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Progress with Technical Assistance Activities in the region

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Abstract

This document summarizes the Technical Assistance activities carried out by the Regional Office of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in the Asia Pacific region since the beginning of the project in 2013. It covers country specific progress on implementation of GS activities, the activities planned for 2016 and the specific data collection improvement activities identified in the country proposals for short to medium term assistance. Till date, the Global Strategy implementation is in progress in 15 countries and 4 more countries have been selected for implementation in 2016. The Regional Office has made significant progress in providing technical assistance to the selected countries both in terms of SPARS preparation and in implementing approved short term project activities. During implementation, care was taken to synchronize the development of country SPARS with the existing NSDS/on-going NSDS preparation and advocacy activities to mobilize resources and promote its implementation.

After finalization of the Regional Action Plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in the Asia Pacific region and its endorsement, the implementation of the RAP commenced in 2013. Number of countries selected for GS implementation has gradually increased to 19 plus development of a Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Fisheries Statistics (P-SPARS) for the Pacific Island Countries. Year-wise list of countries selected for implementation of the Global Strategy is as under:

2013 - Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Samoa, Sri Lanka,
 2014 - Fiji, Georgia, Lao PDR, Myanmar,
 2015 - Afghanistan, Cambodia, Maldives, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, and Viet Nam,
 2016 – China, Malaysia, Mongolia and Tonga

Main focus of the GS activities in the country is the preparation of a long term national Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SPARS). In additional technical assistance is also provided for a number of short to medium term improvement activities prioritized by the country in the form of a country proposal paper. Both these activities necessitate a thorough assessment of the country agricultural statistical system and identification of areas for improvement. Thus the in-country work results in three outputs in the form of an In-depth Country Assessment (IdCA) Report, a Country Proposal paper and SPARS document itself.

Country Level Progress:

1. *Bangladesh.*

Implementation of the Global Strategy in Bangladesh was initiated in 2012 under the project “MTF/GLO/372/BMG: Strengthening Agricultural Statistics in Anchor Countries – Phase I: Assessment of Anchor Country Agricultural Statistics” supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation. The project produced two outputs viz. pilot testing of the country assessment methodology and the publication of the In-depth Country Assessment Report and ended in June 2014 with a dissemination and advocacy workshop highlighting the results of the in-depth assessment.

Subsequent implementation of GS activities in the country was undertaken with the GS funds. Till date, Bangladesh has produced another 2 key reports including 1) a Country Proposal Paper and 2) Roadmap for SPARS development. The work on preparation of SPARS is in progress as per timelines in the draft Roadmap and harmonized with the other statistical activities in the country such as implementation of AMIS, improvement of the methodologies, fishery census etc. drafting of the SPARS is in advanced stage and final SPARS document is expected by June 2016.

2. *Bhutan.*

Implementation of the Global Strategy in Bhutan started in November 2013. To date, technical assistance activities in Bhutan have produced 4 key reports as below:

- i. In-depth Country Assessment of the National System for Renewable Natural Resources Statistics ,
- ii. Country Proposal for Improving Renewable Natural Resources Statistics,

- iii. a Roadmap for the SP-RNRS and
- iv. Draft SP-RNRS.

The documents (i) - (iii) have already been endorsed by the Government. The Government has also constituted an RNR Statistics Committee as a permanent body to guide the preparation and subsequent implementation of SP-RNRS. Preparation of SP-RNRS is at an advanced stage and the final SP-RNRS document is expected by March 2016.

Besides SPARS, Bhutan had submitted a Country Proposal comprising of 9 activities for short-medium term improvement. Of these, following 3 have been approved for implementation through GS funds.

- i. Bringing Improvement in livestock statistics
- ii. Improvement in crop statistics

The work on the activity ‘Bringing improvement in livestock statistics’ is in progress and a pilot survey in a selected district has been completed. The results of the survey are being analysed and a survey report is expected soon. Based upon the encouraging results, the country has also expressed the need for assistance on the second activity namely ‘Improvement in crop statistics’.

3. *Indonesia.*

Implementation of the Global Strategy in Indonesia started in December 2013.. In-depth assessment of the national agricultural statistical system led to identification of major areas for improvement. Simultaneously, WB supported STATCAP project is in progress to meet the needs of the national statistical system and preparation activities of SPARS are being coordinated for integration of SPARS with STATCAP improvement activities. To date, technical assistance activities in the country have produced 4 key reports:

- i. In-depth Country Assessment Report,
- ii. Country Proposal for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics,
- iii. a Roadmap for Preparing the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics and
- iv. First draft of SPARS document.

The country proposal activities planned for the country include

- i. Improvement of Fisheries Statistics
- ii. Forestry Statistics

The Presidential elections in the country in Oct 2014 and subsequent changes in official functionaries both in BPS and the Ministries had some impact on the progress of activities. Despite the constraints, the work on SPARS preparation is in advanced stage and is likely to be completed by Mid-2016.

4. *Samoa.*

Implementation of the Global Strategy in Samoa started in December 2013. Technical assistance activities in Samoa have produced three key reports as below:

- i. In-depth Country Assessment of the National System of Agricultural and Rural Statistics,
- ii. Country Proposal for Short-term Technical Assistance and Training.
- iii. a Roadmap for Preparing the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics

The country proposal paper identified 3 major areas for improvement and 6 short term activities for the improvement of agricultural and rural statistics in the country as below:

- Improving the availability and regularity of agricultural production statistics
Project 1a. Support of project planning for the 2015 Agricultural Survey
Project 1b. Questionnaire for agricultural survey developed
Project 1c. Sample selection methodology for agriculture survey developed and adopted
- Developing an effective data collection operation for agricultural statistics
Project 2a. Evaluation of agriculture module tool for other national surveys
Project 2b. Develop the agriculture module survey tool
- Building capacity in agricultural statistics
Project 3. Improve the capacity of SBS and MAF in agricultural statistics and survey activities

While most of these project activities have been selected for implementation through traditional FAO TCP projects, two activities below are identified for implementation through Global Strategy funds.

- the Development of a SPARS, and
- Improve the capacity of SBS and MAF in agricultural statistics and survey activities.

The work on development of SPARS is in progress.

5. *Sri Lanka*

Implementation of the Global Strategy in Sri Lanka started in December 2013. In-depth assessment of the national agricultural statistical system led to identification of major areas for improvement. Nine short term project activities were identified for priority improvement of agricultural and rural statistics, out of which the following were approved by RSC for implementation through GS funds.

- i. Improving methodology for rice crop cutting surveys
- ii. Improving methodology for highland crops
- iii. Improving the Methodology for Crop Forecasting
- iv. Improving Livestock Production Statistics
- v. Improving Data Quality for the Food Balance Sheet

Implementation of approved project activities at i) and ii) was taken up during 2015 and are at an advanced stage of implementation. Alternative methodologies have been recommended for estimation of production of rice and for selected highland crops. The methodologies are being pilot tested before recommending nation-wide implementation. Pilot surveys both on rice crop and highland crops are in progress in Maha season (Nov 2015 – March 2016) and the results will be processed in April /May 2016. Results of the pilot surveys will recommend improved methodologies for these crops.

To date, Technical Assistance activities in Sri Lanka have produced following key reports:

- i. In-depth Country Assessment Report
- ii. the Country Proposal Paper for Short-term technical assistance and training, and
- iii. SPARS Roadmap
- iv. Draft Technical Report on new methodology for Highland crops
- v. Draft Technical Report on new methodology for estimating Rice production

Launching phase of SPARS preparation has commenced in Dec 2015 and final SPARS document is expected by the end of the year.

6. *Fiji*

Implementation of the Global Strategy in Fiji started in May 2014 In-depth capacity assessment of the national agricultural statistics system was completed and major areas identified for improvement. To date, technical assistance activities in the country have produced three key reports as below:

- i. In-depth Assessment of Country Capacity to produce Agricultural and Rural Statistics,
- ii. Country Proposal for Short-term Technical Assistance and Training, and
- iii. A draft Roadmap for the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

The IdCA report has been endorsed by government. In the country proposal paper, four priority streams of work where technical assistance and training would be most beneficial to the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and Ministry of Fisheries and Forests (MFF), have been identified. These include:

- i. Assessment of the 2015 Agriculture Baseline Survey outcomes;
- ii. Supporting and improving administrative data collection activities;
- iii. Undertake analysis of available crop yield data as used in deriving crop production data
- iv. Support for the planning and development phases of the 2016 Agricultural Survey
- v. Development of an agriculture ‘module’ for the 2017 Population and Housing Census;
- vi. Adoption of mobile technologies for MOA and MFF data collections.

The country proposal paper has been endorsed by RSC for implementation.

7. *Georgia*

Although selected in 2014, implementation of the Global Strategy in Georgia commenced in June 2015 as the national statistics office, GEOSTAT, was busy with conduct of agricultural census in the country during 2014. To date, technical assistance activities in the country have produced four key reports as below:

- i. A Report of the In-depth Country Assessment,
- ii. a Country Proposal paper for short to medium term improvement activities, and
- iii. a Roadmap for the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics.
- iv. a draft Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics

The country proposal paper has identified a number of short term project activities out of which the following have been recommended by RSC for implementation:

- i. Improve coverage of annual agricultural surveys
- ii. Geo-referencing agricultural statistics
- iii. Data needs for rural development
- iv. Training and capacity building

8. *Lao PDR*

Implementation of the Global Strategy in Lao PDR started in February 2014. To date, technical assistance activities in Lao PDR have produced four key reports:

- i. Report of In-depth Country Assessment in Lao PDR,
- ii. A Country Proposal for short-term technical assistance and training,
- iii. a draft Roadmap for the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Lao PDR and
- iv. Draft SPARS document.

The results of the In-depth Country Assessment identified a number of short term country proposals for the improvement of agricultural and rural statistics in the country, of which two have been endorsed by the RSC for implementation. The approved project activities include:

- i. Improving the administrative reporting system for agricultural statistics
- ii. Improving dissemination of agricultural and rural statistics
- iii. Developing Farm Gate Price System

The Government recently constituted a Steering Committee for Agriculture and Rural Statistics (SCA) and a Technical Working Group (TWA) for agricultural and rural statistics which enabled better coordination across data producers and user organizations, better integration of SPARS with NSDS and quick progress in SPARS preparation. Implementation of second activity is proposed to be taken up in 2016.

Another important positive development in Lao PDR is the initiative of the Government to organize a High Level Round Table Meeting (HLRTM) with Development Partners to mobilize support for implementation of its 8th National Socio-economic Development Plan (NSED). HLRTM is supported by 10 thematic Sectoral Working Groups (SWG), Agricultural and Rural Development being one of them. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forests provides the secretariat for the SWG-ARD and GS activities were presented in the meeting of SWG in September 2015 to mobilize support for SPARS implementation.

9. *Myanmar*

Implementation of the Global Strategy in Myanmar was initiated in May 2015. In-depth capacity assessment of the national agricultural statistics system was completed and major areas identified for improvement. Technical assistance activities in Myanmar have produced 3 reports:

- i. Report of In-depth Country Assessment ,
- ii. a draft Roadmap for the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics and
- iii. first draft of SPARS.

Myanmar also provided the opportunity to prepare SPARS as a component of NSDS. With assistance from the World Bank and other Development Partners (DPs), the CSO is preparing First Myanmar National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS) and have constituted 6 Cluster Groups for specific statistical domains, agriculture being one of them. FAO has taken the lead to support the Cluster Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics (ARSCG) to prepare SPARS. SPARS document is expected to be finalized by May 2016.

10. Afghanistan

Implementation of the Global Strategy in Afghanistan started in August 2015. To date, country has received one mission and organized one workshop in support of GS activities. Technical assistance activities in the country have produced 2 reports:

- i. Draft Roadmap for the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics and
- ii. First draft of an In-depth Country Assessment Report.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) has identified improving crop statistics and wheat production forecast as an immediate priority area for improvement. Considering the security situation in the country and its impact on data collection and quality, the Ministry also expressed interest in use of Remote sensing technology for wheat production forecast. To this end, GS facilitated the organization of a study tour of MAIL professionals to National Crop Forecast Centre in India in October 2015. The study was financially supported by FAO Afghanistan.

11. Cambodia.

First mission of the Global Strategy to the country was organized in July 2015 initiating the process for development of Cambodia Strategic plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics. To date, the technical assistance activities in Cambodia have produced two draft reports:

- i. First draft of the Report of In-depth Country Assessment and
- ii. A draft Roadmap for the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

Next mission of the GS is planned in early 2016 and SPARS document is expected by third quarter of 2016.

12. Maldives.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture is the focal organization for implementation of the Global Strategy in the Maldives. First GS mission to the country was organized in September 2015 with an initiation workshop. Keeping in view the importance of fisheries sector to the country, a fishery statistician was also deputed to assist with the in-depth

assessment of the country's agricultural statistical system. First drafts on the fishery statistics system and of the IdCA Report have been completed.

13. Pakistan

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research is the focal organization for implementation of the Global Strategy in Pakistan. The Ministry nominated a National Strategic Coordinator and the FAO recruited the national consultant to support GS activities in the country. To date, the country received one mission and organized one workshop in support of GS activities. Technical assistance activities in Pakistan are still in the early stages due to constraints in availability of international consultants in the region. It is expected that GS implementation in the country will pick up momentum in 2016.

14. Papua New Guinea

Implementation of the Global Strategy in Papua New Guinea started in September 2015. To date, the country received one mission and organized one workshop in support of GS activities. Technical assistance activities in Papua New Guinea have produced two reports:

- i. First draft of the In-depth Country Assessment Report and
- ii. A draft Roadmap for the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

The process for preparation of NSDS by NSO was recently completed and NSDS is now under submission to the Government for approval. Efforts will be made to use the same organizational structure for preparation of SPARS and integrate it within NSDS framework. Next GS mission to the country is expected in March 2016.

15. Viet Nam

The General Statistics Office (GSO) is the focal organization for implementation of the Global Strategy in Viet Nam. Implementation of the Global Strategy in the country started in July 2015. An in-depth assessment of the national agricultural statistical system was undertaken and meetings were held with the stakeholders to decide the roadmap for SPARS. To date, technical assistance activities in Viet Nam have produced two draft reports:

- i. Report of In-depth Country Assessment in Viet Nam, and
- ii. A draft Roadmap for the Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

16. Development of a Sub-Regional Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics in the Pacific.

In November 2014, the RSC endorsed a proposal by the RO to develop a sub-regional Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics for small Pacific island countries. The need for separate SPARS for Pacific Island Countries was felt due to their special situation with reference to their cropping patterns, limited statistical infrastructure and

availability of human and financial resources in the production of agricultural and rural statistics.

The planning for this sub-regional plan has received support from the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC), a major regional stakeholder for statistics capacity building, now working closely with the RO to help build capacity in the region. SPC and the FAO organized a sub-regional workshop in October 2015 with the objective to seek endorsement from Pacific Island countries to develop a regional strategy for agriculture and fisheries statistics, and to constitute a technical working group for the drafting of such a strategy.

In the workshop, participants (1) were informed of the benefits of improved statistical data, (2) were provided support from the RO on the filling of the Country Assessment Questionnaire, (3) endorsed the initiative of FAO and SPC to develop a *Pacific Strategy Plan for Agriculture and Fisheries Statistics*, and (4) constituted a technical working group to take forward actions planned for the drafting and implementation of the proposed *Strategy*.

Technical Assistance Activities planned for 2016

Broad technical assistance activities during 2016 will be as under:

Continuation of SPARS development in existing 15 countries

Based upon the progress so far, the target is to complete the SPARS process in 2013 and 2014 countries. In 2015 countries, it is planned to complete the IdCA Report, the country proposal papers and progress with SPARS development as far as possible.

Implementation of approved country proposal activities

Country proposal activities currently under progress in Sri Lanka and Bhutan will be completed during the year. Country proposal activities in Lao PDR will be taken up for implementation during 2016. The implementation of country proposal activities for Georgia and Fiji will be initiated.