

TRAINING OFFICIAL STATISTICIANS IN AFRICA

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Statistics capacity building in Africa is embedded in the 2006 Reference Regional Strategic Framework (RRSF) in line with the 2004 Marrakech Action of Plan (MAPS). RRSF was designed to improve development outcome and governance by strengthening African National Statistics Systems (NSS). Its goals are to raise awareness about the role of statistical information; to increase user satisfaction and use of statistical information by enhancing its quality and usability; to strengthen Statistical Training Centres (STCs); and to increase cost effectiveness and sustainability of statistical information systems. However, these initiatives for more than forty years or so have not yet raised the capacity of most countries in the region, since there is fewer trained official statisticians who can manage and produce reliable statistics and promote rigorously the use of statistics by policy makers and decision takers. This situation arises due to the fact that NSS have been employing statisticians who graduated from National Tertiary Institutions (usually Universities). These institutions do not adapt their training programs to the needs of National Statistical Offices. The University teaching of theoretical statistics is done from the supply side, it does not provide an understanding of the demand side. In Africa, Official Statisticians can only be trained at the STCs. However, most STCs face shortage of teaching staff, fellowships, teaching materials, budgetary support from the government and teaching space. This situation renders the capacity of most African countries to produce reliable statistics or to promote effective use of statistics by policy and decision makers. Therefore, this paper explains how the STCs in Africa have been prepared to overcome the problems, constraints and challenges not only by training of official statisticians, but also by addressing and harmonizing production of quality statistical information in Africa, one of them being the Anglophone Tanzanian-based Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (EASTC) which serves member countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and East African Community. The Centre was established in 1965 as a joint venture between United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the former EAC. The paper also describes how EASTC has embarked on a long-term programme of becoming the centre of excellence in Official Statistics by introducing an undergraduate degree programme in 2012 and expects to establish an internship training for graduates from Universities and commencement of the Master's degree programme in Official Statistics in October, 2013.

Key words: Reference Regional Strategic Framework, National Statistical System, Statistical Training Centres, official statistics, EASTC, Africa