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FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**REACTIVATING THE AFRICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION
AS A KNOWLEDGE SHARING PLATFORM**

A Publication of the Knowledge Management Department of the African Capacity Building Foundation

REACTIVATING THE AFRICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION AS A KNOWLEDGE SHARING PLATFORM FOR AFRICAN STATISTICIANS AND STATISTICAL INSTITUTIONS ⁽¹⁾

I. INTRODUCTION

This issue of Findings and Recommendations presents a synopsis of the results of an in-depth field study by the Knowledge Management Department of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) on the revival of the defunct African Statistical Association (ASA). Led by ACBF Technical Advisory Panel and Network on National Statistics and Statistical Systems (STATNET), the study examines factors that led to the demise of ASA, provides guidelines for its resuscitation and successful operation as a continental knowledge sharing platform and calls on ACBF, the African Development Bank and UNECA to team up as partners to revive ASA. A resuscitated and an effectively capacitated ASA has an important role to play in assisting national statistical agencies and associations to strengthen statistical culture, share best statistical practices and provide technical support to national statistical agencies.

II. STATISTICAL ASSOCIATIONS IN AFRICA

Effectively functioning national statistical associations are necessary for the development and nurturing of good statistical culture and practice, which in turn contribute to the enhancement of the quality of statistics and evidence-based policy and program planning and management. They provide support to governments, private sector, academic institutions and other sectors of the economies that value evidence-based policymaking processes. For African countries to develop reliable and efficient statistical systems, as well as benefit from and share best practices, national statistical offices and associations need to work together at both national and regional levels. There is therefore the need for countries to have both national statistical offices and independent national statistical associations with an apex African Statistical Association serving as a continental platform for information and knowledge sharing.

At the moment, there are very few statistical associations in Africa. Countries with functioning associations include South Africa, Uganda, Egypt, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'ivoire, Mali, Morocco and Nigeria. AFRISTAT provides technical support for the development of national statistical systems in 19 Francophone African countries. As a result of the weak development of statistical associations in Africa, collaboration among African statisticians has remained very weak.

In the past, there existed a continent-wide statistical association in Africa. The association was set up with support from UNECA in 1978, but was discontinued in 1999/2000. During its existence, the association was temporarily housed at UNECA before being moved to the Federal Office of Statistics in Nigeria. Its aims and objectives were to: (i) promote statistical advocacy at the regional level; (ii) strengthen the theory and practice of statistics within the African region; (iii) promote the development of statistical knowledge among African Statisticians; (iv) facilitate professional networking and capacity building in statistics; (v) encourage the setting up of various statistical forums and create a platform for sharing ideas; and (vi) organize conferences, workshops, seminars, symposia and publish proceedings of such meetings as a means of achieving the above-stated objectives.

1. A STATNET study led by Professor Nicholas Biekpe with contributions by Professor Milton Iyoba.

During the period of its existence, the African Statistical Association posted a number of achievements. It held a series of high level meetings, which included the 1990 Conference in Abuja, Nigeria; the 1993 Conference in Rabat, Morocco and the 1995 Workshop on poverty and databases in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The operations of the Association could, however, not be sustained as a result of inadequate funding, waning interest by some members, language differences and ineffective logistical support systems. In short, the Association was set up without adequate sustainability mechanisms.

III. REACTIVATION OF ASA: RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE CAPACITY BUILDING TASK

Based on an in-depth review of the circumstances that led to the demise of the Association and the strong potential benefits it stands to bring to statistical development on the continent, the STATNET study strongly recommended that the African Statistical Association should be reactivated. It however cautioned that the pitfalls that hampered sustainable operation of the defunct Association should be avoided. To this end, the study recommended, inter alia, the development of a Constitution and a Code of Conduct to guide the new Association. It also recommended the need for suitable organizational structures that would include the following, among others:

- A single Head Office with an Africa-wide Executive Board and Regional Chapters.
- An organizing committee to kick-start the reactivation process
- A web site established to promote the activities of the Association.

Some of the activities of the revived Association would include events organized to help promote statistical capacity building, strengthen the development of statistical culture and the application of best practices, and to share knowledge and information, among others. Once reactivated, the Association should take responsibility for publishing the African Statistical Journal.

The study recommended that the African Capacity Building Foundation, in collaboration with the African Development Bank, UNECA, NEPAD and other development partners, should rise up to the challenge of resuscitating the Association as soon as it is practically possible. Agencies and partners who are interested in collaborating with ACBF, expressing an opinion or providing information in respect of the resuscitation should contact the Foundation in the address below.



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