



**ISI Statistical Capacity Building Workshop on `Statistics and Society`
Sardar Patel University, Gujarat, India
April 4-6, 2015**

A workshop for the purpose of Capacity Building in Statistics in South Asia was conducted in April at the Department of Statistics at the Sardar Patel University, Gujarat, India. The workshop was organized by the ISI Outreach Committee for South Asia and was funded by the World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building.

There were over eighty participants including two participants each from Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh, and three participants from Sri Lanka. The participants included teachers, students and researchers in statistics as well as users of statistics who are actively involved in research and in need of consultation with statisticians.

*A Three Day International Workshop on "Statistics and Society", 4 - 6 April 2015
International Statistical Institute's Outreach Committee for South Asia
Organised at Department of Statistics, Sardar Patel University, Gujarat, India.*



Senior statisticians presented case studies of application of statistics in many fields including agriculture, manufacturing, health, environment, insurance, trade etc. Users were given a platform to present their problems so that statisticians in the audience with interest in the problem could offer advice/collaboration. In a few cases, partnerships between users and statisticians were formed to continue the action beyond the workshop.

As an example, a young psychologist needed help in understanding internet addiction among college students and a statistician offered to collaborate with her. An economist analysing foreign trade statistics sought guidance in studying export of jewels. A statistician volunteered to work together. A field ecologist presented a problem of quantitative study of

forest resources in a tribal area. This presentation turned out to be the most fascinating to statisticians. Three statisticians offered to collaborate.

Two panel discussions were held during the workshop. One was titled '*Problems of Statistics Capacity building in South Asia.*' The discussion brought out the fact that problems faced by different countries were often different. Delegates from Bhutan pointed out that in their small country, the idea of a university is rather difficult to implement. So, any special arrangement for training statisticians seems impractical and facilities in other larger countries will have to be used for the purpose. Nepal does have institutions for teaching of statistics but still they value interaction with groups in other countries. Bangladesh delegates hinted at lack of adequate interaction among applied statisticians. It seemed that periodic organization of conferences and workshops will be very useful. Sri Lanka does not seem to have these problems. Delegates from India suggested that the formal education in statistics has some gaps. In particular, the orientation in programs is often too theoretical and students are not ready to practice statistics when they graduate. Various activities at undergraduate and post-graduate levels introduced to orient students to the world of practice were described. In some courses, however, real life projects have to be carried out and that changes the situation to a considerable extent.

The second panel discussion was titled '*Planning a workshop on Public Health Statistics for SAARC countries.*' Delegates were unanimous that such a workshop will be very useful. However, one input was that countrywise discussions may not be very productive. Instead, the program could be organized around common public health problems faced by different countries (for example, arsenic poisoning or malaria, or drug resistant tuberculosis etc.).

Feedback from participants suggests that the format and content of the workshop were both useful. Student participants were particularly impressed by the very wide range of domains in which statistics was shown to make significant value addition.

Anil Gore

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