workshop will start with an open discussion about the main challenges data producers are facing in the region and continue with the themes such as: building ethical and forward looking managerial practices, optimization and modernization of statistical production processes, dissemination of statistics, internal organization, work programming and reporting, important over-arching statistical processes and project management framework.

Workshop format

Both workshops will be designed to encourage discussion and active participation. For most sessions, discussions would take place in groups. The workshop will conclude with the final report and proposals for a way forward.

Follow up

The follow-up programme could be based either on workshops or on papers written by participants describing how innovations were implemented in their field of competence, challenges faced, solutions developed, etc. The participants in the seminar would then discuss these papers online or at regional meetings. For middle management, the follow up actions could be organized at the regional level, for heads of statistical organizations yearly meetings could be organized on the occasion of the UN Statistical Commission.