



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Committee on Statistics**Eighth session**

Bangkok and online, 23–25 August 2022

Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Regional initiatives and partnerships for strengthening national statistical systems for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: progress made in support of the collective vision and framework for action by groups responsible for regional initiatives of the Committee on Statistics and by the secretariat**Advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: progress in implementing regional initiatives with respect to the collective vision and framework for action****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The present document contains a summary of the work of the secretariat, as well as the plans and achievements of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics, the technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific and the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific.

The Committee on Statistics may wish to express its views on the progress made to date and review and endorse the proposed actions contained in the document. It may wish to review and endorse the revised terms of reference of the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics as annexed to the present document and recommend that the technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific continue its work. The Committee may also wish to provide guidance on the future direction of those groups with a view to ensuring that they collectively and effectively serve to further the commitments contained in the document entitled “Advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community”.

The Committee is invited to provide further guidance to ensure the successful advancement of the collective vision and framework for action.

* ESCAP/CST/2022/L.1/Rev.1.

I. Introduction

1. In 2016, the Committee on Statistics, at its fifth session, endorsed the document entitled “Advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community”.¹ Collaborative efforts as defined in the document are focused on five action areas: engaging users and investing in statistics; assuring quality of and instilling trust in statistics; using integrated statistics for integrated analysis; modernizing statistical business processes; and developing requisite skill sets. With the collective vision and framework for action, the statistical community committed to expanding and reinforcing global, regional and subregional partnerships, building on existing statistical capacity development initiatives in Asia and the Pacific.

2. The Committee’s initiatives are overseen by member States and international organizations through four groups:

(a) Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific;

(b) Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics;

(c) Technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific;

(d) Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific.

3. In addition, the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific supports the work of the Committee, and reports to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

4. In addition, the Asia-Pacific Data Integration Community of Practice, established in 2018 by the Committee at its sixth session, operates as a forum for online collaboration and sharing knowledge, experience and learning. It reports to the Committee.

5. The present document contains a summary of the work of these groups since the Committee’s seventh session and the progress made towards furthering the collective vision and framework for action. The document also contains information on other initiatives by the secretariat to advance official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the collective vision and framework for action.

6. The work of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific is presented in more detail in the reports on its 10th and 11th meetings.²

7. The work of the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific is presented in more detail in the reports on its 6th and 7th meetings.³

¹ E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1.

² ESCAP/CST/2022/INF/2.

³ ESCAP/CST/2022/INF/5.

8. The work of the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific is presented in more detail in the report on its 8th meeting.⁴

9. The work of the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics is presented in more detail in the report on its 3rd meeting.⁵ At that meeting, the Regional Steering Group reviewed and acknowledged the progress with regard to the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics in Asia and the Pacific at the regional and national levels. The Regional Steering Group is obliged to review its terms of reference every two years to ensure that it has the necessary mandates to perform its functions effectively and efficiently. At that same meeting, the Regional Steering Group noted that its terms of reference had not been reviewed since they were endorsed by the Committee at its fifth session, in 2016, and subsequently reviewed them.⁶

10. As a result of the review, the Regional Steering Group agreed to (a) prioritize its strategic functions and delegate technical roles to virtual task forces, (b) increase the meeting frequency to annually, and (c) create an online space to enhance its communication, coordination and functionality. The Regional Steering Group also noted that no further amendments to the terms of reference were required at that time.

11. In support of the Regional Steering Group's decisions, the secretariat amended the terms of reference and created a specific online collaboration space. The Regional Steering Group used the online space to review and finalize the meeting report and terms of reference. The amended terms of reference are contained in the annex to the present document.

12. The technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific supports countries in the region in their efforts to implement the Disaster-related Statistics Framework by providing training initiatives, sharing national practices and engaging in global standards development. Since its inception in October 2020, the working group has developed an extensive knowledge pool, garnered international recognition for its work and contributed to shaping the emerging global framework for disaster-related statistics. Further details of the organization, functions, activities and achievements of the Group are included in the report on the technical working group.⁷

13. In response to a survey of its members in 2021, members of the technical working group confirmed the relevance of and continued need for regional collaboration on disaster-related statistics. The survey revealed that 76 per cent of respondents felt that the group's meetings were highly relevant to their work, 85 per cent found the activities of the group effective and 79 per cent found the meeting modalities efficient. Benefits highlighted by respondents included (a) exposure to good practices and experiences from other countries; (b) improved knowledge of methodologies, standards and frameworks for data collection; (c) networking with experts, producers and users; and (d) support in policy and workplan design.

⁴ ESCAP/CST/2022/3.

⁵ ESCAP/CST/2022/INF/3.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ ESCAP/CST/2022/INF/4.

14. The technical working group's terms of reference require that they be reviewed by the Committee at its eighth session, in 2022, with regard to the working group's functions, work programme and achievements. At that review the Committee should decide whether the working group should continue its work.

15. Despite the achievements outlined above, challenges remain, and therefore the technical working group, through its five-year strategic workplan, seeks to continue supporting the advancement of disaster-related statistics in the Asia-Pacific region with a strategic focus on capacity, standards and governance.

II. Progress by action area of the collective vision and framework for action

Action area A: Engaging users and investing in statistics

Objective 1: National statistical systems are responsive to the needs of users, including those arising from the 2030 Agenda

Objective 2: Investments in national statistical systems match the requirements for meeting demands and needs of users

16. Activities related to economic statistics in the Asia-Pacific region are guided by the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, under the leadership of the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. On the recommendation of the Committee, the Steering Group extended the Regional Programme to 2030 and aligned it with the 2030 Agenda and the collective vision and framework for action.

17. The Steering Group held two meetings in 2021 to agree on its workplan, review progress and to identify priority areas. Activities included the rebasing of gross domestic product and of price indices and using big data to produce economic statistics.

18. Training workshops on labour accounts and statistical business registers were held. In addition, the Steering Group, with support from the secretariat, held a webinar on the use of big data for price statistics. The webinar was an opportunity for participants to share expertise and knowledge.

19. The technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific functions as a community of practice and includes individuals who discuss technical matters pertaining to disaster-related statistics. Its 1st meeting was held in October 2020, and since then the group has met monthly. Attendees are from national statistical offices, national disaster management agencies, government agencies and non-governmental organizations.

20. At its seventh session, the Committee advised on expanding implementation of the policy and data integration tool entitled "Every policy is connected" (EPIC) to more countries and a broader range of sectors. The secretariat has since completed an alpha version of the online application with accompanying communication resources and user guides and made these available for statistical systems in the region to use.

21. The secretariat, in collaboration with the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, developed an open online training course on the application of the “Every policy is connected” (EPIC) tool for development of national indicator frameworks. In 2021, the secretariat worked closely with the Government of Samoa to use the tool to establish an indicator framework for the new policy on the tourism sector. The secretariat is also supporting the Government of Bangladesh in its efforts to identify data needs for monitoring its disaster risk reduction policy through use of the tool.

22. In 2021, the Government of the Republic of Korea funded a project on integrating policy and data to leave no one behind. The aim of the project is to advance policy and data integration in the region using the “Every policy is connected” (EPIC) tool in selected countries.

23. The project is currently being implemented in two countries. In Mongolia, the aim of the project is to identify data needs and develop indicator frameworks for three new policies (on human development, national competitiveness and social development). In Brunei Darussalam, the aim of the project is to integrate Sustainable Development Goal indicators into the national development plan.

24. The Committee, at its seventh session, acknowledged statistical literacy as an important area of work. In October 2021, the secretariat held an Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe event⁸ to raise awareness of the role of data and statistical literacy in enhancing the effective use of data and official statistics by various groups of users, including policymakers, the research community, the media and citizens.⁹

25. The secretariat has supported advocacy efforts which place civil registration and vital statistics systems at the centre of discussions on sustainable development and which ensure that they benefit from related investments. Such efforts include the Get Every One in the Picture website,¹⁰ the monthly *CRVS Insight* newsletter, and participating at and organizing side events at regional and global intergovernmental forums. Pursuant to Commission resolution 74/8 on accelerating the implementation of the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, the secretariat organized the Second Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific in November 2021.

26. The Ministerial Conference concluded with the Ministerial Declaration on Building a More Resilient Future with Inclusive Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, highlighting the crucial role civil registration and vital statistics play in enabling governments and authorities to prepare for and respond to crises such as the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

27. More than 400 participants, including 40 government ministers, attended the Ministerial Conference, which marked the midpoint of the Asia and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade (2015–2024). ESCAP organized the Ministerial Conference in partnership with the United Nations Children’s Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the

⁸ Further information on all Stats Cafe sessions is available at www.unescap.org/our-work/statistics/stats-cafe.

⁹ www.unescap.org/events/2021/asia-pacific-stats-cafe-series-enhancing-data-and-statistical-literacy-policy-action.

¹⁰ www.getinthepicture.org.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the Pacific Community, World Vision International, the CDC Foundation, Vital Strategies and Plan International.

28. The secretariat published *Getting Every One in the Picture: A Snapshot of Progress Midway through the Asia and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade* to highlight progress made by the midpoint of the Decade. The report shows that the Asia-Pacific region is on the right path to reach the goals of universal and responsive civil registration and vital statistics systems, albeit not by the end of the Decade. With further acceleration of efforts, Governments can ensure the catalytic changes to reach those furthest behind are realized.

29. The report contains a review of the progress and achievements made by countries in the Asia-Pacific region since the beginning of the Decade as well as the challenges remaining for the second half of the Decade. Snapshots of the state of civil registration and vital statistics in the region bring to life countries' and partners' successes.

30. In addition to the midterm report, multiple technical papers were presented to the Ministerial Conference, which significantly increased the knowledge base with regard to civil registration and vital statistics systems and challenges in Asia and the Pacific. In close collaboration with partners, ESCAP facilitated national-level consultations and a regional forum for children and youth across the region, where participants expressed their views, shared experiences on civil registration and vital statistics, and made recommendations.

Action area B: Assuring quality and instilling trust in statistics

Objective 1: National statistical systems have in place legal frameworks that accord appropriate coordination authority and responsibility to the national statistics office and are fully in line with and facilitate adherence to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Objective 2: National statistical systems, as the national authority on statistics, formulate and implement comprehensive, system-wide and transformative strategies for the development of statistics for progress monitoring of national development plans and the 2030 Agenda

Objective 3: National statistical systems have implemented a system-wide quality assurance framework

31. The Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific continues to engage with the global statistical community through initiatives on updating the System of National Accounts. In collaboration with the ESCAP secretariat and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the Steering Group held a workshop to discuss the update to the System of National Accounts and its relevance to countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Members of the Steering Group contributed to the review of and

proposed changes to the System of National Accounts, based on the guidance notes prepared by the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts.¹¹

32. To ensure progress towards truly universal and fully inclusive registration, members and associate members adopted the Ministerial Declaration to “Get Every One in the Picture” in Asia and the Pacific, in which they recognized the need to address disparities in civil registration completeness and coverage.

33. Cognizant of the importance of measuring inequality in civil registration and vital statistics systems, the secretariat organized a series of webinars and expert group meetings on inequality assessments for civil registration and vital statistics systems in 2021. The overarching theme of the activities was “Inequalities in civil registration and vital statistics: let’s really get every one in the picture!” and the goal was to provide guidance for countries on measuring the inequalities in civil registration and vital statistics.

34. In 2021, the secretariat provided support for the publication *Gap Analysis of Current CRVS Registration Practices and Mapping of Potential Data-Sources Focusing on Marginalized Population in Pakistan*, which was published by the Technical Support Unit for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics of the Government of Pakistan.

35. In 2022, the secretariat expanded inequality assessment support with additional regional workshops and country-level support to the Governments of Pakistan, Fiji, Bangladesh and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. This support included training activities on demographic analysis and estimation skills and their application to civil registration and vital statistics inequality assessments.

36. In March 2022, the secretariat published guidelines for estimating completeness of civil registration of vital events. The guidelines are intended to support national statistical offices, ministries of health, and other relevant government and non-governmental agencies to better estimate completeness. These guidelines and the associated toolkit were designed to give in-country practitioners the essential skills to evaluate and estimate the completeness of their civil registration systems, with a focus on births and deaths. Regional training workshops expanded on the information in the guidelines.

37. The secretariat contributed to the work of the Expert Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced Persons and Statelessness Statistics to develop the international recommendations on statelessness statistics.¹²

38. Building on the Asia-Pacific SDG Gateway as a one-stop-shop for Sustainable Development Goal data and statistics for the region, the secretariat has enhanced the availability of analytical resources, including a dashboard of investment trends, and country-level data assessments. The aim of the Asia-Pacific SDG Gateway and its analytical products is to enhance consistency across development data and increase the use of statistics in decision-making at regional and national levels.

39. At its seventh session, the Committee highlighted the need for more consistency in reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals at global and national levels. In 2021, the secretariat developed the free, online tool, National

¹¹ Further details are available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/aeg.asp>.

¹² See E/CN.3/2022/10.

SDG Tracker, to assist member States in producing national progress assessments on the Goals. The tool helps national statistical systems to use national data, indicators and targets to produce progress dashboards and charts using the same methodology as in all five regional commissions of the United Nations. The secretariat facilitated the implementation of this tool in Brunei Darussalam, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, the Philippines, Timor-Leste and Uzbekistan, with support from the Government of China and the respective Resident Coordinator's Offices.

40. Through its sustainable development data and indicator support, the secretariat has built partnerships with national-level development partners and contributed to several processes, including common country assessments and the development of country frameworks using the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. In 2021, the secretariat supported the efforts of the United Nations country team in Thailand to use the National SDG Tracker to produce a national Sustainable Development Goal progress assessment and integrated analysis to feed into the common country analysis.

Action area C: Integrated statistics for integrated analysis

Objective 1: An integrated statistical measurement framework for the Sustainable Development Goals has been developed

Objective 2: National statistical systems integrate data from multiple sources in a coherent and consistent manner for the production of statistical products that support integrated analysis of sustainable development issues

41. The technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific promotes the application and implementation of the Disaster-related Statistics Framework, a methodological guide for production of disaster-related statistics through integration of social, economic and environmental data. Members of the technical working group share experiences on implementing the framework, identifying gaps and addressing methods for improvement. Additionally, dialogue between data users and data producers is facilitated through the monthly meetings of the group.

42. Several Governments in the region have used the Disaster-related Statistics Framework. The Government of Indonesia developed the One Disaster Data initiative to improve the utilization of disaster-related data in its official national statistical system. In the Philippines, a satellite accounting pilot programme on disaster risk expenditure links the Disaster-related Statistics Framework to the System of National Accounts, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics.

43. Normative work continues at the global level in the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics, which operates under the Statistical Commission and is co-chaired by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and ESCAP. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group is charged with developing a common statistical framework on disaster-related statistics, which will be submitted for consideration by the Statistical Commission at its fifty-fourth session.

44. The Committee, at its seventh session, acknowledged the establishment of the data integration community of practice and encouraged furthering the work on data integration. As a result, the secretariat continued to support the

expansion and improvement of the Asia-Pacific Data Integration Community of Practice and leveraged its capacity to strengthen regional data integration.

45. As an initial step, a data integration capacity assessment survey was designed and conducted through the Asia-Pacific Data Integration Community of Practice in September and October 2020. The key findings of the survey were the need for capacity-building and enabling an institutional environment for data integration.

46. In November and December 2020, the secretariat held a series of online regional workshops on implementing data integration in collaboration with development partners to enhance awareness of and capacity for data integration within national statistical systems at management and expert levels.¹³ The regional workshops were duplicated to accommodate participants from across the region and time zones.

47. The secretariat, with valuable contributions from the members of the Asia-Pacific Data Integration Community of Practice, developed the *Asia-Pacific Guidelines to Data Integration for Official Statistics*. The publication built on a similar guide by the Economic Commission for Europe. The *Guidelines* have been translated into the Russian language.

48. The secretariat hosted online meetings of the Asia-Pacific Data Integration Community of Practice, where more than 70 country and agency experiences were presented and discussed. The secretariat also hosted Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe sessions on topics relevant to data integration.

49. The Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics, at its 3rd meeting, in September 2021, identified the modernization of census taking, mainly by exploiting new sources of data and conducting register-based censuses, as a priority area. In that regard, the secretariat published *Emerging Trends in Census Approaches in Asia and the Pacific* and a Stats Brief on the same topic,¹⁴ which showcased how countries in the region have used administrative data in their censuses. The secretariat also hosted an Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe session in which the findings of the report were presented and discussed.

50. To facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences with regard to modernized census taking, the secretariat created a specific page on the Asia-Pacific Data Integration Community of Practice online platform and hosted a number of online meetings. The secretariat also developed a Stats Brief on how population censuses in Asia and the Pacific are evolving,¹⁵ which was delivered at the sixty-third International Statistical Institute World Statistics Congress.

51. The secretariat also supported discussions on the use of new data sources, including administrative, scanner, mobile phone and geospatial data.

¹³ See www.unescap.org/events/regional-workshops-implementing-data-integration-asia-and-pacific-round-1.

¹⁴ ESCAP, “Tapping into administrative data in census-taking: an emerging trend in Asia and the Pacific”, Stats Brief, No. 31 (April 2022).

¹⁵ ESCAP, “Are population censuses in Asia and the Pacific evolving?”, Stats Brief, No. 30 (August 2021).

Expert group meetings focusing on big data governance and big data partnership models were held in August and September 2021.¹⁶

52. The group concluded that national statistical offices needed support in defining their new role and responsibilities and improving data access and partnerships with the private sector as well as support with other big data-related issues in their new regulatory frameworks. This is particularly pertinent as many countries are in the process of updating their statistical legislation.

53. The secretariat has documented country experiences in using non-traditional data sources for the production of official statistics, including economic statistics, population and social statistics, environment and agriculture statistics, and for the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁷ Several Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe sessions have showcased country experiences of using big data for statistics. For example, in September 2021, the secretariat held a Stats Cafe event to discuss the interim results of its study on the use of alternative data sources for tourism statistics in Indonesia, Maldives and Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic.

54. The secretariat engages with global groups which promote the use of big data, the management of geospatial information, and the integration of statistical and geospatial data. The secretariat is a member of the Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics and the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management and serves the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information. Through its membership in these groups, the secretariat supports global efforts to further investigate the benefits and challenges of using big data and exchanges of knowledge and experiences.

55. The Global Ocean Accounts Partnership serves as a coordination and communication platform for a global ocean accounting community of practice. Since its formation in 2019, its membership has expanded considerably, and members share experiences and contribute to regional events such as the Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean.

56. Following the national pilot studies conducted in 2019, participating countries continue to extend their pilot studies on ocean accounting. The Government of Samoa focuses on links between land-based pollution and waste and the ocean. Currently, the Government is preparing a study on plastic pollution and mangrove ecosystems. In Thailand, ocean accounts, the Ocean Health Index and marine spatial planning have been integrated in a new pilot study in Phang Nga Bay. The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and ocean accounting were also incorporated into the Tourism Satellite Account–System of Environmental-Economic Accounting study of Thailand, and methodologies from the initial pilot are being replicated in other tourism clusters. In Viet Nam, the original pilot on ecosystem extent, pollution and tourism is being extended to the economic valuation of coastal and marine

¹⁶ ESCAP, “Report of the expert group meeting on the uses of big data for official statistics: data governance and partnership models” (Bangkok, 2021).

¹⁷ ESCAP, “Big data for economic statistics”, Stats Brief, No. 28 (March 2021); ESCAP, “Big data for population and social statistics, Stats Brief, No. 29 (April 2021); Irina Bernal and others, “Big data for environment and agriculture statistics”, Statistics Division Working Paper Series, No. SD/WP/13/April 2021 (Bangkok, ESCAP, 2021); and Gemma Van Halderen and others, “Big data for the SDGs”, Statistics Division Working Paper Series, No. SD/WP/12/January 2021 (Bangkok, ESCAP, 2021).

ecosystem services in Quang Ninh province to support ocean economic planning.

57. Inspired by the other pilots, the Government of Palau initiated an ocean accounting pilot in 2021 with the initial scope of accounting for the extension and condition of coral and mangrove ecosystems.

58. The Technical Guidance on Ocean Accounting¹⁸ was recognized by the Statistical Commission and now forms the substantive basis for ocean accounting standards development within the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting.

59. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development worked with ESCAP on a project on statistics and data for measuring illicit financial flows in the Asia-Pacific region. The aim of the project is to improve Governments' statistical capacity to measure illicit financial flows and to make use of such metrics for targeted policymaking.

60. Based on expressions of interest from six countries, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were selected to participate in the project, with the goal of calculating illicit financial flows from tax-related and commercial practices. The secretariat assisted with coordinating activities and supported the formation of working groups, which consist of experts from national agencies, financial institutions, key government ministries and academia.

61. The secretariat supports national efforts for data collection and conducts training sessions on methods for measuring illicit financial flows. Such efforts follow guidelines compiled by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. A key goal of the project is to test the methodological guidelines. The project will end in November 2022, and the results of testing and measurement will be compiled in a final project report.

Action area D: Modernizing statistical business processes

Objective 1: National statistical systems have used the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (or the Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organizations) to map their current business processes and have used the resulting findings to identify opportunities and priorities for change

Objective 2: National statistical systems have implemented modernization tools and concepts, such as the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange, for strengthened quality, efficiency and effectiveness of statistical information management and exchange

62. The secretariat has been supporting the Governments of Maldives, Niue, Samoa and Vanuatu on the assessment, analysis and redesign of civil registration and vital statistics processes. The activities include mapping the civil registration and vital statistics landscape, actors and processes, from the occurrence of a vital event to civil registration certification. Mapping is conducted using the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems Improvement Framework, which is designed to help stakeholders analyse and redesign existing business processes and the associated operational

¹⁸ Global Ocean Accounts Partnership, "Technical Guidance on Ocean Accounting", 17 April 2022.

capabilities. This is then used to develop strategies and an action plan to improve the performance of the civil registration and vital statistics system. The Framework was developed in collaboration with multiple partners and is increasingly used for redesigning civil registration and vital statistics processes in Asia and the Pacific and beyond.

63. The secretariat is supporting the Government of Maldives in its efforts to improve the exchange and dissemination of statistical data, as well as for the inaugural statistical yearbook and the sustainable development indicators, through the implementation of the Stat Suite platform,¹⁹ a standard-based, componentized open-source platform for the efficient production of high-quality statistical data. A key component of this work is to create the capacity for data modelling in accordance with the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange format.²⁰

64. To encourage Governments to improve statistical processes, in 2021 and 2022, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, with the Asian Development Bank, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and ESCAP provided e-learning courses on the principles of data visualization for official statistics and Sustainable Development Goal indicators, compiling national metadata for the Goals and the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange Foundation.

65. In addition, the Statistical Institute held web-based training sessions on using big data for gender statistics for the Pacific with UN-Women, Pulse Lab Jakarta and the Pacific Community in 2021.

Action area E: Using requisite skills set

Objective 1: Statistical requirements for the 2030 Agenda are supported by appropriate guidance material and training

Objective 2: The combined skill set of the staff of national statistical systems, together with capable management and sufficiency of human resources enable the continuous generation of statistical products and services required for monitoring of national development plans and the 2030 Agenda

66. Training efforts are key to ensuring staff have the right skills. However, it has been difficult to organize face-to-face training activities due to the COVID-19 situation. Therefore, all training activities of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific shifted to web-based activities, which have the advantage of serving larger numbers of participants. As of 30 April 2022, the Statistical Institute had held 43 courses for 4,646 participants, of which 2,737 were female (59 per cent). This included training of trainers on telephone surveys with the World Bank and training of trainers on gender statistics for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals with UN-Women and the ESCAP Statistics Division.

67. In September 2013, the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics established the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific with the mandate to act as a facilitator of information-sharing and coordination among statistical training institutes in the region.

¹⁹ <https://siscc.org/stat-suite/>.

²⁰ <https://sdmx.org/>.

68. The 6th meeting of the Network was held online on 2 December 2020. Reports on the activities of the subgroup on gender statistics and the subgroup on economic statistics were highly appreciated by the Network. The members of the Network stressed the importance of integrating gender perspectives with other thematic areas of statistics and suggested that accreditation of courses and certification of experts should be carried out internally at an initial stage, with expansion and considered after thorough assessment.

69. Members of the Network explained the methodology adopted for evaluation of the training programmes and shared how they used the results of their evaluations. The members of the Network agreed to further improve evaluation of training activities in their respective countries. The members of the Network and the Statistical Institute also agreed to share materials, textbooks, and other relevant information for the development of statistical training.

70. The 7th meeting of the Network was held online on 7 December 2021. The Network reviewed the performances of the subgroups on gender statistics and on economic statistics and expressed its appreciation to the subgroups for their work on developing training materials and promoting e-learning courses with partners. For gender statistics, the accreditation process for national training is still under consideration. It requires further discussion among UN-Women, the Statistical Institute and other partners to ensure the same quality standards are applied at the national level.

71. To prioritize regional training activities in environment statistics, ESCAP and the Statistical Institute considered renaming and expanding the focus of the subgroup on economic statistics, as well as setting up an additional subgroup to cover environment statistics. The Network approved the proposal of the Statistical Institute to transfer the contents of the database of training information to a Microsoft Excel file, which is to be shared with members of the Network for easy access and updates.

72. In partnership with UN-Women and the Statistical Institute, the secretariat developed a set of e-learning modules on using gender data for analysis, communications and policymaking. The curriculum was developed under the guidance of the subgroup on gender statistics training, a subsidiary organ within the Network, which was established in 2018 to support national statistical offices in the region to develop the skills to produce and use gender data for monitoring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. It is co-chaired by UN-Women and the Statistical Institute. Since the curriculum was primarily developed for face-to-face training activities, it was adapted for online use. These modules are targeted at national statistical offices, ministries, academia, the media, civil society organizations and national research agencies. The training strengthens capacity to use existing gender data for policy research, policy formulation and advocacy. The modules have been disseminated for public use through the learning management system of the Statistical Institute.

73. The secretariat piloted e-learning courses and materials on monitoring national and international indicators related to disasters. The efforts are guided by the Disaster-related Statistics Framework, which was endorsed by the Committee at its sixth session as appropriate for producing harmonized statistics in support of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the 2030 Agenda. The experience from previous training activities on disaster-related statistics and on the Disaster-related Statistics Framework is being used to improve the Statistical Institute's training materials and their conversion to an e-learning course.

74. The systematic use of civil registration for vital statistics is still not institutionalized in all countries in Asia and the Pacific. One of the three goals of the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific pertains to the production and dissemination of vital statistics based on registration records. To support this goal, the secretariat provided technical support in the form of workshops and on-going guidance on every step of developing a vital statistics report, including analysis of civil registration data and its completeness, calculation of key indicators, report writing, and communication and dissemination of vital statistics data.

75. In collaboration with the Pacific Community, ESCAP organized a nine-week online course on data analysis and report writing for civil registration-based vital statistics in 2021. Participants from Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu attended the course. The Governments of Thailand and Bhutan also received technical support to further develop their capacities for producing vital statistics. Subsequently, the Government of Bhutan released its first vital statistic report based on administrative data. The report was compiled using data maintained by its Department of Civil Registration and Census under the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs.

76. The secretariat also provided support to the Technical Support Unit for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Pakistan through workshops on the essentials of national civil registration and vital statistics.

77. The secretariat developed training activities for national statistical offices, including an e-learning course in 2021 on machine learning for official statistics and Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

78. The secretariat provided technical assistance on the use of satellite data for specific country needs. This included technical assistance to the Government of Fiji on using satellite data to develop experimental land cover accounts. Technical assistance was also provided to the Governments of Palau and Samoa on the development of pilot ocean accounts.

79. Various guides developed by the secretariat show how to process satellite data to produce maps and statistical tables using programmes such as Quantum Geographic Information System (QGIS) and RStudio. The guides highlight features of geospatially enabled programmes and provide details of different types of open-source data as per users' needs. The guides help users to develop statistics on topics where geodata is useful. To date, the guides show how to map land cover change, assess the expansion of artificial surfaces and visualize population exposure to hazard.

80. The secretariat implemented two projects funded by the Government of the Russian Federation aimed at strengthening the skills base of national statistical systems in Central Asia. The first project involved the facilitation of courses developed by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific. In the first phase, courses were translated into Russian and delivered by the Higher School of Economics of the National Research University in Moscow. Topics included environmental-economic accounts, health statistics, official statistics and national accounts. In the second phase, seminars on environmental-economic accounts and national accounts were conducted with simultaneous English-Russian and Russian-English interpretation. The second project aims at strengthening the capacity of young official statisticians in Central Asia. A network of these young statisticians for country-to-country exchange of expertise was established at the inaugural forum in October 2021, and members of the network have regularly met since then.

81. The project also involves the translation into Russian of pre-existing manuals, tools and guides on innovative new approaches to official statistics. Documents on the use of mobile phone data for official statistics and big data for population and social statistics have been translated and disseminated.²¹

82. In 2022, training materials in Russian will be developed, and training sessions will be held on communication, negotiation and advocacy for official statistics. In addition, a university relay will be held where young statisticians can highlight the need for official statistics and the key role a career in official statistics can play in national development.

83. The secretariat worked with a group of researchers and experts to compile a set of research studies to demonstrate policy uses of time-use data. Time-use statistics are quantitative summaries of how individuals spend or allocate their time over a specified period – typically over 24 hours of a day or over seven days of a week. These can provide insight on policy issues, including gender policy issues related to unpaid domestic and care work.

84. The secretariat published *Harnessing Time-use Data for Evidence-based Policy, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Beijing Platform for Action* in 2021. It provides hands-on guidance on using statistical software to analyse national time-use data for policy advocacy. The publication not only demonstrates better use of existing time-use data in national statistical systems for policy-relevant analysis but also suggests that further time-use data collection is an integral part of the official statistics work programme.

III. Issues for consideration by the Committee

85. The Committee is invited to express its views on the progress and successes of its initiatives in line with the vision and five action areas of the collective vision and framework for action. The Committee may also wish to express its views on the effectiveness and appropriateness of chosen modalities for the various regional initiatives, including types of activities or mechanisms to fulfil the commitments contained in the collective vision and framework for action, and identify any gaps that need to be addressed. The Committee may also wish to recommend a review of the groups and communities of practice supporting its work and provide recommendations for streamlining, consolidation and improvement to ensure the groups and communities of practice continue to be fit-for-purpose. This could include moving towards less formal collaboration mechanisms which may be better suited to the complex world in which national statistical offices now operate. Bearing in mind the recommended review, the Committee may wish to endorse the amended terms of reference of the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics. The amended terms of reference are contained in the annex to the present document. Also bearing in mind the recommended review, the Committee may wish to recommend that the technical working group on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific continue its work.

²¹ See <https://siscc.org/stat-suite/>.

Annex

Terms of reference for Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics*

I. Introduction

1. The Committee on Statistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) established a Technical Advisory Group in 2011 to provide recommendations on the strategic direction as well as substantive and methodological guidelines regarding strengthening national capacity to provide an agreed range of population and social statistics. The Technical Advisory Group developed a core set of population and social statistics, which the Committee endorsed at its third session, in December 2012,¹ and which were subsequently endorsed by the Commission in its resolution 69/16 as a regional guideline for national capacity development.

2. The Technical Advisory Group further developed the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics in Asia and the Pacific, which the Committee endorsed at its fourth session, in March 2015.² At the same time, the Committee requested its Bureau to establish a regional steering group on population and social statistics to oversee implementation of the regional strategy.³

3. The Bureau decided to create the Friends of the Chair Group as an interim mechanism with the mandate to develop a plan for implementing the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics in Asia and the Pacific. In December 2016, at its fifth session, the Committee endorsed the implementation plan for the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics in Asia and the Pacific,⁴ which was developed by the Friends of the Chair Group as an integral adjunct to the document entitled “Advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community”.⁵ In the implementation plan, the vision and goals contained in the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics were revised with a particular focus on supporting informed decision-making for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The Committee also agreed to establish the Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics to oversee the implementation of the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics to achieve its vision.⁶

* Previously contained in the annex to E/ESCAP/CST(5)/3. At its 3rd meeting, in 2021, the Regional Steering Group suggested a review of its terms of reference to enhance the effective and efficient performance of its functions. The current draft terms of reference shall be submitted to the Committee on Statistics at its eighth session for its consideration. If endorsed, the terms of reference contained herein will replace and supersede previous terms of reference for the Regional Steering Group.

¹ See E/ESCAP/CST(3)/5/Add.1.

² See E/ESCAP/CST(4)/3.

³ See E/ESCAP/CST(4)/14.

⁴ E/ESCAP/CST(5)/3 and E/ESCAP/CST(5)/3/Corr.1.

⁵ E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1.

⁶ See E/ESCAP/CST(5)/9.

II. Roles and responsibilities

4. The Regional Steering Group shall oversee the implementation of the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics to achieve its vision.

5. More specifically, the Regional Steering Group shall take the following actions:

(a) Provide strategic direction and oversee the implementation of the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics, including through advocacy, resource mobilization, facilitating regional and subregional cooperation, and the establishment of technical task forces in the form of communities of practice;

(b) In consultation with the secretariat, identify short-term and long-term priorities and establish milestones for the implementation plan, monitor progress and propose any adjustments to the implementation plan as the need arises.

III. Composition

6. The composition of the Steering Group shall reflect considerations with regard to the responsibilities of the Group, including strong and effective strategic leadership, advocacy and coordination skills as well as the ability to coordinate among a wide range of stakeholders.

7. Therefore, the Steering Group shall consist of representatives with senior management responsibilities and technical expertise in population and social statistics from the following areas:

(a) National statistical systems, including national statistical offices;

(b) National government bodies responsible for policies and programmes as key users of population and social statistics;

(c) International, regional, subregional and bilateral organizations whose mandate includes supporting improvements in the production, dissemination and use of population and social statistics.

8. The size of the Regional Steering Group shall be decided by the Bureau and may be changed as needed to ensure that the Steering Group continues to effectively and efficiently perform its functions.

IV. Selection of members

9. The Bureau shall, with assistance of the secretariat, invite ESCAP members and associate members as well as relevant development partners, including the members of the former Technical Advisory Group on Population and Social Statistics, to express interest in joining the Steering Group. The Bureau shall decide on the composition on the basis of the qualifications of nominees and the need for balanced representation, as well as the need for efficient and effective functioning of the Steering Group.

10. Members shall be appointed for a period of two years. All members shall be eligible for re-appointment. Upon departure of an appointed member, the remaining members shall recommend the most appropriate replacement for consideration and approval by the Bureau. Members shall commit to devoting the time necessary for adequate discharge of their duties. Members will not be considered staff members of the United Nations, and therefore will not be

entitled to the privileges and immunities accorded to staff members of the United Nations.

V. Functioning

11. It is envisaged that the Regional Steering Group shall review most issues by electronic means, preferably through an online collaboration space designated for the Steering Group.

12. The Regional Steering Group shall decide the periodicity of its gatherings. It shall aim to meet annually, either in person or via videoconferencing.

13. The Regional Steering Group may decide to invite experts to participate and/or to form subgroups for specific tasks, preferably in form of communities of practice.

VI. Secretariat

14. The Statistics Division of ESCAP will serve as the secretariat and support the Regional Steering Group in carrying out its responsibilities.

VII. Reporting

15. The Regional Steering Group shall submit a written and, if requested, oral report for the information of the Committee on each of its formal sessions on progress in the implementation of the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics.

16. The Regional Steering Group shall report to the Bureau through the secretariat, as required.

VIII. Chair

17. One member shall act as the Chair of the Steering Group, who will guide its work. The Chair will serve for a period of two years after which he or she will be eligible for re-appointment.

IX. Review of the terms of reference

18. The Regional Steering Group shall, in consultation with the secretariat, review its terms of reference every two years to ensure that it has the necessary mandates to effectively and efficiently perform its functions. The revisions shall be subject to approval by the Committee.

X. Sunset clause

19. The Regional Steering Group shall expire at the end of 2030, at the end of the implementation of the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics, unless the Committee decides otherwise.
