Independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development

EVALUATION OF

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

TO STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPACITIES FOR STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND DATA COLLECTION

TO SUPPORT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS) AND OTHER INTERNATIONALLY AGREED DEVELOPMENT GOALS

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
BAPS	Busan Action Plan for Statistics
CCSA	Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities
CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DaO	Delivering as One
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs (of the United Nations)
DFID	Department for International Development
DOCO	Development Operations Coordination Office
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
EMG	Evaluation Management Group
EU	European Union
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICM	Interim Coordination Mechanism
ICP	International Comparison Programme
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISWE	Independent System-Wide Evaluation
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
KSRG	Key Stakeholder Reference Group
LDC	Least Developed Country
LLDC	Land-locked Developing Country
MAPS	Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDB	Multilateral Development Bank
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey
NSS	National Statistical System
NSCD	National Statistical Capacity Development
NSDS	National Strategies for the Development of Statistics
NSO	National Statistics Office
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OIOS	United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services
PARIS21	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
PRESS	Partner Report on Support to Statistics
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
SCI	Statistical Capacity Indicator
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDSN	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
SIAP	Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific
SIDS	Small Island Developing State
SNA	System of National Accounts
TCPR	Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United National Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNFPOS	United Nations Fundamental Principles of Statistics
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNPBF	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund
UNSC	United Nations Statistical Commission
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

INTRODUCTION TO THE TECHNICAL APPENDIX

There are two main outputs of the evaluation: (a) the Evaluation Report; and (b) a comprehensive technical paper with associated annexes (this Technical Appendix).

The Evaluation Report is targeted at the policy and executive level, will be presented to the Economic and Social Council and will be made available in the six official United Nations languages. It will also be widely disseminated to interested stakeholders in the development of national statistical capacity (see JIU/REP/2016/5)[1].

This technical appendix provides detailed information and evidence to support the credibility of the Evaluation Report. As with the Evaluation Report, this document was produced by an evaluation team composed of external consultants, under the leadership of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and with the support of an Evaluation Management Group (EMG)and Key Stakeholders Reference Group (KSRG). Details on the composition of these groups are presented in Annex IX of this appendix.

For the JIU, the subject is part of an integrated programme of work with projects between 2013 and 2016 focused on issues of governance and the use of strong evidence and rigour in decision-making.

The document is structured as follows:

- Section 1 sets out the background to the evaluation, its justification, purpose and scope. It describes the overall approach, data-collection methods and implementation.

- Section 2 clarifies some basic concepts about capacity development and specifically national statistical capacity development, examining the national statistical system, trends in national statistical capacity and the changing global context for statistics.

- Section 3 examines the international support for national statistical capacity development, including the global and regional statistical architecture.

- Section 4 starts by describing the role of the United Nations development system in national statistical capacity development before answering the first evaluation question and its three associated subquestions.

- Section 5 sets out the findings related to the second evaluation question on the quality of the United Nations system contribution to national statistical capacity development.

[1] https://www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2016_5_English.pdf

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND, APPROACH AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. The endorsement of the Policy for independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system[2] (the ISWE policy) by the General Assembly in January 2014 was an important milestone in the process of developing this new kind of evaluation. The policy states[3] the purpose of ISWE as:

> *… to assess whether the United Nations system is efficiently and effectively responding to global, regional and country level needs and priorities, and, where relevant, achieving the internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs. In particular, independent system-wide evaluations are expected to assess whether the United Nations system effectively exploits opportunities for programmatic and operational synergies and draws on the capacities of all relevant entities, with a view to enhancing system-wide coherence and impact.*

2. The ISWE policy established a new partnership arrangement between the JIU of the United Nations system[4] and other United Nations system entities. These new arrangements support the JIU in implementing its mandate for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development while drawing on the experience and capacities of various evaluation units in conducting evaluations. The new ISWE partnership framework therefore uses respective comparative strengths, added-value and existing knowledge in supporting system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development. ISWEs are unique in their capacity to address system-wide issues that no single United Nations operational entity can address on its own.

3. In 2014 the Second Committee of the Economic and Social Council selected two topics to be use to pilot two of three modalities for independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development – a synthesis evaluation, and a comprehensive evaluation. This evaluation addresses the comprehensive evaluation defined in the policy as:

> *These evaluations apply a common framework to produce in-depth evaluations of specific policies, strategies, programmes, issues, efforts, areas or sectors in a single or in several countries4, which are then synthesized into one study. The advantage of this approach is that it generates new knowledge from purposefully selected cases, engages the partner countries extensively in the conduct of evaluations, and builds on and enhances national evaluation capacity. The disadvantages of this approach are that it is costly, takes a long time and requires an intensive coordination effort.*

The completed evaluations will be submitted to the Economic and Social Council to support decision-making for the QCPR 2017-2020.

[2] A/68/229.

[3] ISWE Policy, para. 11.

[4] The JIU is the only independent external oversight body of the United Nations system mandated to conduct evaluations, inspections and investigations system-wide.

1.1 JUSTIFICATION, PURPOSE AND USE OF THE EVALUATION

4. As the world transitions from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (hereafter referred to as the 2030 Agenda), the strengthening of national capacities for sustainable development, once again, takes centre stage. Moreover, the development of national capacities for statistics loomed large in the debate of the new agenda as the need for timely and high-quality information to support decision-making, accountability and learning becomes critical for success.

5. The 2015 agreement on the 2030 Agenda therefore proposes a more extensive and integrated set of development goals and indicators which will be challenging for countries to monitor as well as achieve. More and better quality statistics[5] are going to be required to implement the 2030 Agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As noted in the report of the Secretary-General on, "Transforming Our World" that launched the 2030 Agenda:

> *Quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. Such data is key to decision making …. We agree to intensify our efforts to strengthen statistical capacities in developing countries……*[6]

6. Member States are increasingly recognizing that statistics must play a more prominent role than in the past and have started reviewing capacities within the United Nations system to respond to these emerging needs. Member States are equally aware of the fact that first and foremost is the need to develop national capacities that respond to national demands and priorities in achieving international development goals, as well as providing a source for international monitoring data. A data revolution was called for in 2013[7] that was subsequently defined as:

> *An explosion in the volume of data, the speed with which data are produced, the number of producers of data, the dissemination of data, and the range of things on which there is data, coming from new technologies such as mobile phones and the "internet of things", and from other sources, such as qualitative data, citizen-generated data and perceptions data; A growing demand for data from all parts of society.*[8]

7. The United Nations system has responded strongly to the call for a data revolution. Support to the development of national statistical capacity is an area where the UN has had long involvement and plays a significant role as will be described in section 3 of this technical appendix. Moreover, the issue is of direct relevance to the ISWE initiative as more than 30 United Nations entities have a mandate to national statistical systems through work at the global, regional and country levels.

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[5] At the time of writing of this present appendix, over 300 indicators have been drawn up by the UN Statistics Division for monitoring the 17 goals and 169 targets of the SDGs. The Inter Agency Expert Group on the SDGs is working on defining a core set of indicators from this list of indicators.

[6] A/RES/70/1, para. 48.

[7] *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development*. Report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. 2013.

[8] *A world that counts: mobilizing the data revolution for sustainable development.* Report of an Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development. 2015.

8. It is in this context that Member States commissioned this evaluation, specifically by the Second Committee[9] of the General Assembly, which decided[10] that one of the two pilot ISWEs to be conducted in 2014 was to be an:

> *Evaluation of the contribution of the United Nations development system to strengthening national capacities for statistical analysis and data collection to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally-agreed development goals*

9. This evaluation of the United Nations development system contribution to strengthening national capacities for statistics seeks to develop a comprehensive understanding of where the United Nations development system currently is and where it needs to be going in strengthening national capacities for statistics in current context. The evaluation provides insights into the relevance and value of the United Nations system organization's response to national statistical capacity-building needs and priorities and ways in which the comparative added value and coherence of the UN overall response to these needs can be improved. Therefore, the evaluation serves two core purposes:

- **To help the United Nations system provide stronger support for national statistical capacity development for achieving national development goals including the SDGs.** Any new development agenda should ideally build on lessons learned from the MDGs, so as to avoid the mistakes and build upon the strengths. The evaluation therefore looks backwards to help the UN system move forward. The purpose is not to provide a specific outline for a new global statistical system, but rather to suggest ways in which the lessons that can be learned from the MDG period may inform and enrich the process of positioning the UN system to support a statistical system at global, regional and national levels that will support the 2030 Agenda. This is therefore a forward looking evaluation and the findings and recommendations will feed into the deliberations of member States during the 2016 QCPR resolution negotiations. The QCPR is the mechanism through which the General Assembly: (a) assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of UN operational activities for development; and (b) establishes system-wide policy orientations for the development cooperation and country-level modalities of the UN system in response to the evolving international development and cooperation environment. The evaluation also feeds directly into the deliberations on implementing the 2030 Agenda and will guide the UN system in how best it can support governments and national efforts in a coherent and sustainable way. The main users are therefore the governing bodies of the relevant parts of the UN system including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council as well as Member States involved in preparing the next QCPR. It is also expected that it will be used by all partners involved in the effort to help develop national statistical capacities.

- **To provide lessons for strengthening the independent system-wide evaluations.** It is anticipated that system-wide evaluation methods and approaches will likely draw increasing attention from Member States as the new 2030 Agenda adopts a more integrated and universal approach than had been the case with the MDGs. The evaluation also provides lessons that can guide future system-wide evaluations supporting the policymaking, decision-making for the learning and accountability of the UN system. The main stakeholders are: the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, the JIU that has the mandate for independent system-wide evaluation in general and the evaluation offices of UN system organizations, both groups responding to the demands of the 2030 Agenda

[9] The Economic and Financial Committee.

[10] A/68/229, para. 8.

which has implications for an integrated and interdependent architecture of the evaluation function of the UN system, and the ISWE Interim Coordination Mechanism (ICM)[11] that developed the ISWE policy and reports on lessons learned from policy implementation.

10. A Terms of Reference document was produced (annex I) setting out the basic structure of the evaluation. To enhance the relevance and increase the use of the evaluation, extensive consultations with key stakeholders were conducted between April and May 2015 (a summary table of stakeholders consulted and events where the concept of the evaluation was presented can be found in annex II). Based on these consultations, an Inception Paper was then developed to guide the evaluation.

1.2 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

11. The following objectives have been developed in line with the ISWE policy and bearing in mind the core purposes of the evaluation. The list starts with a descriptive objective that sets out the context within which the UN system was evaluated. It goes on to analyse the role of the UN support within this system as well as its strategic positioning. The third objective is to assess the contribution of the UN system to national statistical capacity development, the quality of that contribution and the factors that can explain the systems performance. This objective is in line with the ISWE policy that clearly states that the evaluations "should address performance as well as strategic direction-setting goals with larger system-wide implications".[12] The final objective is to recommend action for strengthening the UN system contribution to ensuring Member States are better able to achieve globally agreed development goals.

- Objective 1: To describe the importance and evolving status of national statistical capacity.

- Objective 2: To analyse the role and strategic positioning of the UN system in support on national statistical capacity within the context of a larger international effort.

- Objective 3: To assess to the extent possible the contribution of UN system support for national statistical capacity development and the value it has added together with the factors that can explain this role and performance.

- Objective 4: To recommend strategic actions for strengthening the contribution of the UN system to national statistical capacity development in the future through amendments to its role, positioning and approaches.

12. Stakeholders consulted including Member States, during the design of the evaluation placed emphasis on the last objective encouraging the evaluation to be forward-looking in the context of the changing environment for the production and use of statistics. Nonetheless, the evaluation must inevitably look backwards to make a judgment on what has worked and not worked in the past and try to understand why. It therefore combined a retrospective assessment of United Nations system

[11] The ICM was established by the Secretary-General at the request of the General Assembly (resolution 67/226); members include representatives of JIU, the United Nations Evaluation Group, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The ICM was responsible for the development of the ISWE policy and for developing the proposal for pilot system-wide evaluations. Members are listed in annex 9.

[12] ISWE policy, para. 25.

performance with a forward-looking approach to help position the UN system within the new environment. Thus, in line with the ISWE policy[13], the evaluation supports learning and accountability of the United Nations system. It also makes a contribution to global knowledge.

13. Consultations also led to a clearly defined scope for the evaluation. Specifically, it would cover:

- National capacity for both data collection and statistical analysis. During consultations, emphasis was placed on the later to ensure that the United Nations system is held accountable not just for supporting the collection of data, but also for building national capacities for analysing it and ultimately using it.
- The production, analysis and use of **official statistics**. This does not deny the importance of data collected from the private sector and civil society including big data – as recognized in the recent call for a data revolution – but is a practical response to the nature of the United Nations system in this area and the limitations of time and budget. Official statistics are aggregates of data collected or compiled by official entities with methodologies officially sanctioned and often publicly available for scrutiny.
- Capacity development in the **entire national statistical system**, i.e. all key official national agencies that undertake data collection and statistical analysis and not just the countries national statistical office (NSO).

14. The ISWE policy also helps in determining the scope of the providers of capacity support from the United Nations development system, specifically by providing two key definitions: [14]

- *System wide.* System-wide refers to all relevant entities of the United Nations development system involved in operational activities for development in a specific policy, strategy, issue, effort, area or sector at the country/regional/global level, or in the implementation of system-wide mandates. Efforts were made to capture the work of the smaller agencies as well as those playing a major role. All the efforts of these entities are covered whether the initiative was implemented by itself or jointly with others.

- *Operational activities for development.* The report of the Secretary-General on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review defines operational activities for development as: "activities that entities of the Organization carry out with the primary objective of promoting the development and welfare of developing countries."[15] They cover both longer-term development-related activities as well as those with a humanitarian assistance focus and relate to the work of those United Nations funds, programmes, specialized agencies, departments and offices which have a specific mandate in this regard. The evaluation did not assess the normative work undertaken by the UN system (for

[13] ISWE policy, para. 11, "Independent system-wide evaluation should promote learning to inform strategy and policy development, and serve as an important instrument to enhance the accountability of the UN system and its contribution to the greater good."

[14] It should be noted that these definitions are being questioned. In setting out definitions for "operational activities" and "the United Nations development system", the report of the Secretary-General on the QCPR notes that "it may be timely to consider: (a) whether the current terminology adequately reflects the expectations of member States; and (b) how to define a system charged with the delivery of the new integrated agenda" (paragraph 14). A paper was also commissioned to examine the issue: Burley, J and D. Lindores "The UN development system and its operational activities for development: updating the definitions" (February 2016).

[15] A/71/63, para. 17.

example, the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics or statistical standards) but covered the operationalization of this work (for example, promotion, guidance and monitoring implementation).

15. In this respect, the evaluation covered the work of all relevant UN agencies involved in this effort. It recognises that capacity development is not just from in-country activities but also the setting of standards, normative issues, coordination efforts, methodological guidance, etc., where the promotion of development is the primary objective. The evaluation therefore included not just activities undertaken at the country level but also at the regional and global levels in support of national statistical capacity development. The evaluation did not address sectors within the area of statistics. These evaluations should be commissioned by the agencies working in them.

16. The scope of the evaluation includes the time frame covered and given the focus on the MDGs, the evaluation covered the period from 2000. This also coincides with an increase in interest in national statistic capacities from the international community as well as the start of implementation of UN guidance on support for national statistical capacity development.[16] Inevitably, the evidence collected was largely found in the last 5 years and given the forward looking nature of the evaluation, as well as the rapid changes in the development environment of the last 15 years, the focus was on the period since 2010.

1.3 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

17. The initial design of the evaluation was closely aligned with the content and spirit of the ISWE Policy and included working closely with national evaluation systems in undertaking a series of detailed case studies. Unfortunately, although the evaluation has been considered a priority and is assessing an extremely important issue only a very small budget had been secured to undertake such an evaluation. The ISWE Policy, as well as the General Assembly resolution that made the decision on the subject of the pilot evaluations, made it clear that ISWE evaluations should only be carried out subject to the provision of sufficient extrabudgetary resources. Given the importance of this exercise and in using a proactive approach, the EMG[17] made the decision to initiate the evaluation while continuing with resource mobilization in concurrent fashion. The reality of the budget situation made a redesign of the evaluation necessary. During the redesign other resources became available which, while welcome, required constant rethinking about how to do the work within the changing budget available.

18. Promises of even more resources were made available but only for later stages of the evaluation after the fieldwork had started. The urgency to conduct fieldwork results from the need to feed into the QCPR process: for the evaluation to be useful an evaluation report needed to feed into the Economic and Social Council discussions in the first half of 2016. To ensure this deadline is achieved, the initial draft evaluation report needed to be complete by November 2015. This allowed only two months of data collection, analysis and synthesis, considerably less than would usually be available and a significant constraint on the choice of approaches. In addition, the implementation has been complicated by the outage of the UN Secretariat administrative system, UMOJA.

[16] The United Nations Statistical Commission endorsed the Declaration of Good Practices in Technical Cooperation in Statistics in its thirtieth session of 1-5 March 1999.

[17] Details on the EMG can be found in subsection 1.5 of this appendix.

19. **Methodological challenges.** Although much of the thinking in development evaluation is focused on evaluating individual projects and programmes, ISWE evaluations are among a group of evaluations that go further, to a higher level of results aggregation. What these aggregated evaluations have in common is the likelihood that the overall findings will be less precise than those identified in narrower project evaluations. ISWEs such as this evaluation are an extreme version of the aggregated evaluation and it is necessary to be realistic about what can be achieved and the limitations of making findings that hold true for the entire UN system.

20. It was noted above that this is a complex evaluation tied to the very subject of capacity development and its very nature and multiple interrelated dimensions. Added to this complexity is a number of contextual factors that makes this a complicated evaluation. These are highlighted below and their implications for the approach and methods applied are described.

- *Multiple beneficiaries of statistical capacity development at national level:* While there is a single institutional client for statistical capacity development, the National Statistical System (NSS) comprises many separate organizations in a country including and often led by the country's National Statistical Office (NSO). The NSO is usually responsible for coordinating the NSS, and the many other ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) with responsibilities for collecting and compiling data, as well as producing and disseminating national official statistics.

- *Plurality of United Nations entities and other international development organizations supporting statistics:* The support provided to capacity-building in any country by the UN system[18] involves multiple agencies, most of which have a thematic area of specialization and many of whom communicate mainly or only with particular MDAs within the statistical system. To add to this complexity, there are also many other suppliers of capacity-building besides the UN family including the World Bank, the European Commission as well as a number of major bilateral donors, other multilateral agencies, regional bodies and, in some cases, non-profit making organizations. Many of the other development partners finance large, multidimensional statistical projects.

21. **Overall approach.** The overall approach has been designed within the tight budgetary and time constraints. A more sophisticated methodology may have been possible with more of both of these inputs but a key approach has to be to combine simplicity with ensuring the impartiality, quality, credibility and utility of the evaluation. This approach can be seen through some of the core elements listed below, which aim to achieve the evaluation objectives within the defined scope.

- *Country level as the unit of analysis and the primacy of a national perspective***:** Since the focus is on national capacity it makes sense for the country level to be the unit of analysis. It is at this level where the operational activities aimed at capacity development should be best coordinated, with the national authorities taking the lead in the process. Capacity development is almost impossible without national ownership and the contribution of the UN system to helping the country achieve the MDGs is therefore best assessed from the perspective of national stakeholders. Identifying the national perspective can be an inductive approach and was complemented by direct questioning of stakeholders[19] on specific issues that have already been identified as possible factors influencing the

[18] See UN Mapping exercise conducted as part of scoping exercise which identified in excess of 30 UN agencies with a mandate to support statistics.

[19] Representatives of NSO, MDA, UN agencies, other international partners, etc. For additional details, see section 4.

contribution and quality of the UN system contribution. These assumptions were tested at the country level in a deductive manner.

- *A goal-free approach***:** Since there are no set goals for the UN system in relation to national statistical capacity development, the evaluation looked at the actual outcomes to which the UN system made a contribution and not make a judgment against a set of preconceived outcome goals. Such pre-conceived system-wide goals are very rarely established at the country level where UN system operational activities are implemented.[20] Goal-free evaluation is any evaluation being conduct without a framework of stated or predetermined goals and objectives. Each of the interventions may have such goals and objectives, but not for the UN as a whole working in a country. An exception maybe if there is an outcome in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) specifically covering this area, but these are so rare (if they exist at all) that one could not be found at the time of designing the evaluation.

  The lack of framework is not necessarily a constraint as it allows the evaluators to move away from the tunnel vision of focusing on the goals and objectives while missing some of the other outcomes of the interventions being examined. It allows the evaluators to see what is actually happening in terms of results not necessarily what it is trying to do. It makes the identification on unintended effects easier and allows the changing context to be taken into account. The lack of pre-determined results makes accountability more challenging (For what do you hold the system accountable?) but holding an organization accountable for a set of pre-determined goals that may not have been well-designed in the first place or may not take into account changing context also has its own problems. The accountability issue was addressed through the above-mentioned principle - allowing national stakeholders to let the evaluators know if the UN system interventions were good enough.

- *Multiple methods for data collection:* The evaluation used multiple methods for data collection combining (a) a series of country studies and reviews of country level evaluations with (b) desk reviews of global and regional level research and evaluations, key stakeholder interviews as well as use of administrative data where appropriate. A single analytical framework brought together the evidence to answer the evaluation questions and subquestions. These data sources were also triangulated to strengthen the quality of the evidence. In addition, country studies were used to validate (or not) self-reported data.

- *Focused on forward-looking strategic recommendations aimed at supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda:* The whole process from description of the context to data collection, analysis and synthesis of the evidence is aimed at preparing a set of forward looking strategic recommendations that will inform discussion on the role and strategy of the United Nations system in the future. It has been noted already that achieving the SDGs will require an increase in the quality and timeliness of statistics and more effective use for better policymaking as well as accountability. The evaluation includes specific questions that relate to supporting the 2030 Agenda including the key issue of national ownership and, most importantly, the balance between short-term needs for monitoring the SDGs and the need for the inherently long-term process of statistical capacity development.[21]

[20] Analysis of the body of UNDAF evaluations indicate that only a few countries had such a common outcome goal.

[21] Even if technology could lead some countries to “leapfrog” existing practices, the process of building adequate individual capacity to produce and utilize statistics is a long-term process.

22. **The evaluation questions.** Design of the evaluation questions and subquestions is aimed at addressing the objectives of the evaluation and ensure that the evaluation is aligned to its core purpose. It also takes into account the need to be realistic in terms of the budget and time constraints. Two broad evaluation questions have been identified that address the evaluative objectives (numbers 2 and 3[22]). Within each, pre-determined possible explanatory factors were examined and others highlighted as evidence is found of their importance. Evaluation criteria were used to help make evaluative judgements on the UN system contribution as well as its quality. The criteria also draw on the definition of an independent system-wide evaluation contained in the ISWE policy[23]: "it is a systematic and impartial assessment of the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the combined contributions of United Nations entities towards the achievements of collective development objectives".

23. The precise definition of each criterion was made through the subquestions and the definition reflected what the practical constraints to using them including the data available for such an aggregated evaluation. The efficiency criterion is very difficult to use in a system-wide evaluation as it so depends on individual interventions that have to be aggregated. The evaluation therefore used the coherence and degree of coordination of UN system support as a proxy for efficiency based on the assumption that a better coordinated and coherent system will result in a better use of resources in the achievement of its goals. The two evaluation questions and associated subquestions are:

- Question 1: What is the contribution of the UN system within the broader international support to national statistical capacity development?
  - What is the contribution of the UN system to national statistics capacity development outcomes? (effectiveness)
  - Is the UN system contribution likely to help national achievement of national development goals including the MDGs? (impact)
  - Where has the UN been the most and least successful and what are the comparative strengths of the UN system in this area?

- Question 2: What is the quality of the UN system contribution to national statistical capacity development?
  - Was the support to national statistical capacity development relevant to the needs of the country, taking account of resource constraints and competing priorities? (relevance)
  - What has been the degree of sustainability of UN system capacity development efforts? (sustainability)
  - How coherent and coordinated is the UN system support for national statistical capacity development? (efficiency)

24. In addition, several factors are considered important when explaining the contribution and quality of that contribution. An evaluation matrix has been prepared (annex 4) linking the evaluation sub-questions with the core areas to be explored as well as the data-collection methods. These data-collection methods are set out in the next subsection and have been designed to provide the evidence to answer the questions.

[22] The first objective is descriptive and the fourth objective is related to recommendations.
[23] Para. 16.

1.4 DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, SYNTHESIS AND VALIDATION

25. This subsection will elaborate on the data-collection methods used as well as outlining the processes of analysis, synthesis and validation of the findings. The sequencing of data-collection methods is often an important part of the evaluation design so that what is learned from one method can feed in to the other and used either to address additional questions or for validation. In the case of this evaluation, time limitations mean that all had to be conducted in parallel. Although data collection through country studies is emphasised, it is only one of a number of methods used to collect evidence to answer the evaluation questions. This evaluation made use of good quality secondary data and recognizes this as an extremely important method not only for this evaluation but also for all other system-wide evaluations given its principles of subsidiarity and efficiency. For all data-collection methods (country studies, key informant interviews and documentation review), specific guidance was prepared to help evaluators ensure a consistent approach thereby enhancing validity and reliability.

26. **Country-level data collection.** In line with the country level as the unit of analysis, the core approach to data collection was through a series of country studies. This is the most important part of the ISWE comprehensive evaluation. It was also the area that has been most affected by the limited budget and time available to conduct the evaluation. Ideas such as peer reviews[24] and large teams of mixed skills have had to be abandoned for a simpler, but nonetheless effective, approach. The evaluation included two types of country study: (a) those including in-country fieldwork: and (b) those based on a desk review and telephone interviews. A total of 15 countries was accommodated by the committed budget for 2015 and the basis for selection can be found in annex 8.

27. Both types of country study used the same analytical framework, background research, interview protocols and guidance. The major difference between the two is the nature of the interviews (in person or by phone) and the number of interviewees (20-30 per country for fieldwork including group interviews compared to less than 10 for telephone interviews). The *goal-free* nature of the evaluation means that the country study teams had to work with stakeholders to work out how the work of the UN system in the area of supporting national statistical capacity actually led to change.

28. The above-mentioned approach was not without its risks. The original idea of larger teams with expertise in all areas could not be accommodated in the budget or would have resulted in only a few countries being covered. A number of actions have been introduced to address these risks: (a) detailed country study guidance was prepared for use in all studies. The first country study was effectively a pilot of the guidance prepared for the country data collection and the lessons learned were incorporated into a revised version; (b) the guidance included a simple reporting format in the form of an evidence table corresponding to the evaluation questions, subquestions and factors; (c) the consultants conducting the country studies were briefed by the evaluation team leader and statistics specialist; and (d) the teams conducting the country studies were in contact with other team members and the senior advisers during the fieldwork to discuss emerging findings and challenges.

29. Data collection at the country level also included systematic review of evaluations that focused on multi-agency work, for example UNDAF evaluations as well as the projects funders by the MDG Trust Fund. Some project evaluations were also included. These projects provided a rich source of evidence and allowed a much wider range of countries to be included in the data-collection process. Inevitably the

[24] The *Peer Review of statistical system* in the developing world was pioneered by PARIS21 over 10 years ago.

evaluations did not cover all the subquestions of this evaluation or, where they did, did not place equal emphasis on all. This was taken into account in the analysis stage.

30. **Data collection at regional and global levels.** The use of a comprehensive survey was considered but rejected for a number or reasons (time, budget, risk of low response rates, etc.); however, most importantly because it was not considered the most effective tool for answering the often complex and multi-dimensional questions being asked in this evaluation. Nonetheless, a small set of core interview questions was devised and was used in country studies and in telephone interviews for a larger range of relevant stakeholders where adequate time was available.

- *Key informant interviews:* The evaluation team interviewed key informants beyond those interviewed as part of the country case studies, including: (a) Key UN system agencies, funds, programmes, divisions and offices involved in national statistical capacity development (including regional commissions and the UN Statistics Division) or in coordination of UN operational activities [for example, the Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO)]; and (b) Other international agencies working in the area, such as the World Bank, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21). The interviews were semi-structured based on the same protocol developed for the country study interviews.

- *Document review and secondary data:* There is a large amount of information on national statistical capacity development, including some important analysis and research. The relevant documents were identified by members of the evaluation team and were reviewed in order to find any supporting evidence to answer the evaluation questions and subquestions.

- *Qualitative review of existing evaluations:* Good quality evaluations can be a rich source of evidence for an ISWE. A wide range of evaluations from the UN system was examined (not including the country level evaluations described above). Relevant data were extracted and analysed using the same overall analytical framework.

31. **Summary of data collection and some limitations.** The evaluation did not draw on six in-depth country studies only. Clearly, such a narrow evidence base could not be generalized across the UN system. Rather it undertook a total of 16 country studies and also examined other resources at the country level such as global evaluations. These were found to be an extremely important source of evidence. Table 1 below summarizes the sources of data and indicates the annex where further information can be found :

Table 1: Overview of data-collection methods

Group	Sub-group	Number	Annex
Country Studies	Country visit	6	5
	Desk review and telephone	10	
Review of country level evaluations	UNDAF evaluations	20	6
	Other evaluations	6	
Review of global/regional evaluations	UN evaluations	8	7
	Non-UN evaluations	4	
Interviews with key stakeholder organizations	United Nations	19	8
	Partners	8	

32. Each method used the same framework of evaluation questions and subquestions, which facilitated analysis of the data and triangulation between methods and sources. Not all data-collection methods

were able to answer each of the subquestions. For example, while many of the existing evaluations that were examined addressed issues of effectiveness, some did not examine efficiency or sustainability issues in the way used by this evaluation. Nonetheless, a minimum level of data was collected to ensure the rigour of the findings. After identification of the findings, a synthesis process resulted in a small number of strategic conclusions and recommendations for taking the United Nations system forward in this area.

33. The main methodological challenge in the ISWE is to say something about the United Nations system as a whole when in reality there will inevitably be a significant variation in performance and a multitude of factors that can explain that performance in each context. This has led to the use of language such as 'generally', 'often' or 'does not always' when referring to what the United Nations system does or how it performs. This may not be the precise language that can be found in a project evaluation but was inevitable in an evaluation looking at 30 entities working in over 100 countries within the time and budget constraints of this evaluation.[25]

34. The data collection led to some limitations. Firstly, there was inadequate coverage of fragile States, partly due to the resource constraints described earlier. Secondly, the evaluation did not adequately explore the role of the UN system in addressing capacity issues at the subnational level, although where evidence was found it was introduced into the assessment.

35. **Data analysis.** The country case studies, supplemented by desk-research studies and interviews and questions across UN system organizations and partner organizations were reported on using the evaluation questions contained in the Evaluation Matrix. The aggregation and synthesis across all data sources were carried to answer the broad evaluation questions. The key was to have all data collection undertaken using a single analytical framework that is linked directly to the evaluation questions and subquestions.

36. The process of analysis brought the multiple strands of evidence together as a coherent whole to answer the evaluation questions. The standard analytical framework developed for this study facilitated this effort and allowed findings to be drawn directly from all sources of data to form a single finding, or multiple findings as appropriate, in answer to an evaluation subquestion. Triangulation of evidence collected from different sources was also a key element of the validation and synthesis process. Most importantly, it allowed the combination of data from the country level with global level evidence.

37. The various sources of evidence were weighted with greater emphasis given to in-depth country studies and independent evaluations. This is especially important for the documentation review where a wide variety of documents in the process, some with more validity (for example, high-quality independent evaluations) than others (for example self, assessments). A minimum body of evidence was required to make a finding with additional information from lower weighted data used as illustration or to add another layer of triangulation.

38. **Synthesis of findings to identify the key messages and the way forward.** A second part of the synthesis is to interpret the body of findings to reach strategic conclusions and then recommendations. To facilitate this process a synthesis workshop was held bringing together the core evaluation team, the senior advisers, Chair of the EMG, EMG members and the ISWE Coordination Secretary. The workshop

[25] This as noted above greatly affect the design and conduct and capacity for generalizability and conclusions. Future evaluation with such limitations should focus on a smaller subset of countries and also apply the principles of analytic generalizability.

included (a) a presentation of the findings and the evidence behind them; (b) a discussion on the findings, the body of evidence and the language of the findings statements; (c) a session to identify a set of conclusions; and (d) a session to prepare a set of actionable recommendations. The outputs of the workshop fed directly into the initial draft of the evaluation report.

39. **The validation process.** Following the synthesis workshop described in the previous subsection, a first complete draft of the report was prepared. This emerging findings and conclusions were presented to a side event at the 2016 meeting of the United Nations Statistical Commission where participants were asked for validation. Towards the end of the evaluation process a simple validation survey was sent to producers and users of statistics in 131 programme countries. The survey presented the evaluation findings and asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed. Seventy-five (75) fully completed responses were received from 41 countries. Eighty per cent of total respondents were producers and 20 per cent were users of statistics. The results of this survey validated the findings but also indicated the wide variation in perceptions about the performance of the United Nations system in this area. The findings inevitably do not apply to all United Nations systems entities in all their work, in all contexts. Rather they represent a statement of an issue that is common enough across the United Nations system that it deserves attention and action to address it.

1.5 MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

40. The management of the evaluation followed the ISWE policy with modifications consistent with the realities for conducting an effective and efficient evaluation. The evaluation was conducted under the leadership of a JIU Inspector who chaired an EMG. The EMG was established in April 2015 and comprised staff members of the evaluation offices of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The JIU Chair and EMG members are accountable for the quality of the evaluation and its roles included ensuring impartiality, enhancing technical rigour and exercising quality assurance on all aspects of the evaluation.

41. The EMG was supported in day-to-day management and administration by the JIU Secretariat and the ISWE Coordination Secretariat. Following a stakeholder mapping exercise, firstly an ad hoc advisory group and later a Key Stakeholder Reference Group (KSRG) were put in place in April.[26] Its main role was to provide substantive and strategic comments on the draft evaluation report in order to enhance quality and utility

42. **The evaluation team.** As set out in the ISWE policy, the evaluation was conducted by independent evaluators[27] representing the evaluation team. The team was divided into two groups:

- *Core Evaluation Team:* The actual conduct of the evaluation was led by an Evaluation Team Leader, supported by a Senior Statistician. The core team was responsible for preparing the Inception Paper and the data-collection guidance; managing the different data-collection initiatives, including the

[26] While the EMG and KSRG were being officially organized, an ad hoc advisory group was established to start the evaluation. It had membership from key stakeholders (based on a stakeholder mapping) and from the evaluation offices of UN system organizations.
[27] ISWE policy, para. 48.

country studies and preparing the draft and final evaluation reports. The Core Evaluation Team worked under the guidance and quality assurance of the Chair of the EMG and received substantive input from members of the EMG. Two additional consultants were used to support fieldwork in the country studies and support background research.

- *Senior Expert Advisory Team:* Two senior advisers covering expertise in statistics, statistical capacity development and use of statistics for policymaking were contracted to work on an intermittent basis and as needed. The senior advisers participated in consultations on the focus of the evaluation in the early part of 2015 and prepared background documents on scope and approach. They reviewed key documentation, participated in validation and synthesis workshop, supported country studies and provided advice to the evaluation team when needed.

43. **Implementation phases and dates.** Table 2 below shows the main milestones and the target dates for completion (a more detailed time frame can be found in annex X). Implementation of the evaluation can be divided into five phases largely reflecting the reality of what happened in the past but also talking into account financial flows.

Table 2: Implementation time frame

Phase	Time frame
Phase 1: Stakeholder consultations, scoping and initial design	April-July 2015
Phase 2: Redesign and recruitment of evaluation team	August-October 2015
Phase 3: Data collection and analysis	November 2015-April 2016
Phase 4: Validation, finalization of the evaluation report and publication	April-June 2016
Phase 5: Dialogue, presentation and decision-making	May-October 2016
Phase 6: Dissemination and presentation to Economic and Social Council	September–December 2016

SECTION 2: NATIONAL STATISTICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

44. Capacity development[28] is an essential approach of the United Nations development system and has been so for at least the last two decades.[29] The 2013 QCPR stressed that "capacity development is a core function of the United Nations development system and one of the key interrelated principles that must be applied at the country level".[30] The latter part refers to the fact that capacity development is one of the five programming principles[31] of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the strategic programme framework that describes the collective response of the UN system to national development priorities. These programming principles[32] constitute a guide for UNDAF design and implementation and are set apart from priorities and goals, which are influenced heavily by contextual factors. For the UN, a principle gives a basis for reasoning and action and for the UNDAF, this means a principle is universal, applying equally to all people in all countries and relevant to government-UN cooperation, everywhere and always.

45. The focus of this evaluation is on **national** statistical capacity development. This subsection answers the question of what and why – what capacity are we talking about and why is it important. What is the national statistical system – the broad system that brings together the suppliers, producers and users of statistics. The second subsection describes a national statistical system in more detail focusing on production, followed by a section that described the change in national capacities from the production side. It will also close with a subsection describing why its importance is increasing as we enter the post-MDG era, the 2030 Agenda, the sustainable development goals and the new environment that resulted in a call for a data revolution for sustainable development. Firstly, presented immediately below is a subsection on what capacity and capacity development mean and a framework for analysing them.

2.1 CAPACITY, CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND STATISTICS

46. **Definitions and a framework.** Although capacity and capacity development are widely used terms in the context of international development the precise definition are less clear and often contested.[33] The UN Development Group (UNDG)[34] uses the following definition of capacity development which is consistent with that of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) [35]:

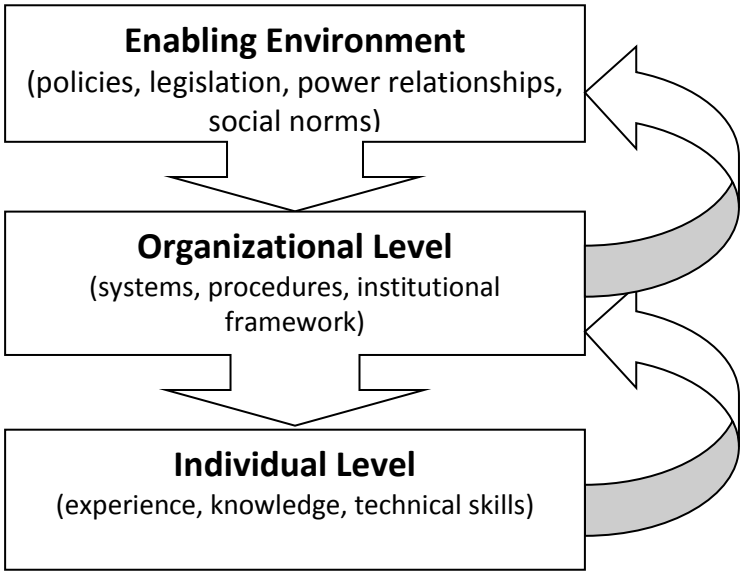
> *the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully; and capacity development is understood as the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, adapt and maintain capacity over time*.

[28] Capacity-building and capacity development are sometimes used interchangeably. This evaluation uses the term capacity development. For a comparison of the two, see UNDP Capacity Development Practice Note 2008.
[29] At least since 1995 according to the chronology of General Assembly resolution set out in annex C of Bester, A. *Capacity Development.* A report prepared for the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review. United Nations, New York. 2015
[30] A/RES/67/226, para. 60.
[31] UNDG Guidance Note: Application of the Programming Principles to the UNDAF, 2010.
[32] Capacity development is one of two enabling principles (the other is results-based management) that offer the means to make the three normative principles (human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability) operational in the UNDAF.
[33] Peter Morgan writing about evaluating capacity development identifies eight and recognizes both difference and convergence in the definitions. Donaldson, S. *et al* (eds.) "Emerging Practices in International Development Evaluation", Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
[34] The role of UNDG Is to enhance the coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations development system and in order to do so, provides guidance for the development and implementation of UNDAFs.
[35] UNDG Capacity Assessment Methodology: User Guide for national capacity development, February 2008.

47. To unpack the above-mentioned, UNDG developed a typology of capacities as impacting at the following levels: (a) the individual; (b) the organization; and (c) the enabling environment.[36] These are illustrated in Figure 1 below. This view of capacity development suggests that capacity resides not only within individuals but also at the level of organizations and within the enabling environment.[37] Capacity exists at these interrelated and complementary levels that combine to form an integrated system. At the first level is the enabling environment, which includes capacities related to policies, legislation and social norms, all of which govern the mandates, priorities, modes of operation and civic engagement across different parts of society. These factors determine the rules of the game for interaction between, and among, organizations. Individuals and organizations do not function in isolation but are part of a broader system, which facilitates or hampers their existence and development.

48. The second level of capacity is the organizational level comprising the policies, procedures and frameworks that allow an organization to operate and deliver on its mandate and that enable individual capacities to connect and achieve goals. Finally, capacity is defined at the individual level, where it refers to the skills, experience and knowledge that are vested in a person. One of the core resources of an organization is human resources; each and every person is endowed with a mix of capacities that allow the individual to perform, whether at home, at work or in society at large. Some of these are acquired through training and formal education, others through learning-by-doing. Even though the above-mentioned concepts are drawn from donor documentation[38] it is interesting to note that such disaggregation of the concept does not always appear in strategy and policy documentation. It is, however, useful in the context of analysis in this evaluation as can be seen in subsection 2.3 and the model of understanding national statistical capacity development.

Figure 1: Levels of capacity: a systemic approach



[37] The 2008 UNDP Capacity Development Practice Note states that within the literature on capacity development, variations on the basic distinction among these three levels can be found. For example, the organizational level is sometimes referred to as the institutional level and the enabling environment is sometimes referred to as the institutional or societal level. The definitions of the various levels used in this subsection are drawn from the practice note.
[38] Specifically, OECD DAC and UNDP.

49. An alternative typology was used in the Secretary-General's 2016 QCPR report: (a) technical and sectoral capacities; and (b) the functional capacities of individuals and organizations (the cross-cutting capacities that enable the use of technical skills). Since some functional capacities could also be defined as technical, in this report the terms vertical and horizontal capacity development are used instead of technical and functional respectively. The question of whose capacity is developed is described in the next subsection: the national statistical system.

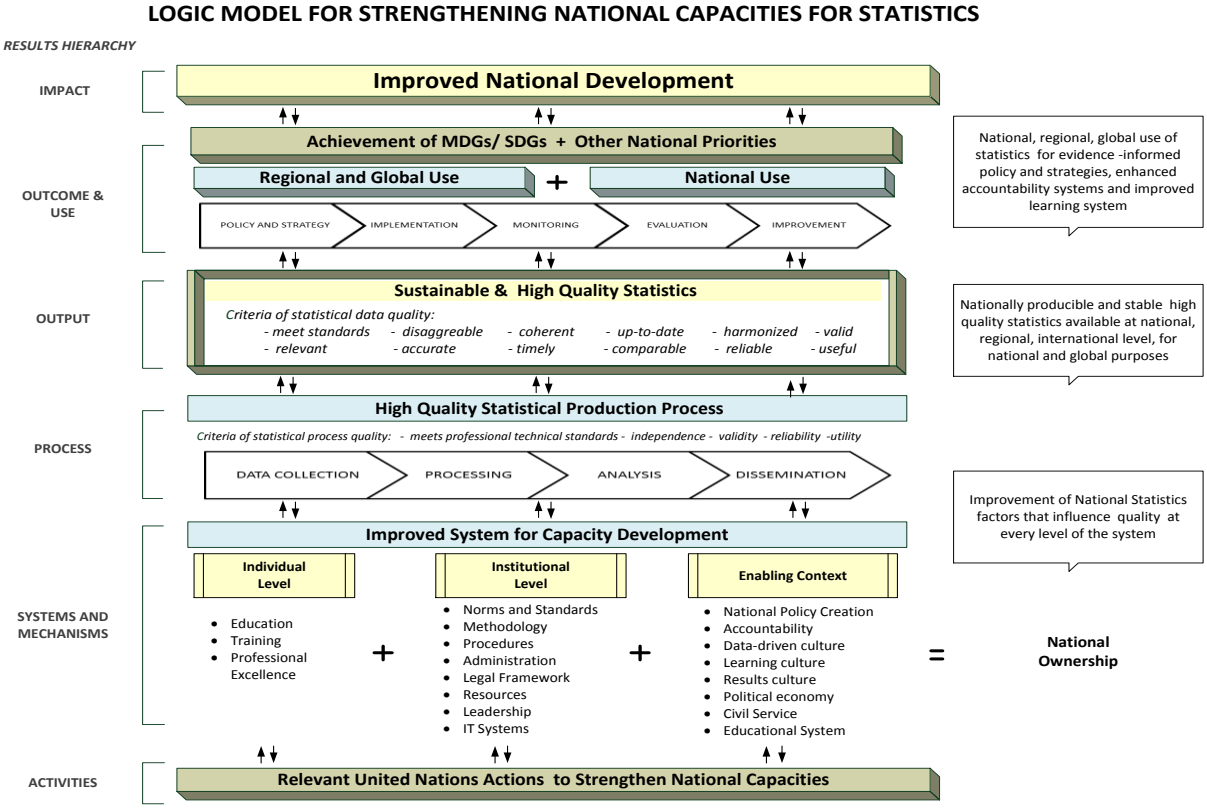
50. **National Statistical Capacity Development and why it is important.** Making use of the UNDG generic model of capacity development to a National Statistical System (NSS), we can describe national statistical capacity development (NSCD) as the process of changes at the levels of the individuals, organizations and enabling environments in an NSS through which an NSS obtains, strengthens and maintains its capabilities to set and achieve its own statistics development objectives over time. Most, but not all, countries have an NSS that produces economic statistics (national accounts, balance of payments, government financials), socio-demographic statistics (population, health, education, labour), agriculture and environmental statistics, and multi-domain statistics on behalf of the national government.

51. Each NSS is clearly a system made up of "defining characteristics of a system include structures of constituent parts, relationships among them, a driving force and integration".[39] Each NSS is also part of the global statistical system, with the United Nations Statistical Commission at the apex of this global statistical community. It is a system of producers, suppliers, users (policymakers, citizens and international organizations) as well as international organizations providing support to the system and training institutes. The primary raison d'être of an NSS) is the production of official statistics that portray economic, social and environmental conditions, as well as changes in these conditions within a country. These official statistics serve as inputs for debate, decision-making and monitoring of national development plans, programs and policies. As in any organization, an NSS has scope for improving its statistical production processes so that official statistics can be better fit for use. A critical challenge in national statistical capacity development (NSCD) are competing demands placed upon NSSs by various stakeholders, including the national governments, other national data users as well as the international community.

52. **Why NSCD is important.** As there are many capacity-building activities impacting on any NSS, no single theory of change can be universally used. Capacity development activities are each intended to produce a variety of outputs and outcomes in an NSS, all leading to an impact of increasing capacity in an NSS to produce more and better official statistics which meet the needs of users. The implicit theory of change or logic in all capacity-building activities expects that by means of this variety of inputs (and all or some will be required depending on individual country needs), better quality and more national statistics will be produced. These better official statistics will be available for use in a policy context, and as input to policy debates. The intervention logic often goes further; it assumes that the increased supply and use of better quality statistics will result in more effective and responsive policymaking. The title of this evaluation project even suggests that this better policymaking will contribute to the achievement of better development goals, so that ultimately, better statistics translates to better development outcomes. Figure 2 illustrates the logic model. There are, of course, some risks to this logic model, given factors in the political economy that can work against these outcomes.

[39] Kiregyera, Ben, The emerging data revolution in Africa: strengthening the statistics, policy and decision-making chain, SUN PReSS, Kindle edition.

Figure 2: Logical Model for strengthening national statistical capacities



53. The nature of demand for statistics (and therefore demand for national statistical capacity development) is broader than for other areas where the international community engages with partners at the country level. It goes beyond national users of statistics to include demand related to global/regional reporting as well as for internal donor monitoring of development interventions:

- National policymakers need statistics to help them identify areas where policies need to be developed (for example, by monitoring trends), for more in-depth analysis that will lead to policy reform and for evaluating if the policy reforms work and why.

- National citizens need statistics to help hold policymaker accountable as well as for information about the society in which they live. Statistics will also help citizens advocate for change, often through civil society groups and will also help citizens in the private sector make better business decisions. The first of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics related to this area of use:

  Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the Government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens' entitlement to public information.[40]

54. **Competing demands for statistics.** It is not, however, only policymakers and citizens who constitute the demand for statistics. The production of statistics faces further demands, often competing, that will influence the pattern of production and the priorities of the national producers and users:

[40] A/68/261.

- International organizations for their own monitoring, programme design, etc.
- Advocacy by international organizations
- Global/regional monitoring

2.2 ELEMENTS OF A NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

55. An NSS consists of various government bodies, typically a National Statistics Office (NSO) which serves as the core statistics producer, and other government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) which have the responsibility of producing and disseminating official statistics in specific sectors or domains, e.g. agriculture, banking and finance, education, environment, finance, ICT, immigration and population, labour, trade, treasury.

56. Official statistics, the main products of an NSS, provide a portrait of a country's socio-economic conditions. These official statistics are aggregates of data sourced from primary data collections (including censuses, surveys and administrative reporting systems) or from secondary data compilations. Across time, official statistics describe a country's performance in meeting national development goals and global aspirations, such as the MDGs and the post-2015 SDGs.

57. For official statistics to be fit for use whether for monitoring global or national goals, they have to be ultimately judged by statistics users as being adequate, relevant, reliable, timely and accessible. The value of official statistics crucially depends upon their quality, but the quality of statistics is not easy to ascertain directly, so stakeholders of an NSS will need to have confidence in statistics producers and particularly in the methods and standards employed in producing official statistics. For instance, a key principle behind the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is that countries compile and publish descriptions of methods and procedures about data from several sources, as well as specific plans to improve data coverage, quality and integrity. A proper enabling environment that NSSs should have is summarized by the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (UNFPOS)[41]. The endorsement of the UNFPOS by the General Assembly in 29 January 2014, during its 68th session, provides the due political recognition of official statistics as a public good. The UNFPOS gives importance to (technical) independence, objectivity and professionalism in an NSS, under which all official statistics[42] should be produced.

58. In contrast to non-official statistics (i.e. those produced by the private sector) the supply and demand of which is influenced by market conditions, official statistics are public goods.[43] The use of official

[41] As described on the website of the UN Statistics Division, the UNFPOS was first adopted in 1991 by the Conference of European Statisticians (CES/702) and subsequently by its parent body the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE); it was then meant to provide a general framework for the organization of NSSs in Central Europe following the transition of Central European countries from centrally planned economies to market economies. Statisticians in other parts of the world realized that these Fundamental Principles had a wider significance.

[42] The UNFPOS describes official statistics as providing an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the Government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation.

[43] For a discussion about official statistics as public goods, as well as issues surrounding the demand and supply of official statistics, see Round, J. (2014) 'Assessing the demand and supply of statistics in the developing world: some critical factors', PARIS21 Secretariat, OECD Development Cooperation Directorate, October, ; and Tendulkar, S (2009) 'Demand for Better Statistics and Use of Data', PARIS21 Secretariat, OECD Development Cooperation Directorate, October.

statistics by one data user does not detract from their use by another user. When official statistics are disseminated and made publicly available by an NSS, it is difficult to exclude other users from making use of these statistics. NSS stakeholders also keep requiring additional official statistics, especially further disaggregation of statistics at finer geographic granularity, but some official statistics particularly those sourced from sample surveys were designed to have reliability only up to national, or regional levels given the costs of data collection. Many of these NSS stakeholders will demand more official statistics but will not pay for the huge costs of extra statistics production, so the demand for official statistics outpaces their supply. Thus, unlike non-official statistics that are more likely to be marketed, official statistics do not have functioning commercial markets. The provision of official statistics is ultimately a core responsibility of governments, constituting the primary stakeholder of NSSs. Decision makers in government require official statistics as inputs for policy formulation, programme implementation and service delivery, as well as for monitoring and evaluation.

59. In an NSS, the NSO typically is in charge of producing socio-economic or general-purpose statistics, which are aggregates of data sourced from either primary data collections or compilations of secondary data. The head of the NSO, usually given the title Chief Statistician, is viewed as the highest national authority on statistical matters. The Chief Statistician usually reports to a minister, often either the minister of national planning or the minister of finance or commerce, who is politically responsible for (national) official statistics. The MDAs, including the Central Bank, produce official statistics of concern to sectors (such as agriculture, banking and finance, education, environment, health, and labour). Each of these MDAs may have a statistical unit that generates statistics as a by-product of some administrative reporting system. Frequently, the Central Bank is an independent component of the NSS responsible specifically for monetary and banking statistics as well as the balance of payments. Each statistics producer in the NSS defines its own statistical activities, balancing demand for information by its stakeholders with available financial and human resources, as well as statistical infrastructure available to it.

60. NSOs may have the status of an autonomous government body or can be part of a ministry, such as the ministry of national planning, economic affairs, trade, finance or the interior. [44] In addition, there is considerably variation regarding to whom the chief statistician may report within a ministry or supervisory body; the chief statistician may report to the minister himself/herself, a permanent secretary, a general director, or advisers in the ministry or NSO supervisory body. In some countries, NSOs also have special additional functions that are not part of statistics production *per se*. Examples include economic forecasting and economic analysis for the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (*Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques*) of France; civil registration system for the Philippine Statistics Authority; and a support function in the elections for the Federal Statistics Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt*) of Germany.

61. While the structure of an NSS may be classified into a centralized system (a single institution model) or a decentralized one, this typology is deficient as no NSS is totally centralized or totally decentralized. In practice, NSSs are in a continuum often a result of national history, culture and legal traditions with a few near the centralized end (such as Australia, Canada and Netherlands) or near the decentralized end (Japan, United States of America), but many NSSs are somewhere in between the extremes. Even in

[44] United Nations (2013). Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Background Document. forty-fourth session of the UN Statistical Commission.

highly centralized NSSs, the MDAs usually play a significant role in the production of official statistics. The UN Handbook of Statistical Organization[45] states that:

> *Nowhere in the world has a country vested in a single institution the responsibility to collect all the official statistics of a nation. Rather, statistical systems exist on a continuum. At one end of the continuum stand those nations in which a single institution is responsible for most of the official statistics…. However, even on this end of the continuum the collection of some official statistics is the responsibility of others. … The country most representative of the other end of the continuum is probably the United States of America, which has numerous statistical agencies that are, for the most part, devoted to particular subject matters. A reference to a centralized or decentralized system generally indicates a system that is nearer one end of the continuum.*

62. Data producers in an NSS owe their establishment, the organization of administrative structures and statistical operations to a legal framework, which can vary considerably across countries. In some countries, the operations of an NSS are drawn from a single Statistics Act or Law. In other countries, NSOs and MDAs fulfil their responsibilities to produce official statistics owing to specific legal mandates (such as the Central Bank Law for a central bank). Results of the 2012 UNSD Global Survey on the Implementation of the UNFPOS, indicate that 119 out of 126 NSOs have a Statistics Law, while among the 7 that do not, the majority are governed by government decrees, orders and regulations, with 2 of these pointing out that a Statistics Law was, as of the survey period, in the process of being drafted.

63. The legal frameworks of the NSS, their contents and the ways these statistical legislations are implemented provide an indication of the statistical capacity of an NSS, i.e., whether there is a sufficient enabling environment for producing timely, reliable and quality official statistics that are fit for use. While there can be no single approach to the development of statistical legislation, a Statistics Law, if there is one, defines the main actors of the NSS as well their rights, responsibilities, accountabilities and relationships with each other. These main actors in the NSS, include: (a) the minister who is politically responsible for the national official statistics; (b) the NSO and its staff, led by the Chief Statistician; (c) the MDAs; and (d) data providers (especially respondents in primary data-collection activities). The legal framework for official statistics production essentially identifies the authority and powers of statistics producers in an NSS, and states an accountability framework, i.e., the obligations of statistics producers, such as publishing the aggregated results of data collections and protecting the confidentiality of information collected from respondents in primary data collections. The 2012 UNSD Global Survey on Implementation of the UNFPOS also points out that in 20 cases, the Statistics Law only covers the responsibilities and accountabilities of the NSO and not MDAs.

64. The Statistics Law dictates what statistics producers are expected to do with the information that data providers submit to these producers; it also asks respondents in statistical inquiries to comply with the NSS's demands for information, and in exchange for intrusion upon their privacy rights, the NSS is required to safeguard the confidentiality of the information provided by respondents. If respondents do not comply, they are subject to certain sanctions; however, if the statistics producer (particularly the NSO or relevant agency conducting primary data collection) breaks this commitment to data confidentiality, sanctions are meted out. Ideally the governance in an NSS, as provided by statistical legislation, should be

[45] United Nations (2003). Handbook of Statistical Organization, Third Edition: The Operation and Organization of a Statistical Agency (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/88).

characterized by technical autonomy, objectivity, integrity, professionalism, relevance and responsiveness

65. **National statistical resources.** The most vital assets of any organization, especially an NSS, are its human resources. The capability of an NSS, in particular the NSO, crucially depends on both the number of its human resources made available to deliver its functions as well as the calibre of such staff members.

66. Since official statistics are public goods, NSSs are supposed to be largely financed by national governments, with the development community providing occasional support. Budgets for statistical activities could be accounted for, and it is likely to be a meagre share of both government expenditures and the gross domestic product (GDP): in the Philippines, for instance, it is about one twentieth of 1 per cent of GDP in regular years when censuses are not conducted. Support from government to finance statistics has not been at the top of budget priorities, partly because of political economy factors. Processes for the provision of budgets are typically 'one size fits all' and it can be difficult for budget ministries to justify costs for statistics production and investments on statistics. Budget managers may become overwhelmed by the costs of data-collection activities for measurement and monitoring of hunger and child nutrition (either through weighing of heights and weights of children, or through measurement of food consumption), and might wonder whether or not these costs may be better used for actual policies and programmes to improve child nutrition and reduce hunger. Thus, statistics producers in NSSs have found themselves having to deal with substantial "need deficits," i.e., gaps between required and approved budgets from government. Statistics units of MDAs likely resort to constantly requesting other units within their respective MDAs for budgets from programs and projects under these agencies to supplement funding for data collection.

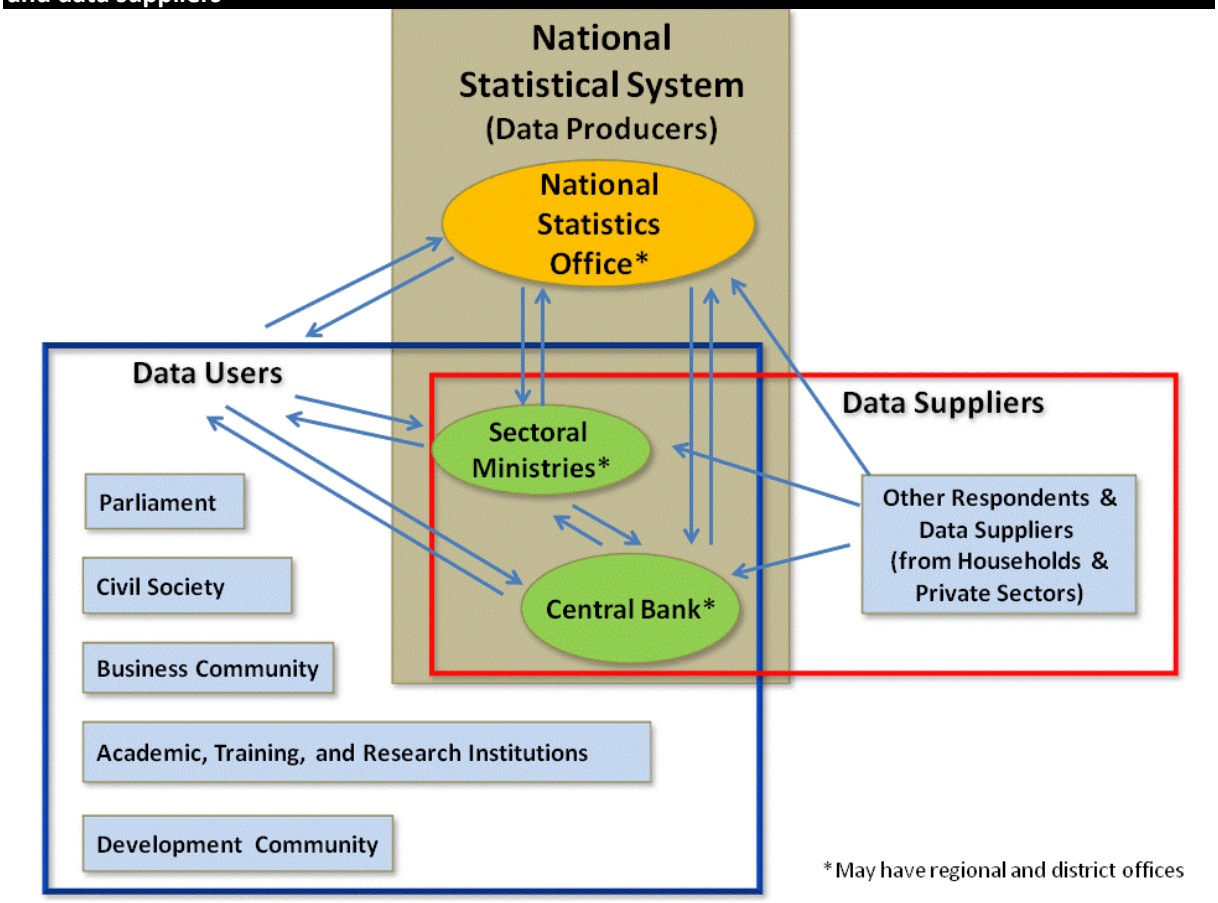
67. In any organization, the office environment in which one works (from the structural and physical security conditions, to the level of accommodation in office space, to the level of adequacy of furniture) affects the quality of work done. This is especially true of statistics producers in an NSS. ITC equipment, both hardware, such as computer workstations and servers, and statistical software as well as access to the internet are essential in statistical offices for data processing, data analysis and data dissemination, as well as for the conduct of methodological research. In this day and age, massive open online courses (MOOCs) and other distance learning courses offered by international agencies also allow statistical human resources to keep update with current trends in statistical thinking, processing and analysis. New data sources, including big data (which include tsunami of data from digital exhaust from electronic gadgets, internet search/social media, sensors and tracking devices) would need to be accessed by statistics producers of NSS as alternative sources of statistics, especially to meet growing requirements for statistical information in both national and international development monitoring.

68. **National Statistical Coordination.** In any NSS, coordination is required to enable effectiveness and efficiency in the production of official statistics. Figure 1 sets out a generic model that may not represent the way very national statistical system works. Many NSSs are highly dominated by an NSO or some other central body that is responsible for coordination and other institutional arrangements among data producers in an NSS. Results of the 2012 UNSD Global Survey on Implementation of the UNFPOS suggest that statistical coordination is implemented through legal frameworks, interagency committees and country statistical programmes. Interagency committees serve as arenas for the discussion of specific statistical issues, e.g. definitions, standards and methods. National accounts compilation can also serve as a framework for coordination. NSOs, even when they do not compile the national accounts, typically play

a major role in statistical coordination, in some cases, providing approval of questionnaires and methodologies, as well as serving clearinghouse responsibilities for the conduct of statistical activities. Statistical coordination can be a challenge, a task made even more challenging by shortcomings in legal frameworks.

69. Data producers need to coordinate with each other, with their data suppliers and with data users (see Figure 1). Data producers require the cooperation of all data suppliers, within government agencies, in the private sector and among households. Relationships must also be developed and managed by data producers with their data users including decision makers within government, the development community, the academic and research community, and the public at large, who ultimately judge if the official statistics produced by the NSS are fit for use. Sectoral ministries and the Central Bank may themselves be data users or data suppliers of the NSO, especially for the production of the national accounts. This type of statistical coordination of the NSO with other statistics producers is called horizontal coordination, to differentiate this with vertical coordination of central offices of the NSO and MDAs with their field offices. In the case of countries under a federal form of government, in addition to having a centralized or de-centralized (by sector) organization at the federation level, there can also be autonomous statistical organizations producing official statistics for regional requirements, with vertical coordination also critical between the federal statistics organization and the regional statistical offices.

Figure 3: Coordination Framework in a National Statistical System involving data producers, data users and data suppliers



70. While centralized and decentralized NSSs have their respective strengths and limitations, (internal or external) coordination mechanisms are important to ensure that outcomes of various data collections are

comparable or can be related in some meaningful way through statistical standards on concepts, nomenclatures, definitions and classification systems as well as by having harmonized sampling frames. In agricultural statistics, for instance, the term crop area may refer to gross area, net area, planted area, harvested area, etc., therefore a standardization of definitions is crucial. In addition, coordination is critical to avoid duplication of statistical activities and minimizing response burden on data suppliers. Official statistics have to be disseminated, including metadata (i.e. data on data), and these dissemination practices also need to be coordinated to constantly improve the image of official statistics and the NSS.

71. Non-official sources of data, including various types of big data (telecom data, social media, sensors, etc.) can also be used to fill specific data gaps. The UNFPOS states that official statistics can be from all sources of data. This is an area that is changing and in need of more study but in many countries, the severe lack of financial resources allocated to the statistical sector mean that harnessing the resources of the private sector's resources may help contribute to achieving national statistical goals.

72. **Statistics and the capacity development framework.** Table 3 brings together a framework of different areas of national statistical capacity development with the three level framework of capacity development:

Table 3: Areas of NSS capacity

Area	Description	Individual	Institutional	Enabling Environment
Legal framework	Establishing a statistics law and adjustment to other legislation as appropriate.			X
Statistical strategy and programme	Development of a medium-term NSDS or similar.		X	X
Coordination mechanisms	Information sharing, fora for dialogue (including producers/users)		X	
Statistic-specific business processes	Such as the general statistics business process model	X	X	
Generic management functions	Horizontal skills and institutional frameworks that cut across all activities in the public administration	X	X	
Thematic statistical skills	Related to a specific standard or issue	X		
General statistical skills	Data collection, sample design, etc.	X		

2.3 TRENDS IN NATIONAL STATISTICAL CAPACITY

73. Beyond defining NSC and the NSS, it is important to have a metric of statistical capacity and diagnose changes in statistical capacities among NSSs across time through the lens of the metric. There has been significant work on identifying appropriate metrics to assess national statistical capacity development but in this subsection, three different approaches are used to provide a sense of the change in capacity over time: (a) the World Bank Statistical Capacity Index; (b) the ability of a country to monitor the MDGs: and (c) compliance with global standards, specifically the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

74. **World Bank Statistical Capacity Index (SCI).** One measure of statistical capacity of NSSs which is publicly available is the World Bank's Statistical Capacity Index (SCI), a composite indicator of twenty-five variables that summarizes three dimensions of an NSS:

(a) Source data: Five indicators in this dimension measure are based on the periodicity of agricultural and population censuses, as well as poverty and health surveys, and the completeness of vital registration coverage.
(b) Methodology: Ten indicators in this dimension measure the availability of statistics and the adherence to the internationally recommended standards and methods. Indicators focus mainly on economic and financial statistics, such as the availability of import and export price indices, the rebasing of the national accounts base year and the Consumer Price Index base year, external debt reporting status in the World Bank's Debtor Reporting System, the adoption of the latest two editions of the Balance of Payments manual and subscription to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
(c) Periodicity and Timeliness of Statistics: Ten indicators in this dimension measure the availability and frequency of key socio-economic official statistics, namely, selected Millennium Development Goal indicators as well as per capita GDP growth.

75. For each dimension of the SCI, a country is scored against specific criteria, using information available from the World Bank, IMF, United Nations, UNESCO and WHO. A composite score for each dimension and an overall score combining all three dimensions are derived for each country on a scale of 0-100. A score of 100 indicates that the country meets all the criteria.[46]

76. Trends in the SCI across continents/regions from 2005 to 2009 and from 2010 to 2015 are shown in Table 4. It can be readily observed that the SCI scores have been increasing across the globe during these periods, which suggests that NSSs have generally made improvements on how official statistics are collected, compiled, disseminated and reported on to international agencies.

Table 4: Average Statistical Capacity Indicator (SCI) scores for 148 countries: 2005-2009; 2010-2015

Continent/Region	Data Source		Methodology		Periodicity		Statistical Capacity Index Score	
	2005-2009	2010-2015	2005-2009	2010-2015	2005-2009	2010-2015	2005-2009	2010-2015
Africa	54.6	55.43	41.44	44.8	77.52	78.58	57.85	59.61
Asia	69	68.47	57.83	58.38	80.63	82.02	69.15	69.62
Europe	83.29	83.1	77.29	81.31	81.38	84.17	80.65	82.86
Latin America & Caribbean	67.35	68.98	60.32	62.8	82.95	82.35	70.21	71.37
Micronesia	20	20	24	30	52.67	51.67	32.22	33.89
Oceania	36.44	41.3	34	38.33	63.26	61.05	44.57	46.89
All regions	**62.52**	**63.33**	**52.74**	**55.33**	**78.8**	**79.53**	**64.69**	**66.07**

Source: World Bank (http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/data-on-statistical-capacity)
Note: Averages obtained only for countries with complete assessments across the years to ensure comparability of aggregates.

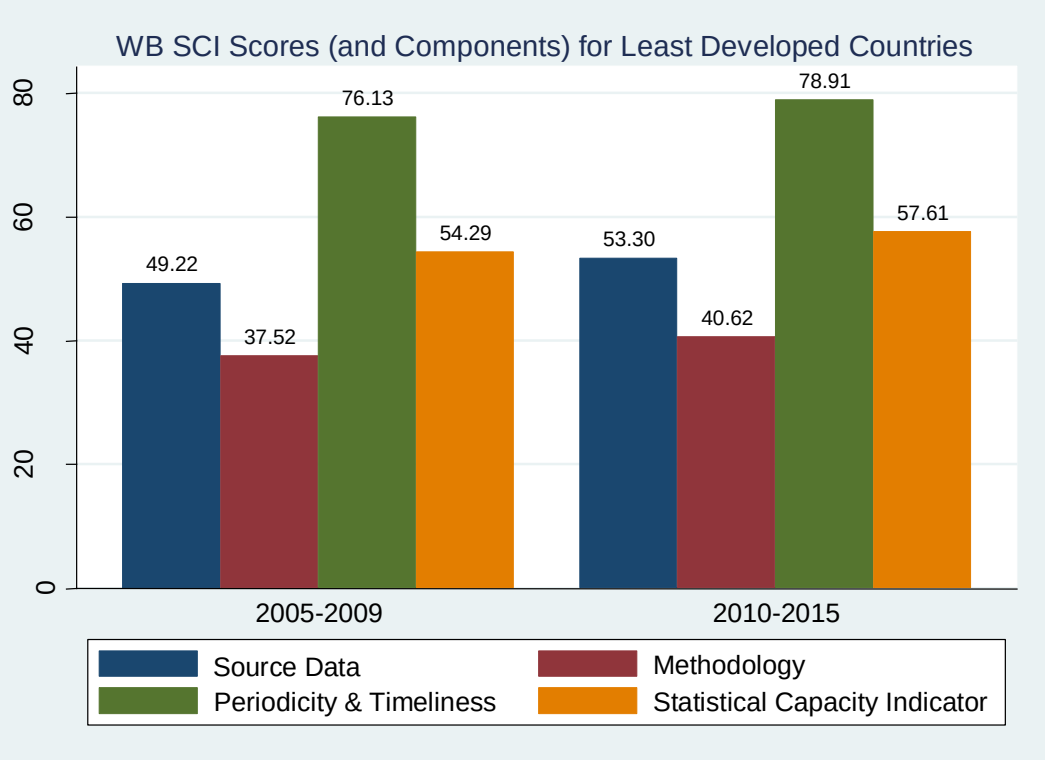
77. The low SCI scores for regions which have less economic development, particular in the data collection, statistical methodology and periodicity and timeliness components of the index, is indicative of the lack of an adequate infrastructure and resources to support statistical activities. Good practices

[46] Note on the Statistical Capacity Indicator, http://datatopics.worldbank.org/statisticalcapacity/files/Note.pdf.

and the establishment of regular statistical programmes require that NSSs have an adequate statistical and physical infrastructure, such as business registers, sampling frames, vital registration systems, classification schemes, as well as requisite ICT equipment for data capture, processing and analysis. A serious problem faced by the NSS is that the extremely limited budgets and statistical human resources, which poses constraints in even maintaining statistics production, let alone expanding and developing official statistics.

78. It should also be noted though that while SCI scores have generally improved, the improvements have varied across regions and countries, and that disparities continue between rich countries and the developing world, especially the least developed countries. Although the SCI suggests improvements especially in the least developed countries (see Figure 4), these SCI scores continue to lag behind average SCI performances in the world, especially in Asia, Europe as well as Latin America and the Caribbean.

Figure 4: Average Statistical Capacity Indicator (SCI) scores for 46 Least Developed Countries: 2005-2009 and 2010-2015



Source: World Bank (http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/data-on-statistical-capacity)
Note: Averages obtained only for countries with complete assessments across the years to ensure comparability of aggregates.

79. It should be noted that the increase in "data source" scores across the years has largely been for the conduct of agricultural censuses and household surveys (see Table 5). In contrast, birth and death registration has largely not improved with only one third of countries having a complete vital registration system, with the share of countries much lower (8%) in Africa.

Table 5: SCI Data Source scores for 148 countries: 2005-2009; 2010-2015								
Percentage of countries that	Period	**Continent/Region**						
		Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America & Caribbean	Micronesia	Oceania	**Total**
have a complete vital registration system	2005-2009	10%	39%	100%	48%	0%	33%	**36%**
	2010-2015	8%	42%	100%	49%	0%	28%	**36%**
conducted an agriculture census in the past 10 years	2005-2009	48%	60%	57%	61%	0%	27%	**53%**
	2010-2015	50%	65%	70%	70%	0%	48%	**60%**
conducted a health survey in the last 3-5 years	2005-2009	83%	87%	67%	62%	0%	2%	**72%**
	2010-2015	79%	74%	54%	59%	0%	6%	**65%**
conducted a population census in the past 10 years	2005-2009	77%	83%	93%	96%	100%	100%	**86%**
	2010-2015	86%	82%	92%	99%	100%	100%	**90%**
conducted a poverty survey in the last 3-5 years	2005-2009	54%	77%	100%	69%	0%	20%	**65%**
	2010-2015	54%	80%	99%	67%	0%	24%	**66%**

Source: World Bank (http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/data-on-statistical-capacity)
Note: Scores obtained only for countries with complete assessments across the years to ensure comparability of aggregates.

80. Despite the limitations of the SCI, the index provides an operational mechanism to assess the capacity of an NSS to produce statistics. Although the SCI is output-oriented and may hide issues regarding dynamics in the NSS capacities at the levels of the individual, institutional and enabling environment, there is sufficient data to support information about the NSSs of countries across the world.

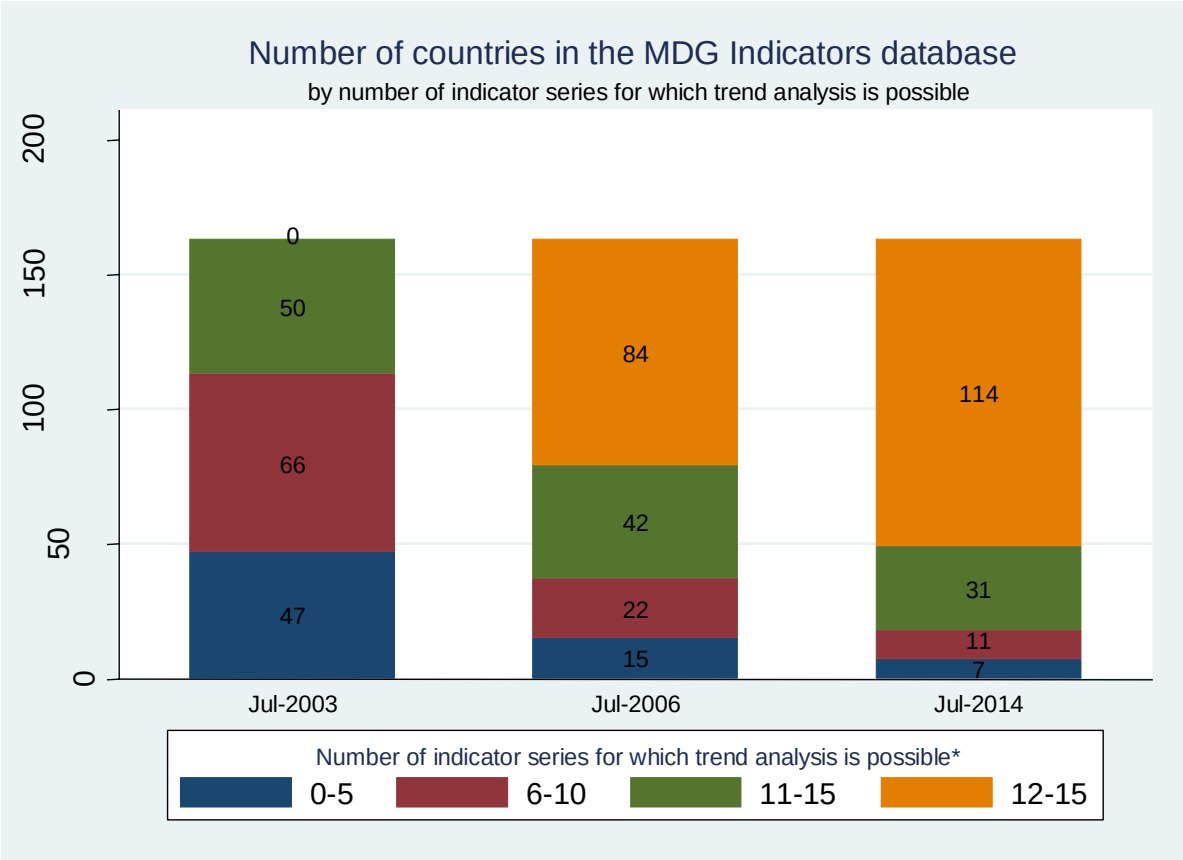
81. **Data availability for the MDGs.** This is the second measure of national statistical capacity and while there has been an increase in statistics production since 2000, especially for indicators to monitor the MDGs, for almost one third of the MDG indicators, less than half of the Member States have data available. Even if statistical outputs and performance may be improving particularly in some regions and countries where resources are not plentiful, the extent of actual NSCD at the levels of the individual, institution, and enabling environment requires investigation in order to see whether there may be scope for maximizing NSCD outcomes.

The global picture shown by the trends in the SCI is consistent with the improvement in data availability on the MDG indicators. Figure 5 presents the results of an assessment[47] of the availability of 22 key MDG indicators across 163 countries in the MDG Indicators database, disaggregated by the number of countries that have data, i.e., at least one data point in the database before 2000 and at least one after year 2000. The number of countries for which data are available for a few number of indicators has decreased in the period 2003 to 2014: the number of countries with trend data for 0-5 MDG indicators reduced from 47 (in 2003) to 4 (in 2014). Meanwhile, the number of countries for which data are

[47] United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on development indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, 2015.

available for a large number of indicators has steadily increased: the number of countries with trend data for 16-22 MDG indicators increased from 0 (in 2003) to 84 (in 2014). However, about a quarter of MDG data availability is on account of estimates by international organizations and adjustments to national official statistics. National official statistics are not always reported to international agencies, and even when they are, there are questions about the quality of official statistics, which do not always comply with recommended international statistical standards.

Figure 5: Number of countries in the MDG Indicators Database by number of MDG indicator series for which trend analysis is possible*



Source: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc15/2015-36-Indicators-E.pdf
Note: * Trend analysis is deemed possible for this assessment if for an MDG indicator series, the country has at least one data point before 2000 and at least one after 2000.

82. Despite progress on MDG data availability, it must be pointed out that there is actually a sizeable data gap in MDG indicators. The 1990 to 2015 MDG indicators database has more missing data than actual observations: "almost a third of the MDG indicators listed have data available for less than half of the countries."[48] This condition of data gaps presents an even greater challenge for SDG monitoring, given that the number of goals for the SDGs have more than doubled to 17 (from the eight MDGs), with the SDG targets numbering 169 (eight times the 21 MDG targets), and the current list of SDG indicators numbering 231 (nearly four times the 60 indicators for global monitoring of the MDGs). Even if the list of indicators were to be reduced to a more manageable shortlist, such as the 100 global monitoring

[48] Shuang Chen et al., "Towards a post-2015 framework that counts: developing national statistical capacity", Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) (PARIS21) discussion paper No. 1 (November 2013).

indicators (GMIs) proposed by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network[49], the NSSs would still find this a daunting task given the experience with the MDGs.

83. **Compliance with global standards.** Official statistics become more meaningful when they are compared, but for statistics to be compared across countries, the practices in the production of statistics must be comparable. Consequently, international coordination on concepts, definitions, classifications, standards, practices and statistical policies are required. Three examples can illustrate this issue.

84. Firstly, for national accounts, the UN Statistics Division and various international agencies encourage countries to make use of the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA)[50], the latest framework for national accounts compilation in order to standardize practices. To date, not all countries have migrated to the use of the 2008 SNA, and even among those that have, data available for calculation of sectoral value added can vary across countries. The 2012 UNSD Global Survey on the Implementation of the UNFPOS also reports a higher percentage of adherence to international standards on national accounting (54 per cent compared to the reported 42 per cent adherence in the 2003 Global Survey conducted also by the UNSD).

85. Secondly, for poverty statistics, most countries use welfare indicators based on income or consumption data sourced from household surveys.[51] Countries, however, make use of survey questionnaires with varying lengths and contents. In addition, there is considerable variation in the sampling design of these household surveys, in the manner in which data are collected (diary and recall approaches) and in survey operations (some NSOs have a single survey operation for a month, other NSOs split their samples across several months, and others interview households more than once throughout the reference year). Even analytical practices in generating aggregates of household consumption expenditure differ. Some countries adding estimates of expenditures on education and health (whether direct or indirect measures) to the consumption aggregates, while other countries do not because of practical difficulties in having these measurements. Some make use of estimates of imputed rent (of household dwelling), while others do not bother making estimates. Further, some countries add estimates of consumption of durable goods to the consumption aggregate, while others decide not to include these estimates as there are questions on the reliability of data generated.

86. As a consequence, the methods and estimates of poverty across countries are not fully comparable, as most data and statistics users would expect them to be. However, most NSOs in the 2012 UNSD Global Survey on Implementation of the UNFPOS and a 2005 Global Survey on Poverty Measurement Practices (also conducted by the UNSD and participated in by 106 NSOs)[52] suggests that while there may be variation in the analytical steps carried out for poverty measurement, the basic methods are fairly comparable, e.g. a general use of the cost-of-basic needs approach, and a typical use of consumption-based measures of welfare. For other social statistics, respondents to the 2012 UNSD Global Survey on Implementation of the UNFPOS as well as the previous 2003 survey also reported that they followed international recommendations, standards and classifications in the areas of education statistics recommended by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), labour

[49] Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Indicators and a monitoring framework for the Sustainable Development Goals: Launching a data revolution for the SDGs (2015).
[50] European Communities, International Monetary Fund, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations and World Bank (2009). The System of National Accounts 2008.
[51] Deaton, A. (1997). The analysis of household surveys : a microeconometric approach to development policy. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland.
[52] United Nations (2005). Handbook on Poverty Statistics: Concepts, Methods and Policy Use. UN Statistics Division.

statistics recommended by International Labour Organization (ILO), health statistics recommended by World Health Organization (WHO).

87. Thirdly, for environment statistics, most of the NSOs (about 90 % of respondents) also report in the 2012 UNSD Global Survey on Implementation of the UNFPOS that they adhere to international standards[53]. Of these, more than half apply the international standards but adapt recommendations to national circumstances, especially on limitations of available data. Global statistical coordination thus aims to improve the comparability of processes for the production of official statistics across NSSs. However, compromises are typically required in the application of international standards to suit country contexts.

2.4 THE CHANGING CONTEXT FOR NATIONAL STATISTICAL CAPACITY

88. The final phase of the MDG era and the start of the process of preparing for a new agenda led to renewed interest in the quality and availability of statistics. Preparation for the post-2015 era started early and by mid-2012 the Secretary-General had established the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The 2013 report of the Panel – *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development* – first coined the term data revolution[54], specifically a data revolution for sustainable development that would include "a new international initiative to improve the quality of statistics and information available to people and governments". Moreover, the report went on to state that the revolution "should actively take advantage of new technology, crowd sourcing, and improved connectivity to empower people with information on the progress towards the targets"[55] and would "would draw on existing and new sources of data to fully integrate statistics into decision making, promote open access to, and use of, data and ensure increased support for statistical systems".[56]

89. In August 2014, the Secretary-General established an *Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development* to provide inputs to shape the development agenda beyond 2015. The group of 24 experts from civil society, private sector, academia, governments and international organizations was to advise the Secretary-General on measures to be taken to close data gaps and strengthen national statistical capacities. It was also expected to "assess new opportunities linked to innovation, technical progress and the surge of new public and private data providers to support and complement conventional statistical systems and strengthen accountability at the global, regional and national levels".[57] The resulting report "A world that counts: mobilising the data revolution for sustainable development" was presented to the Secretary-General in 2014 and highlighted two major global challenges for the current state of data:

[53] Widely used international standards or frameworks for environment statistics cited by NSOs include the Classification of Environment Protection Activities (CEPA), the Classification of Resource Management Activities (CReMA), the United Nations Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA). For details, see United Nations (2013), Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Background Document, forty-fourth session of the UN Statistical Commission.

[54] The term "industrial revolution in statistics" had been used earlier. The High-Level Panel also called for transparency and technology revolutions.

[55] P. 21

[56] P. 24

[57] http://www.undatarevolution.org/about-ieag/

- The challenge of invisibility (gaps in what we know from data, and when we find out)

- The challenge of inequality (gaps between those who [are] with and without information, and what they need to know to make their own decisions)

The report's definition of the data revolution and the data revolution for sustainable development can be found in Box 1.

Box 1: Defining the Data Revolution

The data revolution is:

- An explosion in the volume of data, the speed with which data are produced, the number of producers of data, the dissemination of data, and the range of things on which there is data, coming from new technologies such as mobile phones and the "internet of things", and from other sources, such as qualitative data, citizen-generated data and perceptions data;
- A growing demand for data from all parts of society.

The data revolution for sustainable development is:

- The integration of these new data with traditional data to produce high-quality information that is more detailed, timely and relevant for many purposes and users, especially to foster and monitor sustainable development;
- The increase in the usefulness of data through a much greater degree of openness and transparency, avoiding invasion of privacy and abuse of human rights from misuse of data on individuals and groups, and minimising inequality in production, access to and use of data;
- Ultimately, more empowered people, better policies, better decisions and greater participation and accountability, leading to better outcomes for people and the planet.

Source: A world that counts: mobilizing the data revolution for sustainable development, p. 6.

90. The "World that counts" report makes specific recommendations on how to address these challenges, calling for a United Nations-led effort to mobilise the revolution. Key actions would include:

- *Fostering and promoting innovation to fill data gaps.* New technologies offer new opportunities to improve data, if they are used for the common good. The IEAG proposes a programme for experimenting with how traditional and new data sources (including big data) can be brought together for better and faster data on sustainable development, developing new infrastructures for data development and sharing (such as a "world statistics cloud"), and supporting innovations that improve the quality and reduce the costs of producing public data.

- *Mobilising resources to overcome inequalities between developed and developing countries and between data-poor and data-rich people.* The group stresses the need for increased funding and resources, used both to develop national capacity and global data literacy, and for public-private partnerships to leverage private sector resources and knowledge in the global interest.

- *Leadership and coordination to enable the data revolution to play its full role in the realisation of sustainable development.* The group proposed a global effort to improve cooperation between old and new data producers, ensure the engagement of data users, and develop global ethical, legal and statistical standards to improve data quality and protect people from abuses in a rapidly changing data ecosystem.

91. **The Sustainable Development Goals.** In September 2015, the General Assembly approved a new set of universal goals that would come into effect in 1 January 2016 and would guide all countries, developed and developing alike, over the next 15 years. The 17 goals and 169 targets were based on a proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals following an inclusive process of intergovernmental negotiations and based on a broader global process of consultation. The SDGs and the associated targets are "integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities". Each government will set its own national targets and decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated in national planning processes, policies and strategies.

Box 2: What makes the SDGs different?

Universal: While the MDGs applied only to so-called 'developing countries', the SDGs are a truly universal framework and will be applicable to all countries. All countries have progress to make in the path towards sustainable development, and face both common and unique challenges to achieving the many dimensions of sustainable development captured in the SDGs.

Transformative: As an agenda for "*people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership*", the 2030 Agenda offers a paradigm shift from the traditional model of development. It provides a transformative vision for people and planet-centred, human rights-based, and gender-sensitive sustainable development that goes far beyond the narrow vision of the MDGs.

Comprehensive: The new agenda goes well beyond the narrow vision of the MDGs to include 17 goals including those covering areas such as governance and peace as well as economic growth and the private sector.

Inclusive: The new Agenda strives to leave no-one behind, envisaging "*a world of universal respect for equality and non-discrimination*" between and within countries, including gender equality, by reaffirming the responsibilities of all States to "*respect, protect and promote human rights, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national and social origin, property, birth, disability or other status*."

92. The Goals and targets will be followed up and reviewed using a set of global indicators. These will be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels which will be developed by Member States, in addition to the outcomes of work undertaken for the development of the baselines for those targets where national and global baseline data does not yet exist. The global indicator framework, to be developed by the Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, will be agreed by the UN Statistical Commission by March 2016 and adopted thereafter by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, in line with existing mandates. This framework will be simple yet robust, address all SDGs and targets including for means of implementation, and preserve the political balance, integration and ambition contained therein.

93. In approving the *Transforming our World* document, the General Assembly recognized that "Quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. Such data is key to decision-making."[58] The decision explicitly notes the need for additional support to strengthen statistical capacities in developing countries, "particularly African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries".

[58] Para. 48.

94. Box 2 indicates the major difference with the SDGs versus the MDGs highlighting the broad scope of the initiative. This broad scope comes with its costs, specifically when it comes to monitoring the indicators that come with the goals and targets. At the annual meeting of the Statistical Commission held in March 2016, 231 indicators were identified (with 80 of these requiring refinements after further consultation). Well in advance of this decision, and with expectation of fewer indicators, efforts were made to estimate the cost of monitoring the SDGs. One early effort undertaken in 2014[59] estimated the total cost of monitoring the SDGs to be approximately US$1 billion per annum (inclusive of current expenditures). The study recognized that although it is hard to estimate an exact funding gap[60] there is clearly a large gap between current expenditures and future requirements. Specifically, an additional US$100-200 million of ODA would be required to fulfil SDG monitoring demands, alongside increased domestic investments (an average of US$1.30 to US$2.59 million per IDA recipient or blend country).

95. The above-mentioned changes in the global statistical environment have implications for the functioning of an NSS and represent both opportunities and challenges. New sources of data and technological advances may present an opportunity, but figuring out how to use them optimally may be a challenge for many countries. Equally, the SDGs provide the opportunity of a global development framework but clearly represent the challenge of reporting on progress at the national level. These changes also have implications for the way in which the UN development system should position itself in the future. In the meantime, the next section will set out more on the role and contribution of the system to NSCD.

[59] Jessica Espey et al., *Data for Development: A Needs Assessment for SDG Monitoring and Statistical Capacity Development*. SDSN, Open Data Watch, Paris21, UNIDO, UNICEF, ODI, CIESIN, World Bank Group and Simon Frazer University, SDSN, New York, 2015.

[60] Other estimates range from an overwhelming US$240 billion for monitoring the SDGs to the more 'trivial' US$23 million a year for living standard and health surveys. Morton Jerven, *Benefits and costs of the Data for Development Targets for the post-2015 Development Agenda*, Copenhagen Consensus, 2015, and Chandy, Laurence and Christine Zhang. "*Stuffing data gaps with dollars: What will it cost to close the data deficit in poor countries?*", 31 August 2015. The Brookings Institution, respectively.

SECTION 3: INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT TO NATIONAL STATISTICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

96. Since 2000 there has been an increase in Official Development Assistance (ODA) as well as a rise in emerging donor countries, which have been increasing their development assistance over the last 15 years. For this evaluation, international development cooperation/assistance goes beyond ODA to include other sources of finance, bundled in different ways by a variety of development cooperation actors.[61] During this period there has also been an increase in international support for statistics. This was partly due to the recognition of the need to monitor progress through newly introduced instruments such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and through the introduction of the MDGs. In 2006, the Economic and Social Council called upon Member States:

> *to intensify their efforts to strengthen national statistical capacity in order to produce reliable and timely statistics and indicators for the monitoring of: (i) National development policies and strategies; (ii) The implementation of commitments and the achievement of all development goals at the national, regional and international levels.*[62]

97. This section looks at the broader picture of international development cooperation in which the UN system works in support of NSCD. It starts with an overview of the global and regional statistical architecture that has been put in place, inter alia, to support national statistical capacity development. It goes on to examine the international assistance in terms of the types of support it provides, the financing of the support and the guidance established to help ensure its effectiveness. The final subsection described the major intervention provided by the international community leading on to the next subsection, which specifically describes the interventions of the UN system in this area in more detail.

3.1 THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL STATISTICAL ARCHITECTURE

98. An NSS is mandated to produce official statistics for national development needs, but each NSS is also part of the international statistical system. Although the focus of the evaluation is the national level, the support to it from the global and regional levels is significant and provides a framework through which much of the development assistance is provided.

99. **The global statistical architecture.** At the apex of the global statistical system is the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC). The mandate then of the UNSC is broad and germane to the issue of national capacity-building and the role of the specialized agencies in that capacity-building. Specifically, the UNSC is a Functional Commission of the Economic and Social Council and assists the Council in the following areas:[63]

(a) Promoting the development of national statistics and the improvement of their comparability
(b) The coordination of the statistical work of specialized agencies
(c) The development of the central statistical services of the Secretariat

[61] ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum*, Monitoring and review of development cooperation to support implementation of a post-2015 development agenda*, 2016 Development Cooperation Forum Policy Briefs No. 4, March 2015.

[62] ECOSOC Resolution 2006/6.

[63] The terms of reference as set forth in Economic and Social Council resolution 1566 (L) of 3 May 1971, reaffirming its resolution 8 (I) of 16 February 1946, as amended by resolution 8 (II) of 21 June 1946.

(d) Advising the organs of the United Nations on general questions relating to the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistical information
(e) Promoting the improvement of statistics and statistical methods generally.

100. The commission itself has 24 members and only Member States can be members, thus precluding a major role for international organizations or even the private sector. The Member States are represented by the NSOs, which may not always represent the broader national statistical system. Since 2000, meetings of the Statistical Commission, called Sessions, have been held annually and last for four days.

101. There are additional mechanisms established at the global level that relate to the work of the UNSC. Two important ones created by the UNSC in 2015 are the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for post-2015 Monitoring (HLG), both composed of Member States and including regional and international agencies as observers. The IAEG-SDGs was tasked to develop an indicator framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda at the global level, and to support its implementation. The HLG was tasked to provide strategic leadership for the sustainable development goal implementation process as it concerns statistical monitoring and reporting. It is organizing the UN World Data Forum to be held in 2016, one of the main recommendations of the Secretary-General's IEAG on data revolution for sustainable development. The Forum aims to be a platform for intensifying cooperation on data for sustainable development with multiple stakeholders, including information technology professional, geospatial information managers, data scientists, data users, as well as members from civil society. The objectives of the forum are set out in Box 3 and largely relate to monitoring progress in achieving the SDGs rather than strengthening NSS to meet the needs of national policymakers and citizens.

Box 3: Objectives of the World Data Forum[64]

- The Forum will provide a venue for technical discussion of opportunities and challenges in applying information, data, and statistics to measure global progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The Forum will engage public and private measurement experts, information collectors, statistical producers, information system specialists, and users to discuss technical issues to be resolved in the production and stewardship of the sustainable development goal indicator statistics.
- The Forum will engage with civil society, business, and the scientific and academic communities to discuss the latest information innovations and their potential application to the production and communication of sustainable development statistics.
- The Forum will facilitate a discussion of sustainable development goal indicator methods and measurement to ensure coherence within the broader UN Programme on data, statistics and geospatial information, as anchored in the mandates given by Member States though the deliberations of the UN Statistical Commission.

102. Further groupings have been established, for example, meetings of interested parties known as "city groups", have evolved to address specific statistical methodology issues.[65] These are informal groups of experts primarily from national statistical agencies that get together on a voluntary basis. In order to preserve maximum flexibility, city groups determine their own individual mechanism of work while having the precise terms of reference approved by the Statistical Commission. The Commission has also

[64] HLG Update on the work of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-building for post-2015 monitoring. Background document for the 47th Statistical Commission Meeting. 2016 (annex II).
[65] A list can be found http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/citygroup/index.htm.

established 'Friends of the Chair' groups to address specific issues, for example, the Friends of the Chair Group on Broader Measures of Progress established in 2013.

103. The International Statistical Institute (ISI)[66], a professional association of statisticians, was established in 1885 and has the mission to "promote the understanding, development and good practice of statistics worldwide". The ISI has seven specialized subassociations. One of these, the International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS)[67], brings together producers and users of official statistics "to promote the understanding and advancement of official statistics and to foster the development of effective and efficient official statistical services on a global basis". The ISI World Statistics Congress (WSC) takes place for one week once every two years in a different country and is where all of its Associations, Committees and various types of members come together.

104. More recently, the Global Partnership on Sustainable Development Data[68] was established as "a global network of governments, NGOs, and businesses working together to strengthen the inclusivity, trust, and innovation in the way that data is used to address the world's sustainable development efforts". The partnership is working "to ensure that governments are given the tools they need to ensure they leave no-one behind in these development efforts." There has also been a call for the establishment of a new entity, 'WorldStat', a body that would improve the reliability and availability of global statistics.[69] The entity would focus on 'implementation of agreed standards and capacity-building for the accumulation and interpretation of data, particularly in the developing world. These entities cannot substitute for the work of the UN Statistical Commission in formulating international statistical methodologies and standards (with the aid of its Secretariat, the UN Statistics Division), but complement the work of the Statistical Commission.

105. **The Regional Statistical Architecture.** At the regional level, regional commissions, conferences and committees under the UN regional commissions reflect a similar structure to the global picture with regional counterparts of the Statistical Commission, either called conferences, commissions or committees on statistics comprising chief statisticians of member countries in the respective regions. The oldest of these, the Conference of European Statisticians, founded in 1953, is the governing body on statistics of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The Statistical Conference of the Americas of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Statistical Commission for Africa (STATCOM-Africa) were established in 2000 and 2007 respectively. The Economic Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) as well as the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), both have statistical committees to guide statistical work in their respective regions.

Table 6: Regional statistical commissions, conferences and committees by region

Region	Regional statistical commissions, conferences and committees	Date established
ECA	Statistical Commission for Africa (STATCOM-Africa).	2007
ECE	Conference of European Statisticians	1953
ECLAC	Statistical Conference of the Americas	2000
ESCAP	ESCAP Committee on Statistics	2008
ESCWA	ESCWA Statistical Committee	1992

[66] https://www.isi-web.org/index.php.
[67] The IAOS is a specialized section of the ISI http://isi.cbs.nl/IAOS/index.htm.
[68] http://www.data4sdgs.org/#intro.
[69] *Now for the Long Term,* the report of the Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations, 2013.

106. These may not be the only such structures in the region. For example, in 2010, member States of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) agreed to organize their annual meetings under the umbrella of OIC Statistical Commission. Moreover, the UNFPOS also has regional variations that have been developed recently:

- African Charter on Statistics
- Principles of European Statistics Codes of Practice
- Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean
- ASEAN Community Statistical System Code of Practice

107. **UN Statistics Division and regional statistics divisions.** The UNSC is supported by the UN Statistics Division (UNSD), which falls under the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). The UNSD, formerly the United Nations Statistical Office, is the central body for statistical activities in the United Nations. It compiles and disseminates global statistical information, develops standards and norms for statistical activities, and supports countries' efforts to strengthen their national statistical systems. Of its functions, the following[70] are relevant to this evaluation as they directly relate to national statistical capacity development (for data collection and statistical analysis):

- promotes international standards of methods, classifications and definitions used by national agencies
- assists Member States, at their request, to improve their statistical services by giving advice and training
- coordinates international statistical programmes and activities entrusted to the Division by the United Nations Statistical Commission and the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA)
- promotes modern surveying and mapping techniques as a tool for growth and development

108. The UNSD is committed to the advancement of the global statistical system and compiles and disseminates global statistical information, develops standards and norms for statistical activities, and supports countries' efforts to strengthen their national statistical systems. Particularly pertinent to this evaluation, the UNSD coordinates international statistical programmes. However, the UNSC has never requested the UNSD to attempt to coordinate the capacity development efforts of the development agencies, and UNSD has never had the resources, including field staff (see Table 7), to carry out such an initiative.

109. Also located in DESA, the UN Population Division is responsible for addressing all population issues, including international migration and development, the demographic impact of HIV and AIDS, population ageing, urbanization, contraceptive use, trends in national population policies and the interrelations between population dynamics and development.

110. Each of the UN regional commissions has a statistical division. Table 7 provides the staffing levels of these divisions and their work on NSCD will be discussed in the next section. These are not alone in the supporting the regional NSCD effort. For example, in 2006 the ECA re-established[71] a statistics division – the African Centre for Statistics (ACS) – as a new subsidiary body specifically devoted to statistics and statistical development on the continent. The AU Commission and African Development Bank also have their own statistical division as do a number of the regional economic communities such as SADC and COMESA. In addition, there are many initiatives coming out of these arrangements including:

[70] http://unstats.un.org/unsd/default.htm.

[71] The first subsidiary body to deal with statistics was the Conference of African Statisticians established in 1959, a year after the establishment of the UNECA.

- Africa data consensus
- Strategy for Harmonisation of Statistics in Africa
- African Charter on Statistics
- Forum on Africa Statistical Development
- Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity-Building in Africa

Table 7: Staffing levels of United Nations global and regional statistical entities (2014)

UN global and regional statistical entities	Number of Professional Staff	Number of Support Staff
DESA		
UN Statistics Division	69	53
UN Population Division	28	18
Total DESA	**151**	**74**
Regional Commissions		
ECA African Centre for Statistics	13	15
ECE	19	9
ECLAC	11	17
ESCAP	13	12
ESCWA	11	6
Total Regional Commissions	**67**	**59**

Source: UNSD. *United Nations System: Entities and Existing Coordination Mechanisms*. Background document for the 45th session of the Statistical Commission 2014. UNSD figures updated to 2016.

111. **Global and regional coordination mechanisms.** In addition to the role of the UNSC and the UNSD there are other agencies that play a more specific or a more general role in the coordination of the UN system effort. The key organization in this effort is the CCSA, which acts as a forum aimed at fostering good practices in statistical activities of international organizations. The CCSA was established in 2002 and continued the statistical coordination work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Statistical Activities. Terms of reference were adopted in 2003 and revisions approved 2008.[72] An annual report on ongoing Committee activities is made available to the United Nations Statistical Commission.[73] The Committee focuses its work on the following six main activities:

- Efficient functioning of the statistical system
- Common standards and platforms
- Development of methodologies
- Inter-institutional support
- Outreach
- Advocacy for statistic

112. The CCSA[74] comprises international and supranational organizations, whose mandates include the provision of international official statistics in the context of the Principles Governing International

[72] Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities New Terms of Reference — September 2008. Mission Statement and key activities and functions. http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub/2015docs-26th/TORs%20final-2014.pdf.
[73] If necessary or desirable, the report can be referred to the High-level Committee on Programmes of the CEB.
[74] http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/members.htm.

Statistical Activities. These organizations also have a permanent embedded statistical service in their organization and regular contacts with countries.

113. Since 2007, a group of chief statisticians in UN organizations has met regularly twice a year, once in the first quarter, on the occasion of the annual session of the UNSC, and once in the fourth quarter, on the occasion of the second session of the year of the CCSA. In 2014 the Commission endorsed the proposal that the United Nations chief statisticians hold regular meetings and mandated the group to follow up on the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair on the coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations system. The group comprises the statistical services of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and the Secretariat, whose mandate includes the provision of international official statistics in the context of the Principles Governing International Statistical Activities.

114. To build on existing training activities conducted within NSSs by national statistical training centres, the UN Statistics Division attempted in 2009 to establish a global network of statistical training centres and to assist in the development of subregional leading statistical training centres. Responding to a UNSD inquiry regarding the statistical training programmes in their NSSs and in interest for establishing this network of training providers, 96 member countries reported on their existing training programmes and in their interest in this training network. It is unclear though whether this training network was formally established or if the network is subsumed in the CCSA.[75]

115. Similar mechanisms have been established at the regional level. In Africa, the African Statistical Coordination Statistical Committee (ASCC) was established in 2007 to support implementation of the RRSF. The ASCC is made of representatives from the statistics units of the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), and UNECA. It meets once a year (or more if necessary) and reports to Statistical Commission Africa (StatCom-Africa).

116. In 2013, the ESCAP Committee on Statistics decided to establish the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific with the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) as its secretariat. Acting as a network, it facilitates information-sharing and promotes coordination among national statistical training institutions, regional and international statistical training providers and donor agencies providing funding for statistical training in the Asia-Pacific region.

117. Other forms of coordination and cooperation have been established with more specific objectives. A mapping of "groups, tasks teams and other coordination mechanisms" undertaken by the CCSA in 2013 identified 162 such initiatives. Examples of major ones include:

- Maternal Mortality Estimation Interagency Group[76] established to provide expertise in maternal health, epidemiology, statistics, demography and data collection.
- The Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation[77], with a mandate to improve methods for child mortality estimation and to enhance country capacity for production of quality estimates of child mortality.

[75] http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/workpartner_ccsa.htm.
[76] WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, the UN Population Division and the World Bank.
[77] UNICEF, WHO, the United Nations Population Division and the World Bank.

- The International Household Survey Network (IHSN) formed to work on improving the availability, accessibility, and quality of survey data within developing countries, and on encouraging the analysis and use of these data.
- The International Comparison Program (ICP) was established in 1968 and has developed into a worldwide statistical partnership to collect comparative price data and compile detailed expenditure values of countries' gross domestic products (GDP), and to estimate purchasing power parities (PPPs) of the world's economies. Nearly 200 countries participate in the programme.

3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT TO NSCD

118. In many ways, international support to NSCD is not unlike other areas of support from international development assistance. It is provided by a group of international multilateral and bilateral organization as well as NGOs and has been part of the changing landscape of international development assistance since 2000. Yet, in one important way it is different: the direct beneficiaries of the support are not necessarily citizens of the country; they may be international organizations in a country, or at higher regional or global level. This relates to the several demands for statistical products that were described in the previous section. This is an important difference and has led to different patterns of support and a different degree of implementation of what has been termed the aid effectiveness agenda. In 2009, a thematic evaluation of assistance to statistics[78] led to the question: are statistics the orphan of aid effectiveness?

119. Another major difference is the extent of the budget for statistics that is covered by international development assistance. Of the 77 countries eligible to borrow from the World Bank's Concessional window, the International Development Association (IDA), about half of the financial resources allocated to official statistics comes from aid.[79] Yet, the main data source demands of international monitoring systems have already been found to be beyond the capacity of many NSSs. This is despite the scaling-up of international support for statistics, and the resulting increase in the quantity of results available. Looking forward beyond 2015, data demands are expected to increase significantly, especially given the data demands for monitoring of the SDGs currently being investigated by the Bureau of the UNSC.[80]

120. **A typology of support to NSCD.** Since NSCD requires changes at the multiple levels (individual, institutional and enabling environment levels), various NSCD programmes have been implemented to strengthen the capability of NSSs to meet expectations of their stakeholders. These programmes include improving knowledge, skills and competence of NSS staff members and leadership, supporting the conduct of primary data collection, the production and dissemination of official statistics, the development or refinement of national statistical standards and classification systems, the improvement of adherence to international statistical standards and practices, as well as improving the organization in an NSS (from statistical legislation to statistical infrastructure to statistical coordination).

[78] Undertaken as part of the process of evaluating the 2005 Paris Declaration.
[79] SSN Data for development.
[80] The co-facilitators of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda requested the Statistical Commission to provide a provisional proposal in relation to indicators for sustainable development goals and targets. The Acting Chair of the Statistical Commission confirmed that the UNSC would provide the necessary statistical support for the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda, while also expressing the concerns of Members of the Commission regarding the enormous challenge that a large number of indicators would pose for national statistical systems.

121. There are a number of frameworks that have been used to define the various areas of NSCD but here a distinction is initially been made between the "what", as in what capacities are being built and the ''how", as in how does the international community support NSDC. The "what" was described in section 2 as the NSS defined in a broad sense to include producers, suppliers, users and supporters. These areas are described in Table 8 below, and link to the capacity development framework set out in section 2 (and Table 3 linking the framework to NSCD). Then there is a need to establish the type of support that is provided, the "how" as in how international organizations help this sector.

Table 8: Areas of NSCD support

Area of support	Details and decisions
Training and education	Long-term/short-term, national/regional, individual/workshops
Advisers	Long-term/short-term, resident/regional, etc.
Normative	Standards and principles, regional/global
Information	Dissemination, literacy
Advocacy	Implement principles, increase resources, promote use
Money and equipment	Direct funding, procurement

122. *Training and Education*: Formal education (including graduate education) and non-formal education (including training) have been mechanisms to address skills and knowledge gaps at the individual level. In developing countries, it is not unusual for statistician posts to be occupied by people who may not have had formal education in statistics, or related disciplines (e.g., mathematics, economics, computer science). For these human resources in the NSSs, even if tertiary education is in disciplines required for statistics work, staff members are required to also have competencies for the delivery of major outputs of an NSS. Continuous technological advancements in statistical infrastructure (for data processing and data management, data archiving, as well as statistical analysis, visualization and dissemination) also require concomitant continuing education and training activities to enable NSSs to meet increasing demands for statistics. Some countries and development partners may provide opportunities for staff of NSSs to pursue graduate education in statistics or related disciplines, short training courses (for one-to-two weeks), or other longer training programmes or non-degree education (for six months to a year).

123. Technical workshops, meetings and study visits are another means of knowledge transfer. These activities try to be demand-oriented, and tailored to needs of countries. They provide an opportunity for representatives of NSSs to become aware of international recommendations on statistical standards and practices.

124. *Advisory services:* For many agencies and units in the UN system, technical assistance, in the form of guidance from experts within organizations of the UN system or other experts hired for short-term consultancies, as well as UN publications that provide guidance on management of the NSS and on statistical methods and standards, have been a key element for statistical capacity development. Technical assistance provides direction in the conduct of statistical programs and helps member countries in the adoption of internationally accepted methodologies and standards, including the development of enabling environments for the production of statistics. For instance, in the area of statistical legislation, the UN Handbook on Statistical Organization lists key features of statistics laws as well as other issues at the organizational and enabling environment levels. The UN Handbook entitled "National Accounts: A Practical Introduction" is another example that gives specific suggestions on implementation the UN System of National Accounts (SNA) framework. Countries may also require

specific technical guidance from experts to operationalize international recommendations given country contexts and constraints in data availability. While countries also require funds for the conduct of primary data-collection activities, but the requisite budgets can be quite enormous, thus some UN agencies only offer technical assistance. For instance, support for the conduct of agriculture censuses from FAO has largely been in the form of technical assistance, rather than a substantial part of the budget required for the conduct of the agriculture census.

125. *Statistical standards:* are an important part of NSCD. Comparability of official statistics across countries has been an issue of concern in the global statistical system dating even past the birth of the UN itself, specifically during the first set of International Statistical Congresses in the nineteenth century[81] and the subsequent meetings of the ISI. It was however not until the League of Nations was established that work on statistics comparability got organized when it convened the International Statistical Commission[82] in 1920. This Commission's work led to eventual agreement by countries on the statistics and tables which they agreed to publish (on external trade, occupations, agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries, mining and metallurgy, industry and index numbers of prices), and subsequent work pertaining to methodological issues in implementing this agreement.[83] This entire work programme on having comparable cross-country statistics was subsequently continued by the UN system, and other development agencies.

126. Countries need a set of rules or guidelines to standardize how data are collected, and how statistics are produced and disseminated to ensure cross-country comparability of statistics.[84] Statistical standards consist of definitions, concepts, classification systems, and methodologies therein. They are developed to ensure harmonization and improve comparability of official statistics, whether within a country or across countries. Within an NSS, statistics producers can have problems in improving their statistical information systems or inconsistencies in official statistics, partly for lack of guidelines and standards for data collection, analysis and dissemination. International recommendations and standards for statistics provide countries with a common basis for the production and dissemination of social, economic and financial data to the public. These standards have to be observed by all producers of official statistics in an NSS, and not only by a country's NSO.

127. One example of statistical standards that is widely used by countries is the SNA 2008, a conceptual framework that recommends standards for the compilation of national accounts. The first SNA was published in 1953, and subsequently revised in 1968, in 1993 and in 2008. The SNA is recommended, not only by the UN, but by also by a host of international organizations; it covers accounting rules, the accounts and tables, and their integration. Ultimately, the SNA enables international comparisons of all significant economic activity since national accounts data tend to differ across countries because of the difference in coverage, definitions and quality of basic data compiled for national accounts compilation. Different methodologies can paint different pictures of conditions: India's recent shift from the use of market prices rather than factor costs in national accounts, for instance, has suggested that India is growing faster than previously thought. However, the SNA being a mere conceptual framework also

[81] The International Statistical Congress (1853—1876), "Knowledge Transfers and their Limits" in *European History Quarterly*, vol. 41, January 2011, pp. 50-65.
[82] March, L., International Statistics and the League of Nations, Quarterly Publications of the American Statistical Association, vol. 17, no. 133, 1921, pp. 629–635, accessed at http://www.jstor.org/stable/2965323Copy.
[83] United Nations Statistical Commission: Sixty years of leadership and professionalism in building the global statistical system (1947 - 2007) http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc07/UN_Stat_Commission_1947-2007_bookmarks.pdf
[84] http://unstats.un.org/unsd/iiss/MainPage.ashx.

needs further practical compilation guidance, which can be obtained from handbooks of national accounting, such as those prepared by the UNSD[85].

128. Some statistical standards can be works in progress in part because of the diversity of country practices and the difficulties in arriving at these standards, as well as in adopting them. For instance, in poverty estimation, there is much more divergence in practices across countries than in national accounting (the standards of which took decades to develop). A global survey conducted by the UNSD in 2004–2005, showed that of 84 respondent countries, around half use expenditure, 30 per cent use income, and 12 per cent use both. As regards the poverty line, one of the global indicators on monitoring poverty rates for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) makes use of the $1 per person per day poverty line in purchasing power parity poverty (PPP) 2001 prices, that was updated to $1.25 in 2005 PPP prices, and further recently updated to $1.90 in 2011 PPP prices. However, countries also have their own national poverty lines. While there have been efforts toward adopting a standard methodology in the setting of a poverty line, there has been no full consensus because of the belief that ultimately, poverty lines are somewhat arbitrary and resonate with social norms. There are a number of common features though, especially among countries that make use of a cost of basic needs methodology, as there is a shared understanding for this methodology that the poverty line represents a minimum standard of living in society (based on food and non-food needs). Still, there are differences in methodologies in coming up with the poverty line (as well as the choice of the welfare indicator and the approach for data capture) across countries make poverty comparisons with national poverty lines quite problematic. It can be challenging to have countries agree to standards in the short and medium terms, given the political nature of poverty, but international discussions continue toward working on some standards. There has also been a suggestion to adopt a multidimensional measurement of poverty[86] but there will similarly be challenges for adoption of such a measurement even if some countries consider this measurement important to be part of the global indicators for monitoring the SDGs.

129. *Information:* Information is important for coordination as well as identifying approaches, etc. It also includes general guidance and importantly ideas. Tools for data management and dissemination can be included here. With the increased availability of new tools in information communications technology (ICT), NSSs have been supported by international agencies in the establishment and use of various ICT tools for database management and dissemination. For instance, a dissemination tool advocated by many international organizations is the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange[87] (SDMX) technology that fosters standards for electronic XML-based exchange of statistical information (including data and metadata). Some countries have also implemented other national information portals, such as portals for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), supported by agencies within the UN. There are also various database systems developed and advocated by various international organizations. Whether the plethora of information portals and database systems for various domains, subdomains and cross-cutting themes, such as the MDGs and governance-related themes (Open Data Initiative), has provided maximum impact to stakeholder needs given the propensity for duplication of information requires examination. Dissemination of statistics, after all, is not equivalent to use of statistics.

130. *Advocacy activities:.* Since official statistics are public goods, there has been growing recognition for the importance of user consultation and involvement in determining demand for and the quality of official statistics. The international community has provided support for the conduct of statistical

[85] http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/pubsDB.asp?pType=2.
[86] http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/multidimensional-poverty-and-its-assessment-found-their-place-2030-agenda
[87] https://sdmx.org/.

advocacy activities with the intention of improving the impact on the enabling environment for the use of statistics in policy. This support mitigates the risk that countries become data rich but information poor, i.e., that a substantial amount of official statistics are produced but not utilized.

131. **The size of international support for NSCD.** Estimates of external support for NSCD[88] indicate that it has been rather small, with the share of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for statistics ranging from around one fifth to one third of 1 per cent (0.19-0.33%) in the period from 2006 to 2013. As of 2013, donor support for statistics development was estimated at $448 million, a mere 0.24 per cent of ODA.[89] The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), in collaboration with PARIS21, Open Data Watch and others, yielded calculations that net out existing budgetary commitments from governments and donors; they estimate that the required additional investment on statistics for the SDGs is an additional $200 million per year, but there is quite a lot of variation in this costing in the literature.[90]

132. The PRESS report of PARIS21 gives a breakdown of external financing for statistics development by category of support, and suggests that support for general statistical items and methodology of data collection, processing, dissemination and analysis has been the dominant category of support for statistics. In the period from 2011 to 2013, nearly half (47%) of total support for statistics has gone to this category, followed by support for demographic and social statistics, for strategic and managerial issues at about a quarter (23%). Aside from support for the institutional and enabling environment levels, it is critical to also have in place statistical human resource development programs (both informal training activities and formal education scholarships) to lessen skills gaps. Table 4 lists multilateral institutions in the development community, including the UN system, according to the typology of NSCD activities listed in Table 1. This list suggests that the UN system conducts a broad scope of NSCD activities. It appears that the PRESS report understates the extent of actual assistance given by the UN system to NSCD, especially as coverage of the UN agencies is not complete. Furthermore, TA services of UN staff experts are not fully quantified in the PRESS report. More discussions on the UN system will be given in the next subsection. It can also be observed that there is some degree of overlap in the NSCD activities supported by donors, and thus, there is scope for improved coordination toward more focused interventions by the development community to work on a more impactful NSCD.

133. **Challenges to supporting NSCD.** There is much already known about the challenges to capacity development and especially for international organizations involved in this area. Experience[91] suggests that NSCD fails when funding for statistical development relies purely on external resources and when there is no national ownership. The UN Handbook of Statistical Organization[92] also warns of the distorting effects of the resources provided by international agencies. Furthermore, it counsels against data-collection activities which do not build national capacity and about practices by international agencies publishing statistics without reference to the country.

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[88] PARIS21, , *Partner Report on Support to Statistics* (2015).
[89] ibid.
[90] Several papers in the literature have attempted to examine the financing gap for monitoring the SDGs. A claim has been made that if the SDGs were to be fully monitored, the entire data collection largely from conduct of surveys would cost $254 billion, up from an estimated $27 billion for the entire MDG monitoring (http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/data_assessment_-_jerven.pdf). Other work (see http://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/demombynes-sandefur-costing-data-revolution_1.pdf) suggested that cost for SDG monitoring in the poorest countries where annual per capita income falls under $2,000 would require $300 million.
[91] Isidoro P. David (2001), "Why Statistical Capacity Building Technical Assistance Projects Fail?," International Association for Official Statistics. Manuscript.
[92] UNSD. *Handbook of Statistical Organization. The operation and organization of a statistical agency*. Third Edition, New York, 2003.

The intervention of the agency may cause significant disruptions in the programme of the national statistical office. Situations have also arisen in which the data collected by the agency is published without any review by the country. Finally, too often, international agency programmes have not been accompanied by a transfer of technology from the agency to the country. Thus, while, valuable information has been collected, there has not often been a corresponding improvement in the statistical capacity of the country.[93]

134. The scarcity of funding is considered to be a major constraint on statistical capacity and priority setting is a fact-of-life response to these limited resources, even in developed countries.

It is now generally felt that adequate funding of statistics is a key issue in sustained statistical capacity-building around the globe". Of course, the meaning of "adequate" will always be the subject of debate, and even in developed countries ongoing budgetary pressures make priority-setting in statistical programmes a fact of life. Nevertheless, few would argue that, in general terms, the funding of statistics in developed countries is inadequate. In contrast, the situation is entirely different in developing and so-called "transition" countries.[94]

135. The UN Handbook also suggests that in many developing countries, especially the least developed countries, the requirements of international organizations may have come to dominate the statistical programme. For developed countries these needs for extra resources may be minimal, an issue which needs to be considered for the 2030 Agenda and monitoring the SDGs.

In many countries with advanced statistical systems, the programme requirements of international agencies represent no more than a marginal addition to the statistical agencies domestic programmes and can be treated as a by-product of current activities.[95]

136. Despite the potentially distorting effects of support by international agencies to countries, the UN Handbook points to their role in providing valuable support on norms and standards which increases the accessibility of statistics to their users.

Many statistical agencies, international agencies remain the most important source of conceptual and methodological guidance, not only in improving their capacity for inter-country comparisons but also in structuring domestic programmes. The demands of international organizations impose a discipline without which inter-country comparisons would quickly become either unachievable or meaningless. Comparisons are possible largely due to the use of international classifications and standard accounting systems such as the System of National Accounts (SNA).[96]

137. Another important challenge in NSSs is statistical coordination. This is also the case for NSCD, with many players trying to showcase achievements, with their respective agendas, and with NSSs often overstretched to meet the increasing demands of not only national stakeholders but also donors. Absorptive capacity of NSS for external financial resources should also be looked into. Coordination is important to increase the chances of effectiveness of NSCD efforts, and improved coordination within the NSS is also a challenge to ensure success of NSCD activities.

138. The normative work carried out by UN agencies can then be considered part of capacity-building as comparisons over time and over space are necessary to make official statistics meaningful to users.

[93] UN Handbook of Statistical Organization, para. 224.
[94] ibid para. 149.
[95] Ibid para. 222.
[96] Ibid para. 223.

The provision of funding, while necessary in most developing countries, can distort national priorities and reduce national ownership of the statistical agenda. This evaluation report will thus include normative work, establishment and refining of statistical standards, technical assistance and funding for statistics as significant part of NSCD activities. The evaluation will however not cover all the work of the UN Statistical Commission but will report on the use of this normative work in the case study countries.

139. **Guidance for more effective international support.** Global agreements on how to better engage in statistical activities or to prioritise actions for international assistance have been developed since 2000. These have been based on a growing body of evidence and analysis of what is working and not working in international support to NSCD (the 2005 Paris declaration, for example) and drawing what has been learned in other areas into the area of statistics.

140. *Principles Governing International Statistical Activities:* At the time of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the UNFPOS by the UN Statistical Commission in 2004 an initiative started to develop a similar set of principles that could guide the work of statistical activities on the international level. In so doing, a clear distinction was made between the principles that should guide all statistical activities of international organizations and the practices, on which the main focus was placed, are phrased without an intent of creating a 'legally binding' framework. It was recognized that not all organizations would be able to apply the principles due to existing mandates and/or governance structures. The Principles would therefore be used in different ways by agencies, individually or collectively with others, depending on their specific needs and circumstances. As of end 2015, 25 of the 39 members of the CCSA have endorsed the Principles. The ten principles are listed in Box 4.

Box 4: Principles Governing International Statistical Activities

i. High-quality international statistics, accessible for all, are a fundamental element of global information systems;
ii. To maintain the trust in international statistics, their production is to be impartial and strictly based on the highest professional standards;
iii. The public has a right to be informed about the mandates for the statistical work;
iv. Concepts, definitions, classifications, sources, methods and procedures employed in the production of international statistics are chosen to meet professional scientific standards and are made transparent for the users;
v. Sources and methods for data collection are appropriately chosen to ensure timeliness and other aspects of quality, to be cost-efficient and to minimise the reporting burden for data providers;
vi. Individual data collected about natural persons and legal entities, or about small aggregates that are subject to national confidentiality rules, are to be kept strictly confidential and are to be used exclusively for statistical purposes or for purposes mandated by legislation;
vii. Erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics are to be immediately appropriately addressed;
viii. Standards for national and international statistics are to be developed on the basis of sound professional criteria, while also meeting the test of practical utility and feasibility;
ix. Coordination of international statistical programmes is essential to strengthen the quality, coherence and governance of international statistics, and avoiding duplication of work;
x. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contribute to the professional growth of the statisticians involved and to the improvement of statistics in the organizations and in countries.

141. *Marrakesh, Dakar and Busan Action Plans for Statistics:* A second series of effort to provide guidance for international support to national statistical capacity development has been developed under a number of conferences that have led to action plans for addressing key concerns. The first such action plan developed out of the Managing for Development Results conference held in Marrakesh in 2004 led

to the Marrakesh Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS). In 2009, participants in a PARIS21 consortium meeting held in Dakar produced the Dakar Declaration on the Development of Statistics. At the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Busan in 2011 the Busan Action Plan for Statistics (BAPS) was endorsed by participants. The BAPS:

"*adopts a system-wide approach to capacity development to integrate national statistical activities with the requirements of planning, budgeting, monitoring, and results. It recognizes the important synergies between survey and census-based data, administrative data, and vital statistics. The plan also explicitly supports greater transparency and encourages the use of new methods and technologies to increase the reliability and accessibility of statistics*"[97]

Box 5: Objectives and Actions set out in the Busan Action Plan for Statistics (BAPS)

Objective 1: Fully integrate statistics in decision-making: Improvements in the production of statistics are essential, but policy makers and programme managers must also understand how to use statistics effectively. Poor quality statistics lead to their under use, which in turn leads to neglect and under funding of statistical activities. Statistical offices should be routinely engaged in planning, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation processes so the statistics they produce are relevant and meet user priorities.
Objective 2: Promote open access to statistics: The hallmark of transparent and accountable governments is open access to information. Making timely and reliable statistics widely available to the public as well as to policy makers and other stakeholders increases government effectiveness and public confidence.
Objective 3: Increase resources for statistical systems: Continued investment is a key to breaking the vicious cycle of neglect and disuse of statistics. Financial support to national statistical systems should be integrated in development assistance programs with developing countries providing in-country leadership. Donors should adopt system-wide approaches, coordinating their assistance strategies to ensure they are consistent with national priorities.

Action 1 - Strengthen and refocus national and regional statistical strategies with particular emphasis on improving statistical systems that address country-level development priorities. A key aim is to increase in-country capacity to respond to emerging and unforeseen needs. Strategies should be updated to reflect new challenges and opportunities and integrate international and domestic data collection activities.
Action 2 - Implement standards for data preservation, documentation, and dissemination that permit full public access to statistics.
Action 3 - Develop programs to increase the knowledge and skills needed to use statistics effectively for planning, analysis, monitoring, and evaluation, thus increasing transparency and accountability and improve accessibility of statistics at the national and international levels.
Action 4 - Build and maintain results monitoring instruments to track outcomes of all global summits and high-level forums. Rigorous monitoring of global initiatives requires collaboration between national and international statistical organizations. Outcome documents should specifically recognize the need for statistical capacity development, including technical assistance, training, and financial support.
Action 5 - Ensure financing for statistical information is robust and that funding instruments and approaches reflect the new modalities and actors in development finance.

142. At the third meeting of the HLG in early 2016, members agreed to develop a proposal for a Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data as a successor to the BAPS. The action plan, which should be ready in 2016, aims to:

to outline the necessary actions to generate regular, quality and timely data to inform sustainable development at the needed level of disaggregation and covering all groups of the population, including the more vulnerable and hard to reach. The plan is also intended to fully account and coordinate existing efforts, as well as to identify new and strategic ways to efficiently mobilize resources and thereby address the recommendations of the Secretary-General's Independent Expert

[97] Busan Action Plan on Statistics

and Advisory Group on Data Revolution for Sustainable Development as well as the priorities identified in the "Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics".[98]

3.3 KEY ELEMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

143. The period around the end of the millennium and the start of the new one was one of increasing interest in statistics as part of the national development process. The PRSP process introduced in 1999 emphasized the need for quantitative indicators to monitor countries' own development goals. The Millennium Declaration, signed in 2000 by 189 heads of state and government, led to the development of the MDGs with national government responsible for monitoring and reporting on the targets and indicators. Recognizing that national statistical capacity was weak in many countries efforts to intensive and improve international support started at the same time.

144. While efforts for capacity development in public sector organizations are the primary responsibility of national governments, but in the case of NSCD, official statistics feed into the global statistical community, in particular to regional and global statistical databases. Thus, NSCD is given support also by a variety of international organizations, including agencies of the UN system. Outside the UN, the three biggest supporters of statistical capacity-building shown by The Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS)[99], released by the PARIS21, are the European Union, World Bank, UK Aid (DFID). Other multilateral development banks (MDBs) also play an important role, especially regional development banks. In addition, organizations such as PARIS21 also play a significant role in supporting coordination of the efforts, and in assisting low-income countries to prepare or update their NSDS.

145. **PARIS21 and other major partnerships.** In late 1999, PARIS21 was established by a consortium of the Development Assistance Committee of OECD, Eurostat, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations and the World Bank. PARIS 21 was to develop a new approach to build and strengthen statistical systems – national and international – necessary for setting development policies and monitoring outcomes. PARIS21 aims to encourage a better use of statistics in developing countries, by providing support and strengthening their NSSs. Specifically, it does this through:

- coordinating efforts between data users, producers, policy-makers and providers of development cooperation
- advocating for improved use and production of high-quality and timely statistics
- assisting countries in designing, implementing and monitoring their National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS)
- providing knowledge through data archiving and documentation.

146. The fact that PARIS21 has been mentioned so frequently in this technical appendix is indicative of the central role it plays in supporting NSCD. The role it plays in monitoring expenditure of development assistance on statistics through its PRESS Report should be highlighted and this has become an important tool for advocating for more support to the sector. A second area of work is on the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) that it has been promoting, supporting and monitoring.

[98] HLG Update on the work of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-building for post-2015 monitoring. Background document for the 47th Statistical Commission Meeting, 2016.
[99] PARIS21, *Partner Report on Support to Statistics* (2015).

147. NSCD is suited to global partnerships addressing similar technical issues across the globe. In addition to PARIS21, other partnerships have been established that play an important role in building national statistical capacity in a number of specific areas. The following three examples illustrate different types of programme:

- *Global Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB*): Established in 2000 to complement PARIS21 activities, the TFSCB was set up as a World Bank-administered, multi-donor trust fund to provide grants to developing countries for statistical capacity-building activities. PARIS21 promotes dialogue and advocacy, and TFSCB provides the financial and technical resources to kick-start a sustainable capacity-building process. Through small and quick-acting grants of up to $400,000 over two or three years, countries have been able to address key capacity constraints in their statistical systems and to develop a strategic approach to building an efficient and effective national statistical system.

- *Global Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Scaling up Investment Plan 2015–2024*: The Global Plan for Scaling-up Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) covers activities over a 10-year period from 2015 to 2024, with the goal of universal civil registration of births, deaths, marriages, and other vital events, including reporting cause of death, and access to legal proof of registration for all individuals by 2030. The global plan has three key components:

  - National CRVS systems strengthening;
  - Strengthening of international support for CRVS;
  - Sharing knowledge and building the evidence base for developing CRVS systems.

  There is an estimated financing gap of approximately US$ 199 million per year in the 73 low- and middle-income countries prioritized in the scale-up plan.

- *Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics*: The lack of capacity of many developing countries to provide reliable statistical data on food and agriculture led to the development of the Global Strategy to improve agricultural and rural statistics (GSARS). The initiative aims to address capacity in this area and provide a blueprint for long-term sustainable agricultural statistical systems. It is based on the following three pillars:

  - Produce a minimum set of core data
  - Better integrate agriculture into the NSSs
  - Improve governance and statistical capacity-building.

  The GSARS is coordinated by a Global Office hosted by the FAO Statistics Division which provides overall strategic directions and develops new cost-effective statistical methodologies, guidelines and training material to support the implementation of the programme at regional and country levels. At the regional level, work is led by the regional partners, who provide technical assistance to countries and liaise with regional and national stakeholders. As of early 2016 these partners were the African Development Bank (AfDB), UNECA, UNESCAP and the FAO Regional Office in Bangkok.

148. **Multilateral Support.** The World Bank as well as other multilateral development banks, specifically the regional development banks have been heavily involved in NSCD. The World Bank has

implemented a number of programmes and is a major partner is many of the key initiatives in this area (including those mentioned above). In addition, its two major programmes are:

- The *Statistics for Results Facility (SRF)* aids the scaling up support for statistics. Its goal is to increase developing countries' capacity to formulate development policies and for evidence-based decision-making. In support of this, the Statistics for Results Facility Catalytic Fund (SRF-CF) provides grants to:

  • Stimulate support for implementing the NSDS or similar statistical development plan
  • Promote a system-wide approach in statistics at the country level
  • Promote improved coordination and partnership between statistics users and producers
  • Deliver more efficient and effective aid and technical assistance for strengthening statistical systems and results measurement.

- The *Statistical Capacity Building Program (STATCAP)* provides countries with loans to finance comprehensive or sectoral statistical capacity-building projects, typically the implementation of an NSDS. STATCAP provides flexible financing, for meeting recurrent costs, financing investments and making best use technical support and advice. Each project is based on an assessment of the country's needs and existing capacity.

149. **Bilateral support.** The European Union is a major supporter of NSCD. In addition to the support provided to EU member States, Eurostat provides technical assistance to countries on the production and dissemination of harmonised and high-quality data, and verifies that national statistics comply with the acquis in the fields of statistics.[100] It also supports many of the EU's neighbours, many of whom aim to approximate their statistics to European standards.[101]

150. Eurostat plays an active role in the statistical cooperation between international agencies and organizations and represents the European Commission in the UNSC, in bilateral relationships with international financial institutions (e.g. IMF, World Bank and regional development banks) and in the OECD Statistics Committee (CSTAT). All these international statistical agencies cooperate to set up international standards for statistics, to improve the comparability of statistical information, to improve the coordination of international statistics-related activities, and to financially or technically support national statistical systems.

151. One approach (similar to the EU using EUROstat) is to use the NSO of the donor countries to support NSCD in other countries. This has been a common approach for Statistics Sweden and Statistics Norway. In one country, these two government statistical agencies have linked with Statistics Denmark to have a Statistics Scandinavia intervention.

152. As noted in the previous subsection, in terms of finance the United Nations system as a whole is important but the financing is dominated by the large sums spent by UNFPA. The next subsection will expand on the role of the UN development system before examining its contribution through answering the first evaluation question.

[100] Chapter 18 of the *acquis* (the body of common rights and obligations that is binding on all the EU member States).
[101] Eurostat's role in the European neighbourhood policy (ENP).

SECTION 4: FINDINGS ON THE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM TO NATIONAL STATISTICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

153. Section 4 addresses the first evaluation question: What is the contribution of the UN system within the broader international support to national statistical capacity development? This question addresses and the specific contribution of the UN system to national statistical capacity development for the achievement of national goals, including the MDGs. It will use the effectiveness and impact criteria to make the judgments. The three key subquestions are:

- What is the contribution of the UN system to national statistics capacity development outcomes? (effectiveness)
- Is the UN system contribution likely to help national achievement of national development goals including the MDGs? (impact)
- Where has the UN been the most and least successful and what are the comparative strengths of the UN system in this area?

154. The previous section set out the role of international organizations in supporting NSCD including the overall architecture of the global/regional statistical systems. This section focuses on the specific role of the UN in this context. The section starts with a descriptive subsection setting out the UN system activities at global, regional and national levels as well as the UN system mechanisms that exist to promote coordination and coherence. The following three subsections each represent one of the above-mentioned subquestions.

4.1 UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ENTITIES SUPPORTING NATIONAL STATISTICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

155. The previous section has indicated the critical role the UN plays in the global statistical system through the UNSC, the UNSD and the UN Regional Commissions. It also indicated that the UN is not staying still but trying to adapt to the new environments set out in the data revolution documentation, including efforts to engage with big data and official statistics, use new technologies and open up broader dialogue through the UN Global Data forum. Yet even though the UNSC is made up of representatives of NSOs, the meetings in New York are a long way from the day-to-day work of the NSS at the country level.

156. Here the UN is also active and has a long history of country level support from all levels. According to the 2015 survey of UN Resident Coordinators conducted for the QCPR Process, 116 countries (of the 122 who responded from a possible maximum of 131) engage in statistical activities. This includes 100 per cent of the lower income countries that responded to the survey. Of the 116, 111 were engaged in capacity development of some sort. Table 9 provides the results of the survey:

Table 9: UN Country Team Support to National Statistical Capacity Development	
Answers to question: Does the UN Country Team (UNCT) provide support to national statistical capacity development?	**Percentage yes (No. of countries)**
Low-Income Countries (LIC)	100% (37)
Lower Middle-Income Countries (LMIC)	91% (46)
Higher Middle-Income Countries (HMIC)	97% (33)
High-Income Countries (HIC)	83% (6)
Support by type	**No of countries**
Overall UNCT support for national statistical capacity	116
Capacity development	111
Financial support	56
Direct data collection/Survey administration	58
Other	3
Question on interagency nature of the support	**No. of countries answering yes**
Is this an interagency effort	72
If yes, this is an interagency effort, is there an interagency group on data and statistics?	35
If yes, this is an interagency effort, is there a budget for this activity?	26

Sources: UNDG/DOCO Information Management System (IMS)

157. There are ten United Nations specialized agencies involved in statistical activities and these are listed in Table 10. All are members of the CCSA and those with larger programme expenditures in the area are captured by the PRESS Report of PARIS21. Most also are covered in the UNSD mapping of the statistical activities of the UN system entities.

Table 10: UN Specialized Agencies[102] involved in NSCD			
Entity	**CCSA**	**UN[103] mapping**	**PRESS**
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	X	X	X
International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA)	X	X	
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)	X		
International Labour Organization (ILO)	X	X	X
International Telecommunications Union (ITU)	X	X	X
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO)	X	X	X
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	X	X	X
Universal Postal Union (UPU)	X	X	
World Health Organization (WHO)	X	X	
World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)	X		X
World Trade Organization (WTO)		X	

158. The funds and programmes differ from the specialized agencies in that they generally play less of a normative role and have more resources for programmatic activities. For them the QCPR is a mandatory

[102] IFAD, IMO, WIPO, WMO are not included.

[103] UNSD, *United Nations System: Entities and Existing Coordination Mechanisms*. Background document for the Statistical Commission forty-fifth session, 2014,

guide to their programming process and most have strategic plans aligned to the QCPR Process. They are also more likely to have a country presence than the specialized agencies. They are listed in Table 8.

Table 11: UN system funds, programmes and other entities involved in NSCD[104]

Entity	CCSA	UN mapping	PRESS
UN Habitat	X	X	
UN Women	X		
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)	X	X	
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	X	X	X
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	X	X	
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	X	X	X
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	X	X	
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	X	X	X
United Nations Office and Drugs and Crime (UNODC)	X	X	X
United Nations Peace Building Fund (UNPBF)			x
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**	X		
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**	X		

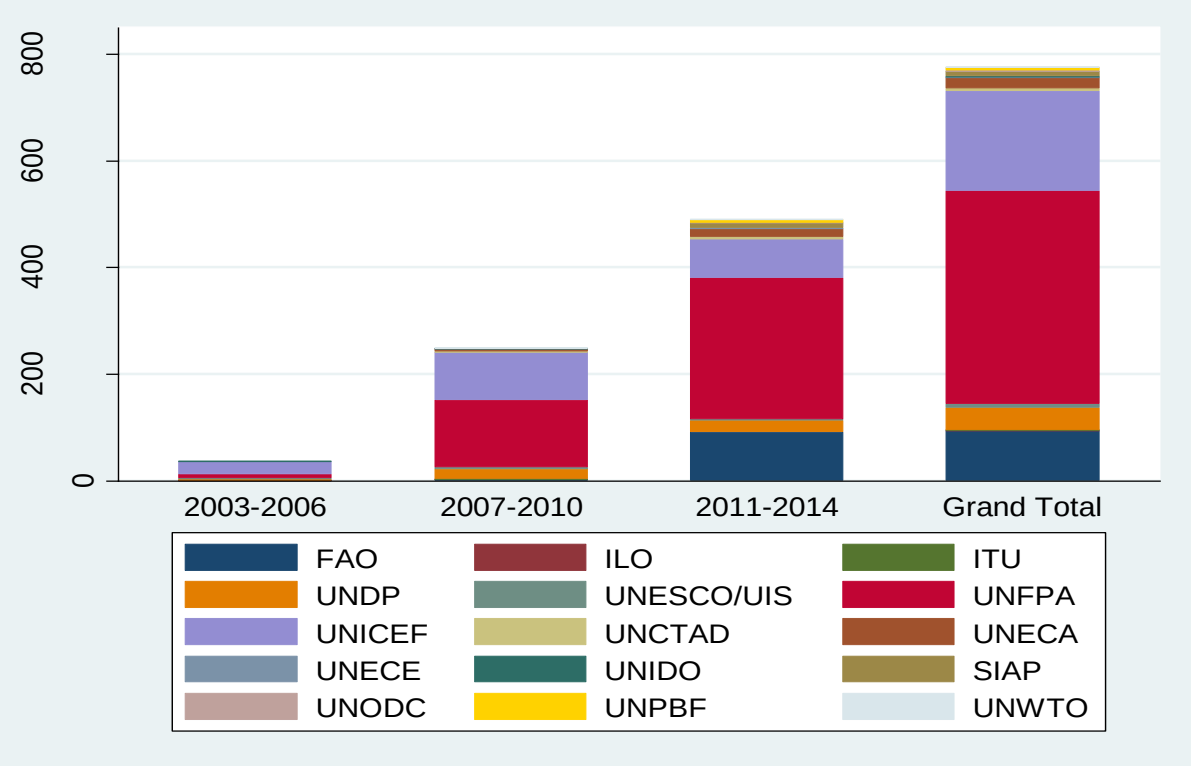
** Classified as departments and offices not funds and programmes.

159. **Financial support for NSCD**. Although there is no current monitoring of UN system-wide monitoring of consolidated financial support to statistical development, the PARIS 21 PRESS provides a snapshot of the financial support provided by multilateral and bilateral donors for statistics development globally and an overview of trends. Of course, the UN system is not a *donor* and the value added by the UN system often goes beyond financial support. Nonetheless, the financial resources the United Nations has available or has the ability to leverage is an important part of the context and of its strategic positioning in the area of national statistical capacity development.

160. According to the PRESS Report, the three organizations in the UN system that have contributed to NSCD the most in the twelve-year period 2003-2014 are the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the UNICEF and FAO. The UNFPA provide half (50.6%) of an estimated 787.3 million USD of the UN system-wide support for NSCD, while a quarter (23.7%) and a tenth (11.9%) of the UN support was respectively provided by the UNICEF and FAO. The fourth largest support among UN organizations, but to a much lesser extent, comes from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), at 5.3 of the total contribution. In the period 2003-2006, UNICEF led the UN system (followed by UNFPA and UNESCO/UIS) in providing financial support to NSCD. The UNFPA surpassed UNICEF in the period 2007-2010 and 2011-2014 (owing to the conduct of population censuses, and post-census activities). In 2011-2014, the FAO also further dislodged UNICEF in its ranking as regards its relative share of support to NSCD compared to the total UN system support as a result of the FAO's support for the conduct of agriculture censuses in the countries, as per the FAO's GSARS.

[104] UNRWA, WFP, UNAIDS, UNISDR, UNOPS, OCHA, OHCHR, as well as United Nations research and training institutes are not included.

Figure 6: Support to National Statistical Capacity Development, by UN Institutions: 2003-2006; 2007-2010; 2011-2014



Source: PRESS 2015

161. A limitation of the CRS is that it does not allow reporters to enter a list of recipients when reporting on multi-recipient projects. To solve this problem some CRS reporters split their projects into subprojects – one per recipient country – with each carrying their respective share of the total project commitment. The same reporting practice in the PRESS Reports is followed to indicate what share of a multi-sectoral aid project goes to statistics.

162. To assess countries' absorptive capacity for making effective use of such an increase in funding, the reporting needs to go beyond commitments of international aid. Two measures for a country's absorptive capacity are actual disbursements (as opposed to commitments) of aid money and domestic resources already invested in support to statistics. These are heroic measures and assume the homogeneity of aid, e.g. a country could absorb equipment, but not training[105].

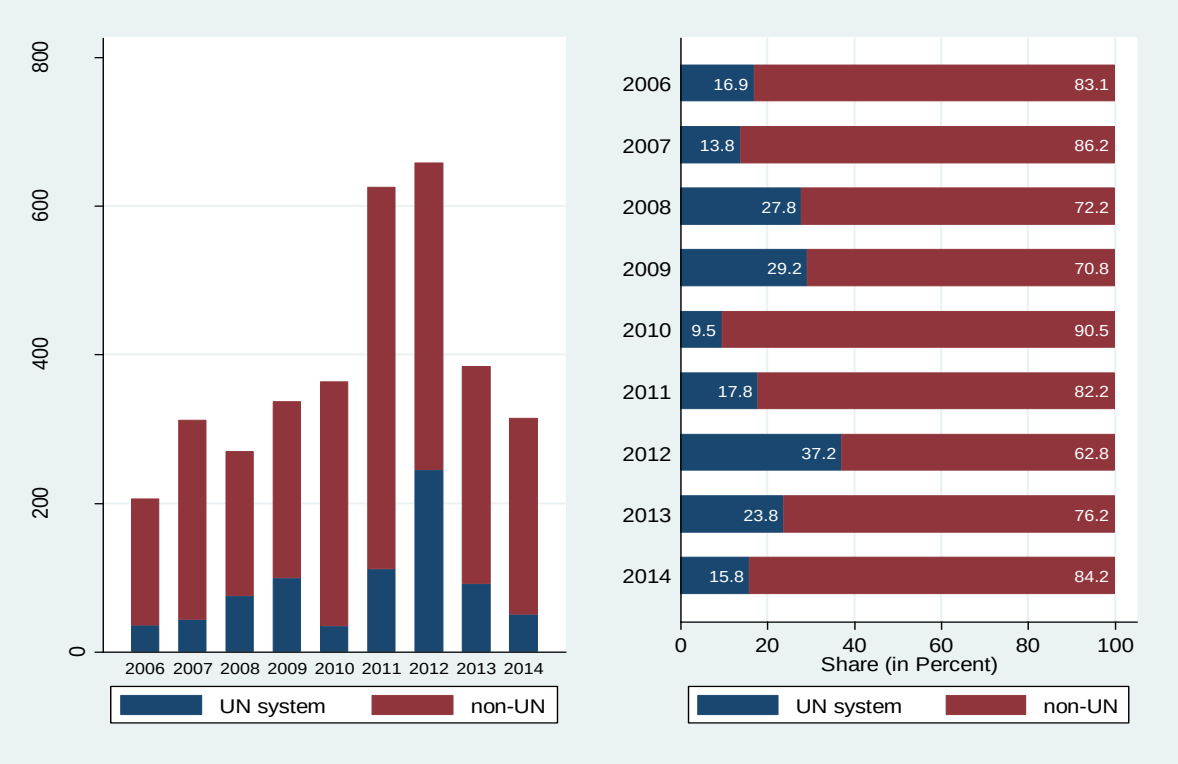
163. From 2006 to 2014, the UN system contribution to NSCD support averaged 87 million USD. This represented about a third (29%) of the total aid to statistics development. The annual share of the UN system support to total aid of the development community for NSCD ranged from a low of 9.5 per cent in 2010 to a high of 37.2 per cent in 2012 (when the assistance by the UNFPA to NSCD increased considerably to a total of 164 million USD). Total financial assistance to NSCD by the UN system ranged from 34.5 million USD in 2010 to 244.4 in 2012 (see Figure 10). There is, however, underestimation of the financial contribution of the UN system to statistics development. Valuation of financial costs for activities in NSCD other than projects, especially in the areas of technical assistance by UN institutions, including costs for the work of staff (permanent staff and advisers) in developing norms and statistical

[105] Partner Report on Support to Statistics, PRESS 2015, PARIS21.

standards, costs for short-term missions for technical assistance, costs for developing and updating tools for statistics and data dissemination, as well as costs for coordination are likely not given a monetary value in the PRESS report (owing to difficulties in providing values to these costs). Additional costs for the conduct of statistical training activities, workshops and technical meetings hosted by the UN system may or may not be properly valued as well.

164. As noted UNFPA is the largest UN agency in terms of contribution to NSCD and therefore deserves special attention when it comes to examining the financial contribution of the UN system as a whole. Since its inception in 1969, the UNFPA has been focused on assisting the production and use of updated and reliable population statistics data for planning, monitoring and evaluating development plans. In recent years, the UNFPA has significantly increased its support of NSCD in line with its commitment to comprehensive reporting through its country offices worldwide. In the 2010 PRESS of PARIS21, UNFPA ranked as the twenty-third largest provider, and moved to fourth largest in 2011 and third largest in 2012. In 2013, the interest in the use of demographic and socioeconomic data for planning and assessment of development increased with the availability of population censuses conducted by countries coupled with the monitoring of the MDGs. Consequently, in 2013, the UNFPA was the third largest provider of development cooperation in statistics constituting one of the top five providers (that consisted of the World Bank; EUROSTAT; UNFPA; the FAO; United Kingdom) giving 11 per cent of the total commitments.

Figure 7: Support to National Statistical Capacity Development, by UN system versus non-UN organizations (in million USD and in Relative Share to Total): 2006-2014



Source: PRESS 2015

165. In 2009 and 2012, UNFPA was the lead UN agency of two main programmes, which positively impacted the United Nations system support to NSCD. An underlying reason for the increase of the

United Nations system statistical support from 2008 to 2009 by 31 per cent was the estimated total commitment of USD 28,912,347 for the programme "2012 Housing and General Population Census". The lead UN agency of this donation was UNFPA and the recipient of this financial support was the National Institute of Statistics of the Republic of Rwanda. The population census in Rwanda was conducted to provide demographic and socio-economic statistics on the population of Rwanda for the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS), District Development Plans (DDP) and to improve investments in all sectors and accelerate progress towards the MDGs[106]. In addition, it can be noted that one of the causes of the substantial increase of the UN system support in statistics from 2011 to 2012 (by 120 per cent) was the total commitment of USD 54 million for the "*Appui à la collecte, analyse et diffusion des données socio-démographique, y compris le 4ème Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitation*" programme in the Central African Republic. The lead UN agency for this programme was UNFPA, and the recipient of this donation was the Central African Institute of Statistics and Economic Research and Social /Central Census Bureau.

4.2 HOW THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM SUPPORTS NATIONAL STATISTICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

166. A mapping of activities of UN system organizations shows that the UN system provides diverse support to NSSs for NSCD. Support has been given for skills enhancement at the individual level (through training activities, workshops, technical/expert meetings, and study visits) that transfer knowledge on statistics in a wide range of thematic areas (especially social statistics, economic statistics, environmental statistics, and cross-cutting statistics). In some cases, funds from the development community are provided or leveraged for supporting UN member countries in the conduct of primary data-collection activities, e.g. population censuses, agriculture censuses, household surveys such as the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), toward increasing the quantity of official statistics, and dissemination of results from these data-collection activities. At the institutional and enabling environment levels, the UN also offers norms and standards, tools as well as technical cooperation and assistance to increase the quality of statistical outputs and to provide a mechanism for achieving better cross-country comparability of official statistics. Ultimately, statistics become more meaningful when they are compared whether across time or across space. There is also growing importance for statistics to be disaggregated across subpopulations, e.g. urban versus rural populations, males and females, children and adults.

167. The UN Statistics Division (UNSD), which serves under the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) as the central mechanism within the UN Secretariat to supply the statistical needs and coordinating activities of the international statistical system, has reported since 2003[107] on its various knowledge transfer activities (including training, workshops, and study visits), on its other activities and projects on NSCD, including the coordination of NSCD. In the period 2006-2014, the UNSD conducted a total of 313 training/workshop events (averaging 35 events per year), which had a grand total of 16,715[108] event participants. In this nine-year period, most of these events were conducted in 2011 (46

[106] Counting the People of Rwanda, 2012 Population and Housing Census, National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda. http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/rwanda/drive/CensusBooklet-lowresolution.pdf.

[107] http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc13/2013-24-CapacityBuilding-E.pdf ; http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc15/2015-34-CapacityBuilding-E.pdf ; http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc11/2011-18-CapacityBuilding-E.pdf ; http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc09/2009-22-CapacityBuilding-SG-E.pdf ; http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc06/2006-27e-CapacityBuilding.pdf ; http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc05/2005-17e.pdf ; http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc03/2003-23e.pdf

[108] Some participants to these events may attend more than one event across the nine-year period.

events) and in 2013 (43 events). Nearly half (48.9%) events were on economic, trade, and environmental statistics, while another half (47.6%) were on population and housing censuses, MDG indicators, gender statistics, and data management and dissemination, while the remaining (3.5%) were training/workshops conducted in the period 2013-204 on geospatial information management. As regards study visits, the UNSD also supported in this period 146 individual fellowships for the attendance of statisticians from developing countries at 996 regional and international meetings. Forty-four advisory missions were also conducted by three interregional advisers of the UNSD in 2011-2014.

168. Follow-up surveys by the UNSD after these events and advisory missions suggested that a large majority of event and mission participants evaluated these activities favourably. They suggested that these activities were very important and useful in terms of providing them with substantive knowledge on the collection, compilation, analysis, and dissemination of statistical data. They were considered especially important for participants from countries that were in the process of conducting surveys and that could immediately take specific steps for the implementation of new international recommendations.

169. Each regional commission has a statistics division supporting regional harmonization of statistics and national capacity development efforts to improve data and statistics collection, processing, comparability, dissemination and use for evidence-based policymaking at the national level, including by working with the regional conferences on statistics (which they support as technical secretariat or otherwise) and by providing capacity-building and technical assistance to NSOs.

170. The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) is a unique training institution in the UN regional commissions. The SIAP was established in 1970 by 20 governments in Asia-Pacific, the UN and UNDP through the initiative of the Government of Japan. The Institute carries out the statistics subprogramme support of ESCAP for member nations in the Asia-Pacific region, in partnership with ESCAP Statistics Division. Through its various regional training programmes and in-country courses as well training development activities, the SIAP helps Asia-Pacific NSSs, especially NSOs by covering in its programmes the foundations and methods of official statistics, the statistical production process, and specialized domains of social, population, gender, economic, agricultural and rural, and environment statistics. The SIAP training programmes aim to improve knowledge and skills of official statisticians and government officials in producing, disseminating and using quality statistics and modernizing national statistical institutions.

171. What is clear from a review of the activities of the UN system organizations involved in NSCD is that the efforts of the UN organization in supporting NSCD are driven, as is to be expected, by their respective mandates. For example, among the larger specialized UN agencies, the UNICEF advocates for the protection of children's rights and collects data related to children and women obtained in the MICS and even related surveys such as the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). The DHS, though funded by the United States Agency for International Development (US AID), has contributions from UNICEF, as well as the UNFPA, World Health Organization (WHO), and the Joint UN Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS). Another example is the FAO that has a general mandate to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity and better the lives of rural populations. In consequence, the FAO provides technical assistance for improving agricultural and rural statistics, and on occasion, even supports with other development partners the conduct of agriculture censuses in selected countries, such as Cambodia. Similarly, the ILO has a general mandate on decent work and international labour standards, and provides

technical support on labour and employment statistics, and occasional support for the conduct of labour force surveys, or special surveys for generating labour and employment statistics.

172. Besides funding for capacity-building in the production of statistics, the UN also has a normative role with the UNSC mandated to set standards, to develop concepts and methods and to advise implementation at the national and international level. For many UN system organizations, the main statistical activities include the harmonization of national data and the provision to NSOs with internationally recognized definitions and concepts as well as assessments of countries' NSSs with the areas/themes of their mandates. These activities do not, however, show up in the PRESS records. The UNSC's leadership role and role in setting norms and standards for official statistics is, for instance, significant, and the UNSD supports this role. Organizations in the UN system have a comparative advantage over other development partners in providing countries this normative role.

173. With the increased availability of new tools in information communications technology (ICT), NSSs have been supported by international agencies in the establishment and use of various ICT tools for database management and dissemination. For instance, in database management, the UN system developed:

- DevInfo[109], a database system managed on behalf of the UN system by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) for monitoring human development with the specific purpose of monitoring the MDGs. The DevInfo software, an enhancement of an earlier UNICEF database system called ChildInfo, is a desktop and web-enabled tool for organizing, storing and presenting data in a uniform way to facilitate data sharing at the country level across government departments, UN agencies and development partners. Select countries, e.g. Bangladesh and Cambodia, have adapted DevInfo into their country dissemination platforms calling it respectively BDInfo and CamInfo.
- The UNSD has also built platforms such as CountryData[110], dedicated to disseminating data from national sources, making use of SDMX technology.
- FAO has also assisted countries in the development of CountryStat[111], a web-based and cross-platform system that integrates national food and agricultural statistical information to ensure harmonization of national data and metadata collections for analysis and policymaking. FAO developed CountryStat to also assist countries in providing faster data inputs to its FAO Corporate Statistical Database (FAOSTAT).[112]

174. Some countries have also implemented other national information portals, such as for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), supported by agencies within the UN, such as UNDP. Whether the proliferation of information portals for various domains, subdomains, and cross-cutting themes, such as the MDGs and governance-related themes (Open Data Initiative), has provided maximum impact to stakeholder needs given the propensity for duplication of information requires examination.

109 http://www.unicef.org/statistics/index_24300.html
110 http://data.un.org/countryData
111 http://www.countrystat.org/
112 http://faostat.fao.org/

4.3 THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL STATISTICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

175. While subsections 4.1 to 4.2 set out what the UN system did and accomplished over the last 15 years, this sub-section assesses whether or not the UN system made a difference, specifically a contribution to national statistical capacity development goals. As noted there are no global goals and very rarely national ones in this area and a goal free approach has been adopted. This subsection therefore relies on the perspectives of national stakeholders (mostly from the government) as to whether the UN has made a contribution as well as analysis of evaluations of UN system work in this area.

176. The survey of programme countries conducted as part of the QCPR process identified the United Nations development system as their preferred provider for institutional capacity development but were moderate in their endorsement of the United Nations development system for developing national capacities.[113] The survey also revealed some of the key contributing factors that have enabled the UN system to be effective in this area:[114]

> Among the factors that programme country governments saw as contributing to UN effectiveness were having well-qualified staff who understood the local situation, coordinating closely with all national stakeholders, flexibility to adapt programmes to changing needs, and involving national institutions and national experts in the development and implementation of programmes.

177. When it comes the specific area of national statistical capacity development, section 2 noted some positive trends as indicated by a number of assessment tools. Yet numerous studies, assessments and evaluations have also pointed to weaknesses in the existing support for NSCD. For instance, while statistical standards have been developed for a number of areas, there are no standards for statistical training. Further, given that countries are starting to look into the use of alternative data sources, such as big data, crowd sourcing, etc., to fill data gaps, there is yet any guidance or standard for the integration of these data sources with traditional sources.

178. Determining the contribution of the UN system is made more difficult by the lack of a monitoring system for the UN as a whole on its capacity development work. Interestingly the Report of the Secretary-General on Capacity Development presented annually to the Statistics Commission is prepared by PARIS21 and the World Bank and contains a report of their efforts.

Finding 1: At the country level, the initiatives of United Nations system entities generally make important contributions to national capacity development for the production of statistics.

179. The body of evidence from country studies as well as well as evaluations at the country, region and global levels shows that the UN system often makes important contributions to NSCD. The country studies reveal that there is much appreciation of the initiatives of UN agencies in supporting national statistical capacity development. In general, what it does, it does well and this perception comes as much from MDAs as it does from the NSOs. This is not to say that the support is optimal and cannot be improved but some of these issues will be examined in other subquestions in this report.

[113] Report of the Secretary-General on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system: Recommendations. Advance Unedited Version – 28 December 2015. Para. 117.
[114] Question 31.

180. The secondary evidence collected from completed evaluations was consistent with the country studies. Of the 20 recent UNDAF evaluation reports examined (annex 6) the vast majority present positive views about the UN system work in this area. Evaluations of the work of regional commissions in supporting NSCD have also been positive. The 2015 OIOS ECLAC Evaluation[115] noted that ECLAC has supported the strengthening and harmonization of statistics across the region and the improvement of methodologies in relation to national accounts, poverty, gender and other social indicators. It found that this work "has strengthened statistics at the regional, subregional and national levels. ECLAC also helped to improve Member States' capacity to collect and analyse census data." However, the evaluation found that ECLAC has not been effective enough in enhancing statistical capacity in the Caribbean, which has been identified as a priority. In addition, the 2009 OIOS evaluation of the work of the United Nations Statistical Division[116] reported that several stakeholders suggested that efforts by the Statistics Division to build national level capacity had resulted in an improvement in the quality of the data submitted by some countries and hence in the accuracy of the indicators overall (para 24). One key respondent, however, also pointed to the need for UNSD to be more systematic in capacity development, particularly by having UNSD focus on statistical standards for training, and working more with regional commissions in the conduct of capacity-building activities rather than having it directly conduct workshops given that the regional commissions are closer to the countries.

181. The 2016 OIOS evaluations of ECE and ESCWA were also positive. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) evaluation[117] noted that the commission importance goes beyond the region and that some outputs originally developed in the region have been adopted worldwide such as the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Moreover, today the Conference of European Statisticians includes active participation from nine countries outside of the UNECE region. The UNESCWA evaluation[118] noted that the Commission had, in a number of areas including statistics, "played a catalytic role by bringing government officials together to exchange experiences and to discuss technical issues, challenges and policy options".[119] The evaluation also notes that when it comes to strengthening national statistical capacities (among other areas of work), UNESCWA is "well positioned to provide the type of assistance its Member States need to be successful in transiting from conflict and unrest to political, economic and social stability".[120]

182. Moving to the global level, the 2011 OIOS evaluation of the work of the United Nations Statistics Division[121] reported that several stakeholders suggested that efforts by the Statistics Division to build national level capacity had resulted in an improvement in the quality of the data submitted by some countries and hence in the accuracy of the indicators overall.[122] A more recent internal audit by OIOS[123] used a survey of members of the United Nations Statistical Commission to assess the substantive support

[115] OIOS, *Evaluation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean*, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, 2015.
[116] OIOS, *Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the United Nations Statistics Division*, 2009.
[117] *Evaluation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe*, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, 2016.
[118] *Evaluation of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, 2016.
[119] Para. 27.
[120] Para. 54.
[121] *Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the United Nations Statistics Division*, 2011.
[122] Ibid, para. 24.
[123] *Audit of the management of the statistics subprogramme and related technical cooperation projects in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. Report 2016/032, Office of Internal Oversight Services.

provided to Member States. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the best, the Division received an average score of 4.

183. Moreover, global assessments of specific themes were also positive. The UNFPA Census Evaluation (2016) found that overall, the contribution of UNFPA support to the 2010 census round has been largely positive: "the performance in terms of contribution to strengthening national capacities for the production and availability of data is without question". One factor identified in the evaluation is that UNFPA support often features good quality assurance mechanisms for the census, including quality assurance related to census governance. [124] Although capacity-building is not the primary objectives of the UNICEF MICS it has still made a contribution to it. A survey conducted for the 2009 UNICEF MICS evaluation indicated that the MICS had contributed to capacity-building for data collection and use in the country. Specifically, 88 per cent of representatives of government agencies who participated in the survey and 97 per cent of those from implementation agencies.[125]

4.4 THE POTENTIAL FOR UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IMPACT

184. The title of this evaluation as selected by the General Assembly is very clear in terms of what national statistical capacity development is for: to support the achievement of the MDGs and other internationally-agreed development goals. The theory of change set out in section 2 noted that high-quality statistics could lead to more evidence based policies, enhanced accountability and improved learning. The assumption is that the statistics are used in the policy decision-making process in the countries, and by citizens and legislatures for holding decision makers accountable, and that these two elements will together enhance the likelihood of achieving the MDGs and other internationally agreed goals. This section answers the subquestion: Is the UN system contribution likely to help national achievement of national development goals including the MDGs?

185. Section 2 identified three broad groups of use of statistics, with use for national policymakers and citizens being one type of use that could be in competition with the others (development agency internal use and global/regional monitoring). It also laid out the importance of the effective use of official statistics. It was made clear that at a national level, use would primarily be for policymaking (monitoring and evaluation) and for supporting accountability to citizens. It also noted that there may be intermediaries that would support both types of primary use, for example media, the private sector, research institutions, academia and civil society organizations. Moreover, a distinction was made between use for examining trends (including forecasting, for policymaking and accountability), i.e., monitoring (which identifies a problem and provides the impetus for undertaking a policy reform) and more analytical use for looking at why something worked or did not (i.e. the causes of the problems) and learning lessons that could be used to design policy reform.

186. Assessing use and then the UN system's contribution to increasing use is a difficult task. The process stared from looking at examples or patterns of use and assessing if the UN had made a contribution to that. It also took into account a number of factors that can affect use of statistics:

[124] Evaluation of UNFPA support to Population and Housing Census Data to inform Decision-making and Policy formulation, 2005-2014, Evaluation Office, UNFPA, March 2016.
[125] Table IV.4, page 63.

- Some of these are technical such as the quality, timeliness and availability of data, and can be addressed by capacity development in the production side.
- Some are more complex such as perceptions and understanding of what the statistics mean.
- Some are to do with the politics of decision-making and why such processes may or may not use statistics
- Some are to do with the capacities to undertake the analysis

The above may not affect all types of statistics in the same way (e.g. a lot of confidence in poverty data but not in macroeconomic statistics). It may be politically acceptable to use education data but not health data or capacities in one more than another or inclinations, more quantitatively inclined people making policy on sector rather than another.

187. Although the above illustrates the different contexts that make examining the use of statistics a challenge, what is clear is that the dissemination of statistics is not enough to ensure their effective use. As one observer of the use of data has observed – data is not a force on to itself:

> *Databases do not knock on doors, make phone calls, push for institutional reform, create new services for citizens, or educate the masses about the inner workings of the labyrinthine bureaucracies that surround us. The value that data can potentially deliver to society is to be realised by human beings who use data to do useful things. The value of these things is the result of the ingenuity, competence and (perhaps above all) hard work of human beings, not something that follows automatically from the mere presence and availability of datasets over the web in a form which permits their reuse.*[126]

Finding 2: The United Nations system has not always done enough to promote national demand for statistics and to support capacities for greater use of statistics for national policymaking,[127] **improved accountability to citizens and better business decisions by the private sector.**

188. The use of statistics for national policymaking and accountability was often included in the design stage of the NSCD interventions. This was most common in broad programmes (Moldova, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, etc.), often joint UN programmes. But these programmes have not always been implemented (Swaziland) or the use part has found to be weakest of otherwise good projects (Moldova). There are good examples of impact of capacity development activities by the UN system when projects link NSCD directly to use. In Moldova, in addition to being a key objective of the joint UN programme, efforts by UNFPA and FAO directly addressed the use issue and made efforts to promote it. In some cases, support was weak (i.e. it stopped at dissemination) in others it was aimed at other forms of use (i.e. internal programme design or monitoring). In Bangladesh, 14 monographs were developed by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, with the support of UNFPA, analysing in detail the most recent 2011 population census. These 14 monographs were jointly developed by BBS with the line ministries and academicians covering a wide area of topics such as education, migration, labour, marriage, children and youth, the elderly, disability. [128]

[126] Rogers, Simon, Facts are Sacred: Text only eBook, Kindle Edition, accessed on 2013-04-15 at Kindle Locations 1323-1327, Guardian Faber Publishing.

[127] The term "policymaking", as used here, refers to the whole policy cycle, from identification to design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and amendment.

[128] As indicated in http://bbs.gov.bd/PageWebMenuContent.aspx?MenuKey=243, the diverse topics analysed from the 2011 population census include: (1) Children and Youth in Bangladesh; (2) Education and Literacy in Bangladesh; (3)

189. Use of statistics is difficult to monitor and monitoring is rarely attempted. It is especially difficult to make a causal linkage between a capacity development effort and a change in policy. While reports, including development plans, may cite official statistics, but whether these official statistics are actual inputs to policy discussions that led to a continuation, an adjustment or a break of a past policy or program, is not clear. The agriculture ministry in Cambodia, for instance, readily admits that despite the support given to production of agriculture statistics through the agriculture census and some sample surveys, it is unclear to the ministry how these statistics can feed into policy formulation. Further, governments may not necessarily be prepared to see and use statistics. For instance, while the Bangladesh put gender development in its priority agenda, it was not fully prepared to make use of results from its pilot Violence against Women survey (given the rather high prevalence rate of VAW). Here, there was also no reason to conduct of a second VAW survey too soon after the pilot survey. This is because change would not be expected, given that globally, VAW studies are carried out every 7 to 10 years as there are social/cultural underpinnings. Thus there are capacities issues on the user side regarding what statistics mean, how these statistics input into policy, and what is the frequency of monitoring specific statistics. Also discussions on use sometimes do not distinguish between the different types of use and in some cases see monitoring as the ultimate objective of statistical use. There has been some support for better understanding of statistics to promote use, for example ECE's work on meta data for MDG monitoring. Other United Nations system efforts to enhance national use have been to promote the homogenization and comparability of statistics at the subregional, regional and global levels, and the sharing of microdata in standard formats.

190. Use is clearly linked to the relevance issue discussed in the previous section and also to the quality of statistics where the UN system seems to have some success in supporting through its NSDC efforts. A major issue raised by a number of countries studied as part of the evaluation is the lack of a culture of use in government. The findings vary considerably even within governments. Where there is a lack of culture of using statistics is precisely where capacity development support is needed. It also seems that in some countries, the MDG reports and similar reports that highlight disparities in development outcomes have stimulated discussion on statistics that have led to improvements in use. Yet, while there is much guidance available on technical issues but there is much less undertaking on promoting the use of statistics.

191. Global thematic evaluations provide more insights into the issue. The 2014 UNICEF MICS Evaluation found some improvement in this area, specifically that "the landscape of MICS data use is more widely varied and robust than that found in the prior evaluation". MICS data are being used increasingly in multi-country analyses, which utilize common conceptual frameworks to examine issues such as child poverty[129] and children out-of-school.[130] Requesters of MICS data sets described analyses with varied purposes that spanned a wide range of analytical topics with health, gender, nutrition and education heading the list. Factors that facilitate the use of MICS data include:

- increased confidence in the quality of the data (as was reported in the evaluation's cluster 1 report)

International Migrants from Bangladesh; (4) Elderly Population in Bangladesh; (5) Disability in Bangladesh; (6) Population Distribution and Internal Migration in Bangladesh, (7) Population Density and Vulnerability; (8) Household Amenities and Assets; (9) Age-Sex Composition of Bangladesh Population; (10) Housing Condition in Bangladesh; (11) Labour Force Participation; (12) Changing Patterns of Urbanization in Bangladesh; (13) Trends, Patterns and Determinants Marriage in Bangladesh; and (14) Fertility Differentials in Bangladesh.

129 http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/index_childpoverty.html.

130 http://www.unicef.org/education/bege_61659.html.

- increased ability to compile global data sets that use MICS and DHS data interchangeably
- intensive analytical work made possible by the partnership of UNICEF headquarters data and analytics staff with Program Division staff. For example, as a result of more harmonized data sets the average annual number of data-driven analytical publications more than doubled in the period 2011-2013 compared to 2005-2007. These publications now moving beyond flagship publications (e.g. State of the World Children, Progress for Children) to cover a more diversified set of themes including birth registration, female genital mutilation/cutting, disparities in sex and adolescents.

192. The previous evaluation (2008) found data quality issues to be an important impediment to data use. With important gains made in data quality, the factors which hinder the further analyses of MICS data relate largely to *capacities* particularly those at country office level. While country office monitoring and evaluation officers cannot be expected to carry out any extensive analyses, it seems that they do not frequently ask further questions of the data sets nor do they routinely tap local resources such as research institutions, and universities for further analyses. Of course, there are notable exceptions to this pattern as well. In addition, MICS processes and materials do not always maximize opportunities related to utilization including further analyses. As an illustration, there is little coverage of data utilization in the Manual and workshops focused on data dissemination and utilization are not attended by those who would be directly involved in analyses. Online survey respondents were largely satisfied with issues of database access but felt that greater standardization was required across MICS data sets.

193. The 2016 UNFPA independent evaluation of UNFPA support to census to inform decision-making and policy formulation [131] was less positive and found that "the 2010 census round has had a preeminent focus on enhancing the production of census data, placing disproportionately less attention on analysis, data dissemination, and use in policy-making."[132] So while population censuses are invaluable tools for monitoring progress in development indicators such as the MDGs - census data not only provides the baseline for most indicators, such as the population size of specific groups, but also generates information for indicators on gender equality, education, health and access to natural resources - UNFPA has not yet exploited the full potential of combining census data with specific surveys, administrative sources or new sources of data such as big data. The evaluation also revealed a number of important factors that can explain this imbalance.

194. Firstly, there are differences between the intended intervention (according to the theory of change) and the actual intervention undertaken to support census, with implications for the UNFPA strategy and business model. Obstacles in adopting the UNFPA business model in part explain the comparatively limited focus of UNFPA support strengthening capacities at the national level, on the use of census related data for policy-making, which has resulted in a lower-than-expected contribution to the intended outcomes vis a vis the use of data for evidence-based policy and programme development. Secondly, the evaluation found that population censuses are statistical operations of a technical nature but they also carry significant socio-political implications with a range of potentially sensitive issues, particularly in countries with political, ethnic and religion-based conflicts. However, there is no UNFPA wide guidance on how to approach censuses conducted within a politically sensitive context and ensure the reliability, credibility and legitimacy of the results. In the absence of such guidelines, country offices approach sensitive questions, such as ethnicity, language or religion, in different ways.

[131] Evaluation of UNFPA support to population and housing census data to inform decision-making and policy formulation 2005-2014 https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/Evaluation_report_-_Volume.pdf
[132] Page 78.

195. The 2011 ILO evaluation of its statistics component of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)[133] noted that although the quality of the research products was perceived as very high, some indications point to a very moderate academic uptake. The 2016 FAO report on the Corporate Outcome Assessment 2015[134] also points to limited contribution to the use of statistics. In asking about the *FAO contribution to the use of statistics for evidence-based decisions in the planning and management of agricultural and natural resource sectors* over the period 2014-2016, the report estimates that in approximately 20 per cent of countries, FAO made no visible contribution. In approximately 63 per cent of countries its contribution was moderate and only in 17 per cent of countries did it contribute significantly.

4.5 THE COMPARATIVE STRENGTHS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

196. The third subquestion tries to address the comparative strengths of the UN system in this area by asking: Where has the UN been the most and least successful and what are the comparative strengths of the UN system in this area? The focus is on its comparative strengths in terms of its effectiveness and potential impact assuming that these are more structural compared to the quality issues discussed in the next section, which may be easier to address. Noting that the scale of the SDGs will require a significant improvement in coordination and coherence among all actors including UN systems, the report of the Secretary-General on the QCPR notes that "*Importantly, it will require the entities of the development system to target capacity development efforts and work in areas where it has a clear comparative advantage and mandate to do so*."[135]

197. The assessment also takes into account that the UN is working in a changing environment (as set out in section 2) and also among a wide variety of international organizations (as set out in section 3). This subsection therefore looks at what its past experience and present capacities/positioning can tell us about its comparative strengths in national statistical capacity development. Clearly capacity development is not just in the mandate of the UN system but an obligatory part of its work. But given that the areas in which it engages in capacity development relates to the mandates of the 30 United Nations entities involved, is it possible for there to be a comparative strength of the UN system as a whole? An attempt will be made to capture such strengths (and weaknesses) at the system level and not examine if the NSCD work undertaken by the UN system is better in one sector than another.

198. It is also important to note that different types of capacity development require different types of skills. Enabling environment often requires closeness and trust of government, institutional capacity-building may require significant resources and individual capacity development may require very strong coordination to be effective and efficient. The strengths of the UN more generally can be seen from the 2015 survey of programme country governments undertaken as part of the QCPR process where in a comparative study of different types of international development partners, the UN system scored highest in eight of the ten categories examined.[136] In terms of this evaluation, two stand out (a) Institutional capacity development and (b) policy advice on national strategies and plans.

[133] ILO Evaluation Unit *Cluster evaluation of ILO-IPEC Research and Statistics (SIMPOC) projects 2007-2010*. 2011
[134] FAO *Corporate Outcome Assessment 2015. Main Results*. 2016 DRAFT
[135] Para. 126.
[136] Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Report on QCPR Monitoring Survey of Programme Country Governments in 2015. Final Report 13 January 2016. Table 15.

Finding 3: The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and statistical standards are much appreciated by Member States, as Member States actively participate in the development of the standards. The support for knowledge-sharing in connection with using these standards is also appreciated.

199. The setting of standards and the sharing of knowledge to use them was the area of support by the UN system most appreciated by partner governments in the country studies as well as by relevant key stakeholder interviewees. The ability of countries to participate in the setting of these standards was raised by some as a reason for which they are both appreciated and used. The case of global monitoring and standard setting of statistics on HIV/AIDS, appears to be a good practice given the challenges based on data gaps, with countries working together with UN organizations to come up with joint estimates, compared to other statistics, where there are discrepancies between country statistics and estimates by international organizations.

200. The role in setting standards is increasing important as we enter the data revolution and the increase in opportunities to use alternative sources of data. Those working in an NSS need support in knowing how to deal with these new opportunities and standards/principles are a way of helping in this effort to provide not only a picture of the SDGs in countries, but also a portrait of country conditions required to improve national development planning priorities. In practice this means continuing the work of exploring big data applications for official statistics. Moreover, the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda – a departure from the MDGs – mean that standards to integrate traditional sources employed for official statistics (such as sample surveys, censuses, and administrative reporting systems) with alternative data sources are even more important. Even in some developing countries such as Malaysia, work has started on this and would require global guidance.

201. The United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics – originally an initiative of the UNECE – is a powerful tool for United Nations country teams to use in engagement with national authorities and to advocate for strengthening NSS. It is also an overarching framework that can be used at the basis for supporting national statistical capacity development. An important principle (the first) notes the importance of transparency, stating that official statistics should be “made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens’ entitlement to public information”.

Finding 4: In supporting national statistical capacity development, the United Nations system does not always effectively use the generic comparative strengths that it often has at the country level.

202. The UN generic comparative strengths such as its presence on the ground with long-term commitment and usually close relationship with government make it well positioned for advocacy for strengthening the statistical system, for supporting the NSS enabling environment and for promoting effective use among policymakers and citizens. In addition, the UN engages in majority of sectors and has often been found to play a role linking NSOs with MDA partners. Its convening power often makes it important for bring together the wide range of participants in the NSS, not just the range of producers but also users and suppliers of statistics in the private sector. Again, the universal presences mean that relationships can be developed on an ongoing basis and not just through one-off efforts such as when preparing an NSDS, or when experts from overseas come into the country for short-term technical assistance. These comparative strengths are not, however, generally being exploited. While the UN system has a clear comparative strength, UN Country Teams (UNCTs) are not provided with the tools to navigate the complex regional and global statistical architectures and to effectively use them in an

efficient and effective manner. There are often no formal linkages between the UNCTs and the UN regional statistical divisions, and generally no linkages with the UNSD. This is an issue examined in greater detail in the next section.

Finding 5: The United Nations system has not always been able to address national statistical capacity development in a holistic manner, to address the national statistical system as a whole. In addition, it has not always been strategic and catalytic in leveraging its limited financial resources and promoting such broad holistic support where necessary.

203. The establishment of the fundamental structures of a statistical system are essential if the NSS is to produce high-quality statistics on time and make them available in a useful manner. While the UN system has produced good guidance on issues such as business processes for production of statistics, it generally does not have the resources to finance the large scale investments often required to strengthen the statistical infrastructure. At the same time, it often relies on globally and regionally developed products for its key interventions. Yet, the UN system's presence on the ground means that it does not have to rely on global/regionally driven models if not appropriate and it should be in a position to make a differentiated response to each situation. This could lead to strong partnerships with non-UN organizations that do not have such a presence and/or relationship.

204. The UN has often been successful, however, at leveraging global resources for important partnerships where it has appropriate technical capacities. Examples include population surveys, agricultural surveys and civil registration. The UN system cannot finance expensive items like improving vital registration systems – often taken on by the World Bank (WB) – but can play a major TA role in partnership. There have been cases where some UN organizations, e.g. UNFPA or UNFPA, have done so or are beginning to do so in some countries, such as Bangladesh. At the country level, the UN has also been successful in mobilizing resources for specific vertical initiatives such as for a population census (Ethiopia).

205. A good example of providing a basis for a holistic approach towards national capacity-building in statistics are the so-called "Global Assessments of national statistical systems" that UNECE has carried out, in cooperation with the European Statistical System and European Free Trade Association, in a number of countries. Global Assessments provide a comprehensive analysis of the institutional, organizational and technical capacity of the countries to produce official statistics that comply with international guidelines and recommendations.[137] They cover all producers of official statistics and different subject-matter areas. The Global Assessment reports are agreed with national counterparts, thus reflecting the national priorities. Such a comprehensive analysis can provide a systematic basis for capacity-building activities that are targeted to the challenges identified by Global Assessments.

206. But it has often not been able to leverage resources at the country level to address the horizontal aspects of the NSS where they are necessary. Clearly this is not the case in all countries where either domestic resources are adequate or where major donors are addressing these needs. But among the countries examined, it is clear that additional resources are required to ensure an effective system and the UN has not played an adequate role in working with the national authorities to mobilise resources. This situation has occasionally been made more challenging because some countries, such as Trinidad and Tobago, are considered high-income or upper middle-income countries, so that the usual donor community would not even exist.

[137] Reports are available at: http://www.unece.org/statcoop/ga.html.

SECTION 5: FINDINGS ON THE QUALITY OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM CONTRIBUTION TO NSCD

207. While the previous section sets out the role and notes the contribution and potential impact of the UN system to NSCD, this section answers the second evaluation question: What is the quality of the UN system contribution to national statistical capacity development? The question goes beyond the contribution of the UN system as defined by effectiveness and potential impact to look at its quality as assessed by the criteria of relevance, sustainability and efficiency. The question will be answered through the following three subquestions:

- Was the support to national statistical capacity development relevant to the needs of the country, taking account of resource constraints and competing priorities?
- What has been the degree of sustainability of UN system capacity development efforts?
- How coherent and coordinated is the UN system support for national statistical capacity development?

208. These questions are at the heart of the UN system approach to development as set out in recent General Assembly resolutions on various comprehensive policy reviews of the operational activities of the United Nations development system. Increasing the coordination and coherence of the UN have been at the forefront of the UN reform process. The themes of the sustainability of capacity development and national ownership have been consistently highlighted by the UN in relation to its operational activities for the past twenty years.[138] How they relate will be expanded in each of the following sections. Moreover, much is known about these three issues in terms of challenges to capacity development as well as more specifically about NSCD. This following sections will summarize the more general evidence and from that examine the specific performance of the United Nations system.

5.1 THE RELEVANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM CONTRIBUTION

209. The evaluation criterion on relevance has been used for some time and usually relates to "the extent to which the aid activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor".[139] In the context of this evaluation, and in line with the UN system approach to development, it relates more to priorities of the Member States where the UN system is working. It conforms to the primacy of national ownership of the activities which the UN system undertakes as laid out in numerous comprehensive policy reviews, including the QCPR of 2012, where it:

> *Requests the United Nations development system to continue its efforts to respond to national development plans, policies and priorities, which constitute the only viable frame of reference for programming operational activities at the country level, on the basis of national ownership and leadership, and to pursue full integration of operational activities for development at the country level with national planning and programming, under the leadership of national Governments, at all stages of the process, while ensuring the full involvement of all relevant stakeholders, at all levels, as appropriate*.[140]

[138] Bester, A. *Capacity Development*: A report prepared for the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review. United Nations, New York. 2015, para.13
[139] For example, by the OECD DAC since 1991 OECD DAC Principles of Evaluation of Development Assistance
[140] Resolution 67/226, para. 12.

210. The Report of the Secretary-General on the QCPR[141] makes the issue clearer, noting it is essential to ensure tailor-made solutions for different countries, strongly anchored in national leadership and ownership, and based on their individual capacities, needs and priorities."[142]

211. The 2015 surveys of programme country governments and of Resident Coordinators indicate a perception of a high degree of alignment. In answer to the question: *Overall, the activities of the UN and your country's development needs and priorities are* … 95 per cent of resident coordinators believed that the answer was very closely or closely aligned. This compares to 86 per cent of programme country government respondents. When it came to the *closely aligned* answer, a result to be expected given the importance of this issue to the organization, the difference was more marked with 55 per cent of resident coordinators indicating this to be the situation versus only 19 per cent of country programme government respondents. Box 6 provides a summary of the qualitative responses to a key survey question on challenges to greater alignment.

Box 6: QCPR Survey of Partner government[143]: Summary of answer to the question
Please mention briefly any challenges to achieving closer alignment between the activities of the UN and your country's development needs and priorities

All countries were invited to answer this question. Many responses called on the UN system to engage more closely with the government and other stakeholders, including civil society, and to share information better. A number of governments perceived the UNDAF as essentially a UN document over which they had little ownership, and in several countries the UNDAF was not aligned with the national planning and budgeting cycles. Some governments referred to programmes being created because non-core funding was available, rather than because the activity was aligned with national priorities. Similarly, some governments commented that some UN agencies give priority to their own mandates over national priorities.

Another prominent theme was the call for the UN system to coordinate itself better, and several governments felt the UN was slow in implementing DaO, and that some UN agencies were still resisting coordination. Some governments felt that coordination was satisfactory at the planning stage but remained weak at the programme implementation stage. Governments also pointed to a multiplicity of UN programming tools among the UN agencies, a reluctance to make use of national systems and capacities, and a need for better monitoring and evaluation.

Lack of staff members of the United Nations in the country was mentioned by some governments, along with a perceived inability by the UN system to address the needs of the most marginalized or vulnerable groups in the country. A few governments also mentioned weaknesses on their own side, such as insufficient staff, or poor coordination within the government.

212. When asked for recommendations on how to improve the UN systems contribution to national capacity (question 32) programme country governments expressed the view that the UN system could improve its effectiveness in developing national capacities by, among other things: making greater use of existing national capacities and systems. Other measures they proposed to improve effectiveness in capacity development include closer collaboration between United Nations entities and government ministries to ensure that initiatives are demand-driven and based on national development priorities;

213. When an NSDS exists, alignment to that strategy means a respect for national priorities assuming the NSDS truly reflects the priorities of the government. Where it does not exist, national ownership can be

[141] A/71/63 Implementation of General Assembly resolution 67/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.
[142] Para. 277.
[143] DESA. *Report on QCPR Monitoring Survey of Programme Country Governments in 2015*, 13 January 2016 .

an elusive concept: who are the owners among the many producers and users in an NSS. Does responding to a request by a government official result in an intervention being nationally owned? Could the priorities of one person not reflect those of another official? In the case of NSCD, the NSDS, where they exist, can provide the basis for ensuring ownership. Yet even these instruments raise further questions: when they were developed, did they really reflect the priorities of the government? Do they still reflect the priorities of the government?

214. The question of who the owner is becomes very relevant in the case of an NSS, which in many countries is highly fragmented. What is a priority for the NSO may not be for other parts of the NSS, especially for the policymakers across government, and what is a priority for one of the MDAs that form part of the system may not be for the system as a whole.

215. Previous case studies and evaluations[144] have shown that national statistical priorities are frequently distorted by resource limitations. Development partner funding often fills these gaps, but sometimes in a way that skews country systems to agenda of donors. The case about the second conduct of a Violence Against Women Survey too early after the pilot survey despite global practices of monitoring every 7 to 10 years is a case in point. As a remedy for this, agreements reached by the international community in Busan at the fourth High Level Results Forum encouraged developing countries to produce National Statistical Development Strategies (NSDS) expressing national priorities around which development partners should align. While most developing countries now have these strategies, but a study by PARIS21 suggests that 'only 40 per cent of the statistics-related aid projects surveyed are aligned with the country's NSDS'.[145]

216. There is, however, some evidence of aggregate improvement in alignment of assistance with the NSDS as recent PRESS data between 2010 and 2013 suggests that the share of commitments to statistical development reportedly aligned with NSDSs[146] grew from 75 to 84 per cent. When examining this trend, however, one should also consider the steady increase in the number of countries implementing an NSDS. As of January 2015, of the 77 International Development Association (IDA) borrowers, 44 are currently implementing their strategies. A total of 97 per cent are currently engaged in an NSDS process. In Africa, 34 of the 40 IDA countries on the continent are designing or implementing a statistical strategy. It would have been interesting to uncover how much alignment is there among UNDAFs with NSDS, when these strategies exist.

217. Ownership is about being in control and this means being able to make choices. In the area of NSCD that may mean making choices concerning alternative priorities such as between your commitment to report on global conventions and your commitment to increase the welfare of citizens through better evidence-based policy reform. The issue of ownership becomes complicated when there are tensions

[144] PARIS21 webpage accessed July 2016 http://www.datarevolution.paris21.org/studies-and%20reports.

[145], Shuang Cheng et al., "Towards a post-2015 framework that counts: developing national statistical capacity", Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) discussion paper No. 1 (November 2013).

[146] The question in the online questionnaire (field of Guidance of New Projects) which makes reference to NSDS is the following:

Is the project aligned with national or regional priorities, for example as reflected in an NSDS, statistical master plan, sectoral strategy, or regional statistical strategy?

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness calls on technical and financial partners to align their support with nationally agreed priorities. In statistical development, these nationally agreed priorities are articulated in NSDSs (national strategies for the development of statistics) or similar strategic processes such as master plans, sectoral statistical strategies, NSO corporate plans, or regional statistical strategies. It is recognized that not all countries have a statistical strategy. Please consult the PARIS21 NSDS report if you are uncertain if the recipient country has one. For this question, please answer Yes, No, or Do Not Know.

between the two, in other words, when international obligations for reporting may not coincide with national development priorities. As noted in section 2, such tensions often exist in the area of statistics. Could there be a situation where the demand for reporting on goals means that less attention gets paid to statistics for policymaking in priority areas that could lead to achievement of the goals themselves?

Finding 6: The United Nations system is generally relevant to the work of the national statistical office and relevant ministries, departments and agencies of the government but it does not always address the highest priority needs of national policymakers.

218. NSOs and statistics producers in the MDAs generally find the work of the UN system to be relevant to their needs, recognizing the areas where the UN works and the resource constraints faced. Resources and capacities mean that the United Nations system cannot finance all needs and resource gaps of the NSS. Users identify that there are gaps in the needs for data but note that the United Nations cannot provide all their needs. The United Nations system resources do not only address the social sectors but in some countries address productive sectors too.

219. The United Nations system helps Member States fulfil global and regional reporting obligations and therefore emphasises this area of work. While such assistance is important, in the context of limited resources for a national statistical system, United Nations system support may not reflect the highest national priorities. United Nations entity activities at the national level utilize scarce human resources in the national statistical system that they seek to strengthen, which can sometimes weaken the production of statistics for other national policy priorities. How relevant this is will depend on where the NSO sees its role primarily as a reporter or as supplier of statistics to national users. This in turn depends on whether there is clearly articulated and realistic demand for statistics.

220. The problem faced by some UN agencies is that resources are available for certain global or regional initiatives and the funds are not fungible. In other words, it is not so easy to divert resources to genuine national priorities. When addressing regional training (often undertaken by global initiatives too) an attempt is made to address the demands of many countries in the region as possible. Inevitably these may not always be the priorities of the national governments. The issue concerns the nature of funding of the United Nations development system and the high degree of dependence non-core resources that, without predictable and sustainable financing, will tend to lead to a piecemeal approach to United Nations system support.

221. The UNFPA evaluation noted that UNFPA had "a clear positive role in strengthening national leadership and ownership of the census by encouraging participation and engagement of all relevant national stakeholders in census process — though with a focus on central government. Consultation has been uneven across stakeholder groups within countries, one reason being the absence of corporate guidance on minimum standards for census governance mechanisms."[147] It also noted, however, there are risks associated with this approach when overly relied upon or when demand driven is taken to an extreme. Firstly, the UNFPA advisory role may be undermined, for example when providing innovative ideas; secondly, the UNFPA support may focus on short-term, ad-hoc responses rather than on mid- to long-term plans and strategies on, for example, capacity development.[148]

[147] EQ3 summary of findings, p. 60.
[148] P. 111.

222. There may also a trade-off between national ownership and advocacy, where a UN agency is trying to identify the situation regarding an important issue that may be driven by a global agenda. For example, violence against women; a survey of the situation may be important to show the extent of the problem to policymakers and to advocate for action to address the issue. Such issues may not be a priority until after the survey reveals the extent of the problem.

223. The 2014 UNICEF evaluation of the MICS found that the survey programme, as represented by the fourth and fifth round,

> *…demonstrated a considerable ability to adapt within the confines of its stated objective of generating quality, internationally comparable data. Adaptability was evidenced in a range of changes including inclusion of new questionnaire content and increased use of sub-national or population-specific surveys. However, there seems to be no specific criteria or documentation used to guide the inclusion or non-inclusion of new content. Overall, UNICEF does not employ any periodic assessment of information needs nor a prioritization process*.

224. Nonetheless, the 2014 UNICEF MICS evaluation also found that several upper middle-income countries with relatively strong statistical systems cited difficulties with a lack of flexibility within the MICS platform, specifically the need to adhere to standardized processes and products. For example, in regards to the standard report structure, respondents stated "we're not in the interested in the rigid report"; "we were told that our own interests had to wait until later, another report at a later time". In addition, the report noted that several interviewees made the connection between a feeling of "ownership" of the data and the subsequent use of that data.

225. As indicated in the introduction to this section, the concepts of alignment, ownership and relevance are highly complex. This can be illustrated by an example from the 2009 UNICEF MICS evaluation where in a country conducting MICS4, a very strong sense of ownership in the Ministry of Planning was seen as hindering ownership in line ministries. In this instance, compounding factors included control of assorted ministries by differing political parties and lack of strong, central leadership to force coordination. This shows the need for a politically astute resident UN and the use of regional consultants with LT relationships and trust, etc.

5.2 THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE RESULTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM CONTRIBUTION

226. Sustainability is extremely important if the long-term goals are to be achieved. Here, sustainability refers to the sustainability of the results to which the UN system contributes rather than to the sustainability of the interventions themselves, although the two are clearly often related. While the results may be considered sustainable if they continue following completion of the intervention, how long afterwards will depend on the type of intervention. Having to rerun the same training programme every year may not be a sign of sustainability. Equally, if support for a survey involved capacity development activities, a sustainable intervention would mean that most of the capacity is available the next time the survey is conducted, even if this occurred several years later. The General Assembly resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review specifically called upon United Nations organizations "to adopt measures that ensure sustainability in capacity-building activities".[149]

[149] A/67/226, para. 64.

227. There are many dimensions of sustainability as it relates to capacity development, for example, staff turnover, predictability of funding, or use of national capacity and systems. National ownership, as distinct from using national capacities and systems, also has been seen to have an effect on sustainability. Given that sustainable capacity development is an endogenous process driven by those whose capacities are to be developed, external assistance can play an important role in developing capacities but externally imposed initiatives are less likely to develop sustainable capacities.[150]

228. Sustainability – in the sense used here - has been one of the most challenging issues facing development, capacity development and NSCD. A 2009 thematic study on support to statistical capacity-building[151] noted that:

> *There are strong indications that projects have typically led to good-quality statistical output and improved capacities of the statisticians and their support services. But too often these gains have not been sustained, people trained have moved on or the training that had been provided proved insufficient to permit updating the computer programme used or adapting it to evolving needs.*

229. The Africa RRSF[152] notes that while donors and partner organizations agree that attention to sustainability is important, adequate government support through the normal national budget process is the surest way of supporting sustainability. Some of the other efforts to ensure sustainability beyond government budget support are included in Box 7 below:

Box 7: Africa RRSF ideas for promoting sustainability

- Using multi-year commitments; providing budget support instead of direct technical assistance;
- Promoting national ownership of programs; promoting institution building;
- Requiring that countries institutionalize the results of assistance; promoting participation in an international network
- Promoting demand for statistics in the country;
- Using local know-how and experts;
- Requiring a counterpart in the institution to which support is being provided;
- Focusing on sustained training, in particular the training of trainers;
- Assessing the sustainability of a project or program as part of the initial assessment in the proposal stage;
- Assessing the country's absorption capacity;
- Requiring a country contribution to the program;
- Collaborating with other donors; recommending international standards;
- Providing post-project or post-programme support.

Finding 7: The United Nations system support for national statistical capacity development often finds ensuring sustainability of the results to be a challenge. There is often inadequate assessment of the challenges and risks associated with sustainability concerns, particularly where globally driven statistical tools (for example, surveys) are transferred to national contexts.

[150] Bester, A., para. 10.
[151] OPM, Evaluation of the implementation of the Paris Declaration: thematic study – support to statistical capacity building, Synthesis Report, 2009.
[152] ECA et al., *Reference regional strategic framework for Statistical Capacity-building in Africa*, February 2006.

230. The sustainability of the capacity development results to which the UN system contributes is difficult to identify. Some of the challenges to sustainable capacity development faced by the UN system in this area – staff turnover, lack of institutionalization of training capacity, uncertainty of financial resources, etc. – are common in most efforts to support capacity development, even in upper middle-income and high-income countries. Overall, the evidence from country studies suggests that sustainability is a concern, but that the performance varies significantly in this respect. This is a similar finding to the UNFPA evaluation of its census work that found uneven success in this area.

231. Often the failure to ensure sustainability by one project is masked by another project with similar objectives. However, a major factor why sustainability is challenging is inadequate risk analysis of the potential for sustainability, including adequately assessing the realities of national budgets and understanding national budget cycles. Sometimes, it is beyond the control of the agency, for instance in the FAO Agricultural Census in Moldova, where one Minister keen on continuing the work of the UN (maintain capacities at all levels) was then replaced by a minister who had other priorities. Equally, taking short-term approaches when long-term ones are needed is often due to donor pressure for short-term results and reporting procedures.

232. Most, if not all of the above-mentioned, relate to the generic challenges to sustainable capacity development which are found across all areas of interventions. Many are as problematic for national authorities aiming to increase capacity as they are for the international community that is supporting these endogenous efforts. One chief statistician related the difficulties of staff being employed by a donor organization only a few months after the staff returned from studying overseas. There are, however, a number of sustainability issues that are specific to NSCD including the idea noted in the previous section that the UN system has placed inadequate emphasis on supporting the development of the fundamental statistical infrastructure.

233. An NSCD-specific issue is the emphasis on short-term support through surveys in situations where long-term investment in administrative and other data sources are more sustainable. Only recently has there been an increase in support for and promotion of vital statistics registration systems. Moreover, the rapidly changing statistical environment, methodologies and technologies mean that both national staff members working for the NSS as well as the staff of the international organizations and the consultants that support them, need to be constantly re-skilled and re-tooled. Finally, all support to national statistical capacity development needs to take into account the absorptive capacity of the various elements of the national statistical system.

5.3 ENSURING EFFICIENCY THROUGH COHERENCE AND COORDINATION

234. Strong coordination is one of the Principles Governing International Statistical Activities: Coordination of international statistical programmes is essential to strengthen the quality, coherence and governance of international statistics, and avoiding duplication of work. It is directly related to efficiency in the use of limited human and financial resources. While the ISWE Policy uses the terms coordination and coherence there has been a move to also include integration with coherence and coordination as a concept see Box 8. This concept will also be used in this section.

Box 8: United Nations Coherence, Coordination and Integration[153]

- The scale of the Sustainable Development Goals will require a significant improvement in coordination and coherence amongst all actors, including the United Nations entities in supporting the development of national capacities in programme countries, including through more joint programmes
- In an era characterized by universality and integration, where the contributions of all actors must be brought into play to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations system needs to take action towards the adoption of a truly integrated response in terms of common analysis, planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- Coordination aims at maximizing efficiencies and minimizing costs. Coherence takes coordination a step further, aiming at the merit of activities in order to maximize impact. Integrated action, on the other hand, aims at creating a shared vision built on a collective recognition of the normative frameworks that underpin it, which, in turn, drives a common strategy reflected by activities that overarch and build on the specificities of each entity for a common good

235. Mechanisms for global coordination of statistical activities have already been described in section 3 including a number of United Nations system-specific mechanisms, such as the meetings of United Nations chief statisticians. In addition, there are more generic mechanisms in place to ensure United Nations system coherence and coordination at the global, regional and national levels. Ultimately, it is the General Assembly that establishes key system-wide policy orientations for the development cooperation and country-level modalities of the United Nations system and the Economic and Social Council, which provides coordination and guidance to the United Nations system to ensure that those policies are implemented. The comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, a General Assembly resolution, guides United Nations operation activities over a four-year period.

236. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) is the prime instrument for strengthening the coordination role of UN inter-governmental bodies on social, economic and related matters. It brings together the executive heads of 29 specialized organizations to deliver as one at the global, regional and country levels. No central authority exists to compel compliance by organizations of the system to act in a concerted manner. Coordination and cooperation are contingent upon the willingness of system organizations to work together in pursuit of common goals. The CEB meets twice a year under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General. It supported by two high-level committees on programmes (HLCP)[154] and management (HLCM)[155] as well as by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). UNDG is responsible for coordinating operational activities at the country level.

237. At the country level, the Resident Coordinator (RC) system encompasses all organizations of the United Nations system dealing with operational activities for development, regardless of their formal presence in the country. The aim of the RC system is to bring together the various United Nations agencies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operational activities at the country level. The UNCT encompasses all the entities of the United Nations system that carry out operational activities for development, emergency, recovery and transition in programme countries. It ensures inter-agency

[153] Report of the Secretary-General on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system: Recommendations. Advance Unedited Version – 28 December 2015.
[154] The High-level Committee on Programmes promotes policy coherence and system-wide cooperation, coordination and knowledge sharing in strategic programme areas.
[155] The High-Level Committee on Management identifies and analyses administrative management reforms with the aim of improving efficiency and simplifying business practices.

coordination and decision-making at the country level through planning and working together as part of the RC system, to ensure the delivery of tangible results in support of the development agenda of the government. At the regional level, Regional UNDG Teams and Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCMs) convened by the regional commissions are used to support coordination. In early 2016 statement of collaboration was issued by the UNDG and regional commissions calling for stronger cooperation between the Regional Commissions, Regional UNDG teams, and Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams (UNCTs).

238. In 2006, the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment recommended the establishment of the Delivery as One (DAO) initiative based around the principles of one leader, one budget, one programme and one office at the county level. Eight pilot countries started and as at July 2015, there were 50 such countries defined as DaO.[156]

239. The QCPR Survey of RCs[157] reported that just over one third of respondents (115) strongly or somewhat disagreed with the idea that the RC's offices had *been provided with adequate resources (human and financial) to ensure effective coordination in support of national development priorities of the country.* The report of the survey noted that this statement probably provoked more disagreement than any other question in the survey:

> *Responses on this question were mostly similar regardless of country status, such as DaO or income level, although nearly all RCs in high-income countries disagreed. The responses may to some extent be seen a self-serving, but there is no doubt that the demands on RCs have been growing rapidly, especially with DaO, while resources have remained tight despite the cost-sharing arrangement that was recently introduced.*

240. It is in this context that the evaluation set out to examine the coherence and coordination of the UN system at all levels. In this context, coherence is defined as adopting the same definitions, approaches and concepts while coordination is defined as communication for reducing fragmentations, avoiding overlap and building on potential synergies between activities. For some time, it has been noted that the UN has not been performing as a system leading to the start of the UN reform process in 1997. More recently, the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on system-wide coherence noted:[158]

> *…we have also seen how the UN's work on development and environment is often fragmented and weak. Inefficient and ineffective governance and unpredictable funding have contributed to policy incoherence, duplication and operational ineffectiveness across the system. Cooperation between organizations has been hindered by competition for funding, mission creep and by outdated business practices.*

241. The report on the 2015 QCPR Survey of programme country governments also indicates that much remains to be done to improve coordination among members of the UNCT:

[156] The definition of DaO as indicated by the Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO) is "countries that have formally requested the UN Development Group (UNDG) to adopt the 'Delivering as One' approach."
[157] Department of Economic and Social Affairs United Nations. Report on QCPR Monitoring Survey of Resident Coordinators in 2015. Development Cooperation Policy Branch, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination. New York, January 2016.
[158] Report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment (2006) Delivering as One.

Another prominent theme was the call for the UN system to coordinate itself better, and several governments felt the UN was slow in implementing DaO, and that some UN agencies were still resisting coordination. Some governments felt that coordination was satisfactory at the planning stage but remained weak at the programme implementation stage. Governments also pointed to a multiplicity of UN programming tools among the UN agencies, a reluctance to make use of national systems and capacities, and a need for better monitoring and evaluation.

242. Coordination is the responsibility of government and is closely related to some of the issues related to ownership discussed at the start of this section. It is the lack of ownership that can lead to poor coordination at the country level. Maybe an NSDS is not used because it does not reflect priorities. And there may be a lack of capacity to coordinate or a lack of incentives to do so. Poor coordination of activities also places an unnecessary burden on government partners. The 2015 QCPR Survey found that 74 per cent of government respondents found that to reduce the workload on national partners the need to coordinate capacity-building activities is very important.

Finding 8: Global coordination mechanisms are not linked to the United Nations country level coordination mechanism and therefore not grounded in the realities of the country level.

243. Coordination and coherence is made more challenging by the complexity of the global statistical architecture and the myriad of participants at national, regional and global levels. With about 30 UN entities involved in NSCD, there is clearly a challenge to coordination the system activities, especially when the entities have different governance structures and physical locations. The issue of different estimates at the above-mentioned country level is an illustration of the problem, as is the proliferation of global and regional indicator databases. The OIOS evaluation of the UN Statistical Division noted that "*The Statistics Division illustrates the type of activity the United Nations does well, but the Organization has yet to 'deliver as one' on statistics*.[159] While improvements appear to have been made, this conclusion still remains valid today.

244. Global coherence is probably strengthened through CCSA as well as the recently introduced UN chief statisticians group. There are, however, no specific country level coordination mechanisms for the UN system beyond the generic ones through the RC system and the UNDAF, as well as weak linkages between the CCSA and the country level coordination mechanism (apart from the opportunity for the CCSA to report to the CEB). Agreements at the global level do not necessarily trickle down to the country level, and the complexity of the international statistical architecture does not make it easing for those involved in programming operational activities at the country level to be able to undertake effective coordination.

Finding 9: Coordination is often a problem at the country level and United Nations system work on national statistical capacity is often fragmented.

245. Results from the QPCR survey of programme country governments clearly indicate that the UNDAF is not enough to ensure good coordination at the operational stage, and in this respect governments urged concerted follow-up through such means as joint sectoral workplans. The large amount of statistical work undertaken by the United Nations across all areas of an UNDAF often gives the appearance of its support

[159] Executive summary.

to national statistical capacity development being fragmented. This may not be the case if there is a strong national statistical strategy in place that brings together all the elements of the UN system support under a coherent framework. Such strategies do not yet exist in all countries and while they may facilitate better coordination the UN system where they do exist, efforts still need to be made to address fragmentation in their absence.

246. A number of countries attempt to bring together the activities related to statistics together in the form of a joint programme at the country level (for example, in Moldova, Swaziland, Zimbabwe) or at the regional level (in the Pacific island countries). While this can promote coordination it may not capture all the UN system activities, especially those initiated at the regional and global levels. The degree to which the UNSD and UN regional statistics divisions' work is coordinated at the country level varies with region and country. There are examples where the RC has been unaware of the Economic and Social Council/UNSD training activities/events in a country.

247. The nature of the UN system financing is that not all activities included in the UNDAF are funded. This is especially a problem in MICS where the core allocations to funds and programmes that can act as a catalyst for mobilizing additional resources are smaller and where there are fewer donors to provide these additional resources. This can lead to problems for coordination where there are expectations of support on one or more areas that may not come from some time or may not come at all. For example, the comprehensive joint programme development by the UN in Swaziland was not implemented due to lack of funds.

248. There are a number of theme groups established for monitoring and evaluating the UNDAF that may also cover statistics but by their nature, these are focused on the internal demands for data. Nonetheless, coordination of inputs into surveys is often good but beyond that, evidence from country studies shows that there is often need for greater effort in this area. Moldova provides an example where a United Nations joint programme (with UNDP as the lead agency) can help coordination even if not all the United Nations system support for NSCD went through the programme. A specific factor here was the role of the programme manager who provides significant support to the NSO in this area, beyond the programme and beyond the UN system. Clearly the responsibility for coordination is with the national authorities and the UN system needs to find a balance between its own coordination process and supporting national counterparts to undertake coordination activities in the long term.

249. The proliferation of data dissemination platforms presents a coordination problem to which the UN system contributes. One NSO Director noted the huge number of platforms by UNICEF, UNFPA and FAO with new ones being established by the regional development bank and the IMF. The need for a harmonized approach was noted together with the fact that this is a burden for the NSO. Concepts may also vary among the various UN entities, for example, as regards enumeration areas. One area that can cause significant burden for national government as well as directly detract from the use of statistics is the development of different estimates, not only by the country and the international organizations, but also among the international organizations themselves (that examine the same survey from a country with differing definitions). Coordination is also important at the training level where one UN agency noted that 50 per cent of the training conducted was on basic statistical approaches. Training at this level could be coordinated among capacity development efforts in the UN and beyond and avoid regular repetition of training on basic issues among participants.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I:TERMS OF REFERENCE

Independent System-Wide Evaluation (ISWE)

Evaluation of the contribution of the United Nations development system to strengthening national capacities for statistical data collection and analysis to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally-agreed development goals".

June 2015 to April 2016

Implementing entities: *The United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in partnership with UN system entities*

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

To support the JIU in implementing its mandate for independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development, the General Assembly approved in 2013 a new policy framework for partnership between JIU and UN system entities in the conduct such evaluations (resolution A/68/229). The partnership framework draws on existing mechanisms among the evaluation functions of the UN system (both internal and the JIU) leveraging their comparative advantages, added value and existing knowledge in supporting system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development. The partnership also calls on all Member States and other stakeholders to provide extrabudgetary as well as other forms of in kind-contribution to carry out the evaluation. In adopting the policy, the General Assembly commissioned this evaluation as one of two pilot evaluations designed to test out one of three basic modalities for approaching system-wide evaluation identified in the ISWE policy.[160]

2. Context

As the world transitions from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the post-2015 development agenda and the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is an increasing recognition of the urgent need to strengthen and transform national statistical capacities. The post-2015 development agenda proposes a more extensive and integrated set of development goals and indicators which will be challenging for all countries. Member States are increasingly recognizing that statistics must play a more prominent role than in the past and should be a priority for the Financing for Development (FFD) process.

[160] The modalities are (i) meta-evaluation and synthesis of existing evaluations; (ii) cross-cutting evaluation; (based on a common framework for the evaluation of a theme being addressed concurrently by several UN system agencies; and a (ii) a comprehensive evaluation generally of a complex topic or and in complex contexts.

The SDGs are likely to demand much more extensive data than their predecessors, the MDGs. The expectation that new technology developments will make more data available by means of Big Data or Open Data will require National Statistical Offices (NSOs) to utilize much more data than that which they collect themselves and to play a lead role in building national ownership of the new development agenda. NSOs also face the challenge of having to produce internationally comparable statistical estimates which may at times distort the priorities of the country's statistical system.

3. Purpose and Objectives

Member States are currently reviewing capacities within the United Nations system to respond to these emerging needs. This ISWE evaluation commission offers an historic opportunity to draw lessons from the experience of the MDGs in the area of statistics and national statistical capacity-building. The evaluation also seeks to develop concrete and comprehensive proposals to guide the UN system forward over the next fifteen years.

The evaluation also responds well to the Secretary-General's road map towards an effective monitoring and accountability framework, which further underscores the need to assisting building national capacities for statistics. It also offers a unique opportunity to examine the changing context in which UN statistical capacity-building efforts take place including the growing engagement and critical role of regional integration bodies such as CARICOM and SADC.

The overall goal is to strengthen national capacities to achieve international development goals through strengthened national statistical capacity. The evaluation will seek to provide insights into how the United Nations system organizations respond to national statistical capacity-building needs and priorities and how the quality of the UN overall response to these needs can be improved.

The evaluation will provide input into the deliberations of Member States during the 2016 QCPR resolution negotiations. It will also feed into the deliberations around the Post-2015 Development Agenda and will guide the UN system in how best it can support governments and national efforts in a coherent and sustainable way. It is anticipated that system-wide evaluation methods and approaches will likely draw increasing attention from Member States as the new Post-2015 Development Agenda adopts a more integrated and universal approach than had been the case with the MDGs.

4. Focus and Key Questions

The evaluation will cover all operational activities of the UN development system and focus on the production, analysis and use of *official statistics* by the entire national statistical system i.e. all key official national agencies that undertake data collection and statistical analysis. It will cover the following evaluation questions and subquestions:

Question 1: What is the contribution of the UN system within the broader international support to national statistical capacity development? This first evaluation question addresses and the specific contribution of the UN system to national statistical capacity development for the achievement of national goals, including the MDGs. It will use the effectiveness and impact criteria to make the judgments. The three key subquestions are:

- What is the contribution of the UN system to national statistics capacity development outcomes? (effectiveness)
- Is the UN system contribution likely to help national achievement of national development goals including the MDGs? (impact)

- Where has the UN been the most and least successful and what are the comparative strengths of the UN system in this area?

Question 2: What is the quality of the UN system contribution to national statistical capacity development? The second evaluation question goes beyond the contribution of the UN system as defined by effectiveness and potential impact to look at its quality as assessed by the relevance, sustainability, coherence and efficiency. The question will be answered through the following three subquestions:

- Was the support to national statistical capacity development relevant to the needs of the country, taking account of resource constraints and competing priorities? (relevance)
- What has been the degree of sustainability of UN system capacity development efforts? (sustainability)
- How coherent and coordinated are the UN system support for national statistical capacity development? (efficiency)

5. Deliverables and Expected Outputs

a) Inception Phase

The main output of this phase will be an **Inception Paper** which will provide a detailed methodology based on the following broad principles:

- Documenting and giving voice to the experiences of national authorities with national statistical capacity-building
- Use of purposive sampling involving country visits and desk studies
- The use of cross-country analysis and document review
- The adoption of a partnership approach involving case study country's participation in the evaluation both as a means of building national evaluation and statistical capacities through utilization of a peer review –based approach
- Use of workshops at the country and global level to help validate findings, promote generalizability and ownership as well as to develop high quality recommendations

b) Implementation Phase

The main outputs for this phase shall be:

- A **full Evaluation Report** which will incorporate the main elements described above into a coherent and easy-to-read analytical report
- The Evaluation Team will also be expected to deliver a **core set of workshop**s designed to validate findings and promote analytic generalizability

6. Managerial arrangements and support

The evaluation will benefit from the following two structures as per the ISWE policy framework:

- **An Evaluation Management Group (EMG**) chaired by JIU and composed of representatives of the evaluation offices of select United Nations entities will oversee and guide the work of the evaluation team.
- **A Key Stakeholder Reference Group (KSRG**) will provide advice to the evaluation team and help validate its findings and recommendations.

- **ISWE Coordination Secretariat:** the team will be supported by the ISWE Secretariat Coordinator and an ISWE Research Assistant.

7. Team Structure

To meet the goals and objectives of the evaluation as well as the principles enshrined in ISWE, the evaluation will be structured as follows:

- **A Core Evaluation Team**: A Team Leader to direct the evaluation and a Senior Statistical Specialist. The core team will be responsible for preparing a detailed Inception Paper and for writing the evaluation report. They will also conduction country studies and undertake other data collection as appropriate.
- **Regional country study consultants**: The core team with work with teams from the regions who will conduct some of the country studies.
- **Specific Expert group**: A group of senior experts for specific task or advisory roles as needed for the evaluation.

8. Major Project Milestones

Activity	Target Dates
Finalization of Inception Report	October 2015
Data collection and field research	October to December 2015
Initial draft report (findings)	January 2016
Synthesis workshop	January 2016
Submission of first draft report	January 2016
Validation Workshops	February 2016
Submission of second draft report	March 2016
Review by EMG/KSRG and JIU Collective Wisdom process	March 2016
Finalization of Report	April 2016
Issuance of report to General Assembly by JIU on behalf of EMG	September 2016

ANNEX II: CONSULTATIONS DURING DESIGN OF THE EVALUATION

Table 1: Individual consultations	
Consultations with Member States	Kingdom of Bahrain Canada Republic of Fiji Republic of Iraq Republic of Kenya State of Qatar Kingdom of the Netherlands Republic of South Africa Swiss Confederation
Consultations with UN system organizations	Regional Commissions Office (NY) Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) United National Development Programme (UNDP) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)
Consultation with UN system evaluation units	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) International Labour Organization (ILO) Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) UN Women United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) United National Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)
Consultations with multilateral partners	African Development Bank European Commission - Eurostat OECD - PARIS21 World Bank
Consultations with civil society organizations	ATD Fourth World Future United Nations Development System Royal Academy of Science International Trust

Table 2: Events where evaluation was presented during the evaluation design phase
Side event at the 46th Statistical Commission Meeting 2015

ANNEX III:BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

The documents listed in this annex were used for developing the background sections. Annexes 6 and 7 list the documents subject to systematic review for evidence.

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MACFEELY, Steve and John DUNE, *Joining up public service information: The rationale for a national data infrastructure*, *Administration*, vol. 61, no. 4, pp. 93-107, 2014

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Open Data Watch. *Partnerships and financing for statistics: lessons learned from recent evaluations*, June 24, 2015

Oxford Policy Management, *Are statistics the orphans of aid effectiveness? Supporting statistics to strengthen rather than dilute results management*, Oxford, 2009

PARIS21, *Statistics for transparency accountability and results: a Busan Action Plan for Statistics*, November 2011

PARIS21, "PARIS21 at ten: Improvements in statistical capacity since 1999", 2009

PARIS21, Statistical Capacity Building Indicators, Final report of PARIS21 Task Team on Statistical Capacity Building Indicators, September 2002

PARIS21, Partner report on support to statistics, PRESS, 2015

PARIS21, *a road map for a country-led Data Revolution*

PARIS21, *How to build statistical capacity: your 10-minute guide to building capacity in data and statistics for the SDGs and beyond*, PARIS21 Knowledge Series

ROBIN, N., T. KLEIN and J. JUTTING, *Public-private partnerships for statistics: lessons learned, future steps*, Partnership in Statistics for the 21st Century (PARIS21) discussion paper No. 8, 2015

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Sustainable Development Solutions Network, *Indicators and monitoring framework for the Sustainable Development Goals*, June 2015

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ANNEX IV: THE EVALUATION MATRIX

AREA OF INVESTIGATION	SUBQUESTIONS	CORE DIMENSIONS TO BE EXPLORED
Evaluation Question 1: What is the contribution of the UN system within the broader international support to national statistical capacity development?		
Contribution of the UN system	What is the contribution of the UN system to national statistics capacity development outcomes?	At the country level to examine changes in national statistical capacity development outcomes and the UN system contribution to those changes.
		Development of a body of evidence from existing research and evaluations on UN system effectiveness.
	Is the UN system contribution likely to help national achievement of national development goals including the MDGs?	Assessment of whether or not the data being produced are being used by (a) policymakers for better decisions and/or (b) citizens to hold the government to account for the decisions.
	Where has the UN been the most and least successful and what are the comparative strengths of the UN system in this area?	Analysis of body of evidence on effectiveness to identify patterns related to the type of interventions.
		Analysis of other organizations also involved in support in this area and comparison to the UN system.
Evaluation question 2: What is the quality of the UN system contribution to national statistical capacity development?		
Relevance of the UN system support	Was the support to national statistical capacity development relevant to the needs of the country, taking account of resource constraints and competing priorities?	Extent of alignment of UN system activities with national priorities, for example the NSDS i.e. have UN system activities been driven by national frameworks or by universal mandates.
Sustainability of UN system support	What has been the degree of sustainability of UN system capacity development efforts?	Balance among types of capacity development at different levels (for example, to see if emphasis being placed on individual training at the expense of institutional support).
Coherence of UN system support	How coherent and coordinated are the UN system support for national statistical capacity development?	Use of national statistical and UN system coordination mechanisms.
		Adherence to UNSD *Principles Governing International Statistical Activities* and the principles set out in the BAPS.

ANNEX V: COUNTRY STUDY SELECTION MATRIX

(a) Countries selected for study and characteristics

Region	Country	Selected for desk review or visit	Income category[161]	LDC, LLDC and SIDS status	Delivery as One Country?	Statistics capacity score[162]		UN spend[163]
						Average 2010-2014	Change 2004-2014	
Africa	Swaziland	Visit	LMI	LLDC		3	4	4
	Benin	Visit	LI	LDC	Yes	3	1	2
	Liberia	Desk	LI	LDC	Yes	4	1	3
	Senegal	Desk	LMI			3	3	3
	Nigeria	Desk	LMI			2	1	3
	Ethiopia	Desk	LI	LDC	Yes	3	3	2
Asia/Pacific	Cambodia	Visit	LI	LDC		2	2	1
	Fiji	Desk	UMI	SIDS		3	3	4
	Malaysia	Desk	UMI			2	3	3
	Bangladesh	Desk	LI	LDC		3	4	2
Western Asia	Tunisia	Desk	UMI			2	2	4
	Jordan	Desk	LMI			4	5	4
Latin American/ Caribbean	EL Salvador	Visit	LMI		Yes	1	1	3
	Trinidad and Tobago	Visit	UMI	SIDS		3	1	1
Europe	Moldova	Visit	LMI	LLDC	Yes	1	1	2
	Albania	Desk	UMI		Yes	2	4	1

[161] World Bank classification of economies: LI – low income; LMI – lower middle income; UMI – upper middle income.
[162] Using the World Bank Statistical Capacity Indicator (SBI): SCI average 2010-2014 (85+:1, 71-84:2, 56-70:3, 41-55:4, 20-40:5); SCI change 2004-2014 (1 = +8 to +19; 2 = +4 to +7; 3=+3 to +2; 4=+1 to -2; and 5=-3 to -14).
[163] UN system expenditure on national statistical capacity development (2008-2013) ranked from 1 to 155: 1 = countries ranked 1-13; 2 = 14-79; 3 = 80-124; 4 = 125-155).

(b) Balance between different categories

Income category		LDC, LLDC and SIDS status		Delivery as One status		Statistics capacity score				UN Spend	
						average		change			
Category	No. of countries	Category	No. of countries	Category	No. of countries	Category	No. of countries	Category	No. of countries	Category	No. of countries
HI	0	LDC	5	Yes	6	1	2	1	6	1	3
UMI	5	LLDC	2	No	10	2	5	2	2	2	4
LMI	6	SIDS	2			3	7	3	4	3	5
LI	5					4	2	4	3	4	4
						5	0	5	1		

(c) Regional distribution

Region	Country studies with fieldwork	Country studies by desk review	Total
Africa	2	4	**6**
Asia and the Pacific	1	3	**4**
Europe	1	1	**2**
Latin America and the Caribbean	2	0	**2**
Western Asia	0	2	**2**
TOTAL	**6**	**10**	**16**

Notes:

- Three changes were made to the country selection table contained in the Inception Paper: (a) due to the nature of conflict in Yemen the second country in the Western Asia region as changed to Jordan; (b) following review of the Inception Paper by the KSRG, Fiji was added to the list in order to have a representative from the Pacific region and an additional SIDS, and; (c) Trinidad and Tobago was originally a desk review but was also visited during the same mission as El Salvador.

ANNEX VI: LIST OF COUNTRY-LEVEL DOCUMENTS FOR SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

These lists do not include evaluations in countries covered by country studies.

UNDAF evaluations		
COUNTRY	**EVALUATION**	**YEAR**
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Evaluation of United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2010 - 2014)	2013
Botswana*	Independent Evaluation of the Government of Botswana UN Programme Operational Plan 2010-2016	2015
Brazil	UNDAF End of Period Evaluation	2011
Chile	Informe Final de Evaluación del Marco de Asistencia para el Desarrollo (MANUD Chile 2011-2014)	2013
Colombia	Evaluación Externa: United Nations Development Framework (UNDAF) Colombia 2008-2014	2014
Comoros	Rapport de L'evaluation Finale du Cadre des Nations Unies pour L'Aide au Developpement (UNDAF)	2014
Djibouti	Evaluation finale de l'UNDAF	2013
Guatemala	Evaluación Final del UNDAF 2010- 2014	2013
Honduras	Marco De Asistencia De Naciones Unidas Al Desarrollo De Honduras (UNDAF) Evaluación Final Del UNDAF 2007-2011	2010
Honduras *	Marco de Asistencia de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo en Honduras 2012-2016 UNDAF Final Evaluation Report	2015
Kazakhstan*	UNDAF Final Evaluation Report 2010-2015	2015
Madagascar	Madagascar Evaluation finale de l'UNDAF 2008-2013	2013
Mexico	Marco de Cooperación de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (UNDAF) México, 2008-2013	2012
Mozambique*	Evaluation of UNDAF 2012-2016 Final Report	2015
Rwanda	End of Programme Evaluation of the Rwanda UNDAF (2008-2012) and its Contribution to the Government of Rwanda Development Priorities	2013
Sudan*	Evaluation Report of Sudan UNDAF 2013-1016	2015
Tajikistan	UNDAF 2010-2015 Evaluation	2014
Tanzania*	Final Report. Evaluation of Tanzania UNDAP 2011-2016	2015
Uruguay*	Evaluacion del Marco de Asistencia de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo 2011-2015	2015
Zimbabwe	UNDAF 2007-2011 Final Evaluation Report	2011

ANNEX VII: LIST OF DOCUMENTS FOR SYSTEMATIC REVIEW – GLOBAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL

1. INDEPENDENT EVALUATIONS

The following evaluations related to NSCD were commissioned between 2000 and 2015 by UN system organizations.

Table 1: Global NSCD Evaluations commissioned by UN system organizations

ORGANIZATION	EVALUATION	DATE
FAO	Independent Evaluation of FAO's Role and Work in Statistics	2008
ILO	Cluster Evaluation of ILO-IPEC Research and Statistics (SIMPOC) Projects 2007-2010	2011
OIOS	Thematic evaluation of monitoring and evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals: lessons learned for the post-2015 era	2015
	Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the United Nations Statistics Division	2011
	Evaluation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	2015
	Evaluation of the Economic Commission for Europe	2016
	Evaluation of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	2016
UNICEF	Evaluation of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) Round 4: Cluster 1: Response to lessons learned in prior rounds and preparations for Round 5.	2013
	Evaluation of UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys Round 3 (MICS3)	2009
	Global evaluation of DEVINFO	2009
UNESCO	Evaluation of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics	2007
	Evaluation of the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) / UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)	2008
UNFPA	Evaluation of UNFPA support to population and housing census data to inform decision-making and policy formulation 2005-2014	2016

The following independent evaluations related to NSCD were commissioned by non-UN organizations between 2000 and 2015. Each was examined for evidence related to the UN system.

Table 2: Global NSCD evaluation commissioned by non-UN organizations

ORGANIZATION	EVALUATION	DATE
World Bank	An Independent Evaluation: Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics	2010
	Statistics for Results Facility – Catalytic Fund (SRF-CF). Evaluation Report of the Pilot Phase	2014
PARIS21	Independent Evaluation of the International Household Survey Network (IHSN) and Accelerated Data Program (ADP)	2013
	Evaluation of Paris21	2009
	Light evaluation of Paris 21	2015
Oxford Policy Management	Evaluation of The Paris Declaration: Thematic study of support to statistical capacity building	2009

2. REVIEWS, INTERNAL AUDITS AND OTHER ASSESSMENTS

Table 3: Reviews		
ORGANIZATION	**EVALUATION**	**DATE**
FAO	Corporate Outcome Assessment	2016
IHSN/World Bank	How well are gender issues covered in household surveys and censuses? An analysis using the IHSN-World Bank Gender Data Navigator	2015
MDG Fund	Youth, employment and migration. Review of MDG-F joint programmes. Key findings and achievements.	2013
Statistical Commission	Various reports of the Secretary-General	2014-2016

Table 4: Internal Audits		
ORGANIZATION	**EVALUATION**	**DATE**
OIOS Internal Audit Division	Audit of the statistical subprogramme and related technical cooperation projects in the Economic Commission for Africa (2015/115)	2015
	Audit of management of selected subprogrammes and related capacity development projects in the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2015/174)	2015
	Audit of the management of the statistics subprogramme and related technical cooperation projects in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2016/032)	2016

ANNEX VIII: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

ORGANIZATION	NAME	DATE
United Nations Statistics Division	**Mr. Stefan Schweinfest** *Director* **Youlia Antonova** *Chief, Capacity Development Section*	18 February 2016
Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO)	**Gerald Daly,** *Policy Advisor, Programming, Business Operations and Joint Funding* **Pervez Hassan** *Policy Specialist, Programme Focal Point for Programme Working Group*	19 February 2016
UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL COMMISSIONS		
Economic Commission for Europe	**Lidia Bratanova** *Director, Statistical Division* **Tiina Luige** *Statistical Division*	12 February 2016
ESCAP	**Margarita Guerrero** *Director ai, Statistics Division* *Director SIAP*	8 March 2016
UN AGENCIES, FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES		
UNFPA	**Bruce B. Campbell** Global Coordinator, Data for Development Platform **Rachel Snow,** Chief, Population and Development Branch, Technical Division	19 February 2016
UNICEF	**Attila Hancioglu,** Senior Advisor, Global MICS Coordinator, Statistics and Monitoring Section, Division of Policy and Practice	19 February 2016
UNDP	**Pedro Conceicao** *Director/Chief of Profession, Strategic Policy, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support*	22 February 2016
UNWOMEN	**Daniel Seymour,** *Deputy Director, Programme Division* **Shahrashoub Razavi,** *Chief Research and Data* **Juncal Plazaola Castaño** *Policy Specialist, Violence against Women Data, EVAW Policy Division*	22 February 2016
International Labour Organization	**Rafael Diez de Medina** *Director, Chief Statistician, Department of Statistics* **Ritash Sarna** *Head, Management and Support Unit, Department of Statistics*	11 February 2016
World Health Organization	**Ties Boerma** *Director, Department of Health Statistics and Information Systems*	12 February 2016
UNCTAD	**Steve Macfeely,** *Head, Development Statistics and Information Branch, Division on Globalization and Development Strategies* **Astrit Sulstarova**	11 February 2016

	Chief, Trends and Data Section, Investment Trends and Issues Branch, Division on Investment and Enterprise **Ralf Peters,** *Chief, Trade Information Section, Trade Analysis Branch, Division on International Trade in Goods and Services and Commodities* **Scarlett Fondeur Gil,** *Economic Affairs Officer, ICT Analysis Section, Division on Technology and Logistics*	
UNHCR	**Kimberly Roberson** *Global CCCM Cluster Coordinator, FICSS/DPSM*	12 February 2016
MULTILATERAL PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS		
AfDB	**Mr. Oliver J. M. Chinganya** *Division Manager, Statistics Department, Statistics Capacity Building Division*	8 March 2016
AsDB	**Mr. Shang-Jin Wei** *Chief Economist*	March 2016?
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)	**Themba Munalula** *Head Statistics Unit*	8 March 2016
Inter-American Development Bank	**Janine T. Perfit** *Modernization of the State Lead Specialist, Institutional Capacity and Finance Sector*	25 February 2016
Pacific Community	**Gerald Haberkorn** *Director Statistics for Development Division*	9 March 2016
World Bank	**Ms. Haishan Fu** *Director, Development Data Group* **Barbro Hexeberg** *Senior Economist, Development Data Group* **Grant Cameron** *Manager, Development Data Group* **Neil Fantom** *Manager, Development Data Group*	26 February 2016

ANNEX IX: ROLE AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE EMG, KSRG and ICM

A. The Evaluation Management Group

According to the ISWE policy, the EMG is chaired by a JIU Inspector and has members from the evaluation offices of UN system organizations. It is accountable for the quality of the evaluation. The role of EMG members is to ensure impartiality, enhance technical rigour and exercise quality control on all aspects of the evaluation. It provides substantive guidance and direction to the evaluation secretariat. It is responsible for key decisions such as:

- Developing the Terms of Reference;
- Approving the budget for the evaluation;
- Serving as tender committee and selecting the evaluation team(s) commissioned to conduct the evaluation;
- Guiding and approving the Inception Paper prepared by the consultant(s) on scope, design and plan;
- Guiding and approving the guidance for different data-collection methods;
- Approving the evaluation products from the consultants including the final report after having ascertained their quality, clarity and credibility of these products;
- Revising the report following the JIU review process and supporting the JIU in submitting the final evaluation report.

Organization	Name	Position
JIU (Chair)	Ms. Sukai Prom-Jackson	JIU Inspector
FAO	Mr. Omar Awabdeh	Evaluation Officer, Office of Evaluation
ILO	Mr. Peter Wichmand	Senior Evaluation Officer
UNDP	Ms. Vijaya Vadivelu	Evaluation Adviser, Independent Evaluation Office
UNFPA	Ms. Alexandra Chambel	Evaluation Adviser, Evaluation Office
UNICEF	Mr. Mathew Varghese	Senior Evaluation Specialist, Evaluation Office
UNODC	Ms. Katharina Kayser	Chief, Independent Evaluation Unit
UN Women	Ms. Inga Sniukaite	Deputy Chief of Evaluation, Independent Evaluation Office

B. The Key Stakeholders Reference Group

Its main role is to provide substantive and strategic advice in order to enhance the quality and utility of the evaluation. Specifically, the KSRG (as well as the previous ad hoc advisory group of stakeholders) reviewed the paper on scope and approach, the Inception Paper on design and plan for conducting the evaluation, and drafts of the evaluation report. A table of comments by KSRG and responses to such comments is available from the JIU Secretariat.

KSRG category	Name	Position
Member States	Ambassador Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou	Ambassador Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations
	Ms. Isabelle Hentic	First Secretary Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations
	Ambassador Peter Thomson (Mr. Peni Suveinakama, Second Secretary of Permanent Fiji Mission to the United Nations)	Ambassador Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations
Member States	Ambassador Dr. Aleda Takemu	Ambassador Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations
UN system organizations	Mr. Stefan Schweinfest	Director of Statistics Division, United Nations
	Ms. Katell Le Goulven	Chief of Policy Planning, UNICEF
	Ms. Silvia Montoya	Director of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics
	Mr. Pietro Gennari	Chief Statistician and Director of the Statistics Division, FAO
	Mr. Rafael Diez de Medina	Director Department of Statistics ILO
	Mr. Gerald Daly (Mr. Pervez Hassan Policy Specialist UNDOCO)	Team Leader Programme and Operations Team, UN Development Operations Coordination Office (UNDOCO)
	Ms. Angela Me	Chief Research and Trend Analysis Branch United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
	Mr. Nanthikesan Suppiramaniam	Evaluation adviser Africa region UNDP
	Ms. Ondina Castillo	Administrative Manager Weilburger (former JIU Intern)
Resident Coordinators Offices (RCOs)	Mr. Paul Farran	Head of UN Resident Coordinator Office Republic of Zimbabwe
	Ms. Fioralba Shkodra	UN Coordination Specialist UN Resident Coordinator Country Office Albania
	Ms. Astrid Marschatz	Head UN Resident Coordinator Country

		Office Republic of Sudan
Resident Coordinators Offices (RCOs) country studies	Ms. Rosine Sori-Coulibaly	UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative - Benin
	Ms. Claire Van der Vaeren	UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative - Cambodia
	Mr. Israel Dessalegne	UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative - Swaziland
	Mr. Richard Blewitt	UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative - Trinidad and Tobago
	Mr. Christian Salazar	UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative - El Salvador
Resident Coordinators Offices (RCOs) country studies	Ms. Dafina Gercheva	UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative – The Republic of Moldova
Relevant UN system task forces	Mr. Sering Falu Njie	Deputy Director Policy UN Millennium Campaign
	Mr. John Hendra	Senior UN Coordinator, “Fit for Purpose”
Global experts	Ms. Saraswathi Menon	Former Director of Evaluation Office UNDP
	Mr. Bruce Jenks	Expert group on Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR)
	Mr. Thomas Theisohn	Expert on National Capacity Development
	Mr. Crispin Grey Johnson	Consultant for African Union (AU) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) on Post 2015 and accountability Framework and also on capacity development
Development partners	Ms. Haishan Fu	SG-Expert Advisory Group on Data Revolution and for sustainable development, World Bank
	Mr. Oliver J. M. Chinganya	Division Manager, Statistics Department, Statistics Capacity Building Division Africa Development Bank (AfDB)
	Mr. Pieter Everaers	Directorate A – Cooperation in the European Statistical System: International Cooperation Resources, Eurostat

	Mr. Johannes Jütting	SG-Expert Advisory Group on Data Revolution and for sustainable development Paris 21
	Ms. Ola Awad	Chair of Statistical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; President of Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
	Ms. Elizabeth Alarilla	Deputy in The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Statistics, Jakarta
	Ms. Aishath Shahuda	Deputy Executive Director, Statistics Division, Department of National Planning, Ministry of Finance and Treasury Chair, Committee on Statistics, The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)
Development partners	Professor Sacas Alpay	Director General of Social, Economic, and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries, Organizations of Islamic Cooperation, the Republic of Turkey
	Mr. Hédi Saidi	Chair of Statistical Commission for Africa; Director General of Institut National de la Statistique Tunisia
	Mr. Andrew Rzepa	Managing Consultant, Gallup
Private organizations	Ms. Kaitlin Yarnall	Deputy Creative Director National Geographic
Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)	Ms. Shaida Badiee	Managing Director and Co-Founder, Open Data Watch
Regional centres for evaluation	Ms. Laila Smith	Director at CLEAR Anglophone Africa
	Mr. André Portela Souza	Director CLEAR Lusophone Center for Brazil and Africa
UNDG NY Regional Focal Points	Ms. Maria Guallar	Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Coordinator Adviser
	Ms. Jacquelina Olweya	Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Coordinator Adviser

C. The ISWE Interim Coordination Mechanism

Organization (ICM role)	Name	Position
JIU (Chair)	Ms. Sukai Prom-Jackson	JIU Inspector
JIU (ICM member)	Mr. Jorge Theresis Flores Callejas	JIU Inspector
JIU (ICM member)	Ms. Aicha Afifi	JIU Inspector
UNDP (ICM member)	Mr. Indran Naidoo	Vice Chair UNEG & Director Independent Evaluation Office
UNDESA (ICM member)	Mr. Kristinn Helgason	Deputy Chief of Development Cooperation Policy Branch
UNOIOS (ICM member)	Mr. Yee Woo Guo	Director, Inspection and Evaluation Division Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)
UNDOCO (ICM member)	Mr. Gerald Daly	Team Leader Programme and Operations Team
UNICEF (ICM Observer)	Mr. Colin Kirk	Director, Office of Evaluation

D. JIU Inspectors who made a substantive contribution to the evaluation besides the general review of the draft and final evaluation report.

Organization	Name	Position
JIU	Mr. Jorge Theresis Flores Callejas	JIU Inspector
JIU	Ms. Aicha Afifi	JIU Inspector
JIU	Mr. George Bartsiotas	JIU Inspector
JIU	Mr. Rajab Sukayri	JIU Inspector

ANNEX X: EVALUATION TIME FRAME

Activity	Target Dates
Phase 1: Scoping and initial design	
Recruitment, background documents and draft inception paper	April-July 2015
Phase 2: Redesign and recruitment	
Recruitment of evaluation team members	October 2015
Finalization of Inception Report	December 2015
Discussion with KSRG	Dec. 2015/Jan. 2016
Phase 3: Data collection, analysis and synthesis	
Country studies undertaken and reports prepared	Nov. 2015 – Feb. 2016
Desk review of documentation and further stakeholder interviews	Nov. 2015 – March 2016
Synthesis of data to produce findings	December 2015
Production of first draft of the evaluation report	December 2015
Synthesis of findings to produce conclusions and recommendations	January 2016
Presentation of summary of main messages the Economic and Social Council Operational Activities segment side event	February 2016
Presentation of emerging findings to Statistical Commission side event	March 2016
Phase 4: Validation, review and finalization of the evaluation report	
Production of first full draft evaluation report	March 2016
Review of draft report by EMG	April 2016
Validation meetings held	January- April 2016
Submission of revised draft report to EMG/KSRG	March 2016
Review by EMG/KSRG	March 2016
Submission of Draft Report to JIU Collective Wisdom	April 2016
Finalization of Report	June 2016
Report editing	June-2016
Report translation	July- August 2016
Phase 5: Dissemination of the report and follow-up	
Issuance of report to General Assembly by JIU Presentation of the report	July 2016 September –October 2016
Dissemination of the report including social media	August 2016
Dissemination at relevant meetings	July- December 2016

ANNEX XII: SUMMARY OF THE VALIDATION SURVEY

With the support of DOCO, the validation survey was sent to all United Nations Resident Coordinators who were asked to forward the link to the online survey to national statistical producers and users. A total of 75 responses were received from 41 countries, as summarized in the table below:

Summary of completed responses	
RCs receiving survey	129
Countries receiving survey[164]	131
Countries responding	41
Response rate (per country)	31.3%
Total respondents	75
Data producers	60 (80% of total respondents)
Data users	15 (20% of total respondents)

ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY

Finding 1	At the country level, the initiatives of United Nations system entities generally make important contributions to national capacity development for the production of statistics.
Finding 3	Statistical standards and the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics are much appreciated by Member States, partly as they are able to participate in their development. The support for knowledge-sharing about using these standards is also appreciated.

The two most positive findings received the strongest validation. Findings 1 and 3 had 88% and 87% respectively of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with these findings. Moreover, 40% and 33% strongly agreed, respectively. Producers were more positive than users (93% of producers agree or strongly agree for finding 1 versus 67% of users).

Finding 2	The United Nations system has not always done enough to promote national demand for statistics and support capacities for greater use of statistics for national policymaking, improved accountability to citizens and better business decisions by the private sector.
Finding 6	The United Nations system is generally relevant to the work of the national statistical office and relevant ministries, departments and agencies of the government but is not always addressing highest priority needs for national policymakers.

The second finding on the use of evaluation had the largest disagreement (45% agreed or disagreed) but also the largest difference between producers and users. 66% of users agreed or strongly agreed with the finding compared to only 38% of producers. Finding 6 may have been difficult to answer as it contained two findings (relevance to producers and relevance to users). 52% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the finding versus 36% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. There were not major differences between producers and users.

[164] https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/RC-list-January-2016-1.pdf.

Finding 5	The United Nations system has not always been able to address national statistical capacity development in a holistic manner, addressing the national statistical system as a whole. In addition, it has not always been strategic and catalytic in leveraging its limited financial resources and promoting such broad holistic support where necessary.
Finding 7	The United Nations system support for national statistical capacity development often finds ensuring sustainability of the results to be a challenge. There is often inadequate assessment of the challenges and risks associated with sustainability concerns, particularly where globally driven statistical tools (for example, surveys) are transferred to national contexts.
Finding 9	Coordination is often a problem at the country level and United Nations system work on national statistical capacity is often fragmented.

For these three findings, more than half the respondents agree or strongly agree. This justifies the use of the language, for example "not always" or "often".

Finding 4	In supporting national statistical capacity development, the United Nations system does not always effectively use the generic comparative strengths it often has at the country level.

Finding 4 is an example of a finding that cannot be clearly understood by itself. In the report, the text accompanying the finding set out what these comparative strengths are and why there are important for national statistical capacity development. It is not surprising that this finding had the highest percentage of responses of "no opinion" (21%).

Finding 8	Global coordination mechanisms are not linked to the country level and therefore not grounded in the realities of the country level.

On finding 8, 48% agreed or strongly agreed versus 40% who strongly disagreed or disagreed. The problem may lie with the language of the findings, which implies that linkages between the global coordination mechanism and the national statistical system are weak. This was confirmed by some of the written answers to the survey. The finding should have made it clear that the weak linkages were found between the global coordination system and the country level UN coordination mechanisms. The text of the finding was subsequently changed to make this clear.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED FOR CONDUCTING THIS TYPE SURVEY IN THE FUTURE

- Findings need to be able to 'stand alone' (i.e. be understood without supporting text) and be clear. Where this is not possible, text should be added to explain the finding. There is however often a trade-off between making the questions clearer (and therefore longer) and the rate of responses to the survey.

- Findings should have been phased to allow the identification of appropriate rubric. As was noted in section 1 of this technical appendix, the aggregation of findings from a large number of interventions presents problems. A clear rubric should be developed to ensure consistency and clarity in the findings statements. For example, when should the term "generally" be used versus "often" versus "not always". The validation process can help ensure that the correct language is used.