

The Philippine Statistical Capacity Building Initiatives: Past and Future

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Abstract

The Philippine Statistical System is mandated to deliver quality statistical information to the public. One major strategy to bring this about is to continuously upgrade the quality of statistical personnel and expand the statistical manpower base that will undertake statistical work and contribute to the improvement of statistical activities. Though the Statistical Research and Training Center, the System's statistical research and training arm, many comprehensive and integrated training programs were developed on the theories, concepts and methodologies for the promotion of the statistical system and conducted various trainings to address the statistical capacity building requirements of the entire civil service in the country both at national and sub-national levels, and international clients as well. Looking forward, while continuously undertaking capacity building initiatives, the Center in consultation with other agencies has developed statistical programs to address the major issues and challenges identified for statistical human resource development. This paper discusses statistical capacity building achievements for the past 25 years and statistical programs set for the next 5 years.

Keywords, human resource development, raised competencies, statistical trainings, training programs

1. Introduction

The Philippine Statistical System is the government-wide decentralized statistical system in providing statistical information and services to the public consisting of the statistical organizations of all departments, bureaus, offices, agencies and instrumentalities of the National Government and Local Government and Government Owned & Control Corporations and their subsidiaries that are engaged in statistical activities either as their primary functions or part of administrative or regulatory functions. There are five major statistical agencies in the System. These are: (a) National Statistical Coordination Board - a policy making and coordinating body on all statistical matters; (b) National Statistics Office - a single general purpose statistical agency; (c) Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS)- agency designated for producing the agricultural statistics; (d) Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES) – agency mandated to compile and analyze labor and employment statistics; and (e) Statistical Research and Training Center (SRTC) - the research and training arm in statistics.

As the lead agency in the statistical training in the Philippines, SRTC is mandated to improve the quality of statistical information generated by the PSS through the conduct of high quality, objective and responsive statistical research and training. It is tasked, among others, to: 1) develop a comprehensive and integrated research and training program on theories, concepts and methodologies for the promotion of statistical system and 2) conduct non-degree training programs to upgrade the quality of statistical personnel and expand the statistical manpower base in support of the needs of statistical system.

SRTC offers two types of training programs: Regular Training Programs (RTP) and Customized Training Programs (CTP). Under the RTP, the SRTC offers training courses on data collection and processing, database management, data analysis and statistical modelling, statistical report writing, and statistical presentation. These courses are intended to provide participants with practical knowledge, skills and experience in various aspects of statistical work. The RTP is open to the public, especially statistical personnel of government offices/units engaged in statistical activities either as primary or secondary functions.

On the other hand, CTP are training programs covering any topic on statistics for its local and international clients. Duration of these programs ranges from five days to two months. The programs are individually designed to meet the specific needs and requirements of clients. The cost of a customized program is dependent on the development of training program which includes the materials, duration of the program, food arrangements and other incidental expenses. Generally, the SRTC can package training courses that will provide the requirements of the clients.

2. Statistical Capacity Building Initiatives Since Creation

Being the training arm of the PSS, SRTC offers its training programs on a regular basis courses in statistical computing on or computer-based statistical training programs for all government institutions/agencies around the country. These programs are intended all PSS workforce to acquire the knowledge and skills in order to improve their performance in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating statistical information for public consumption.

Table 1 below shows that SRTC has conducted 912 training programs from 1988 to 1st quarter of 2013 that benefitted 19,332 participants from the national line agencies, local government offices, private sector and foreign entities. With a a small training staff manned only by six (6) personnel, SRTC was able to increase the number of training programs for the past 24 years. An average of 65 training per year where conducted from 2009-2012, 35 trainings per year from 1998-2008 and 25 trainings per year from 1989-1998.

Table 1. No. of Training Courses and Participants Conducted by SRTC: 1988-2013

Year	No. of Training Courses				No. of Participants			
	Total	Regular	Customized		Total	Regular	Customized	
			Local	Int'l			Local	Int'l
1988	8*				137*			
1989	20*				425*			
1990	28*				738*			
1991	30				681*			
1992	24	7	17		567	158	409	
1993	22	5	17		640	101	539	
1994	18	13	5		294	181	113	
1995	29	4	24	1	670	66	566	38
1996	22	5	17		465	95	370	
1997	34	14	20		675	253	422	
1998	26	13	13		487	200	287	
1999	36	21	15		813	377	436	
2000	31	24	7		550	398	152	
2001	32	14	18		568	236	332	

Year	No. of Training Courses				No. of Participants			
	Total	Regular	Customized		Total	Regular	Customized	
			Local	Int'l			Local	Int'l
2002	40	18	22		796	308	488	
2003	37	4	33		917	42	875	
2004	47	1	46		829	9	820	
2005	29	5	21	3	643	33	572	38
2006	26	8	15	3	478	99	334	45
2007	37	2	33	2	934	31	876	27
2008	52	6	44	2	1,110	106	975	29
2009	86	15	58	13	2,089	294	1,633	162
2010	60	22	28	10	1,196	464	611	121
2011	55	22	24	9	898	403	440	55
2012	59	24	27	8	1,240	537	663	40
2013**	24	2	19	3	492	42	441	9
Total	912	250	523	54	19,332	4,433	12,354	564

*No disaggregation of courses and participants was available from 1988 to 1991 and of participants in 1991

** Data up to 2013 1st Quarter

For the past four years, 70 per cent of the total programs conducted comprised of customized training programs while the remaining 30 percent is represented by regular trainings conducted. Some SRTC training courses are conducted in the regions especially for regional line agencies and local government units (LGUs) under the CTP. The conduct of these trainings has been based on requests to SRTC by arrangements with National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), NSCB and other statistical agencies. In order to systematically accelerate statistical capacity building activities outside Metro Manila, SRTC established a network of regional training affiliates that include selected public and private Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). In cooperation with NEDA, Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC), Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities (PACU) and the Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations (COCOPEA), they identified the prospective regional training affiliates among the member-HEIs. The increase on the total number of training programs from 2007 onwards may also attributed to the conduct of SRTC regional trainings affiliates.

In its 26 years of existence, SRTC has conducted 51 training programs and courses for international clients such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank (WB), Japan International Cooperative Agency (JICA), agencies under the United Nations such as United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (UNSIAP). In cooperation with the statistical institutions of other countries such as Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Republic of Union of Myanmar, bilateral agreement have also been made for the conduct of technical assistance in the form of training programs and study tours. Most of the trainings conducted for foreign statisticians are classified as CTP trainings. These are conducted with the support and assistance of UN agencies and other international institutions. SRTC's counterpart as a support is through its training facilities, providing experts as resource persons, supplying the needed administrative support to carry out the training, and shouldering some incidental expenses.

In 2008-2010, through the project, funded by UNDP through NEDA, SRTC assisted the Provincial Government of Batangas (southern part of the country) in the generation of its own community level socio-economic data using the Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS) approach. LGU officials and key technical personnel of this province have undergone series of trainings on data gathering, data processing and database building, digitizing maps, and preparation of socio-economic profile. The project was successfully implemented, accomplished and attained a complete and evidence-based provincial status report on their advancement of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

3. Statistical Capacity Building Issues and Challenges

Like in any parts of the world, the PSS is confronted with issues and challenges that concern the statistical human resource development sector where SRTC is the key agency expected to address them. On statistical human resource planning and management, the PSS recognizes the need for better management and coordination of human resource concerns and to address the inadequacy of current human resources to meet user needs. On statistical human resource development, there is a need to continuously improve competencies of data producers at the national and local levels. It is also realized the need to enhance statistical literacy and capacity of data users, including oversight government bodies and media on rational use of statistics in planning, decision making and monitoring. Also, the need to strengthen capacity and cooperation of household and institutional respondents and data providers in responding to statistical inquiries is a hurdle to overcome and deal with in time. Other challenges include: the need to improve statistical education in the country to ensure supply of potential human resources for the PSS, and to further promote professional and career development in statistics; the need to augment and improve training resources to meet increasing needs at the national and local levels; and the need to enhance international cooperation.

4. Statistical Capacity Building Plans: Moving Forward

The enhancement of statistical capacity in the PSS is the overarching thrust for human resources for the development plan period 2011-2017. This is by way of improving the quality of statistical manpower to generate and disseminate official statistics through more trainings, wider experience and practice, increasing manpower motivation, and elevating statistics as a recognized profession. The issues and challenges identified in the foregoing are the target of said advocacies. In order to operationalize, general rundown of statistical programs and activities were identified under the following goal/outcome:

Enhancement of management and coordination of human resource concerns for more effective and efficient PSS organization

In order to achieve this goal, a step towards the creation of a working group on statistical human resource development under the proposed inter-agency committee on PSS-wide concerns will be done. With the committee in place, next step is the development of a human resource framework for the PSS for the periodic assessment of its human resources; determination of optimal human resource complement to ensure delivery of critical statistics and address data gaps; and strategic planning of critical statistical activities. Third step is the formulation of competency standards for statistical human resources and finally the preparation of the Code of Ethics/Practice in the PSS which will serve a guidebook for the implementation of statistical undertaking.

The need to address the inadequacy of current human resources in the PSS in support to generation of critical statistics for evidence-based national and local governance

During the plan period, statistical units/positions in national government agencies and LGUs will push to be created. This is firmed up by strengthening the institutional coordination with the Department of Budget Management (DBM) and other oversight agencies for provision of optimal human resources in major statistical agencies to ensure production of critical statistics for evidence-based governance. As things are concretized, recruitment of highly qualified and public service-oriented, statistics-educated/trained human resources will be undertaken aggressively.

Continuous advancement of competencies, confidence and morale of the statistical workforce for stronger PSS institutions and superior quality of statistical products and services

A collaborative effort among statistical agencies will be exerted on the preparation of strategic statistical human resource development plans based on periodic report of human resource offices on capacity building needs assessment. Said human resource development plans include the annual training agenda, academic scholarship program and other capacity development modes. A design and implementation of a competency-based, ladder-type training program for statistical human resources at national and local levels will also be undertaken. This has four components namely: (i) the development of a certification course covering basic statistical training, values/ethics orientation and PSS appreciation; (ii) the enhancement of existing regular and customized training courses; (iii) the development of competency-based training courses, including sectoral statistics, IT solutions/applications, geographic information system/geo-spatial information management, strategic planning and management practices, monitoring and evaluation and communication; and (iv) the monitoring and evaluation of training outcomes and beneficiaries.

In order to uplift the confidence and morale of statistics workforce in the country, the PSS will work towards the provision of degree and non-degree scholarship grants for them. This will be made possible through the development of a government-funded graduate scholarship program in statistics for statistical human resources in coordination with DBM, Commission on Higher Education, Department of Science and Technology and the academic institution. Also, a proactive search will be done for foreign scholarship opportunities in statistics and related fields.

For a widely acceptable quality of statistical products and services, PSS will conduct in-house and inter-agency brown bag discussions, seminars, conferences, workshops and related activities on statistical concepts, processes, methods and analysis to facilitate sharing and transfer of knowledge.

Uplifting of statistical literacy and capacity of data users, including oversight government bodies and media, on rational use of statistics in planning, decision making and monitoring, as well as data providers responding to statistical inquiries

In order to materialize, PSS will conduct statistical appreciation seminars for government executives, business leaders, civil society and media as well as trainings of users on interpretation and analysis of key statistical indicators. Also, an intensive informational and educational campaign among respondents and data providers will be done in order to increase participation in statistical inquiries and reporting systems.

Improvement of statistical education in the country to ensure supply of potential human resource for the PSS

Four major strategies will be implemented. These are (i) provision of undergraduate scholarship grants in statistics; (ii) expansion of the training-the-trainers for teachers teaching statistics at various school levels; (iii) improvement of curriculum and text books on basic statistics courses at the secondary and tertiary levels; and (iv) coordination with the Department of Education for inclusion of statistics as a separate field in the secondary school curriculum.

Continuous promotion of professional career and development in statistics for enhanced professional skills and knowledge base of PSS human resources

This is in five-fold, namely: (i) development of an accreditation program for statisticians; (ii) conduct of statistical conventions, conferences, congresses, and similar advocacy activities such as statistics quizzes and oratorical contests; (iii) provision of funds for participation of PSS personnel in international statistical conventions and conferences; (iv) advocacy among PSS personnel for membership in national and international professional statistical organizations; and (v) conduct of career talks and symposia among statistics teachers and students and participation in related activities.

Augmentation and improvement of training resources for enhanced capacities of statistical human resources to meet increasing needs at the national and local levels

During the plan period, there will be active and continuous development of competency-based training curricula and enhancement of existing training modules and materials in partnership with individual experts and relevant institutions. This also includes the documentation and compilation of statistical methods and processes to serve as additional training references. This can be done effectively given the expansion of the SRTC training staff and its regional training affiliates, and the adoption of alternative modes of training delivery through the distance learning or the e-learning. On top of these is the active recruitment of additional resource persons and experts for trainings; continuous training of resource persons and experts on module development and training delivery; rationalization of compensation scheme for professional services; and improvement of the physical training facilities, or better, the acquisition of new SRTC building with the latest ICT resources for statistical training, including geographic information/geo-spatial information management systems.

Enhancement of international cooperation for sustained investment/contribution of the international community in statistical human resource development in the PSS

Since SRTC has established active collaboration with international institution, there is a need to enhance further the partnership with them and expand partnership with others in the delivery of international statistical training courses. This is through participation in international cooperation programs on statistical capacity building and provision of technical assistance to national statistical systems of other countries.

5. References

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