

Statistical Reform in Uganda¹

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1. Introduction

For much of the 1970s and 1980s, there was general decline in statistical production in Uganda and Africa in general. This decline was caused by poor economic performance and by low priority successive Governments gave to statistics as well as general lack of appreciation of the role and importance of statistical data and information in society. As result, the Department of Statistics in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the national statistical system and services became weak, vulnerable and unable to meet user requirements. Starting from early 1990s, the Government of Uganda realized the need for reforming the national statistical system, raising the profile of statistics and making provision of statistical data more efficient and responsive to user needs. Government took a strategic decision to de-link statistical production from the civil service (which is not known for efficiency) and the political processes, by establishing a semi-autonomous **Uganda Bureau of Statistics** in 1998. This paper outlines how the Bureau has gone about to build a co-ordinated and demand-driven national statistical system, and Government commitment to statistical development.

2. Uganda Bureau of Statistics and Government Commitment to Statistics

The Uganda Bureau of Statistics was established to act “**as the principal data collecting and disseminating agency responsible for co-ordinating, monitoring and supervising the National Statistical System**”². The Bureau has a **Board of Directors** which is responsible for policy formulation, approval of budgets and work plans, determining terms and conditions of service for staff, etc. Members of the Board are all eminent professionals representing main data users, producers and research and training institutions in the country. The Board meets at least once every quarter.

The Board has successfully completed the restructuring of the former Department of Statistics into a Bureau with a lean structure of about 160 regular staff (professional and non-professional). The Board did not want to take on baggage from the former Department of Statistics. So, it advertised all posts in the Bureau and recruited all staff on merit (with no influence and especially political influence). This enabled the Bureau to take on highly qualified and motivated staff. The Board has also put in place attractive and competitive terms and conditions of service for staff and established a sound financial management system for the Bureau's resources. It has also approved an integrated framework for the development of Uganda's national statistical system and services. Government has shown a lot of support for statistical development and has increased subventions to the Bureau and committed itself to using the products of the Bureau in macro-economic management, programme implementation and monitoring, and reporting. The core programmes of the Bureau have been included in the Poverty Action Fund, which protects them from budgetary cuts even when there is a shortfall in Government revenue. In addition, the Bureau has become a full participant in the development of major Government initiatives, which are developed in a consultative manner, involving all major stakeholders.

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² *Uganda Bureau of Statistics Act, 1998*

Strategies the Bureau is using to develop the national statistical system include, among others:

- ❑ creating general awareness about the importance of statistics;
- ❑ improving management processes by appointing the best professionals on the market;
- ❑ establishing mechanisms for enhanced partnerships, networking and sharing of information with all main stakeholders - Government, public and private sector, NGOs, research and training institutions, donors and international organizations, the press and the public;
- ❑ actively promoting system-wide use of “**best practices**” in data production;
- ❑ assisting districts to build their own capacity for statistical production and utilization in support of the decentralization policy;
- ❑ mainstreaming data users in the national statistical system and being accountable to a multiplicity of users;
- ❑ building a comprehensive and shared state-of-the-art **national statistical databank** which can be easily accessed by users and which can act as a **one-stop-cent re** for statistical data in the country; and
- ❑ designing a comprehensive **dissemination programme** including a "**release calendar**" for inflation figures and deadlines for dissemination of household survey data.

3. Conclusion

Increased Government commitment to statistical development, creation of a semi-autonomous national statistical agency and improved management processes, have raised the profile of statistics, increased awareness about the role and importance of statistics and improved the capacity to produce and deliver statistical products and services in Uganda.

Abstract

In order to reverse the decline in statistical production and make provision of official statistics in the country more efficient and responsive to user needs, a semi-autonomous Uganda Bureau of Statistics was established in 1998. Highly trained personnel have since been recruited and attractive terms and conditions of service for staff have been put in place. Government has shown a lot of commitment to statistics which is reflected in increased subventions to the Bureau, building a statistics component in major government programmes and attention to the national statistical system. Details of the reform as well as strategies for meeting the challenges of providing data to inform policy and decision-making as well as monitoring important government initiatives and actions are given.