

Challenges in Statistical Capacity Building in the Arab Countries

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Statistical capacity is the ability of countries to meet user needs for good quality official statistics which are produced by governments as a public good. Being an inseparable part of the broad development initiatives and also an indispensable tool for sound evidence based policy making; producing quality (i.e. accurate, reliable, comparable, timely and relevant) statistics can be accomplished through the adoption and implementation of internationally accepted standards. This, in fact, requires a significant capacity building among relevant stakeholders of the National Statistical System (NSS). Due to the changing nature of social practice and advancement of official statistics, statistical capacity building is a never-ending process and cycle. Taking 16 countries with available data in the Arab Region into account, this paper focuses on the challenges faced by them from an indicator perspective in three levels for statistical capacity. From this end, countries in scope have been analyzed concerning their performances in: (i) *statistical methodology* – reflecting the extent a country follows international statistical standards, (ii) *source data* –reflecting the extent a country collects and disseminates data consistent with internationally recommended periodicity, and (iii) *periodicity and timeliness* – reflecting the extent a country makes key socioeconomic indicators accessible on a timely basis. Furthermore, the status of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) as a part of country development and poverty reduction policy in these countries has also been summarized. Last but not least, this paper gives a set of recommendations including effective technical assistance which are proposed for enhancing the statistical capacity development in the Arab region.

Key Words: Statistical capacity building, statistical capacity indicator, NSDS, Arab region