First International Workshop
on Poverty Statistics in the SAARC Region

11-14 December 2017, Kathmandu, Nepal

Organized by:

National Statistical Institute, Nepal

**International Statistical Institute
and World Bank Statistical Capacity Trust Fund (WBTFSCB)**

*Participants of the Workshop
Representatives of the World Bank, members of National Planning Commission
and representatives from Central Bureau of Statistics*

Background

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) established in 1985, is an organization of eight nations - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It occupies only 3 per cent of the world's total area but it has 1.69 billion inhabitants, which is 23.5 per cent of the world's total population in 2015.

International agencies such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank prepare poverty statistics on the basis of country data (national poverty lines) and international data collection initiatives such as the International Comparison Program. Statistics released by the World Bank reveal that the economies of SAARC countries are growing faster than any other economy of the world. Nevertheless, a major part of the population in the region still lives below the poverty line. Over the last years, the strong economic growth and the advancement in technology alleviate the poverty to some extent, but due to a high population growth the total number of poor people has not decreased.

At the national level all SAARC countries have conducted Living Standard Measurement Surveys. Nepal has already done this three times and it also conducts a regular Annual Household Survey from 2011/12 using its own resources. Similarly, the National Sample Survey Organization of India carries out National Sample Surveys.

These surveys highlight consumption disparities among people and help the governments in formulating appropriate policies and programs to eradicate poverty and hunger and to improve the lives of poor individuals and households.

The outcomes of the studies on poverty estimation are sometimes inconsistent because of disparate methodologies used and assumptions while performing the research. Therefore, it is challenging to draw inferences and compare statistics at international as well as at regional levels while estimating and comparing the level of poverty and the change of it.

Considering this situation in the SAARC region, National Statistical Institute of Nepal (NSI) approached the International Statistical Institute (ISI) and submitted a proposal to organize a common forum among the SAARC countries where government officials, statisticians, academics and researchers could come together, learn and share poverty estimation methodologies and techniques. NSI is an affiliated member organization of ISI and ISI has kindly accepted the proposal. Through their World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (WBTFSCB), ISI provided the necessary financial and technical assistance to organize the first ever *International Workshop on Poverty Statistics* in Kathmandu, Nepal between 11 and 14 of December 2017.

NSI president Dr.Jishnu Mohan Bhattarai in front of the banner of the workshop

Overview of the Workshop

The workshop was organized with financial and technical support from International Statistical Institute (ISI) and the World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (WBTFSCB). A total of 25 participants from SAARC countries; Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka actively participated at the workshop, which was comprised of both theoretical and practical sessions. The workshop provided a knowledge platform on key concepts of poverty statistics and international practices of poverty measurement.

Resource Persons Mr. Hiroki Uematsu from WB, Mr. Ram Hari Gaihre, national expert and Prof. Sabina Alkaire from Oxford University

Dr. Jishnu Mohan Bhattarai, Prof Sabina Alkire and Mr. Ram Hari Gaihre

Renowned international expert on poverty measurement Mr. Dean Mitchell Jolliffe of the World Bank (Development Data Group, Survey Unit Living Standards Measurement Study) delivered lectures on "Different measures of poverty and dimensions". Similarly, another international expert Prof. Sabina Alkire from Oxford University, enlightened the participants

on "Multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI)". Mr. Ram Hari Gaihre, the national expert from Nepal explained how different household income & expenditure survey (HIES) data could be used as a basis for poverty estimation.

Dr. Chandra Kant Poudel, Honourable Member of the National Planning Commission of Nepal inaugurated the International Workshop on Poverty Statistics as the Chief Guest. Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Hiroki Uematsu, representative of the World Bank, Kathmandu Office, and Dr. Mahesh Kumar Subedi, Director at Central Bureau of Statistics, were also addressed the inauguration of the event. Dr. Jishnu Mohan Bhattarai, President of the National Statistical Institute and organizer of the workshop welcomed all the participants and experts to the program. The workshop concluded on 14 December following deliberations of two theoretical modules, one practical module and a case study.

Schedule of Workshop

The workshop commenced on 11th and concluded on 14th of December 2017. All but the participants from Bhutan arrived before 11th of December. The Bhutanese participants arrived in the morning of December 11.
There were altogether four modules in the workshop, each having three sessions (except on the 4th day of the workshop). The participants were given time to raise questions after each session.

A summary of the Workshop is presented below:

Day 1: 11 December 2017
Module 1: Conceptual Framework of Poverty Measurement Practices
- Session 1: Presentation on Poverty Measurement at the country level-basic data and survey instruments by Ram Hari Gaihre, the national expert on poverty statistics.
- Session 2: Absolute vs. Relative poverty; deriving poverty lines by Mr. Hiroki Uematsu, expert at World Bank Office, Kathmandu.
- Session 3: Different measures of poverty; dimensions of poverty measurement by Mr. Dean Mitchell Jolliffe.
- Extension of survey based estimates by Mr. Ram Hari Gaihre.

Mr. Hiroki Uematsu, Senior Economist from World Bank delivering lecture in the Workshop

Day 2: 12 December 2017
Module 2: Small area estimation (SAE) and multidimensional poverty index (MPI)
- *Session 1*: Small Area Estimation: Steps and census & survey mapping Mr. Ram Hari Gaihre.
- *Session 2*: Small Area Estimation: data preparation, modelling & interpretation of disaggregated estimates by Mr. Ram Hari Gaihre.
- *Session 3*: Internationally comparable poverty lines (a dollar-a day); Updates of International poverty line after each ICP round by Mr. Dean Mitchell Jolliffe.
- Hands-on exercise on poverty estimation; by Mr. Ram Hari Gaihre.

Day 3: 13 December 2017
Module 3: Practical Session
- *Session 1*: Different household income & expenditure survey (HIES) data as a basis for poverty lines by Mr. Ram Hari Gaihre.
- *Session 2*: Estimation of poverty at the country level by Mr. Ram Hari Gaihre.
- *Session 3*: Multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI); more than monetary poverty measurement by Ms. Sabina Alkire.
- MPI: Dimensions & cut-offs and implications by Ms. Sabina Alkire.

Day 4: 14 December 2017
Module 4: Case Study of Nepal
- *Session 1*: Group Formation and discussion by Ms. Sabina Alkire and Mr. Ram Hari Gaihre.
- *Session 2*: Presentation by the group and Q&A by Ms. Sabina Alkire and Mr. Ram Hari Gaihre.
- Distribution of Certificates of Participation and delivery of concluding remarks by the President of NSI.
- Conclusion of the workshop

Distribution of Certificates by NSI President Dr. Jishnu Mohan Bhattarai

Day 5: 15 December 2017
- Departure of the participants of the Workshop

Outcomes of the Workshop

NSI, the organizer of the workshop, believes that the lectures, presentations, discussions, practical sessions and case study generated a wealth of knowledge and ideas which will enable the participants to:

- derive the level of poverty from the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) approach using consumption expenditures;
- derive the head count index, poverty gap index and square poverty index;
- derive the Small Area Estimation (SAE) poverty index from the National Population and Housing Census data and Living Standard Measurement Survey data;
- understand how the international poverty lines are derived.

In addition, the workshop has successfully created a forum where statisticians, academics and researchers of the SAARC countries can share their ideas and findings on the poverty statistics and their measurement. Similarly, the other SAARC countries can continue to host similar events in the future so that all the relevant organizations and authorities will be updated about new knowledge and international standards.

Conclusion

International Statistical Institute (NSI) has supported National Statistical Institute (NSI) of Nepal to organise the first International Workshop on Poverty Statistics in Kathmandu, Nepal. 25 participants, who are either government officials or researchers or academicians of five SAARC countries actively participated and accumulated ideas and knowledge on poverty statistics and estimation. NSI believes that the program has served the objectives of the workshop and would like to thank ISI, The Netherlands, World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (WBTFSCB), the experts and the participants for all their support and cooperation.

Some pictures of the workshop are attached to this report.

Endnote: *This is a preliminary report on the workshop. A full report and a statement of incomes and expense will be prepared and submitted to the ISI as was agreed between the ISI and NSI.*

Photographs of the Workshop Participants

Participants from Bangladesh

Participants from Sri Lanka

Participants from India

Participants from Nepal

Participants from Bhutan