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Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Regional initiatives: population and social statistics

**Regional strategy to improve population and social
statistics in Asia and the Pacific****

**Note by the Technical Advisory Group for Population and Social
Statistics**

Summary

At its second session, the Committee on Statistics established a Technical Advisory Group on Social Statistics, which was given the responsibility to provide: (a) recommendations to the Committee on the scope of social statistics that all countries in the region should be in a position to produce by 2020, taking into consideration the relevance of the statistics, policy priorities and the varying national statistical capacities of member States; (b) methodological and substantive guidelines on the formulation and implementation of the regional programme, including through the development of a core set of social statistics; and (c) guidance on the medium- and long-term plans of implementing a regional strategy, including monitoring and evaluation.

At its third session, the Committee agreed to the inclusion of population statistics in the scope of the work of the Technical Advisory Group. At its meeting on 24 February 2013, the Bureau approved revised terms of reference for the newly named Technical Advisory Group on Population and Social Statistics. The change of name was intended to reflect the Technical Advisory Group's broader scope of activities.

The present paper, which supplements document E/ESCAP/CST(4)/3, contains a regional strategy to improve population and social statistics in Asia and the Pacific, and has been developed by the Technical Advisory Group on Population and Social Statistics.

The Committee may wish to endorse the regional strategy and encourage member States to undertake assessments of their capacity to produce the core set of population and social statistics and identify priority issues.

* E/ESCAP/CST(4)/L.1.

** The present conference room paper is being issued without formal editing.

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I. Introduction

1. The present conference room paper outlines a strategy to improve population and social statistics in Asia and the Pacific developed by the Technical Advisory Group for Population and Social Statistics (TAG) and based on the process presented to the fourth session of the Committee on Statistics (see E/ESCAP/CST(4)/3)¹.

II. Regional strategy for population and social statistics: vision, goals and initial targets

A. Vision

2. The regional strategy for population and social statistics is informed by the overarching strategic goal endorsed by the Committee on Statistics at its second session, namely, that all countries in the region have the capability to provide an agreed basic range of population, economic, social and environmental statistics by 2020 (see E/ESCAP/CST(2)/9).

3. The core set of population and social statistics (see E/ESCAP/CST(3)/5/Add.1)² specifies the basic range of population and social statistics referred to in this overarching strategic goal and therefore forms the basis of the vision of the regional strategy which can be expressed as follows:

The countries of Asia and the Pacific have the capability to produce the core set of population and social statistics by 2020.

4. The core set comprises 11 domains and approximately 75 statistical themes rather than a precise set of indicators. It thus provides a flexible basis for developing statistical capacity to respond to changing national and international priorities such as those presented by the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Goals

5. The TAG has developed a Capacity Framework for Population and Social Statistics which identifies six fundamental elements of the National Statistical System needed to respond to and adapt to changing national and regional priorities for population and social statistics. These form the basis of the goals of the strategic approach to capacity building for population and social statistics.

Goal 1. Strong engagement between data users and providers across the 11 domains of the core set.

Goal 2. Impartial and professional institutions support production of the core set.

Goal 3. Adequate funds allocated to the sustained production of the core set

¹ Developing a regional strategy to improve population and social statistics in Asia and the Pacific http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/pre-ods/CST4_3E_Developing-a-regional-strategy_English.pdf.

² Core set of population and social statistics for Asia and the Pacific [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/ESCAP/CST\(3\)/5/Add.1&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/ESCAP/CST(3)/5/Add.1&Lang=E).

- Goal 4.** Data sources required for production of the core set are collected and made available across the government departments and agencies
- Goal 5.** Professional staff have the skills required to collect, analyse and disseminate the core set
- Goal 6.** Technological and methodological statistical infrastructure is available to support production of the core set.

C. Targets

6. The Capacity Framework defines for each of the six fundamental components of the National Statistical System indicators of effectiveness. These indicators form the basis of the targets of the strategic approach to capacity building for population and social statistics.

D. Potential country activities and regional support activities

7. Achieving the targets specified in the strategy will depend on well-coordinated country and regional activities. Proposed or potential priorities for country activity and regional support are presented for each goal and are based on the priorities identified by TAG over its four meetings.

8. These activities, however, are not intended to be exhaustive. The vision of the regional strategy is intentionally ambitious, and the diversity of the statistical systems and issues in region is substantial. A one-size-fits-all solution does not exist and effective regional support to national capacity development will depend on more detailed understanding of the priority areas of the countries in the region (see section II).

9. Priority areas will also change over time. Information needs and demands are constantly evolving, and as capacity-building develops, the priorities and activities within each goal will need to be periodically monitored to ensure they address the issues of most relevance to member States and other stakeholders.

Goal 1 - Strong engagement between data users and providers across the 11 domains of the core set

1. Benefits

10. A basic requirement of a strong statistical system in any country is that the Government places a high value on objective statistics. It should value statistics both for their own use in developing, implementing and evaluating policy, and also for their use by the public more broadly, both nationally and internationally, in decision-making and in building trust in the workings and directions of the Government.

2. Initial assessment

11. Many of the domains of the regional core set of population and social statistics are produced by a range of agencies or government departments. The requirements of these departments need to be included in the regular national programmes of statistics to ensure that they are not left out in resource allocation and planning.

12. This is particularly important as population and social statistics tend to be a lower priority for Governments than areas such as economic statistics, which move markets and affect credit ratings.

13. However, high-quality social statistics integrated within the programme of statistical output are of little to no use if they are not understood or trusted by users. Large compendiums of high quality but static tabulations traditionally produced by national statistics systems may contain the information users require, but in a format that renders them unusable. As noted by the UN ESCAP Expert Group Meeting (EGM)³ convened in preparation for the fourth session of the Committee on Statistics – [National Statistical Systems] *need to reposition themselves as information providers rather than data collectors, which may help bridge the gap between current statistics production and demands, such as those posed by the post-2015 development agenda*".

14. Disseminating microdata freely and publicly is also likely to result in diverse high-quality analysis at virtually no cost to the producer or survey sponsor. Despite the high demand for microdata, many datasets remain underexploited as a result of weak metadata/documentation, problems with data quality, limited relevance, lack of analytical capacity at the national level, and lack of capacity among users.

3. Targets

(a) The core set of population and social statistics is integrated within national action or development plans (such as the national strategy for the development of statistics);

(b) Policy frameworks and statistical programmes of outputs are available for each domain of the core set of population and social statistics;

(c) Microdata and metadata are available to the public for all population and social statistics, with privacy and secrecy protections stipulated in national laws appropriately applied;

(d) Communication strategies exist and meet the specific needs and concerns of different users of population and social statistics;

(e) Well informed media trust and make effective use of population and social statistics.

4. Activities

Potential country activities

15. Initiate assessments of capacity priorities using a process such as that developed and piloted by TAG which engages senior stakeholders from across the 11 domains of population and social statistics, including both data/information providers and users, in identifying priority capacity issues and associated action plans.

16. Formulate a development plan for statistics such as a national strategy for the development of statistics (NSDS).

³ Data and statistics for the post-2015 development agenda: Implications for regional collaboration on statistics in Asia and the Pacific - Preparatory expert group meeting for the fourth session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Report_EGM2014_Data%20and%20statistics%20for%20the%20post-2015%20development.pdf.

Regional support activities

17. Develop common tools and procedures such as that developed by TAG for countries to identify and quantify statistical capacity issues.
18. Support national efforts in carrying out global assessments and/or formulating national strategies for the development of statistics by promoting mutual learning and experience-sharing.
19. Identify the development priorities for capacity-building in population and social statistics in the region.
20. Identify and realize opportunities to mobilize donor support to tackle common problems.
21. Formulate microdata dissemination policies and protocols and facilitate South-South cooperation to develop tools enabling countries to make anonymized microdata available to the public.

Goal 2 - Impartial and professional institutions support production of the core set

1. Benefits

22. A significant determinant of the current and future capability of a national statistical system is how robustly it has been set up to collect, compile and disseminate a high-quality set of objective official statistics. This includes the legal mandates governing the professional production of data and official statistics and their impartial dissemination across the national statistical system (NSS).

2. Initial assessment

23. Funding for statistics is likely to be limited relative to the level of demand for data to inform policy requirements and national statistical systems will increasingly need to find more innovative and efficient ways to use existing administrative and survey data more effectively. For a national statistical system to realize the potential of existing data it must be authorized to collect those data for statistical purposes.

24. A major barrier to maximizing the use of existing social data is the lack of trust users have in their quality and impartiality. To be effective as a trusted collector and provider of official statistics, the national statistical system must be free from (and be seen to be free from) political influence, or interference or pressure from other government agencies, departments and any other bodies that might have such an interest.

3. Targets

(a) The national statistical office (NSO) is clearly mandated to collect data for statistical purposes and to use administrative data for statistical purposes;

(b) A code of practice or similar guidelines sets out the responsibilities of the national statistical system;

(c) A mechanism exists to safeguard the professional independence from political influence of statisticians working in a production, analysis or dissemination role in other agencies in the national statistical system;

(d) Population and social statistics are available to all users at the same time;

(e) Published data protection policies exist and are supported by appropriate legislation, both for administrative and survey/census data.

4. Activities

Potential country activities

25. Review and revise statistical laws regarding the mandates, roles and responsibilities of the national statistical office vis-à-vis the rest of the national statistical system.

26. Publish a calendar of the date and time of release of all official statistics.

Regional support activities

27. Develop advocacy tools than countries can use to raise awareness of the role of the national statistical offices.

28. Raise awareness of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

29. Develop clear international norms and guidelines on effective data protection policy and legislation.

Goal 3 - Adequate funds are allocated to the sustained production of the core set

1. Benefits

30. The capability of a national statistical system largely depends on its level of funding, the nature of funding sources and the autonomy of relevant stakeholders in allocating funding. A poorly funded national statistical system - including human, financial, IT and other resources - will be unable to produce relevant social statistics to support policy development, and evaluation, and to inform Governments, non-government organizations and the community on issues of social concern.

2. Initial assessment

31. Funding for statistics is likely to be limited relative to the level of demand for data to inform policy requirements. . The Philippine Statistical Development Program for 2011 to 2017⁴ noted that from 2005 to 2012, the percentage of the core statistical budget to gross domestic product (GDP) has been declining as has the proportion of statistical personnel in government service.

32. Some estimates of the global cost of monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals over the post-2015 period are as high as \$254 billion.⁵ While this figure may be disputed, it does underline that providing quality data and statistics requires substantial resources.

⁴ See www.nscb.gov.ph/pss/psdp/20112017/NSCB_PSDP2011-2017_Highlights.pdf.

⁵ Data for development assessment; available from www.copenhagenconsensus.com/publication/post-2015-consensus-data-development-assessment-jerven.

33. A reliance on donor support is indicative of a lack of adequate funding within the national statistical systems in the region. According to the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) *Partner Report on Support to Statistics* (PRESS) for 2012,⁶ financial commitments to statistical development in Asia and the Pacific for the period 2010–2012 amounted to approximately \$600 million.

34. A downside of this type of support noted in the PRESS report is that a decreasing percentage of aid projects/programmes are aligned with the recipients' nationally agreed priorities. This observation was echoed by the World Bank in its report to the forty-sixth session of the United Nations Statistics Commission,⁷ in which it noted that donor support has often been provided for specific, ad-hoc survey activities, with donors' concerns and global interests often dominating national priorities.

35. Interest and awareness of the data revolution may provide the basis to leverage support for increased investment in statistics development, and provide means and processes for more efficient and effective use of existing administrative and survey to produce population and social statistics. As noted by the EGM in recommendation B, *The statistical community should take advantage of the data revolution and the increased attention to statistics by policymakers that has been generated by the post-2015 consultations to leverage support for the establishment and maintenance of well-resourced and well-functioning national statistical systems across the region. The data revolution can particularly accelerate efforts in modernizing statistical production and services*⁸.

3. Targets

(a) National investment plans to build and maintain statistical infrastructure to support population and social statistics are in place;

(b) Ongoing programmes are in place for producing high priority population and social statistics;

(c) Modernization programs are in place to improve the efficient of statistic production.

4. Activities

Potential country activities

36. Estimate the resources required to provide the elements of the core set reflected in national and international policy priorities.

37. Raise awareness in national planning ministries and departments of the resource needs for population and social statistics, the benefits of investing in statistics development and opportunity costs of not doing so.

⁶ Available from <http://paris21.org/printpdf/1295>.

⁷ Report of the World Bank on improving household surveys in the post-2015 development era: issues and recommendations towards a shared agenda; available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc15/2015-10-HouseholdSurveys.pdf>.

⁸ Data and statistics for the post-2015 development agenda: Implications for regional collaboration on statistics in Asia and the Pacific - Preparatory expert group meeting for the fourth session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Report_EGM2014_Data%20and%20statistics%20for%20the%20post-2015%20development.pdf.

38. Develop business cases for investment in population and social statistics.

Regional support activities

39. Raise awareness of the importance of coordinated data collection across the national statistical system and the importance of population and social statistics in the national context.

40. Develop a regional evidence base of the cost of statistics development for population and social statistics.

41. Develop guidelines on estimating the resources required to produce the core set of population and social statistics.

42. Coordinate with complementary regional initiatives such as Strategic Body for the Modernization of Statistical Production and Services in Asia and the Pacific (SAB-AP) to leverage the data revolution and awareness of priority issues for population and social statistics to mobilise donor support.

43. Test global modernization solutions in the regional context, such as the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) and the Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM), led by SAB-AP.

44. Prepare guidelines for member States to raise resources, including domestic resources for statistics development.

Goal 4 - Data sources required for production of the core set are collected and made available across the government departments and agencies

1. Benefits

45. Some countries are rich in source material for statistics, while others are less well off. Richness in source material may come from a variety of statistical data collections. These will themselves provide statistical information, but they may also provide vehicles which support the cost effective collection of further information.

46. The key data sources required for population and social statistics include the population and housing census, household surveys such as the labour force survey, as well as administrative data such as those compiled in the delivery of government services such as health, education and justice.

2. Initial assessment

47. A consequence of the range and variety of government services focused on delivery of social policy is the corresponding range of government agencies collecting data, often including those outside the umbrella of the national statistical office.

48. Another important characteristic of data collection for population and social statistics, and one emphasized in the discussions on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, is the need for data and information on small and vulnerable groups to ensure that “no one is left behind”.

(a) Population census

49. The 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme recognizes population and housing censuses as one of the main sources of data for effective development planning and objective decision-making. It is important that this primary source of statistics is of high quality and meets the user needs by adopting emerging concepts and technologies.

50. A key opportunity presented by the 2020 census is the further integration of geospatial and statistical information. This provides direct benefit to the census by ensuring coverage and facilitating census operation pre-enumeration; supporting data collection during enumeration; and providing the basis for identifying and presenting local patterns of important demographic and social indicators.

(b) Household surveys

51. Many aspects of a person's socioeconomic circumstances are not routinely recorded in administrative data and can only be captured in household surveys; for example, surveys relating to well-being, income, expenditure and employment.

52. These surveys are often administered by a range of government departments such as health, labour and justice, departments that often fall outside the scope of a national coordinating body. In addition, conflicting priorities across departments may prevent development of a coherent survey program for the planning or integration of surveys and censuses programs.

53. Unintegrated survey programmes are very likely to result in incompatibility across surveys and over time, duplication of activities, data gaps and inefficiencies. And although many guidelines exist on the implementation of surveys, very little guidance is available on timing, sequencing and integration of survey programmes.

54. Support to household survey programmes in the post-2015 environment must include the development of better information-sharing and coordination mechanisms to improve the timing, sequencing and frequency of household surveys. While countries should take the lead in identifying data priorities, past experience has shown that global coordination is needed to rationalize investments in household surveys as part of a broader data agenda.⁹

(c) Administrative data

55. Administrative data can be a sustainable and cost effective source of timely data. They also have the potential to ease respondent burden (by reducing the need for household surveys) and to provide complete coverage of small target populations such as those in vulnerable income and social groups.

56. However, administrative source of data are typically collected and held by a government department or agency to deliver a specific service; and cannot simply be converted into statistical information.

57. Ensuring that high quality statistics can be derived from administrative sources requires the consistent application of common

⁹ Ibid.

processes and standards. And while there are often theoretical frameworks in place to measure the quality of statistics based on survey data, this is less likely to be the case for administrative data.

58. This is a particular problem for administrative sources of population and social data maintained by a range of government departments such as health or education applying a range of practices and processes.

59. For example, civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems that are the preferred source of accurate, complete and timely statistics on the health and demographics of a population, are typically maintained by departments such as the civil registration authorities, ministry of interior or home affairs, ministry of justice, ministry of health and national statistics office. In recognition of the particular importance of CRVS systems, and given the majority of countries in Asia and the Pacific do not have universal and responsive CRVS systems that meet relevant international standards,¹⁰ the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in its resolution 69/15, requested that the Executive Secretary establish a Regional Steering Group for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific. This Group has developed and will provide oversight and strategic guidance on the implementation of a Regional Action Framework¹¹ to support the improvement of CRVS.

(d) Sharing and joining key data sets

60. Sometimes a single data source does not include all the items needed to address the question of interest, and information needs to be combined across more than one data set. By joining data from a variety of sources the impact of a range of interacting factors can be considered, for example in:

- Addressing social mobility and inequality – by linking data on education, training, employment, unemployment, incomes and benefits
- Distinguishing between transient and chronic components of mobility and inequality – by linking data on units at different time points
- Researching causal pathways over the life course – linking data on education, health, employment, incomes and wealth
- Informing policies designed to tackle poverty – linking data on housing conditions, health incomes and benefits
- Comparative analysis of access to and the provision of social care for vulnerable groups
- Linking data on (re)offending behaviour, incomes, benefits and health – exploring the role of poor mental health

61. In addition to linking administrative data together across government departments, value can also be gained from linking administrative data to other studies, including ongoing longitudinal and other surveys. Linkages of this type have considerable potential for reducing the burden on respondents to such surveys and for improving the quality and extent of the information they provide.

¹⁰ Available from www.getinthepicture.org/docs/Ministerial.Declaration.English.final.pdf.

¹¹ Available from www.getinthepicture.org/docs/Regional.Action.Framework.English.final.pdf.

3. Targets

- (a) High-quality administrative data sets exist in key areas. For example: vitals, income tax and benefits, school enrolments, hospital admissions;
- (b) Integrated plans determine the collection of household survey data for population and social statistics;
- (c) National statistical offices are prepared for the 2020 census, including the integration of geospatial information;
- (d) Mechanisms exist for integrating administrative datasets across the domains of population and social statistics.

4. Activities

Potential country activities

- 62. Conduct audits of the data sources data required for production of the core set.
- 63. Identify the potential and the benefits of sharing existing collections including more coordinated and harmonized household surveys. This could include:
 - (a) Compiling practical technical and methodological guidelines for all stages of the survey life cycle;
 - (b) Developing a central survey data catalogue which would inform data users of the availability of survey and census data from multiple sources;
 - (c) Developing standards, tools, and guidelines that would allow data producers to document, disseminate, and preserve microdata according to international standards and best practices.
- 64. Use the Regional Action Framework for CRVS as a basis for focusing and organizing efforts towards developing, implementing and supporting comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategies.
- 65. Compile and disseminate metadata for principle data sources, standardized to allow different data sources to be compared.

Regional support activities

- 66. Develop guidelines on the use of administrative data for the post 2015 development agenda.
- 67. Contribute to implementation of the recommendations of the report of the World Bank on improving household surveys in the post-2015 development era: issues and recommendations towards a shared agenda.
- 68. Contribute to implementation of the recommendations of the report on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme and on preparations for the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme.
- 69. Create guidelines and tools to aid effective management of data including the creation of a regional metadata repository for the core set, to allow countries to compare data sources, share best practices and make meaningful cross country comparisons.

70. Develop clear international norms and robust national policy and legal frameworks that enable citizens to better understand and control their own data, and protect data producers from demands of Governments and attacks by hackers, while still allowing for rich innovation in re-use and sharing of data for the public good.¹²

71. Implement the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, led by the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.

Goal 5 - Professional staff have the skills required to collect (or acquire), analyse and disseminate the core set

1. Benefits

72. Developing, managing and disseminating high-quality official statistics requires access to a strong pool of professionally skilled people. These skills cover different aspects of statistical, technical, leadership and management ability, and are needed at varying levels from “some understanding” through to “expert”.

2. Initial assessment

73. Most training for statisticians is focused on technical skills such as survey sampling or analysis. Consequently, the foundation skills required to generate the core set of statistics are likely to be in place in most national statistical systems. Technical areas where there are more likely to be capacity gaps include the collection, analysis and dissemination of inequality statistics, the use of new and emerging technologies and management of large datasets including “big data”.

74. Relatively little focus has been devoted to developing critical business orientated skills such as strategy development, management and leadership. This may be a particular problem for government statisticians where advancement may depend on technical ability.

75. Similarly, the use of population and social statistics and the provision of resources required to produce them will benefit from better communication, enabling policy colleagues, decision-makers and the media to interpret and use them effectively. Communicating effectively with the media may be particularly important in raising public awareness of key social issues.

3. Targets

(a) Active management and leadership programmes in place including both formal and on the job training opportunities;

(b) Effective training courses, materials and manuals are available to support staff gain the technical skills required for the collection (or acquisition), analysis and production of the core set of population and social statistics.

¹² A World that Counts: Mobilizing the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development; available from <http://www.undatarevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/A-World-That-Counts.pdf>.

4. Activities

Potential country activities

76. Develop or update statistical competency frameworks to incorporate the requirements of the core set of population and social statistics.

77. Conduct assessments of the requirements for training in areas such as leadership, management and technical areas such as the provision of inequality statistics, which could also form the basis for new training programmes.

78. Participate in regional competency development programmes to share best practices.

Regional support activities

79. Maintain and update the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) Core Skills Framework for Statisticians of NSOs in Developing Countries.

80. Provide secretariat support (SIAP) to the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific formed by the Committee on Statistics.

81. Identify the components of leadership and management particularly relevant to population and social statistics and develop programmes for enhancing competencies in these areas.

82. Identify the requirement for better management of data and the production of inequality statistics and develop programmes through a mix of web-based and classroom activities.

83. Establish a competency development programme for countries to participate in which would promote the ongoing development of competencies in the work place and the exchange of best practice.

Goal 6 - Technological and methodological statistical infrastructure is available to support production of the core set

1. Benefits

84. Statistical infrastructure refers to the tools which support the operation of a statistical system. These tools can help to organize the statistical system, improve efficiency, create new outputs or simply perform tasks within the system.

85. These can be considered in three broad categories:

(a) Conceptual infrastructure that helps to achieve consistent, accurate, reliable and cost-effective statistics. Examples of this type of infrastructure will include: standards, methods and best practice frameworks;

(b) Technical infrastructure that allows data to be held and analysed such as computer hardware and software;

(c) Country-specific infrastructure that can be used across the national statistical system such as a population or household survey sample frame.

2. Initial assessment

86. Areas of the core set and key components of the post-2015 development agenda not well supported by conceptual infrastructure include governance and inequality. There are also gaps in conceptual infrastructure required for collection and analysis of the data sources underlying the core set. While key survey data collections such as the census or general household surveys are typically overseen directly by the national statistical office according to detailed frameworks and guidelines, many population and social statistics are derived from administrative sources from a wide range of government agencies with very little supporting infrastructure. Similarly, the administration and analysis of “big data” is increasingly recognized as a potential source of official statistics, but very little conceptual infrastructure is in place.

87. In addition to conceptual infrastructure, national statistical systems also require access to technology and tools to efficiently apply frameworks such as those needed to anonymize data, join data or provide the means for data visualizations.

88. Country specific infrastructure with particular relevance to capacity development for population and social statistics is the development of sampling frames integrating geospatial information. This will support more efficient survey design stratified by geographic area and more engaging analysis of data collected.

3. Targets

(a) National standards and frameworks based on international guidelines are available and understood and followed for each domain for the core set;

(b) Data producers in the domains of the core set have a forward-looking technology plan for using the most relevant statistical tools in compiling and disseminating statistics and managing data over time;

(c) Comprehensive sampling frames are available for population and social surveys that include geospatial information.

4. Activities

Potential country activities

89. Review existing best practice in areas such as inequality, governance and maintaining administrative data.

90. Analysis of gaps in the statistical infrastructure supporting the core set and participation in expert groups tasked with developing new infrastructure.

Regional support activities

91. Compile technical reports on findings, standards and recommendations for solutions to methodological issues related to governance, inequality and data management.

92. Develop guidelines and handbooks supporting these issues.

93. Provide training materials prepared on the basis of guidelines, standards, and handbooks.

94. Coordinate with complementary regional initiatives such as those under the auspices of SAB-AP, specialised international agencies and experts in the region to develop generic solutions to common technical problems related to production of the core set of population and social statistics.

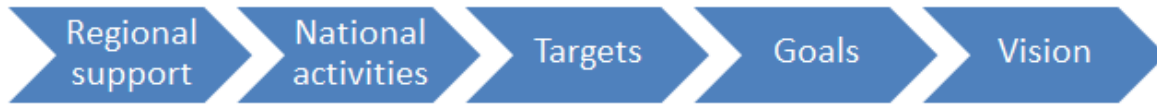
E. Summary of the regional strategy

Impact	Better informed and more effective social policies (contributing towards the successful delivery of national priorities and the post 2015 sustainable development agenda)					
Vision	The countries of Asia and the Pacific have the capability to produce the core set of population and social statistics by 2020					
Goals	1. Strong engagement between data users and providers set	2. Impartial and professional institutions of the NSS	3. Adequate funds allocated	4. Data sources are collected	5. Professional staff have the skills required	6. Statistical infrastructure is available
Priority issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The core set is integrated into national policy priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective statistical legislation • Trust between NSO, government and the public • Data protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment plans for population and social statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population census • Household surveys • Administrative data • Sharing and joining key data sets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and management • Technical skills for inequality issues • Data management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance statistics • Statistics on well-being and inequality • Sampling frames including geospatial information
Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The core is integrated within national plans • Policy frameworks and programmes of outputs for each domain • Anonymised microdata and metadata are available to the public. • Effective communication strategies • Media make effective use of statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear statistical mandates • A code of practice sets out the responsibilities of the NSS. • Professional independence from political influence of statisticians • Statistics available users at the same time. • Clear international norms for data protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment plans support pop-soc • Ongoing programs are in place • Modernization programs in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality administrative data sets exist in key areas. • Integrated household survey plan. • Prepared for 2020 census • Mechanisms for integrating admin datasets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and leadership programmes • Training courses, materials and manuals for technical skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National frameworks available for each domain • Forward looking technology plans • Comprehensive sampling frames for population and social surveys

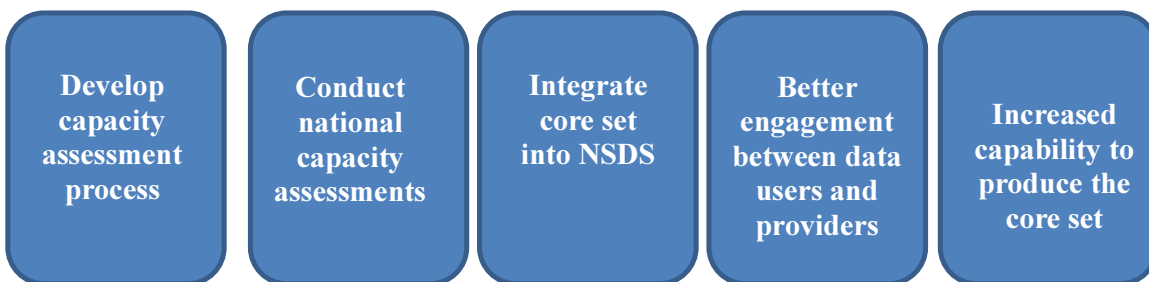
Suggested national actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate assessments of capacity priorities • Formulate development plan for statistics • Integrate statistics plans in broader national plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise statistical laws. • Pre-release calendar of official statistics published 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimate the resources required • Develop business cases for investment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit data sources • Identify the benefits of sharing existing data • Use the Regional Action Framework for CRVS. • Compile and disseminate metadata for principle data sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop statistical competency frameworks. • Asses training requirements • Participate in regional programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing best practice • Identify gaps in the statistical infrastructure
Potential regional support	Research					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, document and the promote the use of existing good practices 					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools to for capacity assessment. • Microdata dissemination policies. • Opportunities for South-South cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy tools to raise awareness of NSOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional cost of statistics development • Guidelines on estimating the resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines on administrative data • Create a regional metadata repository • Implement Regional Action Framework for CRVS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Skills framework • Leadership and management • Data management • Competency development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate existing standards and frameworks • New standards and frameworks
	Technical assistance					
	Support countries in applying tools and guidelines in priority areas					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support capacity assessments • Anonymised microdata tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop norms and guidelines on data protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilise donor support • Test GSBPM, GSIM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Household Surveys • 2020 Housing Census Programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support implementation of standards and frameworks • Generic solutions to common problems
Advocacy						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of capacity issues in the region • Monitor and disseminate progress in building capacity and in achieving the goals and targets of the post 2015 development agenda 						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the FPOS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits of coordinated data collection 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing standards

F. The results chain for the regional strategy

95. The relationship between regional support to national activities in achieving targets, goals and the vision of the regional strategy is summarized in the diagram below.



96. For example, regional support in developing a capacity assessment process for population and social statistics will support or enable national capacity assessments. This, in turn, will contribute towards the target of integrating the core set into NSDS plans, the goal of better engagement between data users and providers and the ultimate vision of increased capability to produce the core set.



III. Regional strategy for population and social statistics: implementation

97. Section I outlines the scope of the aspirations of the regional strategy articulated in the core set and capacity framework for population and social statistics. Section II outlines a process for determining priority areas and concrete actions.

98. This process has five main steps and is supported by a national reflection toolkit under development by the Technical Advisory Group and piloted in Bhutan and the Philippines.

A. Identify and engage stakeholders

99. The first step of the implementation of the regional strategy is to identify and engage senior policy leaders and statisticians from across the 11 domains of the core set able to affect change.

100. Tools and opportunities for engaging these stakeholders include the core set of population and social statistics endorsed by the Commission (resolution 69/16); its relevance to both national priorities and the development agenda beyond 2015; and the frequent and repeated calls for a data revolution. As noted by the participants in the expert group meeting in draft recommendation B: “The statistical community should take advantage of the data revolution and the increased attention to statistics by policy-makers that has been generated by the post-2015 consultations to leverage support for strengthening national statistical capacity.”

101. The Committee's endorsement of the regional strategy would provide yet further impetus and support to engaging stakeholders and raise the profile of population and social statistics and raise the profiles of population and social statistics.

102. As part of the Technical Advisory Group's national reflection toolkit, the Chief Statistician leads a series of reflections with senior policy leaders and statisticians to identify and agree on the main priorities for population and social statistics development. As the statistical system that exists in one domain of population and social statistics, for example health, may well differ from those that exist in another, for example justice, the issues in individual domains of the core set will generally need to be worked through one by one.

103. This process of engagement and reflection across the stakeholders in each of the 11 domains of population and social statistics underlines the coordinating role of the Chief Statistician and the National Statistical Office in a National Statistical System. It therefore contributes towards Goal 1 of the regional strategy. *“Strong engagement between data users and providers across the 11 domains of the core set.”*

B. Conduct a capacity assessment

104. Identifying and engaging stakeholders is a vital first step in national capacity-building, but ongoing engagement is crucial. A further component of the Technical Advisory Group's toolkit builds on senior stakeholder engagement by conducting more detailed and quantifiable assessments of the specific priorities for population and social statistics development. Assessment findings inform the formulation of capacity priorities and set a baseline for continuous monitoring and evaluation of progress.

105. The expert group meeting considered that similar assessments are general requirement for all statistic capacity building and proposed that *“regional or global partners develop a common framework for benchmarking the capacity to produce official statistics, including those required by the post-2015 development agenda, to enable countries to share experience and raise awareness of common issues. This process or framework should include target 17.18 of the OWG”*.

C. Develop action plans

1. National action plans

106. The third step of process is to use the priority targets identified from national capacity assessments as the basis for specifying a national population and social statistics development strategy. To be effective and to ensure broad support from across government and potential donors, these plans should be incorporated with national statistical plans such as the national strategy for the development of statistics (NSDS) and whole-of-government national plans.

107. This element of the process also echoes the conclusions of the expert group meeting, at which the experts recommended that: *“Such a [statistical] plan or strategy should be endorsed within the whole of government national plans (and as part of the national development plan) to ensure high-level political support and resource allocation.”*

2. Regional action plan

108. The scope of ambition expressed in the core set and the diversity of the region are substantial. Analysis of the range of capacity issues in the region, ideally derived from a consistent and comparable national assessment process, will be critical in assessing where regional support will be most effective.

109. As noted in the outcome document of the expert group meeting “*the results of assessment[s] can be used, for example, to classify countries according to the level of their statistics development and to determine the needs for capacity development.*”

110. Regional action plans can then be formulated and tailored to national circumstances and priorities, and will typically identify opportunities for providing advocacy, technical support and research to create:

(a) Greater awareness of the deficiencies in national statistical systems and the consequences for monitoring of national and international development priorities;

(b) Greater power and potential to secure resources including through the mobilization of donor support;

(c) More efficient and effective capacity building activities through partnerships between national statistical systems and expert agencies in the region.

D. Deliver plans

1. Coordination with other capacity development activities

111. Successful implementation of national action plans for population and social statistics, supported by regional action plans, will depend on coordinated and integrated delivery.

112. Better coordination and integration of regional statistical capacity-building activities was a key challenge identified in recommendation A of the expert group meeting¹³.

113. The experts identified that many of the fundamental issues at the core of an effective national statistical system (and presented in the Population and Social Statistics Capacity Framework) are common to the Committee’s other sector-specific programmes or strategies such as the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.

114. To ensure that the regional strategy for population and social statistics builds synergies with the Committee’s other capacity-building activities and to prevent duplication of effort, the experts concluded that common issues should be identified and tackled in a coordinated way rather than within sector-specific stovepipes.

¹³ Data and statistics for the post-2015 development agenda: Implications for regional collaboration on statistics in Asia and the Pacific - Preparatory expert group meeting for the fourth session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Report_EGM2014_Data%20and%20statistics%20for%20the%20post-2015%20development.pdf.

2. Building partnerships

115. While some capacity development priorities for population and social statistics may be common to economic or environment statistics development, many issues such as technical or methodological guidelines or exploitation of data sources will be unique.

116. These issues will need to be addressed through partnerships with specialized agencies such as the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and PARIS21, and support from donor organizations such as the Asian Development Bank. A summary table of some of the main specialised international agencies and partners most relevant for each domain of the core set is provided in table 1 below.

Table 1

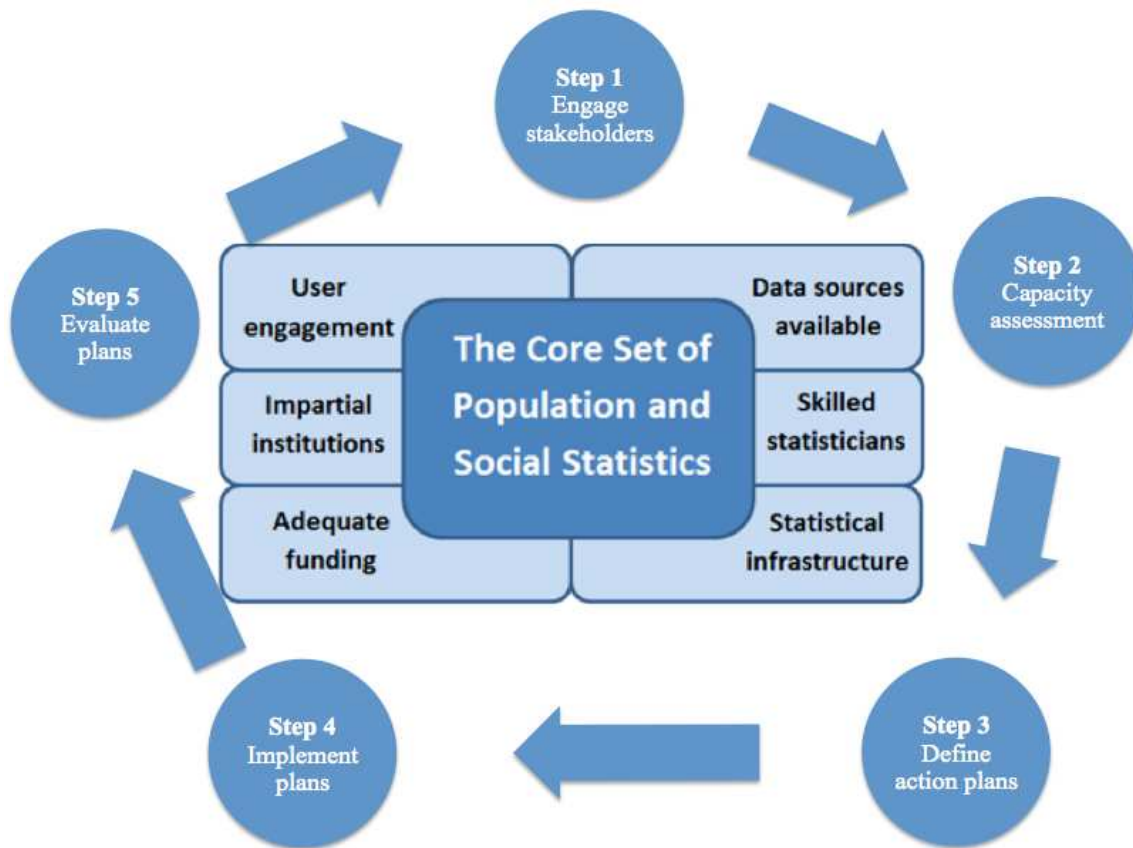
Specialised partners for each domain of the core set of population and social statistics

Domain of the core set	Partners
Population	UNFPA, WHO, UN-Habitat, ILO
Health	WHO, UNICEF, World Bank
Income, wealth and expenditure	UNFPA, World Bank
Employment	ILO
Education and training	UNESCO
Housing and infrastructure	UN-Habitat, UNICEF, WHO
Information and communication	ITU
Crime and Justice	UNODC, WHO
Family and community	UNFPA, WHO, UNESCO, ILO, UNICEF
Culture and leisure	UNFPA, UNESCO, UNWTO
Governance	UNODC, World Bank

E. Evaluate plans

117. The fifth step of the Regional Strategy is to evaluate the effectiveness of national and regional action plans in improving capacity to produce the core set by 2020. This final step is critical for performance management, accountability, and learning purposes.

F. Summary diagram of the regional strategy for population and social statistics



IV. Governance

118. As emphasized in the Technical Advisory Group's strategic process, successful implementation of the regional strategy will require support from a range of stakeholders and experts.

A. Steering group

119. A steering group will need to be formed to oversee implementation of the regional strategy and in particular to:

- Monitor the progress towards the targets of the regional strategy;
- Identify emerging new priorities and targets;
- Highlight best practices and raise awareness of barriers to development;
- Facilitate partnerships between countries and donors to mobilize resources;
- Identify the need for and develop action plans to address common capacity issues;
- Identify the need to form expert groups to tackle specialist issues.

120. Membership of this group should span the range of stakeholders whose engagement and guidance will be critical to the implementation of the strategy including:

- (a) Statisticians from national statistical offices;
- (b) Statisticians responsible for social statistics;
- (c) Experts in implementing capacity-building programmes outside of statistics such as the United Nations Development Programme;
- (d) Influential users of population and social statistics from inside the Government;
- (e) Donor agencies.

B. Expert groups

121. Specialized expert groups formed by the steering group will be needed to provide support and guidance in specialist areas, including the development of guidelines and tools. Membership of these groups would include representatives from:

- (a) Specialized international agencies;
- (b) Main data users;
- (c) Experts from the national statistical system.

122. Where possible, these specialized groups should form part of the international efforts. For example, the steering group may wish to form a specialized expert group that will form part of the Praia group on governance statistics⁹ that was proposed at the forty-sixth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. By leveraging off existing international activities, the members of the specialized expert groups will not only take advantage of global thinking but also benefit from the personal development that comes from being part of international efforts.

C. Regional representation in global forums

123. The global statistical community is undertaking a number of activities that are most relevant to the regional strategy for population and social statistics. Several members of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics are engaging with the United Nations Statistical Division Friends of the Chair Group on Broader Measures of Progress and through membership of groups such as the Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development. New groups were proposed at the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission in early March 2015.

124. In addition to the main United Nations Statistical Commission meeting, there are many side events dedicated to the post-2015 development agenda, including side events on capacity-building.

125. Regional representation on these global forums provides a regional voice to the international deliberations. It also provides an opportunity to connect Member States directly with the regional strategy for population and social statistics.

⁹ E/CN.3/2015/17.