



*ILO-PARIS21 Seminar on  
Capacity Building for Labour Statistics  
Geneva, 3 December 2003*

Thematic Paper

# National Statistics Development Strategies (NSDS) and Labour Statistics

PARIS21 Secretariat

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## Introduction

*Strategy: Collection of coordinated actions and manoeuvres targeting a specific objective.*

*Strategies are hypotheses based on a cause–effect relationship that are to be implemented in a context that is by its very nature uncertain.*

*Le Petit Robert dictionary*

A distinction should first be made between strategies, the results from a decision, and the process that leads to this strategic decisionmaking. Strategies depend on a starting point, on an explicit relationship between cause and effect, on a context that is certain to evolve, and on expectations in terms of stakeholder satisfaction and the role of the institution. This document will not attempt to outline strategies that all developing countries, large or small, should implement to guide the development of their statistical systems. Instead, this document will present a decision-making process to lead to the adoption of overall strategies and action plans covering a period of several years.

We define “public statistics” as the totality of data that government and its external partners, public administrations and bodies, private sector businesses and organisations, the media, civil society, employers’ organisations and unions, political bodies, citizens, and elected officials need to make decisions in their respective areas and to evaluate decisions made on behalf of the public. To provide a holistic view of the national statistical system, all aspects of data production—from the system’s institutional and technico-administrative framework, its financing, human resources, and methods to data users and data use for decision-making—must be considered.

Labour statistics are an integral part of the demand on statistical systems. Planning of statistical production relies on specific mechanisms and on an infrastructure that is common to all statistical areas: institutional organisation for coordination, standardisation, and programming; preliminary and ongoing training of staff; sampling frames and registers; computer systems; human resource management; resource allocation; partnerships; etc.

A strategic plan cannot be a simple, four-to-five year project in which the beginning starts from zero and the end has solved all problems. A period of several years is required, accounting for a national environment that has its own particular requirements, in order to structurally and sustainably modify the relationships between the numerous actors as well as the implementation of a large number of activities already being carried out, are about to be launched, or that are scheduled and financed by partners. The first two years are generally slow going due to the decisions already in place and the inertia inherent in administrative and regulatory decision-making.

It is important to recognise two consecutive stages:

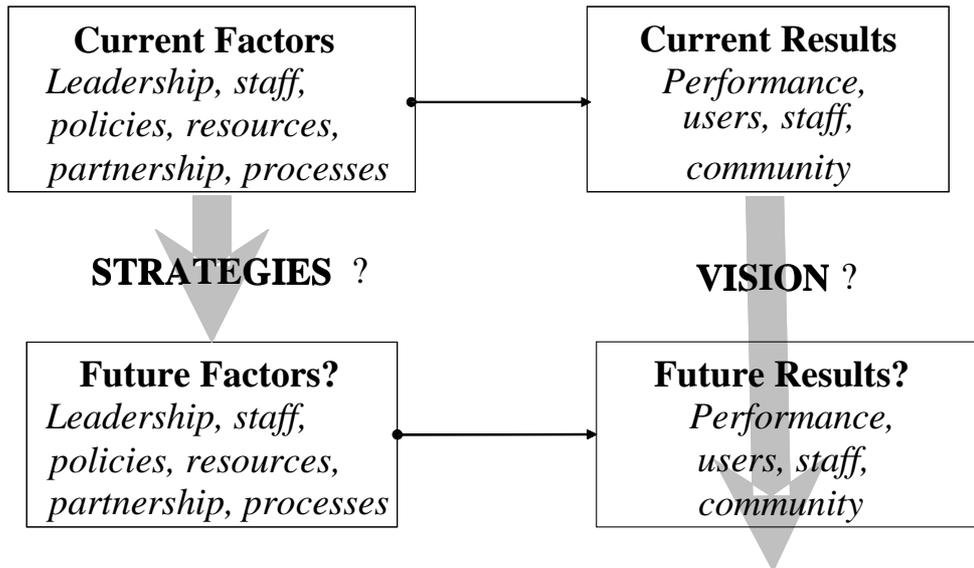
- development: several months to decide what will be done over the course of the next four to five years.
- implementation: four to five years to execute what has been decided.

## Drafting National Statistics Development Strategies

One must be fully aware that there is no “one-size-fits-all” plan that can be merely fine-tuned then ratified. In other words, it is not realistic to believe that it is possible to present a package of recommendations to be accepted or rejected, even if these proposals were the result of a wide consultation of all stakeholders working together in a ratifying workshop. The process is much more complex, and the political powers must necessarily intervene. Each time that stakeholders must weigh several technically equivalent options that will have various political repercussions, the political authorities must be asked to arbitrate.

### *The NSDS phases*

The breakdown presented below was influenced by both a constraint and a line of reasoning. The constraint was identified above: namely, the necessity of involving political authorities at each stage that decisions for the future must be made. The line of reasoning is the following: establish a diagnosis and deduce from it a vision for the future and results to be obtained, decide on strategies to build capacities to produce the desired results, then determine the timeline for the actions to be implemented. See the Overview Table and the Sample Calendar at the end of the document for more information.



The five NSDS phases are the following: launching, the road map, diagnosis and vision, strategies, and annual action plans. Each phase is considered completed when its proposals have received the formal approval of the appropriate authorities. In the majority of cases, this approval will be issued via the report from the Council of Ministers session ruling on these proposals.

***Phase 0 or launching***

The period leading up to the decision to develop an NSDS constitutes a preparatory phase 0 that can also be considered an opportunity study — the opportunity or not to launch a strategic planning process, and if the decision is yes, along what lines and with which actors?

***Phase 1 or the roadmap***

In this phase, stakeholders agree on the goals of the exercise, the practical terms and conditions of the approach, the human resources required, the calendar of actions, and the necessary budget, and they submit their proposals to the political authorities. It is also during this stage that stakeholders outline the responsibilities of the political authorities, project manager, advisory board, and the technical and financial support in line with the current regulations.

***Phase 2 or diagnosis and vision***

In this phase, the diagnosis is agreed, and two questions are answered: where are we today and how did we arrive at this point? The medium-term vision is then made explicit, and two new questions are answered: whom do we want to be and where do we want to go?

The analyses conducted should enable stakeholders to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) and to describe the relationship between the stated results and the implementing factors. However, of equal importance is a dialogue with all stakeholders to outline the results expected of the data production system—results expected by the general community, data users, statistical staff, and those responsible for shouldering the cost of this production.

***Phase 3 or strategies***

Phase 2 not only defines the current diagnosis and identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats but also explains the expected results of the plan and its longer-term vision. Regardless of the strategies adopted, they should naturally and at the very least set out to mobilise the strengths, reduce the weaknesses, seize the opportunities, and fend off the threats.

Consideration must first be given to the combination of factors that will help achieve the desired results. There is not one single combination capable of delivering the results, so choices must be made. The financial and human resources are of course among these factors, and they must be accounted for in separate but not independent strategies.

Consideration must then be given to possible strategies to help each current factor evolve toward an integrated set of factors that are sufficient, over the course of the plan, to achieve the desired results. Here too multiple strategies may exist that ought to be explored. For example, relying on loans could be a possible financing strategy.

***Phase 4 or action plans***

In this phase, stakeholders outline the timeline for actions and agree on the implementation, follow-up, and evaluation mechanisms. This must be done for each component of the national statistical system.

To begin this phase, it is useful to organise a workshop to present authorities’ choices—the outlined scenario and its constituent strategies—and to gather advice on timelines and the follow-up/evaluation system.

During this phase, stakeholders should consider how to progress from strategy to action while recognising the following:

1. translate the strategy into operational terms,
2. harmonise organisation with strategy,
3. make the strategy a daily concern for all involved,
4. transform the strategy into a continuous process,
5. mobilise change through leadership.

The implementation of action plans begins as soon as the reports from the last stage are adopted, at the start of the first budget year of the planning period.

### ***Including Labour Statistics***

Labour statistics refer to all data necessary to make effective decisions in questions relating to labour. These statistics have been the subject of certain resolutions adopted by labour statisticians regarding:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- economically active population, employment, and underemployment</li> <li>- Statistics of employment in the informal sector</li> <li>- Measurement of underemployment and inadequate employment situations</li> <li>- The measurement of employment-related income</li> <li>- Statistics of hours of work</li> <li>- An integrated system of wages statistics</li> <li>- Statistics of labour cost</li> <li>- Household income and expenditure surveys</li> <li>- Consumer price indices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Statistics of occupational injuries resulting from occupational accidents</li> <li>- Statistics of strikes, lockouts and other action due to labour disputes</li> <li>- Statistics of collective agreements</li> <li>- The development of social security statistics</li> <li>- International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)</li> <li>- International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE)</li> </ul>
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By ratifying Convention C160, each country undertakes to “regularly collect, compile and publish basic labour statistics, which shall be progressively expanded in accordance with its resources.”

The main decisions regarding labour statistics are taken during phase 2: diagnosis and vision.

### ***Labour statistics, diagnosis, and vision***

Evaluating the satisfaction of national and international users is based on accessibility of data, diverse aspects of data quality, data use, and missing data. An evaluation can also be conducted on users’ ability to draw conclusions from data to make their decisions.

The process of producing these statistics can also be evaluated to understand its strengths and weaknesses. In a decentralised system, there are many parties involved, and one usually finds oneself faced with several producers corresponding to sub-areas of labour statistics: individual employment, labour costs and revenue, working conditions, industrial disputes, social security, etc. The sources for these statistics can be individuals or households, businesses or firms, administrations or parapublic bodies. Collection methods are mainly censuses, surveys, and processing of administrative files, with a distinction made between individuals and businesses for informal activities. The Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) being prepared with the IMF will be one of the preferred tools for establishing a diagnosis.

Based on this diagnosis, priorities for labour statistics must be set and made public, with their essential elements outlined and kept in line with how the data will be used. Improvements to the existing processes must also be considered, while recognising that the statistical standardisation, coordination, and evaluation mechanisms will be common to other statistical areas — such as household and business surveys.

The vision concerns the place and future of the overall statistical system; therefore, its definition does not require the explicit inclusion of labour statistics.

### ***Labour statistics and strategies***

The previous phase established the status of the production system of labour statistics and set goals for data availability.

First consideration must be given to the factors that should be put in place to make data available—organisation of the components of the statistical system, primary data collection mechanisms, data processing methods, dissemination mechanisms, data analysis capacity, staff qualifications, funding mechanisms, computer equipment, premises, partnerships with nonstatistical units and with employers’ and union bodies, etc. Several combinations are possible, and their respective advantages and disadvantages should be outlined and compared.

Second consideration should be given to possible synergies with the other data production mechanisms: sampling frames and registers, the system of surveys, archival processing and statistical dissemination, compatibility of the concepts adopted, synchronisation of activities, training, multisectoral analyses within the framework of development and poverty reduction policies, user satisfaction surveys, etc.

Strategies regarding the production of labour statistics will be an integral part of the strategies adopted for the development of the overall statistical system.

### ***Labour statistics and annual action plans***

During this phase, mechanisms for dialogue, standardisation, implementation, follow-up, and evaluation will be agreed, as will the detailed action programme for the first year and the overview calendar for the following years.

The calendar for household and business surveys should specify each of the statistical areas (including labour statistics) on which data will be collected, autonomously or not. Particular attention should be paid to training in the concepts and methods relevant to each area, without underestimating the needs for compatibility that multisectoral analyses such as poverty studies require.

## **Implementation, Follow-up, and Evaluation**

This is not a preparatory phase for the NSDS. It is important that all statistical activities of the first year are perceived as helping implement the NSDS.

Among the tools for follow-up, there is naturally an annual report on statistical activities, which is essential when arguing for the allocation of new resources in the national budget. It is also a valuable resource during discussions with partners with whom countries wish to establish linkages and from whom they wish to secure future contributions.

Follow-up mechanisms should generally be anchored in statistical coordination activities which regulations almost always foresee. If these regulations lead to difficulties, the action plan itself will have recommended corrective measures allowing the follow-up to be properly implemented. Coordination should establish a pluriannual calendar with the major actions outlined to ensure they unfold under good conditions.

An evaluation is indispensable on two levels: (1) to estimate the accuracy of the strategic decisions taken and the efficiency of the implemented actions in order to provide the necessary corrective measures, and (2) to take stock of the policies adopted, which is essential when drafting a new NSDS after the completion of the planning period. Two evaluations can therefore be scheduled: a light, mid-term evaluation conducted by a body or official not involved in the development of the NSDS and a second, more complete evaluation in the penultimate year that involves for example a peer review.

# Overview Table for Developing a National Statistics Development Strategy

PHASES	Goals	Outputs	Activities	Stakeholders	Duration	Comments
	<i>National</i>	<i>For each phase: Meeting minutes, recommendations, mission reports. Communication to council of ministers, report</i>	<i>For each phase: PARLISTAT update Coordination authorities meeting Drafting of stage reports</i>		<i>The political calendar takes precedence. The deadlines will be adjusted accordingly.</i>	
<b>Phase 0: LAUNCHING</b>	Political commitment to developing an NSDS.	Peer Review report Letter from the Minister to colleagues and partners	Advocacy (Film) Documentation (PARLISTAT) Meetings with partners Peer review, study missions Participation in PARIS21 and other meetings	Government and Minister overseeing statistics Statistical System Coordinator National Team Leader Main Users and Producers Partners and PARIS21 Secretariat Consultants	From 1 to 6 months, depending on the country	The development of an NSDS was recommended in each of the PARIS21 regional workshops.
<b>Phase 1: ROAD MAP</b>	Organisation decided and resources allocated	Agreement with national and international partners Outline of NSDS development Budget approved for the development of the NSDS; TF project document	Partner consultations Consultant mission Identification of future members of the national team Drafting of the funding (TF) request		2 - 3 months	Count on approximately three months to prepare a Trust Fund request.
<b>Phase 2: DIAGNOSIS AND VISION</b>	Diagnosis made Vision defined Needs determined	Report including the diagnosis, vision, and needs	Consultant missions Launching workshop (PARIS21 guide) Consultations with all stakeholders Collecting information on the status of the system (SCBI) Ratifying workshop (PARIS21 guide)		4 months	This stage requires the most data gathering from the different actors. Many reports are already available.
<b>Phase 3: STRATEGIES</b>	Strategies chosen	Report including the study comparing several strategy scenarios	Consultations with all stakeholders		3 months	This stage is mostly one of reflection, looking to the future, and merging points of view.
<b>Phase 4: ACTION PLANS</b>	Calendars and implementation terms finalised	Report including: implementation calendar implementation and monitoring plan evaluation arrangements	Consultant mission National dialogue workshop (PARIS21 guide) Consultations with all stakeholders Donors roundtable		6 - 7 months This duration corresponds to the last half of the first budget year.	Many activities are already scheduled. The strategies are already drawn up before budgetary discussions and the draft programme for the first budgetary year.
<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	Strategies implemented Expected results achieved	Annual reports on the statistical system Detailed annual programmes Annual budgets Mid-term evaluation report Final evaluation report	Launching workshop (PARIS21 guide) Drafting annual reports Preparation of detailed annual programmes and budgets Mid-term evaluation Final evaluation	Producers Users Partners	Depending on the duration foreseen for the plan; that is, from 4 to 6 years.	Implementation begins with the first budget year of the plan period.

## Sample 16-Month Calendar for Phases 0 to 4

Phases	Budget Year -2				Budget Year -1												1
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
<b>Phase 0: LAUNCHING</b>																	<b>NSDS Adopted</b>
<b>Phase 1: ROAD MAP</b>																	
<b>Phase 2: DIAGNOSIS AND VISION</b>																	
<b>Phase 3: STRATEGIES</b>																	
<b>Phase 4: ACTION PLANS</b>																	
<b>IMPLEMENTATION OF NSDS</b>																	