



A Value Chain Approach to Data Production, Use and Governance for Sound Policy Making in Africa

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The Context

Quality data is key to sound policy making that is necessary for accelerating development in Africa. The state of official statistics from most of the African countries are regarded with mistrust and occasionally judged as insufficient in informing development needs for the continent. In light of the necessity for accelerating development in Africa, there is need to strengthen the state of official statistics in the continent.

The problem

Myriad of challenges have been cited as the reasons behind under development in Africa. Official statistics have been identified as part of the challenges linked to slow development in Africa since they are largely viewed as of low quality, low precision, untimely, incomplete, poor accessibility and inconsistent. There is need therefore, to strengthen the state of official statistics in Africa by re-looking at the way these statistics are produced with a view of addressing their quality. Production of quality statistics will inform better policies and will also be used to monitor and evaluate development goals at national, regional, continental and international levels.

Background

The study focused on the need for African National Statistical Offices (NSOs) to encompass value chain approach to data production, increase the uptake of statistics for evidence-based decision making and better governance of statistical process to address data quality for sound policy making in Africa. The purpose of this research therefore, was to investigate the value chain approach to data production, use and governance in Africa and how it can be improved to enable sound policy making in the continent.

Value chain is a sequence of discrete primary and support activities that are required to be undertaken by a firm or an organization in order to create a product or service. In official statistics, value chain analysis involves examination of a stream of primary activities and support activities undertaken by an NSO in data production and dissemination. Examination of primary activities entails the process of identifying the data needs, designing data collection instruments, testing data collection instruments, collecting the data, processing the data, analyzing the data, and disseminating the data for its final use. The data value chain also addresses uptake of data by potential users as well as the resultant impact of the data usage. On the other hand, examination of support activities includes analysis of financial and human resources, statistical capacity, procurement processes, technology used in production and dissemination of official statistics, and governance structure of NSOs (legal framework, institutional framework, financing framework, overall management of NSOs).

Research results

The research reviewed existing literature to identify and examine gaps and challenges in regard to production and use of official statistics in Africa. The research also used existing literature to examine the governance structure in production and use of official statistics in Africa where underlying gaps and weaknesses were identified. The research identified current practices by African NSOs in official statistics production, use and

governance and compared these practices with the best international practices. On the basis of these gaps, challenges and weaknesses, value chain analysis was conducted in data production, use and governance in Africa and recommendations were made for future improvements. The research conducted three case studies on Australia, Rwanda and South Africa where their practices in relation to data production, use and governance were reviewed.

Review of existing literature indicated that the challenges experienced by African NSOs include: weak basic statistical data systems; low use of non-traditional sources of data (e.g. big data); lack of a comprehensive data users' engagement strategy; weak coordination of the National Statistical System (NSS); inadequate data dissemination systems; lack of a strategy to enhance uptake of official statistics; inadequate funding; inadequate human resources; gaps in the legal framework leading to lack of autonomy; data gaps especially on civil registration and vital statistics, health, poverty levels, agriculture, climate change and digital economy among others; use of different methods and standards in production of statistics in Africa; non-standardized data collection tools; lack of an elaborate long-term plan indicating timelines for different statistical activities; production of statistics that do not conform to international standards and methods; challenges in accessibility and use of official statistics; inadequate political support for statistics, low degree of appreciation by the African society on the value and significance of statistics; insufficient utilization of statistics in decision making; and lack of political and institutional independence.

Implications to policy makers

African countries need to undertake the following statistical reforms in order to improve the production and use of official statistics as well as governance of official statistical processes.

Strengthen the systems used in collection and processing of administrative data: Strengthening administrative data systems and using data from other producers will help in filling data gaps, enhance production of quality statistics, and reduce duplication in production of official statistics.

Use non-traditional sources of data in production of official statistics: African NSOs need to address issues limiting access, invest in technology required to process and analyze the data from these sources, and hire and retain staff with technical capacity and skills to process, analyze and interpret the data from these sources.

Identify needs of different users and establish a national users' engagement platform: African NSOs should strengthen the process of identifying data needs for different users and this process should be part of their routine activities.

Coordinate the National Statistical System and Collaborate across African Statistical System: NSOs across Africa should coordinate NSS so as to achieve an efficient and consistent statistical system and ensure production of quality and comparable statistical information. The coordination role of African NSOs should be anchored in official statistics laws. African Statistical Systems need to collaborate amongst themselves in order to improve the production and use of statistical information.

Use international standards and methods in production of official statistics: African NSOs should domesticate and use international accepted standards and methods in production of different statistics and this will improve the quality and comparability of statistics produced.

Fund production of official statistics activities: Funding for production of official statistics in Africa need to be prioritized in national budgets with an aim of ensuring adequate allocation of funds for production of statistics across NSS. African NSOs should develop resource mobilization strategy and establish an office purely responsible for mobilization of resources for carrying out statistical activities.

Address human capital skills gaps: African NSOs need to come up with appropriate career progression framework, develop succession plan, create knowledge management systems and come up with training and development strategy.

Invest in modern technologies for use in production and dissemination official statistics: ICT plays a significant role in all aspects of statistical production starting from data collection up to dissemination and therefore, the need to invest in modern technologies.

Enhance use of official statistics: African NSOs first need to release statistical information and statistical products in their custody for use by all users; develop an advocacy strategy for use of statistics whereby all users will be informed on the availability of the various statistical products, how they can be accessed and how they can be utilized.

Improve the trust of official statistics: African NSOs need to enhance trust of official statistics in Africa in order to increase uptake of these statistics for evidence-based decision making.

Improve data governance of NSOs: African NSOs should be autonomous to enable production of official statistics without any interference. This will ensure professional independence in production of official statistics thus, improving the credibility and trust of official statistics. Legislation on production of official statistics should be anchored on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and African Charter on Statistics, which guarantees production of quality official statistics.



Mission

To strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into the problems facing the management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa.

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