

Indian Statistical System

Historical Perspective

India has a federal structure of Government. There is a division of responsibility for administration between the Central Government and the State Governments. Under the Indian Constitution, the responsibility is divided on the basis of the three-fold classification of all subjects, viz., the Union List, the State List and the concurrent list, the last category representing the areas where both the Union and the State Governments can operate. There is a further division of responsibility at the Central and State levels, by subjects or groups of subjects among the different Central Ministries and among the State Government Departments respectively.

There has been marked improvement in the system of official statistics in India since 1947. With the appointment of Professor P.C. Mahalanobis as Honorary Statistical Adviser to the Cabinet in 1949, the urgent need for the proper statistical organisation was brought to the fore and the organisation began to take shape. To start with, a nucleus statistical unit was set up at the Centre in the Cabinet Secretariat in 1949 which developed into the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) in 1951. The main role of the CSO is to lay down standards, to advise on methodology and to coordinate the statistical activities in the country with main areas of work in national accounts, industrial statistics, economic census and surveys, training, price statistics and statistical intelligence. The National Sample Survey, a multi-purpose fact-finding body, was created in 1950. This was reorganized as National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) in 1970. The Indian Statistical Institute (founded by Prof. P.C. Mahalanobis) was declared as an institution of national importance in 1959. In 1961, a full-fledged Department of Statistics was created. The Computer Centre providing service of electronic data processing facilities was set up as an attached office of the Department of Statistics in 1966. To ensure effective coordination of planning and statistical activities, the Department of Statistics was transferred to the Ministry of Planning in 1973 (now called Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation) with effect from 1999. Statistical offices, units or divisions have also come up during the period in many other Ministries. Among the old statistical institutions, mention may be made of the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S) set up in 1871 and the statistical organisation for population census (Office of the Registrar General, India) in 1948. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research was set up in 1931 with a statistical branch (which developed into an autonomous Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute (IASRI) in 1970. The Directorate of Industrial Statistics was set up in 1944, and the Directorate of Economics and Statistics under the Ministry of Agriculture (DES-Ag) in 1947.

Statistical System at the Centre

The collection of statistics for different subject-specific areas, like agriculture, labour, commerce, industry etc. vests with the corresponding administrative ministries. More often than not, the statistical information is collected as a by-product of administration or for monitoring the progress of specific programmes. Some of the ministries, like Agriculture, Water Resources, Health etc. have full-fledged statistical divisions, while most others have only a nucleus cell. Large-scale statistical operations like the Population Census, Annual Survey of Industries, Economic Census, etc. are

generally centralized, and these cater to the needs of other ministries and departments, as well as State Governments. In important ministries, officers of the Indian Statistical Service (ISS) and subordinate statistical staff perform the statistical functions. The Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoS&PI) is the nodal agency for a planned development of the statistical system in the country and for bringing about coordination in statistical activities among statistical agencies in the Government of India and State Directorates of Economics and Statistics.

Central Statistical Organisation

The Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) was set up in May 1951 with the purpose of coordination of statistical activities of the different Ministries of the Government of India and the State governments and for promotion of statistical standards. Since then the CSO has been coordinating the Statistical activities in the country, including laying down and maintenance statistical norms and standards and providing liaison with Central, State and International statistical agencies. The CSO also shoulders the responsibility of preparation of National Income Accounting, conduct of Annual Survey of Industries, Economic Censuses, compilation of Index of Industrial Production, Consumer Price Indices for Urban Non-Manual Employees, Human Development Statistics and Gender Statistics, imparting training in Official Statistics, Five Year Plan Work relating to Development of Statistics in the States and Union Territories, Dissemination of Statistical Information, work relating to Trade, Energy, Construction and Environment Statistics, revision of National Industrial Classification, etc.

In fulfilling its coordinating role, the CSO participates in the inter-departmental meetings of the Working Groups, Technical Advisory Committees, Standing Committees constituted by the Central Ministries/ Departments in subject areas of their concern with a view to ensuring adoption of statistical standards, minimizing duplication of efforts and for promoting quality and timeliness of data. The CSO also participates in the meetings of the high-level statistical coordination committees of the State Governments, which review activities related to statistical data generation and dissemination.

National Sample Survey Organisation

The need for developing a sound database in respect of various fields was keenly felt by Late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of free India as early as in 1948. It was, at his instance and on the recommendations of the National Income Committee chaired by Late Professor P.C.Mahalanobis, a large scale sample survey agency known as NSS (National Sample Survey) came into existence in 1950. While instituting the NSS, the Government of India turned to the Indian Statistical Institute for providing technical direction to the surveys. The work relating to finalization of sampling design, schedules of enquiries, writing of instructions, training of field staff, processing of data and writing of reports was all entrusted to the Indian Statistical Institute. The Directorate of NSS, Government of India was assigned the job of conducting the fieldwork.

In March 1970, the NSS was reorganized and all aspects of its work were brought under a single Govt. organisation, namely the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) under the overall technical guidance of Governing Council to impart objectivity and autonomy in the matter of collection, processing and publication of the NSS data. The responsibility of NSSO is to fill the data gaps. The Governing Council consists of a non-official chairman who is a man of eminence in either of the fields of economics, statistics and social sciences. Members of the Council are five academicians, five data users from Central as well as State Governments and senior Statistical Officers of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The Director General and Chief Executive Officer (DG&CEO) of NSSO is the Member-Secretary to the Council and is responsible for coordinating and supervising all activities of the organisation.

NSSO has been conducting multi-subject integrated household sample surveys since 1950. The subject coverage of the socio-economic surveys conforms to a well-defined cycle of the surveys extending over a period of 10 years. Surveys on consumer expenditure and employment & unemployment, social consumption (health, education etc.), manufacturing enterprises and service sector enterprises in the unorganised sectors are covered once in five years, while subjects like land holdings & livestock holdings and debt & investment are covered once in 10 years. Thus, out of a cycle of 10 years, pre-assigned subjects are allocated for nine years while one year is kept as a open round to cover special topics of current interest to meet the demand of the data users. The data on consumer expenditure and employment and unemployment are also collected in every round from a small sample of households along with the main survey of enquiry. These socio-economic surveys are conducted in the form of rounds, the period of a round being normally a year.

Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner

The Population Census of India, conducted every ten years, is the most comprehensive source of information on the size, distribution, living conditions and demographic characteristics of the population. It is also an important source of the religious, linguistic and cultural profiles of the people. It serves therefore, both as a tool of the State polices and as a means for understanding the socio-economic transformation of the society, economy and polity of the nation.

In India, a census over different parts at different time points was first conducted during the period 1867-72, being known as the Census of 1872. However, since 1881 a Population Census is being conducted in the country regularly every ten years and the Census 2001 is the 14th and the latest in the series. With each census the scope and the coverage has been enlarged, particularly since the Census 1961, in order to provide meaningful information for developmental planning as also to make it more responsive to the present day requirements. The provisional totals of the Census 2001 conducted during February-March 2001 have been released on 26 March 2001 and have placed India's population at 1027 million on 1 March 2001. Provisional totals of the population at the district level, by sex, in broad age categories 0 to 6 and 7+, literate and illiterates among men and women aged 7 and above are already available for all the States and UTs.

Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture

Agriculture plays a vital role in the Indian economy. Over 70 per cent of the rural households depend on agriculture as their principal means of livelihood. Agriculture along with fisheries and forestry accounts for one-third of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is its single largest contributor. Agricultural exports constitute a fifth of the total exports of the country. In view of the predominant position of the Agricultural Sector, collection and maintenance of Agricultural Statistics assume great importance.

India has a well-established and internationally acknowledged Agricultural Statistics System. It is a decentralised system with the State Governments – State Agricultural Statistics Authorities (SASAs) to be more specific – playing a major role in the collection and compilation of Agricultural Statistics at the State level while the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture (DESMOA) at the Centre is the pivotal agency for such compilation at the all-India level. The other principal data-gathering agencies involved are the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), and the State Directorates of Economics and Statistics (DESs).

The Agricultural Statistics System is very comprehensive and provides data on a wide range of topics such as crop area and production, land use, irrigation, land holdings, agricultural prices and market intelligence, livestock, fisheries, forestry, etc. It has been subjected to review several times since independence so as to make it adaptive to contemporary changes in agricultural practices.

Ministry of Health and Family welfare

Health is a State subject and vital and public Health Statistics are traditionally the responsibility of State Health Directorates. However, in a few States vital statistics have been the responsibility of State Directorates of Economics and Statistics. Presently, the Central Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (H&FW) consists of three Departments namely, Department of Health, Department of Family Welfare and Department of Indian System of Medicines & Homeopathy (ISM&H). The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) is the technical advisory wing of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and is responsible for running the various national disease control/eradication programmes. At the national level, a small Bureau existed since 1937, which was organised in 1961 into the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI) in the DGHS, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, to coordinate and advise on the development of health information in the country. At the national level, it is the sole organisation dealing with collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of health data for the country as a whole.

Ministry of Human Resources Development

The Educational Statistics System in India dates back to the pre-independence period. Annual Educational Statistics began to be collected from 1913-14 followed by elaborate quinquennial reviews. Prior to 1947, the Directorate General of Commercial

Intelligence collected Educational Statistics. The activity was taken over by the Ministry of Education (MOE) after independence when the Government was required to plan for Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). To assess the status and to prepare a plan to this effect, the MOE conducted the first All-India Educational Survey (AIES) in 1957. Since then, five more AIESs have been conducted by NCERT from time to time, the last one in 1993. These surveys have become an integral part of the system of Educational Statistics in India.

Ministry of Labour

The main agency involved in the collection and compilation of Labour Statistics mainly in the organised sector is the Labour Bureau in the Ministry of Labour. The Labour Bureau collects statistics through statutory and voluntary returns under different Labour Acts. The State Governments compile such statistics at the State level; the Bureau in turn consolidates them for the country as a whole covering all States and sectors of the economy and brings out periodical reports. It also conducts occasional surveys concerning labour in specific geographic areas or for some specific section of labour. Essentially, these are either to study the socio-economic conditions of labour with a view to formulating policy measures or to assess the impact of labour enactments. The Labour Bureau also undertakes compilation and maintenance of CPI numbers for industrial, agricultural and rural workers.

Directorate General of Employment and Training

The Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGE&T) in the Ministry of Labour, in its administration of various provisions of the Employment Exchanges (such as Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act, 1959 has been collecting statistics on employment and the likely vacancies to occur for the organised sector of economy under the Employment Market Information Programme (EMIP) which covers: (a) all establishments in the public sector (except defence establishments and armed forces, however, the programme covers civilian employees in defence establishments), (b) non-agricultural establishments in the private sector, employing 25 or more persons on a compulsory basis, and establishments having 10-24 workers on a voluntary basis.

Central Water Commission

The Central Water Commission (CWC), which is the nodal agency for water resource development in the country, is responsible for statistics of water resources pertaining to major and medium irrigation projects. The River Management Wing of CWC is engaged in hydrological data collection relating to all the important river systems in the country with the help of as many as 877 hydrological observation sites. The Information System Organisation (ISO) in the CWC is involved in planning, implementing, monitoring and coordinating all aspects of activities associated with information-gathering activities, analytical studies and computerisation.

Statistical System in the States

The Statistical System in the States is similar to that at the Centre. It is generally decentralized laterally over the Departments of the State Governments, with major Departments, such as, Agriculture or Health, having large statistical divisions for the work of departmental statistics. At the apex level is the Directorate (formerly Bureau) of Economics and Statistics (DES), which is formally responsible for the coordination of statistical activities in the State. The DESs have large organizations at the headquarters,

with statistical offices in the districts and, in some cases, in the regions of the State. The statistical activity of the DESs is more or less uniform. They publish statistical abstracts and handbooks of the States, annual economic reviews or surveys, district statistical abstracts, and State budget analysis; work out the estimates of the State Domestic Product and Retail Price Index Numbers and engage in such other statistical activities as is relevant to the State. Most of them participate at least on a matching sample basis in the national Sample Survey Programme, and some of them carry out an Annual Survey of Industries for factories not covered by the ASI of the NSSO. Generally, the States do not have a common statistical cadre. Some of the states have made common Statistical cadre.

(Position as on May 26, 2005)
