

Foreword

This year's *Africa Development Indicators*, which covers some 1,700 macroeconomic, sectoral, and human development indicators dating to the 1960s, comes at a critical time for Sub-Saharan Africa's 48 countries and 841 million people. After a decade of economic growth at nearly 5 percent a year, Africa—along with the rest of the world—was hit hard by the global economic crisis, but it rebounded within a year. In 2011 the continent's growth is expected to return to precrisis levels. The poverty rate has been declining at about 1 percentage point a year, and progress on the Millennium Development Goals, while insufficient to reach the 2015 targets in many countries, has been substantial.

Yet, Africa faces some of the most formidable development challenges in the world. First, growth has been uneven, with about 20 fragile and conflict-affected states seemingly trapped in persistent poverty. Second, economic growth has not translated to productive jobs and more earning opportunities for Africa's labor force—most of which is engaged in agriculture and informal enterprises—and especially for the 7–10 million young people entering the labor force each year. And third, Africa's growth could be faster and more widespread (and abject poverty eliminated) if it could address its most fundamental challenges—improving governance and increasing public sector capacity.

Just as the World Bank's Africa strategy, *Africa's Future and World Bank Support to It*, seeks to harness the continent's recent dynamic growth to address these development challenges, so too do statistics in general, and *Africa Development Indicators* in particular, reflect both the progress and the potential of the continent. *Africa Development Indicators* permits policymakers, private actors,

civil society, development partners, and citizens to monitor, study, and document Africa's economic and social development. It also shows where we need to improve. Just 18 of 48 countries have poverty data for 2007–10. And in the 2000s Africa averaged 1.5 poverty figures per country, less than half the world's average of 3.8. One reason for the shortcomings is lack of statistical capacity—as of 2010 only six countries have statistical capacity building indicators of 70–84 percent. But here too there has been progress: all but four countries now have an official national statistics website, compared with 50 percent a few years ago. More than 20 countries have made their household survey datasets available on their national data archive website, and more than 75 percent of Africa's people are covered by a population census less than 10 years old.

Since 2005 countries have developed their national statistical systems by designing and implementing a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics, which links data with poverty reduction strategies. The World Bank, in collaboration with other partners, is providing financial support and technical advice through lending operations such as STATCAP, through trust funds (in particular the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building and the Statistics for Results Catalytic Fund), and through international initiatives. Moving forward, the Bank will scale up its statistical capacity development activities, not least because it is only with credible statistics that progress on the Africa strategy can be monitored. In addition, technology is being used to accelerate data collection, especially in underserved areas. For instance, in Africa's newest country, the Republic of South Sudan, the Bank is collaborating with the local statistics office to

collect information on people's economic situation, security, and outlook using cell phones distributed to 1,000 households in 10 state capitals.

Africa Development Indicators has another, more fundamental role in Africa's development. Statistics—and the information contained in them—can empower citizens to hold their governments accountable. From the first public expenditure tracking survey of education in Uganda to the Ushahidi platform for tracking political violence and natural disasters, Africans have demonstrated how systematic data can mobilize citizens to spur their governments to action. Inasmuch as governance was identified as the fundamental constraint to African development, *Africa Development Indicators* is a major instrument in relaxing that constraint.

To that end, since April 2010 the World Bank has made all its data freely available, resulting in continually growing use of its online resources. This volume is part of the Africa Development Indicators suite of products, which also includes *The Little Data Book on Africa 2011* (available online only), the Africa Development Indicators 2011–Multiple User CD-ROM, and a data query and charting application for mobile services.

A tool for learning, capacity strengthening, and accountability, *Africa Development Indicators 2011* will continue to play a critical role in Africa's economic transformation.

Obiageli K. Ezekwesili
Vice President
The World Bank Group
Africa Region