

International conference on International Outreach and Coordination in National Accounts for Sustainable Growth and Development

Session 8 – Training

Title: Training of Statisticians in Africa as a Central Framework for Capacity Building in National Accounts

Institution: *African Development Bank*

1 Context

1. The implementation of the 1993 SNA requires National Statistical Systems (NSSs) to have enough qualified national accountants. But according to several assessments conducted in Africa, most countries face a shortage of qualified experts in this area. Not only is the critical mass of national accountants far from being reached but also there is a high turn-over of such experts in the NSSs. Qualified national accountants cannot be attracted and retained in the statistical service due to poor terms and conditions of service or temporary ban on recruitment of civil servants including statistical personnel in several countries. There is a need to train more and more national accounts experts and improve their conditions of service. This paper presents the experience of the AfDB capacity building programme in national accounts within the framework of the ICP-Africa. Challenges to be taken up to enhance training in national accountants are stated. Based on those challenges, an innovative approach is recommended.

2 Major Challenges for Training in National Accounts

2. Most national accountants in Francophone Africa are trained in specialized sub-regional statistical training centers (STCs) where they are provided at least basic knowledge in National Accounts. They have acquired actual expertise while working in National Accounts department/units in the NSOs. Few of them have University background in economics.

3. English-speaking national accountants are trained mainly at universities or specialized training centers in Anglophone Africa, and have acquired national accounts expertise while working in the NSO. For Portuguese-speaking students, access to the Francophone and Anglophone institutions is limited and long-term education is available only in Portugal.

4. Sub-regional statistical training centers provide long-term training and are increasingly conducting short-term training courses on specific areas, including national accounts. Countries hosting these training centers tend to have many more trained national accountants than those that do not.

5. The specialized training centers in Africa adapt their training programs to the needs of national statistical offices. In contrast, university programs tend to be theoretical. The assessment of training identified the following problems, constraints and challenges: (1)

shortages of teaching staff, especially experienced staff; (2) lack of fellowships for staff to undertake specialized study abroad; (3) lack of scholarships, mainly for foreign trainees; (4) lack of teaching materials (mainly tools, books and computers); and (5) lack of budgetary support and teaching space.

3 Capacity Building in National Accounts through the ICP-Africa

6. The AfDB strategy provides for capacity building through targeted technical assistance, training and workshops. The International Comparison program for Africa (ICP-Africa) managed by the AfDB has been used as a springboard for statistical capacity building in the areas of price statistics, national accounts and assisting countries in the design of their national strategy for the development of their statistical systems (NSDS).

7. Through the ICP-Africa, over 2000 participants from all 51 African countries and a wide range of African consultants have benefited directly from the Bank's support through participation in numerous workshops, seminars, on-the-job training in the areas of price data collection and analysis, processing and production of National Accounts data, NSDS design process, etc.

8. Training through Statistical Training Centres (STCs) is also the cornerstone of the sustainability of the ICP-Africa to ensure that ICP requirements and data are rooted in statistical needs and procedures. A number of STCs in Africa are implementing the training component of the ICP-Africa. The Bank is providing them with financial and technical support to: (i) improve their curricula and make it more relevant to African circumstances and in particular with respect to the production and uses of official statistics, and (ii) provide appropriate statistical training that is of immediate relevance to the African conditions.

4 Towards an Innovative Strategy for Training in National Accounts

9. A strategy should be prepared to train more and more national accounts experts according to the following principles and lines of actions:

- Organize regular training sessions for officials responsible for the compilation of national accounts of their countries. These are regional and sub-regional workshops to be convene every year with a view to ensuring that, at the end of each workshop, specific sets of accounts/tables should have been drawn up and validated in a participatory and cross-fertilizing approach;
- Provide for the training of trainers in national accounts;
- Improve the training curricula of STCs in National Accounts. National accounts provide a synthesis of the image of the country economy. National accounts compilation process requires data from different sources

covering different sectors and units (production units, population, agriculture, household consumption, etc.). Hence the SNA 1993 has to be used as a framework for other statistics courses. Social accounting matrixes and satellite accounts cover different statistics aspects (economic, social and sectoral statistics). Therefore, an innovative new approach consists in extending training in National Accounts to experts in all the statistical fields, in terms of: (i) introducing them into the basics of National Accounts; (ii) underlining the linkage between their fields and National Accounts and stressing the criticality of their statistical inputs/outputs in the set of SNA accounts and tables; (iii) defining effective flows of information between statistical sectors and the SNA convergence framework; (iv) ensure proper synergy between sectoral survey activities and the National Accounts work; (v) mainstreaming the compilation of National Accounts in the review of macroeconomic and social situations of countries in the context of their Poverty Reduction Strategies or development programs;

- Provide training materials and equipment (tools, computers, books) to STCs. This includes updated methodological documents as well as reports from international working groups on National Accounts. STCs lack up to date adequate training material for national accounts. In francophone statistical training centres the tool used to introduce national accounts to students is still the outdated Kangare case study. A new training tool has to be designed based on SNA1993. The Bank is in the process to assist STCs to develop a new case study that will include the ICP GDP expenditure breakdown approach. For advanced training in national accounts, some francophone statistical training centres use the ERE-TES module;
- Reinforce linkages between training centers and national statistical offices to increase the policy relevance of their training programs.
- Take into account National Accounts training needs in the NSDS process, with a view to, inter alia, address the issue of shortage of staff in NSOs.