

Agenda Item 5. Emerging issues:

(a) Measuring progress beyond gross domestic product

Comments from Nepal

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Historically, the data collection practice of Nepal was almost unilateral and supply-driven, and there was hardly any mention of demand from different users. The current society demands more and more disaggregated data for the evidence-based decision making, monitoring and evaluation process. Demand for data also increases because of increasing level of statistical awareness among people and increasing concern to their societies. This situation ultimately pressurizes the statistical agencies to boost up their efficiency in statistical activities. On top of this the GoN has endorsed a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) aiming to strengthen the NSS in February 2019. A new bill, the Statistics Act 2022, replacing the previous Act 1959, has just been approved by Parliament, keeping in view the new governance system.

Following the adoption of federalism and the internalization of SDGs into the national development agenda, the demand for local-level statistics, particularly the income accounts, has become more intense than before in Nepal. This has exerted pressure on the National Statistical System (NSS) to generate a large volume of diversified data disaggregated by age, sex, caste/ethnicity, disability, income, socio-economic group, environment, and location (dimensions/parameters beyond GDP), at the lowest level, calling for urgent actions towards revitalization of the NSS.

The constitution of Nepal (2015) explicitly spells out the various roles and responsibilities of the federal, provincial, and local governments, including the collection, production, and dissemination of official statistics. The constitution mandates the federal government to bear the responsibility of generating national-level statistics with national and international standards of quality. As a result, the federal government is responsible for conducting national population and housing censuses, national sample censuses of agriculture, national economic censuses, and national surveys such as living standards measurement survey, labor force survey, demographic and health survey, multiple indicator cluster survey, etc.; and the compilation of national accounts and price statistics. Regional level national accounts and price statistics generation is always a challenge, so we need to develop indicators that go beyond GDP but may be useful for planning and monitoring of the ground reality.

Federalism, as elsewhere, has created both challenges and opportunities in the production of official statistics. The setup of three tiers of governance in the country is a good opportunity for all levels of governments as it provides ample opportunity for the establishment of new setup of statistical organizations, strengthening existing M & E/MIS units, and making necessary funding for statistical development. Another opportunity is to refine data instruments, considering indicators other than GDP and for SDGs monitoring, which demands a data revolution.

Furthermore, there is a need to enhance the quality of administrative data and make them usable as per SDGs requirement. The challenges are to strengthen national statistics, including upgrading the (CBS) and establishing Provincial Statistical Offices in each province to carry out statistical activities required by provincial governments.