

Statistics in development cooperation - advocacy

Statistics Explained

This article is part of a [set of background articles](#) providing an *outline of knowledge* of international statistical cooperation between the [European Union \(EU\)](#) and developing countries, for non-statisticians needing to deal with statistics in development programmes and projects. The outline serves as an entry point and introduction to the much more detailed [Eurostat](#) publication 'Guide to statistics in European Commission development cooperation', downloadable in [PDF format](#) in English, French and Spanish (further down referred to as 'the *Guide*').

Many developing countries have weak statistical systems and mechanisms for measuring results. Good, reliable statistics are essential for measuring progress in reaching development goals and provide essential information about the effectiveness of policies and programmes. They help governments improve their policies and to be transparent and accountable about the delivery of development results. Reliable statistics are a key element towards better measurement, monitoring and management of the results of [development assistance](#).

An important effort still needs to be made in advocacy for the use of statistics. Effective advocacy for statistics, both in terms of promoting evidence-based decision making as well as ensuring that statistical activities are properly financed and resourced, is crucial to the development of national statistical systems. In low income developing countries, the national use of statistics and interest in statistics may be low. However, promotion of evidence-based policy-making along with advocacy on the importance of statistics raises national user interest. This, together with strategic planning in the national statistical system (NSS), should substantially increase the interest and trust in statistics and thus the level of analysis.

Advocacy for quality statistics and statistical strategies – national level

Why is it vital to advocate for the key role and importance of statistics?

The [availability](#) of [quality](#) statistics are vital to evidence-based policy making. Policy decisions should be informed by reliable, comparable, timely and objective data. Policy decisions on such a basis are consistent with a democratic political process with transparency and accountability.

National authorities, international and regional organisations and donors all require quality statistics for monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects.

The use made of statistics in the policy making process, as well as their quality, may have a large influence on policies and their success. Quality statistics are vital to accountable and transparent:

- identification of key issues for development and poverty reduction;
- formulation of policies and programmes to address these issues;
- forecast results of policies and other future developments;
- monitor the implementation of the policies and programmes;
- evaluate their outcomes and impact

Strengthening the [national statistical system](#) and the availability and quality of statistics enhances transparency and accountability of decision-makers, thus promoting democracy and good governance.

Advocacy for evidence-based decision-making is essential in this context. In developing countries, advocacy at the national political level plays a vital role for the development of a statistical strategy. The [Evaluation of the Commission support for statistics in third countries](#) (2007) underlined that an important effort needs to be made in advocacy for the use of statistics in decision-making, which “*may have constituted a major missing link between results and outcomes*” in the past.

A central document on advocacy for statistics and why it is so important is PARIS21’s “[Measuring up to the](#)

If national statistics lack quality, the national development strategy should highlight the support to statistics as a priority. However, the production of statistical data should not be a target in itself but should be supported as a means towards good governance. Advocacy for evidence-based decision-making is essential.

[measurement problem: the role of statistics in evidence-based policy-making](#)”.

For which areas and purposes is promotion of quality statistics particularly important?

The [Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness](#) and the [European Consensus for Development](#) identify a central role for statistics, necessary for:

- an approach based on results and performance [indicators](#) ;
- the allocation of funds;
- an observation of progress towards policy goals;
- the close monitoring and evaluation of development activities and projects, especially the [budget support](#) instruments;
- contracts based on negotiated mutual commitments.

The importance of statistics for policy making in developing countries is continuously increasing, due to the need to:

- monitor progress towards the [Millennium Development Goals \(MDGs\)](#) ;
- monitor progress of Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs);
- provide reliable and timely data for policy analysis;
- increase the transparency of political decision processes and the accountability of governments.

The need for quality statistics arises even before the cycle of operations has started; the aid allocated is calculated on the basis of a number of indicators:

- resources for development aid are allocated based on need and performance criteria, which should be objective and transparent;
- a close monitoring and evaluation of activities and projects needs data of good quality.

Economic indicators are conditional for the assessment of national performances and development by decision makers and donors (national and international), national auditors, the media and citizens. They should be included in [National Development Strategies for Statistics \(NSDS\)](#) and are part of the:

- [National Indicative Programmes \(NIPs\)](#) of the [European Commission](#)
- [Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers \(PRSPs\)](#)

These papers and programmes form the basis for:

- the follow up and support of National Development Strategies in developing countries,
- all concessional lending by the [World Bank](#) (regarding development) and the [IMF](#) (regarding macroeconomic stability).

In order to facilitate the assessment of the implementation of the national strategy and reform programmes a performance assessment framework (PAF) should be associated especially to PRSPs.

Guide examples and practical information

- B.1 *Statistics for development co-operation*
 - B.3 *Statistics and indicators in the European Commission development aid process*
 - B.4.2 *Indicators for poverty reduction strategies*
 - Box 1.2: *The principles of Managing for Development Results*
 - Box 1.7: *The Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics*
 - Box 3.1: *Typology of indicators*
 - Box 3.2: *Typology of indicators by the use made of them*
 - Box 3.3: *The 'Agenda for Change' and country resource allocation*
 - Box 3.4: *The Cotonou Agreement and Country Resource Allocation*
 - Box 3.5: *The Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) Regulation and country resource allocation*
 - Box 3.6: *The European Consensus on Development and Country Resource Allocation*
 - Box 3.7: *Comparison of sets of key indicators*

How should efficient national advocacy for quality statistics be designed?

PARIS21 advocates for increased involvement of national stakeholders in statistical development. In this context, PARIS21 has produced statistical advocacy material promoting:

- the increased use of statistics in decision-making,
- the development of [statistical capacity](#) , and
- the need for a well financed National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) integrated into wider development policy frameworks.

In particular, PARIS21 has prepared a [Country-Level Advocacy Toolkit](#) . This Advocacy Toolkit aims to help NSS managers and statisticians in developing countries start their own advocacy work. It focuses on statistical advocacy as a means to convince policy-makers, civil society, media, NGOs and other stakeholders in developing countries of the importance of statistics.

The Advocacy Toolkit demonstrates the advantages of planning advocacy systematically. The Advocacy Toolkit

Effective advocacy depends on the relationships that advocates develop with decision-makers and other key audiences. The stronger the ties of trust and mutual support between advocates and audiences, the more effective those advocates will be.

presents advocacy methodology, tools, tips and key messages.

The main processes involved in developing an advocacy strategy within the context of the NSDS are the following:

The NSDS covers structural issues such as statistical legislation, human resources, infrastructure, funding and reporting. Advocacy must be part of the strategic issues covered by the NSDS.

- assessment of existing advocacy activities and resources;
- developing a vision and strategic plan;
- implementing the advocacy strategy action plan;
- monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy.

Advocacy tools include workshops; advocacy booklets; media initiatives (press releases, press conferences, interviews); statistical websites; newsletters.

Other articles

- [International statistical cooperation](#) (online publication)
- [Statistics in development cooperation](#) (online publication to which this article belongs)

Dedicated section

- [International statistical cooperation](#)

Publications

- [Guide to Statistics in European Commission Development Co-operation](#)

External links

- PARIS21:
 - [Advocacy at a Glance](#) and [Country-Level Advocacy Toolkit](#)
 - [Library of materials to promote statistics](#) (videos, national and regional advocacy leaflets, general advocacy materials)
 - [Measuring Up to the Measurement Problem: The Role of Statistics in Evidence-Based Policy-making](#)