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**African Statistics Day**  
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**Managing for Development Results: the Role of Statistical Information**

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African development leadership is set on *African Statistics Day*, on 18th November, to raise awareness of governments, international agencies, and the community-at-large to the importance of statistics in a nation's progress.

The absence of reliable, up-to-date statistical information in African countries limits the application of practical development strategies on the continent. To highlight the issue, this year the focus of *African Statistics Day* is "Managing for Development Results: the Role of Statistical Information."

Compiling, analyzing and disseminating statistical information is conditional for countries to design applicable, lasting and coherent policy and programme frameworks. Indeed knowing a nation's existing or budding potential, such as human and natural resources and infrastructure, as well as the organizational framework in which this potential is integrated, helps set clearly defined, coherent and attainable objectives.

Measuring a country's potential provides it with practical tools for setting development objectives and tackling them through strategic planning, risk management, progress monitoring and outcome evaluation. At the international level, this concept is working towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which define expected outcomes and indicators of achievement. This implies relevant, accurate and up-to-date statistical information, in short, quality statistical information.

Once objectives are set, regular statistical data is necessary for monitoring of progress in the implementation of policy and programmes and for and evaluation of the outcomes. This guarantees transparency and accountability of governments and constituents *vis-à-vis* the citizens.

In Africa, statistical systems are at varying stages of development. Some countries are able to undertake exhaustive and expensive countrywide operations such as censuses, specific sample surveys and crosschecking of administrative records through databases, for example.

Other African nations lack the capacity to generate the required information for macro-economic and social demand management. These countries require more adequate financial and human capital resources that enable effective data collection programmes such as population censuses. But there is also a gap in continuity with regard to the coordination of various household surveys initiated by bilateral and multilateral agencies.

To tackle these issues, African partners and the international community have recently launched a number of initiatives to strengthen statistical capacities in Africa.

Most recent was the global partnership on managing development results, published in a joint declaration by regional development banks, the World Bank, and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Written as a follow-up of the International Conference on Financing for Development, in Monterrey, in 2002, it rallies development practitioners and managers to champion the application of data compilation and analysis in development strategies.

The economic and social situation of developing nations, and in particular of African countries, underscores the pressing need for more effective development based on co-accountability of States and bilateral and multilateral agencies.

Some international and regional initiatives that challenge these issues include advocacy activities – such as *African Statistics Day* – the establishment of PARIS21 Consortium; Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building and the STATCAP facility, the new round of the International Comparison Programme (ICP), the sub-regional organization's programmes, and more recently, the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS) and the establishment of a Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV).

This year, *African Statistics Day*, aims to sensitize African governments to the issue, prompting them allocate more resources to the development of statistics in their respective countries.

In order for statistical information to play its full role in the development process, the African statistical community is invited to establish strategic plan for statistical development – within the context of national development plans: poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), monitoring of Millennium Development Goals, among others.

Just as important is the alignment of actions and financing of bilateral and multilateral development agencies to match the needs and national strategic plans of beneficiary nations.

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) wishes success to all the activities undertaken during the commemoration of *African Statistics Day*.