

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Modernising statistical systems must pay attention to “data value chain” that is data collection, publication, uptake and impact.

To sustain the statistical development momentum Africa has generated over the recent years, there is need for enhanced data governance, transformational leadership, acquisition of new knowledge, capabilities as well as strategic skills including in data science, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML), for the continent to actualize the new “data ecosystems” and to unlock the full data potential in Africa. This should be implemented in recognition of the increased demand for data in terms of quantity, scope, quality and disaggregation. This increase in data demand goes beyond what the traditional National Statistical Systems are able to provide thus the urgency to modernize and transform National Statistical Systems into broad data ecosystems that span the entire data value chain, driven by national priorities and underpinned by the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics as stipulated in the African Charter on Statistics, the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA) among other existing policy frameworks such as the African Data Consensus.

The commemoration of the African Statistics Day reemphasized the need for a sustained data revolution needed to drive social, economic and structural transformation in every African country. The commemoration focused on **“Modernizing national statistical systems to support socio-cultural development in Africa”**, aligned to the African Union theme of the year 2021 on Arts, Culture and Heritage. Attention was paid to opportunities for strengthening the production of Arts, Culture and Heritage Statistics for Sustainable Development and Building the Africa we Want. The 2021 theme is intended to raise awareness among decision-makers, technical and financial partners, data producers and users, researchers, and the general public on the importance of data and statistics on cultural and creative economy in the process of building back better and more inclusively, post COVID-19 pandemic. The Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) play a key role in national economies through their contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and through their cultural and economic benefits. CCIs have shown more resilience to external shocks than other industries as evidenced by its steady growth over the past twenty years. Cultural and Creative Industries can also foster inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and as such National Statistical Systems (NSS) on the continent must transform and modernize to be better equipped to provide data and statistics, supporting socio-economic and cultural development in Africa.

The African Union Institute for Statistics –STATAFRIC- led the commemorative activities of the African Union. In a statement read on behalf of the African Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson restated that the relevance of the need to strengthening the development of statistics in Africa to drive the implementation of Agenda 2063. The Chairperson called on African Union member states to ratify, implement and domesticate the African Charter of Statistics. As of November 2021, 23 member states have ratified the Charter while have 33 have

signed it. He also called for the adoption and implementation of the SHaSA II to support the collection and production of timely, reliable and harmonized statistics at the national, regional and continental levels. “African statisticians must now be the coordinator and central sources of all data leading to the monitoring and evaluation Africa’s Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030”, he stated.

Mrs. Leila Ben Ali, Head of Statistics Division at the STATAFRIC observed that for Africa to achieve functional statistical systems, it is important for the data ecosystems to digitize statistical systems at national, regional and continental level; drastically reduce processing and data analysis periods after censuses and surveys; fully computerize administrative data sources; make use of new data transmission techniques such as SDMX; and address the data gap in Africa through allocation of adequate financial and human resources for the production of quality statistics which would build on the continental database with data produced by National Statistical Institutes of African countries.

There is growing acknowledgement over the years, on the systematic and noticeable improvements in National Statistical Systems across Africa in terms of infrastructure, systems, resources for statistics, and increased data use especially for public policy, planning, decision-making, service delivery and accountability. These improvements have been catalyzed by among others, the increased demand for data by various development actors; adoption and adaption of international statistical standards and frameworks as well as home-grown statistical initiatives; the increased investments by countries in statistical infrastructure, systems and capabilities although clearly this is not enough and more needs to be done; and easier access to ICT solutions.

Prof. Ben Kiregyera, an International Statistical Consultant from Uganda, observed that the modernization of National Statistical Systems has a direct impact on data production and its use. He called in data producers, managers and analysts, to maximize data impact on development at the national level. This entails internalizing and paying greater attention to the entire “data value chain” which includes, data collection, publication, uptake and impact. “Unfortunately, there has been a tendency among data producers in Africa to think that when they publish data, their work is done. Far from it. There is a need to pay greater attention to the downstream stages of data uptake and impact. Data uptake involves connecting with data users and reprocessing data for new insights, incentivizing them by reducing time-cost of data use, encouraging perception of data value, influencing or promoting data use culture and encouraging data use for decision-making’, he stated.

To offer a one-stop-shop for all statistical information and data in Africa, STATAFRIC launched their redesigned and revamped website. Developed by the African Union Commission Directorate of Information and Communication, with the support of Statistics Sweden, the website now features a critical section to provide Statistics by theme and information on the Member States is also available. The website also features Multimedia information and relevant resources. Visit <https://statafric.au.int/en> to learn more about the work of STATAFRIC.

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