



Speaker 3: Nureni Olawale Adeboye
Building Robust Collaboration between the Producers and the Users of the Official Statistics in Africa

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Abstract

Statistical information has become a vital and indispensable tool world over. The use of harmonized and reliable statistics in all fields of political, social, economic and cultural activity is recommended for the monitoring of the implementation of the integration process in the African continent and across the world. According to the African Union charter, Statistics authorities should be endowed with a clear legal mandate empowering them to collect data for production of African statistics. Data production may need to cover emerging areas that require or are likely to require brand new data collections tools, and it is important to consider users' priorities for new statistical outputs. The relationship between the producers and users of official statistics will involve each partner building on and contributing different strengths and will likely result in flexible networks.

Keywords: Data Producer, Data Consumer, Collaboration, Reliable Statistics.

1.0 Introduction

Official Statistics are the body of statistical information produced, validated, compiled and disseminated by Statistics Authorities, such as national statistics institutes and/or other statistics organizations in charge of official statistics production and dissemination at national, regional and continental levels. In Nigeria, official statistics are being coordinated and disseminated by the federal governments of Nigeria through the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS). According to the Statistics Act of 2007, NBS is the main National Agency responsible for the development and management of official statistics, and the agency is the authoritative source and custodian of official statistics in Nigeria.

The use of harmonized and reliable statistics in all fields of political, social, economic and cultural activity is recommended for the monitoring of the implementation of the ongoing integration process in the continent on which African States embarked several years back. This will make it possible for the process to achieve its objectives and for its outcomes to be assessed. Statistical information has become a vital and indispensable tool in the regional and continental integration process. Although there has been significant progress in Africa's

promoting economic, social, cultural and self-sustained development, as well as integration of African economies; the adoption of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa by the Conference of Ministers in charge of Social and Economic Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in May 1990; the United Nations Statistical Commission's Resolution on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics adopted in April 1994; the professional code of ethics adopted by the International Statistics Institute (ISI) at its 45th session in August 1985; the declaration on good practices in technical cooperation in statistical matters adopted by the United Nations Commission for Statistics during its session of March 1999.

The African Union (2000) charter has put in place a common legal framework for statistics development on the African continent. The union emphasized the need to enhance coordination of statistical activities in the continent, and that the quality of the official statistical information available to public administrations and other activity areas largely depends to a large extent on effective collaboration between statistical data providers, producers and users. The professional and social responsibility as well as the credibility of African statisticians' demand not only technical skills and capacities, but also respect for the fundamental principles of official statistics, professional ethics and good practices. It is of note that statistical information is vital for decision-making by all components of the society, particularly policy makers as well as economic and social players, and is therefore essential for the continent's integration and sustainable development. Popoola and Adeboye (2020) emphasized that the data published as official statistics are almost invariably nationally representative, because they are obtained from complete censuses or very large-scale national sample surveys, and they usually seek to present definitive information conforming to international standards and classifications or other well-established conventions.

The volumes of official data and the rate at which these data are produced have given rise to the concept of 'Big Data'. This new data formative has changed completely the context in which statistical agencies operate globally. According to Adeboye and Oyedunsi (2020), large data repositories or database management still remain a mirage and tough challenge to accomplish by most developing countries and establishments around the globe. This necessitates the need to improvise on the gathering of suitable data with good spread that provides opportunities for timely gathering with minimum resources, higher precision, completeness and less burden data by users. However, in order to make optimal use of Big Data for official statistics, there must be in existence, sustainable synergy between numerous data producers and users. This presentation thus outlines the prospects and challenges of data production, coordination and usage within the African continent, as well as fill in the synergy gaps between the producers and the users of official data.

2.0 Producers of Official Statistics

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Data production is an administrative process that includes acquiring, validating, storing, protecting, and processing required data to ensure the accessibility, reliability, and timeliness of the data for its users. Organizations and enterprises are making use of Data more than ever before to inform business decisions and gain deep insights into customer behavior, trends, and opportunities for creating extraordinary customer experiences. In modern managerial usage, the term data is increasingly replaced by information or even knowledge in a non-technical context. According to the African Union charter, Statistics authorities should be endowed with a clear legal mandate empowering them to collect data for production of African statistics. At the request of statistics authorities, public administrations, business establishments, households and the general public may be compelled by domestic law to allow access to the data in their possession or provide data for the purpose of compilation of African statistics. Adeboye and Oyefunsi (2020) listed the following sectors as producers of official statistics:

- Government
- International development
- Manufacturing
- Healthcare.
- Education
- Media
- Information technology

The required stages for effective running of a data production system are as follows:

- Administrative Process
- Acquisition of Required Data
- Data Validation
- Data Storage
- Data Protection
- Data Accessibility
- Data Reliability

The necessary skills required to be an efficient data producer are:

- Competence
- Analytical mind
- Administrative skills
- Analytical (Statistical) skills
- Computer skills

2.1 Challenges of Data Production

While some companies are good at collecting data, they are not managing it well enough to make sense of it. Simply collecting data is not enough; enterprises and organizations need to

collection with efficient systems for processing, storing, and validating data, as well as effective analysis strategies.

Another challenge of data production occurs when companies categorize data and organize it without first considering the information they hope to glean from the data. Each step of data collection and management must lead toward acquiring the right data and analyzing it in order to get the actionable intelligence necessary for making truly data-driven business decisions.

3.0 Users of Official Statistics

Various approaches are possible to understanding what users really require and some might work better with some users than with others. It is often useful to discuss each broad area of social statistics (crime, health, education, labour etc.) on its own, with different groups of users. This process is the most natural to manage, and easier than to discuss globally on “social statistics”.

Two sets of conversations are fundamental. The first set relates to users’ views on the current statistics available in each area. These dialogues can be organized around the quality dimensions: Are statistics relevant, timely, accessible, and so on, and what do users mean by those terms? Which of the quality dimensions are important to each user? Which statistical outputs are used most and least (bearing in mind that resources are limited and additions in one area might lead to cuts elsewhere)? It is likely that many potential users will not know the information exists in the first place (and informing this group about existing data can be an added benefit of the dialogue). The sorts of questions one might ask will depend on the circumstances. A different set of questions will be needed within the context of a regular user-producer forum compared to those in response to ad hoc requests. For statistical areas in which no regular forum exists, an ad hoc approach is needed. Moreover, different styles of dialogue will suit different types of users. These might range from a structured survey of users’ views to an open dialogue.

A second set of dialogues should consider users’ priorities for new statistical outputs. This might cover emerging areas that require or are likely to require brand new data collections tools (such as a time use survey), refinements to existing collections (to produce more highly disaggregated data for example), new products or tools that help users to better get the data they require, new methods of communication, data access, or dissemination. The dialogue on “new” needs has an importance beyond stocktaking of demands and existing data. It is also about discussing the place and value of new data within the overall output of official statistics (bearing in mind that official statistics are a public good, especially when they are financed through public funds).

3.1 Synergy between Producers and Consumers of Official Statistics

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It is of note that there is an immense gap between the supply and demand for statistical information needed for development and for the African integration process. For the moment, quality statistical data produced by the African statistical system is virtually inexistent. It is to remedy this shortfall, which is a setback to Africa's integration and development processes, that the decision-making organs of the African Union took the historic step to call for the elaboration of an African Charter on Statistics, which will serve not only as a legal instrument to regulate statistical activity but also as a tool for advocacy and the development of statistics in Africa.

The initiatives already undertaken by various concerned statistics organizations at national, regional and international levels for statistics development, particularly the strengthening of national legislations; adoption and implementation of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) for the conduct of statistical activities; the development of harmonized statistical tools by the Regional Economic Communities (RECs); the adoption in 2007 of the Regional Strategic Reference Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa (RRSF) by the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic development and the establishment of the Statistical Commission for Africa (STATCOM-Africa) in 2007.

They should also strengthen the independence and status of national institutes of statistics as well as regional and continental statistics services. The effective implementation of the Charter should make it possible to enhance the coordination of statistics and the effective functioning of Africa's statistical system as well as to avoid duplication in African statistical programs.

African statisticians and all those operating in the field of statistics at the national, regional and continental levels should respect the principles enshrined in the resolution of African charter, on the fundamental principles of official statistics adopted by the United Nations Commission for Statistics in April 1994. African statistics shall meet the needs of users and they should also apply the best practices principles as listed hereunder:

- **Scientific independence:** Statistics authorities must be able to carry out their activities according to the principle of scientific independence, particularly vis-à-vis the political authorities or any interest group; this means that the methods, concepts and nomenclatures used in statistical operation shall be selected only by the Statistics authorities without any interference whatsoever and in accordance with the rules of ethics and good practice.
- **Impartiality:** Statistics authorities should produce, analyze, disseminate, and comment on African statistics in line with the principle of scientific independence, and in an objective, professional and transparent manner.
- **Responsibility:** Statistics authorities and African statisticians shall employ unambiguous and relevant methods in the collection, processing, analysis and presentation of statistical data. Statistical authorities should also have the right and duty to make observations on erroneous interpretation and improper use of the statistical information that they disseminate.

line with scientific standards. The domestic law governing operation of the statistical systems must be made available to the public.

- Sustainability: African statistics should be conserved in as detailed as possible a form to ensure their use by future generations, while preserving the principles of confidentiality and protection of respondents.
- Data sources: Data used for statistical purposes may be collected from diverse sources such as censuses, statistics surveys and/or administrative records. The statistics Organizations should choose their sources in consideration of the quality of data offered by such sources and their topicality, particularly the costs incurred by the respondents and sponsors. The use by statistics authorities of administrative records for statistical purposes should be guaranteed by domestic law, provided that confidentiality is preserved.
- Accuracy and reliability: African statistics should be an accurate and reliable reflection of the reality.
- Continuity: Statistics authorities should ensure continuity and comparability of statistical information over time.
- Coherence and comparability: African statistics should be internally coherent over time and allow for comparison between regions and countries. To this end, these statistics should make combined use of related data derived from different sources. It should employ internationally recognized and accepted concepts, classifications, terminologies and methods.
- Confidentiality: National Statistics authorities, African statisticians and all those operating in the field of statistics in Africa should absolutely guarantee the protection of the private life and business secrets of data providers (households, companies, public institutions and other respondents), the confidentiality of the information so provided and the use of such information for strictly statistical purposes.
- Timeliness: African statistics should be disseminated in good time and, as far as possible, according to pre-determined calendar.
- Universal adoption of Medstat III. Medstat III is designed to strengthen the national statistics institutes and national statistical systems in the Mediterranean Partner Countries by improving their capacity to collect timely, relevant, and high-quality data necessary for political decision-making and good governance. Furthermore, it promotes the harmonization of statistical data with European and international standards, and consolidates the exchange of data between partners.

4.0: Conclusion:

The relationship between the producers and users of official statistics will involve each partner building on and contributing different strengths and will likely result in flexible networks. Coordination and collaboration amongst Statistics authorities in a given country are essential in ensuring unicity, quality and harmonious statistical information. Similarly, coordination and dialogue amongst all Members of the African Statistical System are vital for harmonization, production and use of African statistics. Bilateral and multilateral statistics cooperation shall be encouraged with a view to upgrading African statistics production systems, thereby encouraging the users and beneficiaries of official data.

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