

PARIS21 Secretariat

International Household Survey Network (IHSN) DGF 401010-06

Final Report

BACKGROUND

Since April 2006, the IHSN core program is implemented as a satellite program of the PARIS21 Secretariat at OECD. It is supported by the World Bank MAPS Development Grant Facility (DGF).

A grant of US\$1m was allocated for year 2010 under the Grant Agreement DGF 401010-06. The grant was signed on 18 November 2009, with a closing date on 31 December 2010. The funds were received at OECD on 17 December 2009.

This final progress report is submitted in accordance with the Section 3.1 of the Framework for Cooperation. It covers the full grant period.

Progress and results on this grant have been reported through the required semi-annual reports on 30 June and 31 December 2010.

No overlap existed in the grant period with the 2009 and 2011 grants, as shown below:

| | 2009 First Half | 2009 Second Half | 2010 First Half | 2010 Second Half | 2011 First Half | 2011 Second Half |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| IHSN 2009 | | | | | | |
| IHSN 2010 | | | | | | |
| IHSN 2011 | | | | | (1) | |

(1): Funds of the 2011 grant were only received at OECD on 26 April 2011, which left the IHSN without a budget between 31/12/2010 and 26/04/2011.

GRANT OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the grant (as set out in the grant agreement) were to improve the availability, accessibility and quality of survey data, to avoid duplication of data collection activities, to improve cost-effectiveness of surveys, and to reduce the burden of international survey programs on national statistical systems. Priority areas of work were (i) coordinating international survey programs, (ii) fostering adoption of international standards and best practices by harmonizing data collection instruments, (iii) developing and maintaining a central survey data repository, and (iv) developing tools and guidelines for improving survey data documentation, dissemination and preservation.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN AND RESULTS OBTAINED

The main activities implemented over the grant period included:

➤ **Maintenance of the IHSN Microdata Management Toolkit (MMT)**

The software applications developed by the IHSN are used by an increasing number of users, both at the national level (national statistical offices and line ministries), and at the international level (including Afristat, the International Health Facility Network, FAO, Global Fund; Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), UNICEF, the World Bank, World Food Programme (WFP), WHO).

The MMT is a standard microdata management tool. On this grant, the version 1.2 has been made available at: www.ihsn.org/toolkit. The IHSN templates have been upgraded to version 1.6.

One component of the MMT (the Metadata Editor) is based on a commercial application (from NSD-Nesstar Ltd, Norway), which is now provided to users as a shareware. This is a real step forward for the user community worldwide. While the MMT used to require a license, the new distribution policy of this software allows all users –including the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the academia in developing countries, and all users in industrialized countries – to get free access to the software. This will likely increase the users community. This new development results in cost-saving for the IHSN. The IHSN had planned to initiate the development of its own metadata editor with a view to provide a totally free suite of tools to users. This will not be needed anymore. Rather it will invest resources in the further improvement of the current application, in close collaboration with Nesstar Ltd, Norway.

The IHSN decided to develop a light web-based Survey Management Toolkit (SMT), which will likely evolve towards a more comprehensive package (developed in partnership with the World Bank) with an advanced microdata management system. The SMT is intended to help survey managers to document their surveys on a “real time” basis (and not after completion of the work). This will (i) improve the quality of the documentation, and reduce the cost of archiving data; (ii) allow remote supervision of data collection activities. The technical specifications of this DDI-compliant application have been developed by the IHSN Secretariat and the Version 1.0 of the tool has been developed by a contracted company.

➤ **Development of the IHSN National Data Archive (NADA)**

NADA is a DDI-compliant survey cataloguing system, developed by the IHSN as an open source software to complement the Microdata Management Toolkit. The software is compliant with the Open Archive Initiative standard (XML). NADA is being used in the context of the ADP by NSOs and other users in many countries, and by international organizations (the World Bank, WFP, IHFAN).

On this grant, the Version 3 of the application has been developed, tested, finalized and made available at: www.ihsn.org/nada. This new version features the following enhancements:

- Improved indexing system.
- New standard quality assurance to increase security.
- Improved system for disseminating licensed datasets.
- Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian language versions available.
- Improved documentation for installation and administration (including French version).
- Citation manager to track and advocate data use.

In NADA version 3, the IHSN has added a “Citation Manager” which allows easy maintenance of a database of citations related to survey/census datasets. And on-line tools such as Google Scholar provide a source of information for locating citations related to particular datasets. Locating these citations, and “attaching” them to documented datasets, is a major service for researchers. It also provides a good solution for measuring data use, and the “return” on data collection investments.

The IHSN has therefore undertaken an ambitious effort to build a central database of data-related citations. This database will provide a good information base on the level, source, and type of analysis done by country, and by survey. Considering the extent of the effort, the work has started on a pilot basis using the Living Standards Surveys. A collection of about 2,500 citations has been compiled. This work will continue over the next grant.

At the end of the grant period, NADA was used by about 25 statistical agencies worldwide to catalog their surveys and provide access to survey meta and microdata.

➤ **Development of microdata anonymization tools**

The tools developed by the IHSN have been tested by the Computer Center at Cornell University. A study has been conducted, comparing under different metrics the various algorithms used to assess and reduce disclosure risk. The result of the study is an academic paper which has been released over the reporting period. However, the paper does not provide the technical guidance required by the potential tools users. There is a need for the IHSN Secretariat to partner with advanced statistical agencies which have practical expertise in microdata anonymization, rather than relying on pure academicians.

In close connection with the ADP, the IHSN Secretariat has contracted the NSOs in Uruguay and the Philippines to document their practices in this field and produce some practical tutorials. A direct follow-up will be to see how the IHSN tools can be relevant to improve the procedures in place.

The IHSN is continuing to seek for additional expertise - within the IHSN membership and outside (OECD Statistics Directorate and EUROSTAT).

➤ **Production of technical guidelines**

The production of a series of IHSN technical papers has continued on this grant. The following have been finalized over the grant period and are available on www.ihsn.org:

- Microdata Dissemination: Policy Guidelines and Recommendations.
- Guidelines on the long-term preservation of digital data and metadata.
- Working Paper on “The Struggle for Integration and Harmonization”.
- Working Paper on “The Canada Data Liberation Initiative” (being finalized). This paper intends to document Statistics Canada’s experience of disseminating microdata to universities, known as the “Data Liberation Initiative”.

➤ **Development of the IHSN Question Bank**

An important activity of the IHSN is the harmonization of international survey guidelines. This is being done by developing the IHSN Question Bank. The IHSN Question Bank aims to be a central repository of survey modules, indicators and concept definitions, and classifications. This repository has two main purposes:

- Help statisticians design surveys questionnaires by learning from a diverse set of models.
- Provide a tool for identifying inconsistencies in, and fostering harmonization of, international guidelines.

All metadata are stored in an XML file. The Question Bank makes use of an XML schema developed by the IHSN. This schema borrows many elements from the DDI, SDMX, and Dublin Core standards.

The User Interface was developed in Flex (web version) and AIR (stand-alone version). A specialized XML editor was developed in C#.

Content development:

The content of the Question Bank is generated by specialized international agencies (notably IHSN member agencies) and by experts commissioned by the IHSN. The IHSN Secretariat coordinates the maintenance of the system. At the end of the grant period, the Question Bank includes a total of 7,207 questions (in 364 survey modules), 933 classifications, and 266 indicators.

➤ **Contribution to the development of the DDI metadata standard**

The IHSN is a member of the DDI Alliance who develops the DDI standard, and is the only member who echoes the views and needs of developing countries, which it channels through the ADP. Other members are mainly data librarians from richer countries. Over this grant, the IHSN has lobbied for the maintenance –and further improvement- of version 2 of the standard, which was obtained. The IHSN has worked with the Alliance on the upgrade of the current version. A new version (2.5) has been developed and submitted to the DDI Alliance for final approval.

➤ **Maintenance of the IHSN Website**

The IHSN website is being regularly maintained and improved. An updated version of the website will be launched in 2011, which will include an upgraded Central Survey Catalog.

➤ **Management Group Meeting**

The IHSN Management Group met formally on March 24. The minutes of the meeting have been circulated and are available with the IHSN Secretariat.

USE OF THE FUNDS

During the grant period, 50 contracts were processed with individual consultants, private companies and public institutions. The terms of reference and the summary of the outputs delivered under each contract are available upon request at the PARIS21 Secretariat.

Interim financial reports were submitted on 30 June and 31 December 2010. A final financial report is also submitted at the end of the grant period. The grant budget (USD 1,000,000) was used as follows (USD):

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Project staff | 106,708 |
| Intellectual services | 457,519 |
| Missions | 197,633 |
| Hardware and software | 42,909 |
| Other costs | 170,495 |
| Grant administration | 24,736 |
| Total expenditure | 1,000,000 |

MAIN ISSUES

As reported before, the one year grant period is a major challenge. Many of the IHSN member agencies would like to establish formal agreements with the IHSN Secretariat to support the implementation of work programs and the funding of agreed activities. This is the case of several United Nations specialized agencies. Concluding such agreements has proven impossible on several occasions as it is a long administrative process which may take several months, which leaves very little time for the implementation of the activities. The IHSN Secretariat had no other choice than avoiding systematically these formal agreements, which has an impact on the way the Secretariat can work and interact with its partners.

Other administrative issues include:

- The short DGF grants periods (1 year) makes it nearly impossible to attract and hire regular staff, the programs relying now almost exclusively on consultants. A similar challenge exists with the ADP.
- The negotiation between the World Bank and the OECD on the IHSN DGF 2011 grants were initiated in July 2010, with the preparation of the Grant appendix describing the objectives, activities and deliverables. In November 2010, the draft Agreement was submitted to OECD for review, but little progress was made on 31/12/2010. The new formulation of the DGF Grant Agreement, in particular the formulation of the articles on fraud and corruption and on information disclosure, were not acceptable to the OECD as they were proposed by the World Bank, As a consequence, the IHSN did not have funding to operate in early 2011. The ADP had the same problems and started funding its activities in 2011 on the remaining budget from the ADP 2010 grant, which was extended to 30 June 2011. The very key IHSN activities were funded on that same budget.