

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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Africa's structural problems are better solved or avoided with quality statistical data.

In Africa, the demand for quality statistical data, regularly produced and disseminated is increasingly pressing. As part of initiatives for statistical development on the continent, the development and implementation of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDSs) and Regional Strategies for the Development of Statistics are recommended as comprehensive frameworks for statistical development at national level and regional level respectively.

In a two-day meeting held on the 17th and 18th December 2020, the Committee of the Directors General of the National Statistics Offices joined by the Representatives of the Regional Economic Communities; the Statistics training centers; and strategic partners, underscored the use of statistics in decision-making as well as in the formulation of development policies in African countries. Convened by the African Union Commission Department of Economic Affairs, the Directors General of the National Statistics interrogated the status of progress and challenges in the production of data taking into account the stock of the various commitments on the development of statistics at continental, regional and national levels to support the implementation and monitoring of Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa ([SHaSA 2](#)), and the African [Charter](#) on Statistics; the African Statistical System contribution for the Agenda 2063 implementation; and the impact of the COVID 19 on Statistical development in Africa.

The meeting observed that much of the economic and structural problems that Africa faces today and in the past, could be better resolved, or avoided altogether, if quality statistical information was available. It was an opportunity to share the good practices and challenges on statistics development during the COVID-19 Pandemic and exchanges to better generate and disseminate data in critical and important area of statistics. African Union Commissioner for Economic Affairs Prof. Victor Harisson observed that the development of comparable statistical data across time and space on the continent calls for the adoption of harmonized and standardized definitions and concepts; the adaptation of international norms to African realities and specificities and the utilisation of a common methodology for statistical production and dissemination by all African countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a reminder that management in times of crisis must be based more than ever, on reliable and credible statistics. While the current situation poses additional challenges, the meeting observed that it also offers opportunities to be seized, particularly in terms of modernization of governance and digital transformation.

Adapting the National Statistics Offices to the new context will require strengthening their capacities and transforming their processes for developing, producing and disseminating statistical indicators. Greater openness to the data ecosystem and collaboration with various stakeholders, including the private sector, coupled with communication closer to our citizens, will strengthen confidence in the official statistics produced. Investing in the modernization of national statistical systems would thus optimize policy capacity and improve the efficiency of economic, social and health policies in the period ahead.

While great strides have been made towards the production of quality statistics to inform public decisions, including both nation-specific programmes and continental statistical development frameworks such as the Addis Ababa Plan of Action (AAPA); the Reference Regional Strategic Framework (RRSF); the Africa Symposium on Statistical Development; and recently the African Charter on Statistics and Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA), there are still a number of challenges facing the African Statistical System, particularly with regards to the monitoring and evaluation of the Agenda 2063 and 2030 SDG Agenda. Among the challenges, are the methodologies used to produce statistics without reflecting the African realities thereby making it difficult to compare data across countries. This is due to a number of hindrances including, among others, inadequate resources allocated to statistical activities, lack of institutional capacity, low profile of statistics on the continent, inadequate coordination of statistical activities, and minimal consideration of African specificities in setting up international standards. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) statistical harmonisation programmes vary from one region to another and hardly meet the demand for harmonised statistics. Further, the practice of innovative data collection methods for major, nationwide operations are sparse, with face-to-face interviews remaining the primary modality in most statistical systems for censuses and large household surveys.

The African Statistics System (AfSS) is therefore expected to further scale up its efforts towards continental statistical integration to address continental need for harmonized and quality statistical information. To address these recurring challenges, the African Union established the African Union Institute for Statistics (STATAFRIC) based in Tunis (Tunisia) and the African Statistical Training Center in Yamoussoukro (Cote d'Ivoire). STATAFRIC is at the center of the African statistical system in order to lead the provision of harmonized statistics and ensure good coordination of statistical activities at continental level and provide effective technical support to African countries for the emergence of quality benchmark statistics in Africa. The African institute will also regulate and coordinate the African statistical system, consolidate relations with the

main partners, achieve the goals and strategic objectives set out in SHaSA, strengthen the capacity of Member States to enable them to generate updated, reliable and harmonized statistical information, covering all aspects of political, economic, social and cultural integration for Africa through the implementation of the African Charter on Statistics (ACS) and the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA).

The meeting reiterated that for African institutions to be effective, special attention has been paid to critical areas such as the promotion of synergies, linkages and good working relationships between all organs of the African Union through their functioning; the creation of financial institutions and statistical institutions capable of financing and providing good statistics for the integration process; and the establishment of a framework for regular interaction and effective communication between them. The outcome of the meeting will be reported to the Policy Organs of the African Union for consideration on integration into existing policies such as the declaration of 2017-2026 to be "[Decade](#) for repositioning CRVS in Africa's continental, regional and national development agenda."

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