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Theme 6 – Global Strategy: International Governance

Strategy implementation: a donor's perspective on what could work.

Abstract: Successful implementation will depend on NSDSs. Firstly, on how effectively countries integrate agricultural statistics into their national strategies. And secondly, on how effectively donors harmonise and align our support to these strategies. Our experience suggests that having a strong national partnership in place (from across government and donors) and having a lead donor to encourage coordinated support are both key to success. These are elements we are currently piloting with the World Bank and Netherlands in the Statistics for Results Facility (SRF). The paper will look at how the SRF approach could apply in the context of the agricultural statistics strategy.

Introduction

As the Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics states - 'the process of improving agricultural statistics will begin with the integration of agriculture into the national statistical system'. This integration will require not only technical and methodological improvements (the development of a master sample, an integrated survey framework etc.) but changes in the way Governments and donor partners support statistical systems.

We have learned much from the experience of education and health sector colleagues about the benefits of sector wide approaches: about how agreed national strategies can be supported through well coordinated funding; to accelerate progress and ultimately deliver results. In statistics, we have taken these lessons on board and are moving towards 'system wide' support: aligning behind national strategies (including NSDSs - National Strategies for the Development of Statistics), and coordinating more effectively. We have come a long way. But much remains to be done; particularly in the area of agricultural statistics, and particularly if we are to ensure the Global Strategy is implemented successfully.

A system wide approach for statistics

This approach applies the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness to statistical capacity building, and relies on the following elements:

- Alignment behind national statistics strategies (such as NSDSs).
- Effective stakeholder discussions through better national partnership arrangements between development partners and statistical agencies.
- A shared funding source, preferably managed by government;
- Coordination among donor partners, through the direction of a lead donor; and

- A bridge between donors and technical statisticians – by the presence of an in-country statistician to support capacity building.

The success of this approach depends largely on the effectiveness of coordination. That is: coordination of the national statistical system (ensuring that all sectors – and especially agricultural statistics, which are often less well represented – are included in national strategies); coordination of users and producers of statistics; and coordination of donor partners to support implementation of the strategy.

The 'national partnership' encourages all key stakeholders (producers, users and financiers) to come together and to strengthen existing relationships. This can help to ensure the national statistical system prioritises the key data which meet users' needs. Thus leading to the development of agreed national statistical strategies, or the re-prioritisation of current strategies where necessary.

The national partnership would seek to address the wider management/institutional issues which are crucial to resolving the vicious cycle of underdevelopment which has hampered statistics over the last few decades. It would also help find and secure adequate funding to implement the key agreed priorities within the strategy. And while the ideal position is that governments cover the costs from national budgets, in reality we know that in many countries statistics is not prioritised, and donors are often needed to try to plug the gap. Direct financing – where funds are managed through government systems – is the preferred option, though where national financial management systems are weak, alternatives (donor basket funding for example) can be used. Either way, this should lead to harmonised funding streams and minimise the reporting burdens on countries.

The identification of a lead donor can increase the effectiveness of coordination among donors. They can act as focal point for all donors; lead in interactions with government; and encourage donors to avoid creating parallel systems and funding ad-hoc data collection exercises.

Finally, an in-country statistician can not only provide direct capacity building support to government as they implement their strategy; they can also act as a 'technical bridge' between the statistics system and donor partners.

A system wide approach: experience so far

The approach described above is one which is being piloted through the Statistics for Results Facility Catalytic Fund. This multi-donor Trust Fund, administered by the World Bank, is currently financed by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Netherlands. It has begun its pilot phase in five countries: Afghanistan, DRC, Ghana, Nigeria, and Rwanda.

Though at an early stage, there is evidence of progress. In almost all pilot countries, national partnerships are in place and are becoming increasingly effective. We are also seeing the emergence of well prioritised and realistic implementation plans. And

the trust fund is beginning to have a catalytic effect by encouraging other donor support (either financing or through the provision of in-country statisticians for example).

Lessons for the implementation of the Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics?

As noted above, the SRF is at an early stage, and further lessons will emerge as implementation of the pilot phase continues. But it already seems clear that the fundamental elements of this approach could apply in the context of the Global Strategy.

A national partnership which includes representation from all parts of government involved in agricultural and rural statistics (the National Statistical Office, the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as others with specific responsibility for remote sensing, fisheries, forestry, etc. if outside of these organisations) would be an important mechanism to drive success. It could work to ensure that agricultural statistics are effectively integrated, and are given appropriate priority in the national statistical strategy.

Similarly, the lead donor could be called upon to help ensure capacity building for the implementation of the Global Strategy was adequately funded, well coordinated, and aligned behind the priorities identified.

What is DFID doing?

DFID will continue to promote a system wide approach in its statistical capacity building interventions, and will continue to encourage partners to embrace its principles. We will also explore how we can use this approach in the specific context of agricultural statistics, and stand ready to help support the Global Strategy's ground-breaking effort to improve this crucial area of statistics.

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