

## NEPAL

### **AREAS OF MUTUAL COOPERATION AMONG THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL ORGANIZATIONS OF THE SAARC REGION**

*First Meeting of Heads of Statistical Organizations of SAARC Member Countries,  
Kolkata, India, 26-27 May 2005*

*Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates and Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.*

It is a matter of privilege and pleasure for me to be here amongst you all in this *First Meeting of Heads of National Statistical Organization of the SAARC Member Countries*. I would like to thank the organizers of this meeting for choosing its venue at Kolkata where the famous ISI is situated. This Institute has been very instrumental in popularizing statistics and its application in different sectors. Many great statisticians have been associated with this Institute in one way or the other. I am very much delighted to be here indeed. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the organizers for their warm hospitality in this historic and beautiful city of Kolkata.

We know that, countries of this region are at different stages of statistical development. This first step towards regional cooperation in the field of statistics will undoubtedly go a long way in meeting the national, regional and international data needs.

Honourable Chair, before I move onto the main theme of this meeting - SAARC Forum for Co-operation in Statistics (SFCS) - please permit me to briefly mention the present status of statistical system in Nepal.

#### **Statistical System in Nepal**

The statistical system of Nepal is partly decentralized. The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) is the major statistical agency of His Majesty's Government of Nepal. The bureau was created in 1959 by virtue of *Statistics Act, 1958* as the sole agency for the collection, consolidation, publication and analysis of statistics. The bureau generates data from primary and secondary sources. Most of the basic data are generated through periodic censuses and surveys of the official statistical programmes. Population census, agricultural census and surveys, establishment census and surveys, and household surveys are among the major activities of the bureau. Besides,

conducting these periodic censuses and surveys, CBS prepares annual estimates of national accounts and other indices.

Annual crops and livestock survey is another major responsibility of the CBS. However, at present the security situation in some areas of the country is not very conducive to conducting this survey. As such, the government is relying on data provided by the agricultural extension workers of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC). These MOAC data are based on the subjective assessment of the crop situation.

Besides the CBS, various ministries and other government instrumentalities generate official statistics in the country. They generate statistics on their own according to their data needs. For example, the health, education and tourism sector related statistics are generated by the concerned ministries. Further, data are also generated as a by product of administrative reports and official records from various government agencies.

Ministry of Finance is another important source of data in the country. It generates statistics on government finance and fiscal policies including taxes, customs and government budget. Nepal Rastra Bank, the central bank of Nepal, provides statistical information related to financial aspects of the economy. It is the major agency responsible for producing economic and financial statistics. There are several other legitimate sources of information including social organizations that generate statistics on social securities.

### **Issues of the Nepali Statistical System**

The existing statistical system of Nepal lacks a comprehensive statistical development plan that has given rise to number of basic problems. The strengthening of statistical system of any country is an ongoing process in which the dynamism of different socio-economic sectors as well as demand for data set the agenda for the government. The following are some of the issues that need consideration while setting agenda for the improvement of statistical system: comparatively low priority to statistical activities; absence of a strong coordinating body; gap between supply and demand of statistics; under utilization of the available statistics; duplication in some areas of statistics production; need for high level training institutions for official statistics; weak relation between NSO and other data generating agencies; weak mechanism for cooperation and coordination among stakeholders; weak relationship between data dissemination mechanism of

NSO and the media; lack of trained statisticians in several data generating agencies other than the NSO.

Honourable Chair, the past decade has been quite eventful for statistical system of the country. I feel it is worthwhile to inform this august gathering about the improvement initiative taken to improve statistical system in Nepal.

A Consolidated National Statistical Plan (CNSP) has been prepared with the objective to ensure that the data requirements in the preparation and implementation of the Government's Plan are available for governance, policy formulation, target setting, decision-making, monitoring, and evaluation of government operations. The main issue is to establish an effective body for co-ordination and standardization, to establish a clearing house, to put in place a designated statistical system and to establish a national data ware house. This plan also gives priority to the data needs of Nepal's System of National Accounts and poverty monitoring and evaluation system. CBS is identified as the lead agency in these activities.

The CNSP has categorically listed government's data requirement, present data compilation/delivery system, resolution of issues and problems regarding present system and proposed integrated system with inbuilt mechanism to cater the new and emerging data needs. Though this Plan was to be launched earlier, it has been stalled till now. CBS, however, is still following up for its implementation.

### **SAARC Forum for Cooperation in Statistics (SFCS)**

As mentioned earlier, the national statistical organizations of this region differ in their size, and in their operating and planning processes. We have opportunities to learn from each others' experience which helps to save our time and resources by keeping us from committing the same mistake that others have already made.

This being the first meeting, it is a crucial moment in our efforts for regional cooperation. Let us take this opportunity to assess our statistical status, learn from each other and gain insight into how we can move forward in our endeavor towards better regional cooperation.

The *Discussion Paper on Framework for SFCS* prepared by Central Statistical Organization, Government of India is very comprehensive. The objectives and mission of SFCS are very clear and well thought of. The core set of SAARC statistical indicators seems to cover all aspects of the present day need. “Areas of Cooperation” have been well identified and included in the paper. However, I feel we need to be more specific in the areas like, “Harmonization of Statistics” and “Statistical Capacity Building”. A regional training center for official statistics, for example, would be one important area of mutual cooperation. Environment Statistics is another important area of cooperation for Nepal. Hopefully, the major outcomes of the meeting will incorporate these areas with specificity. During this 2-day meeting, we will have ample opportunity for intensive discussion and give final shape to the Framework.

Poverty reduction has been the overarching goal of His Majesty’s Government of Nepal since the Eight Plan (1992-97). The current Tenth Plan (2002-2007), which is also the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), represents a renewed commitment of the government to the poverty reduction. The plan places strong emphasis on monitoring progress towards the attainment of key poverty reduction goals including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A National Poverty Monitoring and Analysis System (PMAS) has been set up to support the implementation of PRSP. One of the key sources of data for poverty monitoring is facility and household surveys. CBS has been identified as the focal point for these household surveys. This has added more responsibilities to the CBS in Nepal in order to cater the emerging data needs. Fortunately, most of the new requirements are in line with the Framework for SFCS.

I am confident that this meeting will bring us even closer in our collaborative effort to improving statistics in the region. As I mentioned earlier, the SFCS shall give us the opportunity to learn from each other and build a better network for “sharing the best practices and experiences” of member countries.

Thank you.