

The World Bank

**Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building
(TFSCB)**

**Fifth meeting of the Advisory
Panel (AP)**

**Report to the Consultative
Group (CG)**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fifth Meeting of the Advisory Panel (AP) was held from March 10 to 14, 2008, according to the recommendation #1 of its 4th meeting aiming at reducing the gap between meetings of the AP and the Consultative Group (CG). The review of activities of the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB) conducted since this 4th meeting confirms the increasing need for preparing national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS) that are now considered an important prerequisite for the sustainable development of statistical systems in developing and transition countries.

The mechanisms for making decisions within the Internal Management Committee (IMC) are now well established and run efficiently allowing NSDS projects to be accepted and reviewed as they are received. Non-NSDS proposals are received and reviewed by the IMC twice a year. A review of the decisions and reports from these meetings shows a clear rationale for the decisions taken and indicates that all decisions are transparent and correspond to the revised guidelines and procedures. A clear announcement of TFSCB II and III on the Web sites of the World Bank and PARIS21 and a better understanding by countries of the goals of the TF has meant that a greater percentage of proposals received each year are in line with the main objective of statistical capacity building. The TFSCB decision-making process is now well established and permits rapid and efficient decisions and has been further clarified by useful meetings and comprehensive discussions with members of the IMC. After having reviewed the activities of the IMC since its 4th meeting, the AP dealt with some specific problems raised by the operation of TFSCB.

The Progress Report presented to the CG meeting in Paris on May 19, 2007 listed the actions taken by the Administration Unit of the TFSCB and by its IMC to implement the comments and recommendations of the 4th AP meeting concerning the management of the Fund. The AP was very pleased with these actions. It has made several new recommendations which are detailed in the report. These recommendations, not necessarily in order of priority, are as follows:

1. Eight years after the creation of TFSCB, the extent to which countries have produced an NSDS and have implemented and updated it should be assessed
2. It is important to maintain a good balance between project proposals on social and economic statistics, and increase the number of projects in the domain of environmental statistics.
3. IMC should track whether the emerging interest in social statistics is a general trend or a temporary spurt.
4. A study should be conducted to better define the framework for priority data needs in countries still in conflict, the specific ways to collect them, and how the NSDS process can be utilized in post-conflict countries.
5. Regional strategies for the development of statistics have to be prepared, in particular in regions or sub-regions composed of poor, small countries.
6. For efficiency, a single international organization may be assigned to the financial management and secretarial work relating to the pooled resources on meetings. If the regulatory provisions of these official organizations do not permit management

by a single official organization of such a pool, then an independent international organization such as the International Statistical Institute (ISI), involved in similar activities might be assigned this task with certain guidelines.

7. A more permanent source for financing the developing countries participation to international conferences, congresses, seminars and workshops (rather than repeated applications to TFSCB) should be sought.
8. A working group (composed of representatives of the TFSCB management, PARIS21 and the international organizations having interests at stake) should examine whether the case of meetings organized by official international bodies has to be dealt with in a different way from the case of meetings organized by scientific NGOs.
9. TFSCB may and should encourage such a capacity building proposals from basic training centers based on a framework and action plan developed after an analytical study of their current status on their academic programs, resources, capacities and effective delivery of services.
10. A more permanent source for financing the delivery of scholarships should be sought.
11. A study should be prepared to propose the best ways of providing feedback on best practices, and guidelines for improving the practices.
12. TFSCB should be provided with funding in the coming years, and its mandate be expanded so that they can finance the updating of NSDS and preparations required to convert them into action plans for implementation.

I - BACKGROUND

As agreed at the Third Meeting of the Consultative Group (CG) of the TFSCB held in Paris on October 6, 2002 the Advisory Panel (AP) consists of two “external advisors” (*see Box 1*). Since the 2002 decision, meetings of the AP have been held from August 25 to 28, 2003 (which resulted in a report presented on October 14, 2003 at the 2003 annual CG meeting), from September 13 to 16, 2004 and from September 6 to 9, 2005. The 4th meeting of the AP was organized differently, by splitting it into two sessions: the first session took place from August 22 to 25, 2006, and the second one on January 16 and 17, 2007, both at the World Bank Headquarters¹.

According to the recommendation #1 of this 4th meeting endorsed by the CG in May, 2007, the 5th meeting was convened on March 10-14, 2008.

Box 1 Re-structuring the AP in 2002

¹ The main reason for this change was that, in 2003, the AP met just six weeks before the CG meeting. But there was no CG meeting in 2004; the next two CG meetings were held during the spring of 2005 and 2006, more than eight months after the AP meetings. Since it is advisable to present the CG with an AP report based on more recent facts and findings, it was proposed to organize a second session of the 4th meeting in January of 2007 and to convene the 5th meeting of the AP during the first quarter of 2008.

The AP was created to conduct a yearly technical review of TFSCB activities and report its findings and recommendations to the CG prior to its Annual Meeting. Up to 2002, the AP was composed of five members who were asked to comment on TFSCB activities by correspondence. One of the members (based in Paris) gathered all comments and presented a synthesis report to the CG meetings. This process didn't work in an efficient and effective way. As a result, during the Third Meeting of the CG held in Paris on October 6, 2002, it was agreed to replace the AP with a small team of two "external advisors". These advisors usually visit World Bank Headquarters in Washington, DC, for two or three days, about six weeks before CG meetings, to make a more detailed assessment and thus a better contribution to the operation of the TFSCB. Based on the above decision, the CG appointed two members of the former AP, Mr. Chandrakant A. Patel and Mr. Jean-Louis Bodin, as members of the new Advisory Panel.

The proposed terms of Reference for this new AP were:

- the AP will review the TFSCB strategy and evaluate selected activities and projects funded by TFSCB and report on their findings and recommendations to the CG prior to its annual meeting; and,
- the AP will meet once a year during two or three days at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington, DC, to review all relevant documents and meet with the TFSCB Management.

The mechanism for making decisions within the Internal Management Committee is now well established and runs efficiently and allows NSDS project proposals to be reviewed and accepted as they are received. One observation of the AP in respect of NSDS projects is worth making here. A review of activities of the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB) at the end of the FY 2006/2007 and during the first eight months of the FY 2007/2008 confirmed the increasing need to prepare national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS). These strategies are now considered an important prerequisite for the sustainable development of statistical systems in developing and transition countries, and, in the view of the AP, it would be important to take stock of the NSDS status in countries and the extent to which they have been implemented

Recommendation

1. Eight years after the creation of TFSCB, the extent to which countries have produced an NSDS and have implemented and updated it should be assessed

The Progress Report presented to the CG meeting in Paris on May 19, 2007 listed the actions taken by the Administration Unit of the TFSCB and by its IMC to implement the comments and recommendations of the 4th AP meeting concerning the management of the Fund (see section 2.3 of the Progress Report). The AP is satisfied with these actions.

A clear announcement of TFSCB II and III on the Web sites of the World Bank and PARIS21 and a better understanding by countries of the goals of the TF has meant that a

greater percentage of proposals received each year are in line with the main objective of statistical capacity building.

During their 5th meeting, the members of the AP had comprehensive discussions with Mr. Misha Belkindas, Manager, Development Data Group and Head of the TFSCB IMC. AP also held meetings and discussions with some members of the IMC (Pedro Arizti, Ghislaine Delaine (Ms), Neil Fantom, Haeduck Lee, and Jose Molinas Vega) and the TFSCB Administration Unit: Mustafa Dinc and Barbro Hexeberg (Ms). These discussions were fruitful and served to clarify the decision-making process which is now well established and allows for rapid and efficient decisions.

To assist with its deliberations, the AP was provided with the interim Progress Report covering the period October 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007 and April 1, 2007 to September 30, 2007, documents for evaluating the projects submitted to the IMC since the 4th meeting of the AP, and minutes of the IMC meetings and other project approval decisions.

Section 2 of this report reviews the operation of TFSCB since the 4th meeting of the AP. The next sections deal with some specific problems raised by the operation of TFSCB: section 3 puts a spotlight on social statistics in the non-NSDS projects proposals. Section 4 deals with a particular case, the one of countries still in conflict or in a situation of post-conflict, section 5 discusses the international and regional efforts for the improvement of statistics, section 6 is devoted to a new kind of proposal, supporting basic training in schools and universities and scholarships, section 7 raises the question of preserving best practices from NSDS experiences, and implementing a Knowledge Base to this end, and section 8 discusses a new facility that has been discussed in various fora “Better Statistics for Better Results”.

II - SURVEY OF THE RECENT PROJECT PROPOSALS RECEIVED BY THE IMC

DECDG has provided the AP with copies of the 21 project proposals they received as, well as the minutes of meetings (both virtual and face-to-face), and records of decisions taken.

These 21 proposals can be classified into five groups:

- 9 NSDS projects (decisions were taken immediately through virtual meetings²)
- 1 specific project concerning the Kyrgyz Republic (implementation of the already approved SMP)
- 7 non-NSDS projects (decisions were taken during real meetings organized twice a year)

² The decision concerning the proposal for Somalia has been taken by the “real meeting” held on Nov. 20, 2007, because of the particular situation of this country.

- 3 proposals aiming to facilitate the participation of statisticians from less developed countries in international conferences or meetings (decisions made virtually because of the urgency)
- 1 specific project concerning the production of a toolkit for transferring lessons learnt in practice (considered in the NSDS “window”).

NSDS projects

Approved	Approved with a reduced amount	Rejected
India Paraguay Indonesia Palestine	Armenia (-41 %) Gabon (- 25 %) Rwanda (- 33 %)	Somalia Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)

The opinion of the AP is that these decisions are consistent with the guidelines.

Some specific comments on selected projects:

Somalia. The IMC suggested the drafting of a modified proposal. But there is a question about the usefulness of an NSDS in a country still in conflict.

OECS. The IMC found the proposal unclear: there is a lack of articulation between the regional level and the development of strategy in OECS’ member countries. A special study should be conducted for regional or sub-regional areas where countries are too small and may not have the capacity for building a sustainable statistical system by themselves.

Gabon. The reductions concern the components 1.6 (funding of equipment) and 4 (English language “immersion” trips) of the initial proposal that the IMC considered as not eligible.

Kyrgyz Republic

The objective described in the first proposal for this project was the implementation of the already approved Statistical Master Plan and the proposal was a small and additional contribution of the TFSCB in a strong consortium of donors. This is an important topic: PARIS21 and the TFSCB made important efforts to get NSDS and SMPs prepared in a large number of countries and it is important to make sure that all these documents do not wind up on a shelf, and that they are effectively used as the basis for developing and strengthening statistical capacities. One question was to decide if it was appropriate to use the TFSCB in this specific case or rather another Bank facility. Another question was to determine what activities and outcomes should be expected based on the TFSCB funded part of the overall project if the donors’ contributions are not forthcoming as expected.

After the decision taken by the IMC (IMC asked to revise the proposal), a revised proposal was made on March 11, 2008 where the proposed financing plan is just a joint grant by TFSCB and TICA (Turkish aid) in order to follow up the implementation of the SMP components on the strengthening and development of the institutional framework and the improvement of human resources. This proposal is totally in line with the recommendation 13 made by the 4th meeting of the AP in 2007.

Non-SNDS projects

Approved	Approved with a reduced amount	Rejected
India (Health sector)	Guatemala (Health and Education sectors) African Regional Schools of Statistics Afghanistan (collection of primary data)	WAEMU South Sudan(Health Sector) MENA Region (Health and Development of Information Base)

The AP’s opinion is that rejections and reduction of amounts have been decided according to the guidelines.

Some specific comments on selected projects:

Guatemala: The reduction (36 % of the initial amount) concerns a component that is already funded by another Bank facility

African Regional Schools of Statistics. The reduction of the requested amount concerns the funding of scholarships (although it has been accepted for the proposal made by Gabon).

Afghanistan. IMC’s approval was made under the condition that the requested amount does not exceed US \$ 150,000 (\$476,400 were asked); this is justified by the absence of a necessary clarification on the connection of the proposal to the National Statistical Strategy and the statistical system of Afghanistan. The AP also raises the question of the usefulness of an NSDS in a country still in conflict.

WAEMU. The AP agrees with the decision to ask to the Commission of WAEMU to submit a proposal for funding of a regional strategy for development of statistics.

South Sudan. In addition to the explanations provided by the IMC to reject this project, the AP raises once again the question of the priorities in collecting data in a country in conflict or in a post-conflict situation.

Participation of statisticians from developing countries in international conferences or meetings

Three proposals have been approved:

- funding to the ISI for participations of developing countries to ICAS 4 (in addition to the funding of participations in IAOS Conference in September, 2006, and the 48th ISI Session)
- support for the participation of developing countries in the 39th session of the UNSC
- support for the participation of African countries and institutions in the first session of the Statistical Commission for Africa (STATCOM I) and the third Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV III).

The decisions made by the IMC are in line with the recommendation 10 of the 4th meeting of the AP.

Toolkit

The IMC received a project proposal on “Transferring Lessons Learned into Practice for Improving the Statistics Base for Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System Best Practices from the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics”. The ideas behind this proposal are (i) to develop a ready reference toolkit (knowledge base) to provide national stakeholders for statistical information to guide the process of developing and implementing the NSDS and, (ii) to tailor assistance and attention to countries through a unit of specialized experts, based on the general information provided in the toolkit. In fact, the AP had suggested such similar studies in its previous reports (see for instance recommendations 11, 15 and 16 of its 4th session). The IMC rejected the proposal, presumably because it was internally proposed from the World Bank and was to be managed by the Bank staff. The AP understood that the IMC rejected the proposal not for its contents but because of the way in which its implementation was proposed.

Also one IMC member questioned why the proposal was being considered in the NSDS "window" (it is not for an NSDS in a particular country), and noted that PARIS21 should be funding this work as part of its work program. The AP shares the concern of this IMC member.

III - SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL STATISTICS IN THE NON-NSDS PROJECT PROPOSALS

The AP noted that the TFSCB received four project proposals³ on social statistics as opposed to none specifically on economic statistics. This development indicates that there is somehow enhanced interest in obtaining TFSCB financing for social sector statistics.

While the proposal from India was approved as it was aimed at nurturing the culture of data utilization so as to foster evidence-based decision-making, the remaining three were

³ Guatemala (monitoring of statistics in the Health and Education sectors), OECS – Organization of East Caribbean States (compilation of social statistics in its member countries), India (tracking results for better performance of the health sector), South Sudan (support of evaluation of the health programs) and League of Arab States (development of regional data bases on health in the MENA region) Creating ‘CARIBSTAT’ by using the model of AFRISTAT may be considered³.

rejected. IMC considered that India's proposal would contribute to the development and implementation of the SMP. On the contrary, South Sudan proposal was rejected as it was not well focused and cost effective and it was suggested that alternative source of financing under the ongoing health sector project be sought. In the case of the East Caribbean States and MENA, IMC suggested that revised proposals focusing on developing regional frameworks on NSDS for the member states be submitted for future consideration.

The AP feels that the IMC took its decisions on these proposals prudently after reviewing their focus on and relevance to NSDS. The AP recommended during its 4th meeting that requests for TFSCB grants on capacity building on poverty statistics should be given priority among non-NSDS requests if they meet the objectives and framework of the national strategy on statistics. There is therefore no contradiction between such a spotlight on social statistics and the general orientations of the TFSCB. The AP nevertheless suggests that it is important to maintain a good balance between social and economic statistics and IMC should track whether this emerging interest in social statistics is a general trend or a temporary spurt.

Recommendations

2. It is important to maintain a good balance between project proposals on social and economic statistics and increase the number of projects in the domain of environmental statistics.
3. IMC should track whether this emerging interest in social statistics is a general trend or a temporary spurt.

IV - A PARTICULAR CASE: THE CASE OF COUNTRIES STILL IN CONFLICT OR IN A SITUATION OF POST-CONFLICT

The IMC received one proposal coming from two countries still in conflict (Somalia and South Sudan) and two other ones coming from countries in a situation of post-conflict (Afghanistan and Palestine).

For the countries in conflict, priority data to be collected are very specific and cannot be the subject of a long term planning for the development of a sustainable statistical system. The situation in Afghanistan and in Palestine is different from the situation in Somalia. Several initiatives have been undertaken towards the building of a "State of Rights" in Afghanistan and Palestine, which is not the case in Somalia.

Recommendation

4. A study should be conducted to better define the framework for priority data needs in countries still in conflict, the specific ways to collect them, and how the NSDS process can be utilized in post-conflict countries.

V - SUPPORT OF INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL EFFORTS ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF STATISTICS

TFSCB has been supportive of international and regional efforts on the improvement and development of statistics in various ways, e.g.

- i. Financing regional general or sectoral programs on the development of statistics,
- ii. Financing development of regional framework on NSDS.
- iii. Financing developing countries' participation in international and regional meetings and the seminars.

After the focus of the TFSCB moved mainly to the development of NSDS, the first activity has tapered. During the period under review, there were requests from the League of Arab States for the MENA region, and WAEMU⁴. Both were rejected, the first one for reasons quoted in the previous section on social statistics, the second mainly because this proposal was not oriented towards the improvement of statistical capacities of WAEMU's member countries.

Financing for the second activity is favorably encouraged and the AP considers that it might be worthy to develop regional strategies (with the help of PARIS21 and bilateral cooperation agencies) as was recommended by the IMC in the case of its decision on the WAEMU's proposal. The case of regions or sub-regions composed of small size and poor countries deserve some attention: for instance creating 'CARIBSTAT' within the OECS by using the model of AFRISTAT may be considered⁵. In the case of the decision on the WAEMU's proposal, it may be noticed that AFRISTAT⁶ has already developed such a strategy for its member countries.

Recommendation

5. Regional strategies for the development of statistics have to be prepared, in particular in regions or sub-regions composed of poor, small countries

Financing for the third activity is growing and well appreciated as a contribution to international collaboration by encouraging the participation of developing countries in the dialogue on the development of policy, framework, standards and methodologies on statistics. However, the management of this TFSCB financing by WB staff takes considerable time and administrative effort, and same may be true for the staff of other donors.

On the other hand, there are differences between the support for the participation of developing countries to conferences, congresses, seminars and workshops organized by NGOs specialized in statistics (like the ISI and its sections) and meetings organized by

⁴ WAEMU – West African Economic and Monetary Union (better known under its French acronym – UEMOA – all its member countries being Francophone) – Support of the SCB program of the WAEMU Commission.

⁵ See also the proposal by the IMF to create GULFSTAT with the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

⁶ All member countries of WAEMU are also member countries of AFRISTAT

official international bodies like the UN or UNECA .Participation in official meetings is in principle reserved to senior statisticians and members of staff (since they represent their country and very often decisions have to be made during such meetings). However , it would be worth encouraging and stimulating the participation of younger statisticians in conferences, congresses, seminars and workshops organized by international scientific institutions like the ISI..

In addition, the key question is the sustainability of this kind of financing. The TFSCB is a time-bound facility, therefore when its main activity gets completed, its secondary activities have to cease.

The AP expresses, therefore, several recommendations on this third group of activities; these recommendations have to be discussed not only within the Data Development Group of the Bank, but also by the PARIS21 Steering Committee:

Recommendations:

6. For efficiency, a single international organization may be assigned to the financial management and secretarial work relating to the pooled resources on meetings. If the regulatory provisions of these official organizations do not permit management by a single official organization of such a pool, then an independent international organization such as the International Statistical Institute (ISI), involved in similar activities might be assigned this task with certain guidelines.
7. A more permanent source for financing the developing countries participation to international conferences, congresses, seminars and workshops (other than TFSCB) should be sought.
8. A working group (composed of representatives of the TFSCB management, PARIS21 and the international organizations having interests at stake) should examine whether the case of meetings organized by official international bodies has to be dealt with in a different way from the case of meetings organized by scientific NGOs.

VI - A NEW KIND OF PROPOSAL: SUPPORTING BASIC TRAINING IN SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES AND SCHOLARSHIPS

During this period a new kind of proposal seeking TFSCB financing for African Regional Schools of Statistics⁷ was received and sent back for revisions particularly to omit student scholarships, though the delivery of scholarships was accepted in the case of the Gabon's proposal. Strengthening of regional schools of statistics and/or of the statistics

⁷ This proposal concerned the three schools of statistics providing a basic training in Francophone Sub-Saharan countries (ENEA in Dakar, Senegal, ENSEA in Abidjan, Côte-d'Ivoire and, ISSEA, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

departments at the Universities in Africa⁸ can of course largely contribute to the training of human resources required for national statistical development targeted by the NSDS. Capacity building of these institutions should be based on a framework and action plan developed after an analytical study of their current status on their academic programs, resources, capacities and effective delivery of services. Therefore, the AP thinks that TFSCB may and should encourage such a capacity building proposal if it comes from an Africa-wide regional or sub-regional institution, taking nevertheless into account the cultural, administrative and historical differences between the Francophone and Anglophone countries .

It would be useful to go deeply in the question of scholarships, having however in mind that we may repeat what was said in the previous section: the key question is the sustainability of this kind of financing. Moreover, in principle, training through scholarships is a recurrent expenditure that should be funded by governments from their own budgets, maybe within the framework of donors support to national budgets.

Recommendations

9. TFSCB may and should encourage capacity building proposals from basic training centers based on a framework and action plan developed after an analytical study of their current status on their academic programs, resources, capacities and effective delivery of services.
10. A more permanent source for financing the delivery of scholarships should be sought.

VII - PRESERVING BEST PRACTICES FROM THE NSDS AND IMPLEMENTING A KNOWLEDGE BASE TO THIS END

The rejection of the project proposal “Transferring Lessons Learned into Practice for Improving the Statistics Base for Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System Best Practices from the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics” has been discussed in a previous section.

For transparency and credibility it would be better if such a project is carried out by an institution like PARIS21 rather than by the Bank who is involved in the management of TFSCB. Even PARIS21 should engage consultants selected in consultations with the donor countries and a forum of NSDS countries since the NSDS policy, framework, and guidelines are within their domain. Such a study could provide feedback on best practices, guidelines for improving the practices and introducing modifications in these practices where needed.

⁸ Statisticians in the Francophone countries in Africa are generally trained in specialized so-called schools whereas the ones in Anglophone countries are more usually trained in the Department of Statistics of Universities. The African countries have reproduced the scheme existing in the former colonizing nations.

Recommendation

11. A study should be conducted to propose the best ways to provide feedback on best practices, and guidelines for improving the practices

VIII - A NEW FACILITY: “BETTER STATISTICS FOR BETTER RESULTS”

The AP was pleased to note that a new facility to scale up investment in statistical systems through National Partnerships to have “Better Statistics for Better Results” has gone through discussions in various forums and is likely to be evolved. Several developing countries have gone through NSDS with TFSCB financing and only a few of them have reached the implementation stage with STATCAP and other financing. The statisticians in developing countries feel - and the partner donor countries agree - that, as statistical development is not regarded by the national authorities as a high priority area, the possible implementation of the NSDS is constrained by the lack of financing. For participating countries, considerable work on the prioritization and costing of programs targeted by NSDS, laying down details for their financing, procurement and management, as well as monitoring and evaluation of results meant to serve the users’ needs to be carried out. The TFSCB should be provided with funding in the coming years, and its mandate be expanded so that they can finance the updating of NSDS and preparations required to convert them into action plans for implementation and worthy to be financed by the partners.

Recommendations

12. TFSCB should be provided with funding in the coming years, and its mandate be expanded so that they can finance the updating of NSDS and preparations required to convert them into action plans for implementation