

The Challenges of the Narrative of African Countries' Development: Data Demand and Supply Mismatches

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Abstract

That statistics play a crucial role in the overall development policy and decision making process of countries is widely recognized across the African continent. Despite this recognition, substantial gaps still exist between the demand for quality information and the ability of most African countries to routinely produce and disseminate statistics. Several factors contribute to this demand and supply mismatch. They are largely presented in this paper through an analysis of two main aspects of the challenges facing African countries in their quest to support the narrative of their development efforts: data gaps and data differences. Based on an in-depth review of data availability on a number of economic and social indicators at both the national and international levels, the paper argues that economic and social statistics are both subject to data gaps. When available, both data types are subject to differences between national and international sources. The paper finally presents ongoing efforts at the continental level aimed at addressing some of the observed challenges.

Key words: data gaps, data discrepancies, economic statistics, social statistics, African statistical development

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1 Introduction

It is well understood that statistics play a crucial role in the overall development process across the African continent namely through continuous advocacy campaigns during the commemorations of the African Statistics Day¹. They are needed for setting development objectives and targets as well as measuring and monitoring progress towards meeting development goals. They are also needed for evidence-based policy-making. Scott (2005) defines evidence-based policy making in a democratic context as the use of statistics to achieve issue recognition, inform programme design and policy choice, forecast the future, monitor policy implementation, and evaluate policy impact.

In quest to provide users with quality statistical information in support of development efforts, African National Statistical Systems (NSSs) rely on three main sources: censuses, surveys, and administrative data. While censuses provide relevant information at a disaggregated level that no other statistical operation can, they nevertheless are only conducted every ten years. Although they constitute a very important source of information for the compilation of official statistics, administrative data, by their nature, are a result of routine work of administrations and are not necessarily collected to serve statistical purposes. Surveys are generally conducted in order to address specific needs, going into depth of issues at stake. However, they are sample-based and do not usually cover lower level administrative areas. All these operations are based on nationally representative samples, and are expensive, time consuming and infrequent. It is therefore not surprising that there are still significant gaps in the provision of sound statistical information to support policy decision making and development efforts in many African countries.

Substantial gaps still exist between the demand and supply for statistical information. Several factors contribute to this demand and supply mismatch including: limited long-term statistical planning capabilities; limited human and financial resources and infrastructure; limited coordination, collaboration, networking and sharing of information at different levels within the NSS; compliance with international methodologies, standards, and norms in order to ensure that the data produced are comparable across regions and internationally; and limited political commitment to statistical production and use.

This paper analyses two main manifestations of the challenges facing African NSSs in quest to support their countries' development efforts: data gaps and data differences between national and international sources. It also presents ongoing efforts at the continental level aimed at addressing some of the challenges causing the data demand and supply mismatches.

It is organized as follows. Section one describes the problems. The main users (demand) of data in African countries as well as main producers are presented in section 2. Section 3 analyses the mismatches between the data demand and supply

¹ African Statistics Day is an advocacy tool aimed at raising awareness of the importance of statistics in economic and social development in Africa. It takes place every year on the 18th of November.

with special emphasis on data gaps and data differences. A summary of ongoing efforts to address the identified challenges is presented in section 4 followed by some conclusions in section 5.

2 Data Demand and Supply

2.1 Data Demand

There is consensus about the increase in the demand for statistical data to inform national development processes. The last decade of the twentieth century has particularly seen African NSSs being called upon to produce and avail information to support an array of initiatives including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development² (NEPAD). These demands are in addition to the usual routine production of statistics, which support sectoral and national development plans. This has not only created new demands but also provided countries with an opportunity to further develop their statistical systems. The demand for sound statistical information can be summarized at national, sub regional, regional, and international levels.

2.1.1 National

At the national level, the demand for statistics mainly emanates from sectoral and national development frameworks. The main national development goals are elaborated in PRSs which are prepared by governments through a participatory process involving key stakeholder constituencies such as the general public, the private sector, the civil society, and development partners. A PRS describes a set of country's macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programmes aimed at promoting growth and reduce poverty, as well as associated financing needs. The PRSs-successors to Structural Adjustments Programmes³ (SAPs)-constitute a good representative of national development frameworks. Recently, many African countries have added a growth dimension to the main poverty reduction objective resulting in growth and poverty reduction strategies. In addition, African countries are more and more confronted with increased demand for information in new and emerging areas such as governance, HIV/AIDS surveillance, energy, environment, climate change etc.

² NEPAD is a blue print for Africa's development in the 21st century. It was formally adopted by the 37th Summit of Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 2001 as a strategic framework document that promises Africa's renewal. NEPAD is a program of the African Union and its highest authority is the Heads of State and Government Summit of the African Union. In February 2010, the 14th AU Assembly established the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NEPAD Agency) as a technical body of the AU to replace the NEPAD Secretariat. The NEPAD Agency is a key outcome of the integration of NEPAD into the AU.

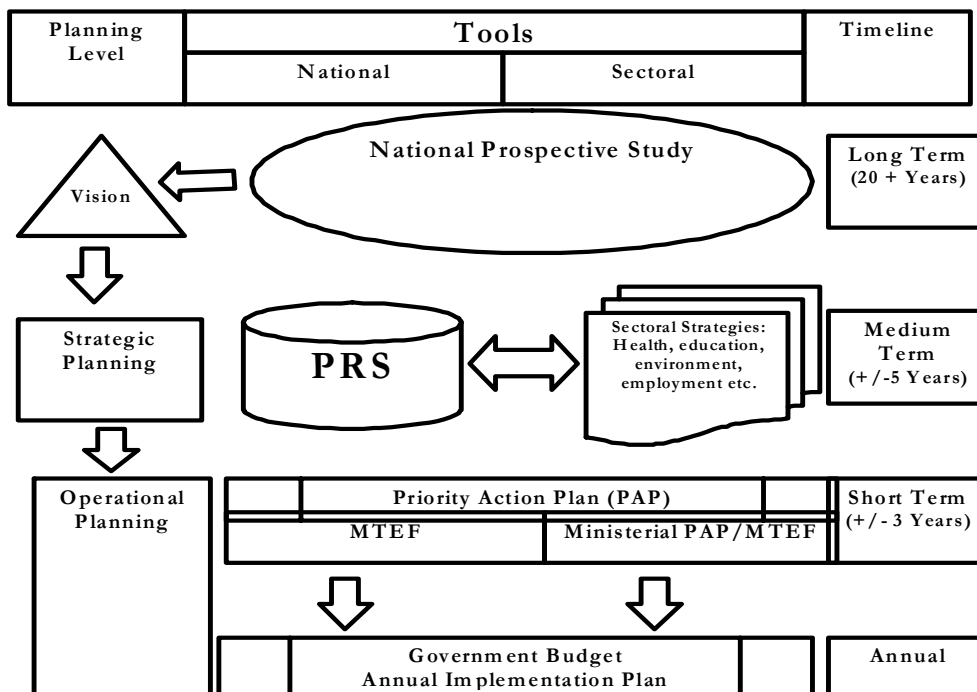
³ SAPs are a set of policies implemented by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in developing countries in the 80s. They consisted in conditions for getting new loans from the Bretton Woods institutions or for obtaining lower interest rates on existing loans. In order to ensure that the money lent will be spent in accordance with the overall goals of the loan, a set of conditionalities were attached to the loan with the aim of implementing free market programs and policies through privatization and deregulations. These programmes had devastating effects in many areas including in statistical development.

PRSs are part and parcel of a planning system that generally comprise a long term vision, a medium term strategic plan (PRS), and an operational plan. The vision document is prepared following a thorough evaluation of national development prospects that include a confrontation of country potentials to long term and medium term development prospects as well as sub regional and regional ones. The process also involves a study on people’s aspirations as well as scenarios for long term development.

The vision document is then translated into a medium term strategic plan. It is a consensual framework for national orientations for accelerated sustainable development with the aim to reduce poverty and inequalities. These plans are based on a thorough assessment of country’s development prospects and analysis of implementation policies. They set up main public policy orientations and priorities. The PRSPs are completed by their sectoral equivalents that are formulated as strategic thematic or sectoral plans. The latter define detailed reference frameworks for all stakeholders in terms of objectives, priority areas and responsibilities.

The PRSs are further translated into operational documents that include priority action plans (PAP) and medium term expenditure frameworks (MTEF). The PAPs consist of operational and budgetary programmes aimed at meeting the objectives of the PRSs and both documents are updated annually. The MTEF is an operational and budgetary programme which provides detailed specific needs for each ministry. The whole operationalization of a PRS can be represented as in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Operationalization of a Poverty Reduction Strategy



2.1.2 Regional

At the regional level, African countries are member of several groupings such as the well-known Regional Economic Communities (RECs). These groupings have to comply with several multilateral surveillance criteria. These include Gross Domestic Product (GDP), inflation, budget deficits as a percentage of GDP, debt as a percentage of GDP, harmonized Consumer Price Index (HCPI) etc. There are also a number of programmes and strategic plans at this level that require quality statistical information.

2.1.3 Continental

During the 1960s, African countries through the Organization of the African Unity (OAU), initiated a process of continental integration intended to ultimately provide critical ingredients for economic and social development as well as political stability. The African integration agenda, as outlined in treaties and protocols passed by African Heads of State and Government, addresses three main areas, namely political integration, economic integration as well as social and cultural integration. Among the treaties is the 1991 Abuja Treaty that provided for the establishment of the African Economic Community with a single currency, and set out a process for attaining an African common market. This was to be achieved through the creation of regional economic blocs (RECs), the establishment of free trade areas and customs unions within each one of them, the completion of a continent-wide customs union by 2019, and a continent wide common market by 2023 leading to full economic and monetary union. The Treaty also recognises the need for African nations to work together on economic and social development issues, to increase sustainable growth across the continent and lift people out of poverty. At the end of the 1990s, the African Heads of State and Government took very important steps in calling for the establishment of an African Union (AU), *“with a view, inter alia, to accelerating the process of integration in the continent to enable it to play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems compounded as they are by certain negative aspects of globalization.”*. They also launched the process of formulating a vision and designing a strategic framework for Africa’s renewal well-known as the NEPAD. The latter was adopted as a reference framework for the objectives, prerequisites, strategic directions and action lines of the continent’s development as well as for the relationships with development partners for resource mobilization. In 2002, the African Heads of State and Government adopted a Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. The declaration, which is reinforced by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), uses sub-regional organizations to leverage implementation. These development initiatives were facilitated by an international context in which changes were occurring in political approaches, in economic policies, and in partnerships between developing countries and developed countries and financing institutions. At the same time, democratization was spreading in Africa, empowering more people than ever. It was in this context that a global compact between Africa and the international community came into existence. African decision-makers have specified their political visions and objectives consistent with the internationally agreed objectives. All the above mentioned

initiatives form the basis for a growing demand for quality statistical information in support of the NEPAD and other accompanying development initiatives, all working towards continental integration.

2.1.4 International

At the 2000 Millennium Summit, 189 member States of the United Nations (UN) pledged to achieve progress in international development goals, codified in eight MDGs. The goals provide a focus for international development efforts and a road map for their achievement, with concrete measures for judging performance through a set of inter-related commitments, goals and targets. The demand for statistical information at the international level can be represented, among others, by these MDGs as they are a culmination of a series of worldwide mobilization campaigns and compromises emanating from the summits of the 1990s. These summits called upon UN member states to deal with social issues in addition to the traditional quest of economic growth. In fact, despite commendable growth rates observed during the 1990s, people in many countries were still living in difficult conditions. In response to this, MDGs were meant to tackle a number of issues from poverty, hunger, to diseases and environment. To ensure a proper follow up on progress or lack thereof, a set of initial 48 indicators was agreed upon and data collection efforts have started to feed the reporting on MDGs. The MDG indicators used for such data collection and processing have been 48 up to early 2007, but they have since then been increased to 60 restructured indicators after adding on new ones, modifying a few and deleting a few others. In Africa, the tracking of progress towards attaining the MDGs has put additional pressure on National Statistical Offices (NSOs), and it has also provided them with the opportunity to develop their capacity to deliver the required information for monitoring development initiatives. Several other international frameworks and requirements exist owing to the fact that countries are part of many treaties and conventions that require proper follow up on progress made to meet relevant requirements.

2.2 Data Supply

There exist data producers having different responsibilities and capacities for data production and management. The main data producers in African countries include the NSO, line ministries (health, education, agriculture, infrastructure, labour etc.), departments, agencies such as the central bank, private sector institutions such as chambers of commerce and industry, research and training institutions including universities, and non governmental institutions etc. In many countries, line ministries not only produce statistics by aggregating basic information collected by the local structures under their jurisdiction such as schools or health centres but often they conduct comprehensive data collection exercises. For example, in many countries, the ministry of agriculture have substantial delegated authority and technical capacity to conduct a census of agriculture.

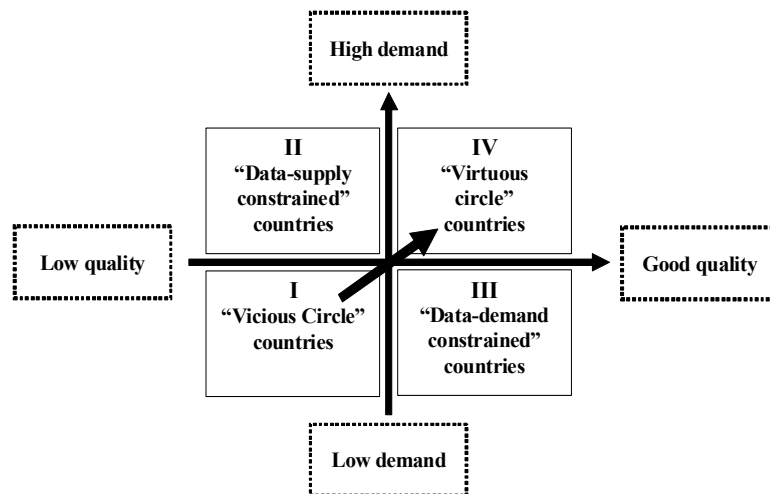
In many countries the legal framework provides a mechanism to coordinate these data producers and usually, this responsibility is assigned to the NSO. In order to meet data needs in a comprehensive and synergistic manner, many countries have

designed medium-term strategic or corporate plans for NSOs. They have designed and are implementing national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDSs) covering all sectors and users of data, which are judged to be the most appropriate approach to strategic planning for national statistics. Different institutions collect data using different methods. NSOs collect data from nation-wide censuses and surveys, using international standards and statistical methods, and they use secondary data from other data producers such as line ministries to complement the production of official statistics. Line ministries and public sector institutions compile data mainly from administrative records, although some conduct censuses and surveys. In some countries, for example, the ministry of education undertakes an annual school census and the ministry of agriculture undertakes a census or survey of agriculture. NGOs collect data mainly from participatory assessments while research and training institutions usually conduct small-scale surveys.

3 Data Demand and Supply Mismatches

In an effort to make the case for evidence-based policy making, Scott (2005) suggests an interesting typology of countries involving continued interaction between data generators and data users so that demand for and supply of data are taken to be realistically inter-dependent and mutually interactive. According to the typology, countries can be represented in a continuum of data demand and supply, which are mutually reinforcing as represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Data Demand and Supply



Quadrant I represent countries trapped into a *vicious circle* of statistical under-development and under-performance as a result of limited awareness about the importance of statistics leading to low demand and use of data for policy and decision-making. In these countries, statistics are given low priority and fewer resources leading to under-performance. Quadrant II represents countries where more and more data are being used especially for policy and decision-making but supply of good data is falling behind demand. Quadrant III represents countries where supply of better statistics is increasing but for a number of reasons, demand remains low as available statistics are not being put to full use to inform national

development processes. Quadrant IV represents countries in a *virtuous circle* where statistical production is improving and statistics are increasingly being used to inform development processes.

Many African countries are trapped into the *vicious circle* of statistical underperformance and low demand and use of data. Several assessments undertaken on the African continent with a view to develop frameworks and plans aimed at revamping the statistical development of the continent have confirmed this fact. These include the evaluation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for the Development of Statistics in the 1990s (AAPA)⁴, the preparation of the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa (RRSF)⁵, the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA)⁶, and ongoing assessments accompanying the preparation of NSDSs⁷ across the continent. This vicious cycle has clear impacts on the availability of statistical information in support of countries' development efforts. Discussed below are two major manifestations of this vicious circle namely through data gaps and data differences.

For analysis purposes data gaps are defined as unavailability of data on a given variable when considering a time series. Data differences are discrepancies observed on the same variable using two or several different data sources. The analysis in this paper will focus on differences between national and international data sources. To illustrate these two issues, the analysis will be performed on two sets of data namely economic statistics; and social statistics.

3.1 Economic statistics

Economic statistics constitute a very important area of statistics as they provide inputs to the compilation of national accounts, balance of payments, government finance statistics, monetary and finance statistics, price statistics, etc. These are critical and essential for macroeconomic policy analysis which includes the corresponding policies for economic growth and employment, exchange rate, fiscal

⁴The AAPA was designed in 1990 to build statistical capacity at the national level through designing strategic development plans for statistics, strengthening the organization and management of statistical systems, coordinating statistical activities, improving the quality of statistics, developing databases, disseminating statistical products, promoting data analysis and research, creating African Statistical Day and training staff. It was evaluated at the end of the 1990s. The evaluation identified the problems encountered in implementing the plan. Most of the problems were related to the lack of ownership of the plan, the lack of leadership of national statistical systems, the lack of financial resources, and the inadequacy of institutional and human capacities.

⁵ The RRSF is a framework designed to provide strategic directions and appropriate mechanisms for guiding and accelerating the development of sustainable statistical capacity in Africa for managing for results. It was prepared the African Development, PARIS21 and the World Bank under the leadership of ECA. This framework has four main aims: Raise awareness of the role of statistics; Increase user satisfaction by enhancing the quality and usability of statistical information; Promote greater use of statistical information. Achieve synergy, cost-effectiveness and sustainability in national statistical systems.

⁶ The SHaSA is a continental effort that directly supports the African integration agenda, particularly the Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) which was adopted by the African Union Heads of State and Government in July 2009. Its objective is to provide the African Statistical System with a general framework for providing quality harmonised statistics for the design and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of integration and development policies in Africa.

⁷ NSDSs are the overarching strategy of the RRSF. They are essentially second-generation statistical plans that provide a comprehensive framework for statistical development at national level. They provide for, among other things: statistical advocacy to create greater awareness about the role of statistics; forging and/or strengthening partnerships for statistical development; a vision of where the NSS should be in the medium to long term; a road map and milestones for getting there and a base from which progress can be measured and establishes a mechanism for informed change when needed etc.

and monetary. The statistical data in this area are produced by a number of players in the NSS, namely NSOs, central banks, and ministries of finance, planning, and economic development.

African countries, in collaboration with RECs, have endorsed programmes for regional integration and macroeconomic convergence, including steps towards free trade areas, customs unions, and common currencies. The adopted frameworks for convergence consist, among others, of common definitions on the convergence criteria, including primary and secondary criteria of convergence, and the harmonization of macroeconomic and statistical concepts. Accordingly, there has been an increase in the demand for statistical information aimed at accompanying these integration efforts. These include the statistics for the convergence criteria, such as the harmonized budget deficit as a ratio of the GDP; the harmonized inflation rate under an agreed ceiling; limits on the financing of central banks and foreign reserves; and extensive change in the compilation of balance of payments and trade statistics due to the removal of trade barriers. Since the bulk of the criteria and the statistics for integration are expressed as a ratio of GDP, harmonization of definition and compilation of national accounts is given special attention. Another important element of statistics used in the integration process is the measurement of inflation. Harmonized trade statistics is a major requirement in the assessment of the compliance with criteria on external position and the reduction of trade barriers, including the compilation of intra-trade and extra-trade data from the potential countries to be part of the unions.

While it can be argued that African countries are still struggling to produce statistics in support of their development efforts in this area, it is nevertheless worth noting that this is an area where statistical information is available in the majority of African countries. This is because these data are needed for macro economic and other sectoral policy decision-making processes as basic foundation of any nation whatever the level of development. Moreover, the functioning of any country is also dependent on relationships with international organizations including the Bretton Woods institutions that require a minimum of information to provide grants and/or lend money to their members.

Table 1 below shows that most African countries have smooth time series data for GDP for the last eleven years. Only Libya and Somalia do not have data for the year 2011. The data used in the table are from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) statistical database⁸. This means that owing to the importance of this kind of data, there are few gaps, at least at the aggregated level.

Whilst data gaps are not common, at least at the aggregate level in the area of economic statistics, the quality of the data availed to users is still questionable in many instances. Recently, the statistical development on the African continent has been questioned, in particular, the inability of African countries to produce and use quality statistics to support of the development efforts.

⁸ StatBase is a regional database based at the ECA that contains key development information on African countries. This database gives priority to country data as opposed to other international data sources.

Table 1: GDP at Current Market Prices (millions of USD\$)

Country	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Algeria	54,745	56,760	67,864	85,333	103,198	117,209	135,174	171,718	138,213	161,956	198,533
Angola	8,936	11,432	12,863	18,227	28,234	41,789	60,449	84,216	75,519	82,476	101,274
Benin	2,499	2,808	3,557	4,051	4,358	4,705	5,506	6,634	6,585	6,558	7,296
Botswana	6,034	6,092	8,087	10,048	10,256	11,256	12,377	13,487	11,474	13,903	16,036
Burkina Faso	2,834	3,206	4,206	4,839	5,463	6,069	6,785	8,210	8,339	8,821	9,982
Burundi	...	...	595	665	796	920	922	1,078	1,225	1,379.9	1,564
Cameroon	9,633	10,880	13,622	15,775	16,588	17,953	20,432	23,323	23,380	23,621	26,587
Cape Verde	563	621	814	924	972	1,108	1,331	1,530	1,456	1,484	1576
Central African Republic	932	991	1,140	1,270	1,350	1,473	1,698	1,984	1,982	1,987	2,209
Chad	1,710	1,988	2,722	3,279	6,269	6,873	8,233	9,952	9,030	10,626	12,450
Comoros	220	247	318	368	380	406	462	520	520	543	610
Congo	2,794	3,020	3,496	4,649	6,087	7,731	8,344	11,790	9,408	12,407	14,950
Côte d'Ivoire	11,193	12,347	15,307	16,554	17,085	17,801	20,342	23,281	23,043	22,920	23,630
DR Congo	6,808	5,544	5,670	6,511	7,191	8,824	10,029	11,933	11,153	13,191	16,112
Djibouti	556	577	628	666	709	769	848	983	1,049	1,129	1240
Egypt	90,284	84,828	71,357	78,322	93,185	107,741	132,235	164,841	187,986	215,464	231,223
Equatorial Guinea	1,695	2,087	2,754	4,774	7,206	8,553	10,841	14,550	10,127	12,386	13,547
Eritrea	752	729	870	1,109	1,098	1,211	1,318	1,380	1,857	2,117	2,210
Ethiopia	8,043	7,768	8,539	10,035	12,286	15,134	19,182	25,866	28,477	26,593	31,394
Gabon	4,713	4,932	6,055	7,178	8,666	9,546	11,430	14,413	10,866	13,255	16,127
Gambia	687	578	509	576	626	651	797	966	900	947	983
Ghana	5,315	6,166	7,633	8,881	10,732	20,332	24,632	28,470	26,141	32,887	39,248
Guinea	2,829	2,950	3,446	3,666	2,937	2,867	4,152	4,520	4,635	4,714	5,038
Guinea-Bissau	384	407	465	523	573	579	691	843	837	846	945
Kenya	12,983	13,103	14,904	16,095	18,739	22,504	27,237	30,508	30,561	32,212	34,059
Lesotho	706	657	969	1,234	1,368	1,429	1,597	1,626	1,711	2,179	2,206
Liberia	545	519	443	530	584	676	788	889	991	1,039	1,110
Libya	34,061	21,913	26,236	33,293	45,452	55,077	62,668	81,376	58,762	69,823	...
Madagascar	4,530	4,397	5,474	4,365	5,039	5,516	7,343	9,413	8,552	8,739	9,844
Malawi	2,365	2,665	2,425	2,625	2,755	3,117	3,648	4,088	4,726	5,132	6,047
Mali	3,018	3,189	4,222	4,982	5,486	6,123	7,145	8,738	8,964	9,400	10,426
Mauritania	1,115	1,145	1,284	1,548	1,837	2,699	2,928	3,585	3,027	3,614	4,078
Mauritius	4,537	4,756	5,817	6,579	6,489	6,732	7,792	9,641	8,824	9,709	11,313
Morocco	37,725	40,442	49,757	56,947	59,464	65,640	75,223	88,313	90,426	90,988	100,256
Mozambique	4,075	4,201	4,666	5,698	6,579	7,096	8,036	9,891	9,674	9,199	12,567
Namibia	3,547	3,361	4,931	6,607	7,261	7,979	8,812	8,789	8,903	11,166	12,513
Niger	1,881	2,145	2,640	2,897	3,369	3,647	4,284	5,403	5,365	5,671	6,381
Nigeria	44,138	59,117	67,656	87,845	112,249	145,428	166,451	208,146	169,410	196,262	223,094
Rwanda	1,675	1,677	1,847	2,088	2,581	3,110	3,741	4,707	5,253	5,624	6,364
Sao Tome	76	85	101	111	123	135	144	182	198	207	261
Senegal	4,878	5,334	6,858	8,032	8,707	9,359	11,285	13,387	12,767	12,859	14,495
Seychelles	654	736	740	857	937	1,038	1,039	958	842	960	1,059
Sierra Leone	1,173	1,311	1,422	1,418	1,491	1,646	1,951	2,193	2,168	2,153	2,906
Somalia	1,303	1,219	1,341	1,668	2,372	2,208	2,539	2,599	2,730	1,747	...
South Africa	118,479	111,101	168,219	219,093	247,051	261,007	286,172	272,591	282,136	364,580	401,865
Sudan	15,716	18,137	21,355	26,646	35,183	45,461	56,554	60,832	58,982	70,523	69,960
Swaziland	1,355	1,224	1,854	2,421	2,584	2,948	3,054	3,006	3,170	3,696	3,860
Tanzania	10,384	10,806	11,659	12,826	14,142	14,331	16,825	20,715	21,368	22,915	23,874
Togo	1,332	1,472	1,674	1,937	2,110	2,219	2,531	3,168	3,163	3,186	3,503
Tunisia	22,066	23,142	27,454	31,184	32,272	34,377	38,910	46,016	41,992	45,380	47,946
Uganda	6,341	6,670	7,050	8,436	10,040	11,011	13,549	16,378	16,554	17,715	19,442
Zambia	3,654	3,711	4,342	5,439	7,179	10,702	11,541	14,641	12,805	16,190	19,332
Zimbabwe	3,224	6,203	6,199	6,206	6,073	6,101	5,660	5,221	6,133	7,433	10,068
Africa	571,695	581,396	696,056	847,830	995,761	1,150,816	1,337,657	1,563,488	1,474,359	1,702,513	1,833,597

Jerven (2013) in an article in the Guardian⁹ titled “*Lies, damn lies and GDP*”, states that “...it is a real tragedy that the statistical capacities of sub-Saharan African economies are in such a poor state. African development statistics tell us less than we would like to think about income, poverty and growth in the region...” This is only a flavor of the content of a book¹⁰ he published through the Cornell University Press early this year.

African statistical systems are certainly challenged and are yet to fully meet the ever growing demand for quality statistical information of modern economies, which they are aspiring. When data are available, there exist differences especially between national and international compiled data. Table 2 presents differences in data from the ECA database and the World Bank. Out of a total of 53 countries, 3 did not have data on GDP in the World Bank database for the year 2010. These are Djibouti, Libya, and Somalia. Of the remaining 50 countries, 26% have a perfect match between national (represented by the ECA database) and international (represented by the World Bank) sources. For thirty-two percent of the countries, the values in World Bank database are higher than the reported values at the ECA. In 42% of the countries, national sources report a higher value than the World Bank. There is a tendency for national sources to overestimate the values of GDP. While most of the differences can be considered as negligible, some are considerable. This is the case of Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone with 31.9%, 10.3%, 24.4%, 14.6%, 10.4%, and 12.8% in absolute values respectively. These differences might be explained, among others, by the need to ensure comparability of data through adjustments to reflect methodological differences. In fact, the production and use of economic statistics follow a number of guidelines, concepts, definitions and standards such as the International Classifications, the System of National Accounts (SNA), the International Merchandise Trade Statistics, and Balance of Payment.

African countries face many challenges in the production and use of economic statistics and compilation of national accounts. In a survey conducted by the ECA in 2011 on the implementation of the SNA, several challenges were identified. The results show that, in general, the continent is still in the early stages of developing viable harmonious national accounts systems. National accounts statistics are not fully comparable across countries. There are limited human, financial, and technical resources as well as weak capacity within the statistical systems coupled with inadequate infrastructure to support statistical operations. Due to the poor state of technology, the industry and products nomenclatures are too aggregated.

While national accounts in Africa are mainly compiled by NSOs¹¹ (89%), the number of professional staffs working in national accounts departments of these institutions is relatively small. The average number of national accountants per country is 8.

⁹ Morten Jerven in the [African Arguments](#), part of the [Guardian Africa Network](#), [guardian.co.uk](#), Tuesday 20 November 2012. Morten Jerven is assistant professor at the Simon Fraser University, School for International Studies, in Canada.

¹⁰ Morten Jerven (2013), “Poor Numbers: How We Are Misled by African Development Statistics and What to Do about It,” the Cornell University Press, USA.

¹¹ Refer to ECA Regional Project Document for the Implementation of the 2008 SNA in Africa.

Table 2: GDP at Current Market Prices in 2010 (Millions of USD)

Country	ECA	World Bank	Difference (%)	Country	ECA	World Bank	Difference (%)
Algeria	161,956	161,979	0.0				
Angola	82,476	82,471	0.0	Libya	69,823		
Benin	6,558	6,558	0.0	Madagascar	8,739	8,721	0.2
Botswana	14,865	14,905	-0.3	Malawi	5,132	5,054	1.5
Burkina Faso	8,822	8,825	0.0	Mali	9,400	9,422	-0.2
Burundi	1,380	2,027	-31.9	Mauritania	3,614	3,614	0.0
Cameroon	23,621	22,480	5.1	Mauritius	9,709	9,714	-0.1
Cape Verde	1,488	1,659	-10.3	Morocco	90,988	90,803	0.2
Central African Republic	1,987	1,985	0.1	Mozambique	9,199	9,209	-0.1
Chad	10,626	8,541	24.4	Namibia	11,166	11,133	0.3
Comoros	523	541	-3.3	Niger	5,671	5,411	4.8
Congo	12,407	12,008	3.3	Nigeria	196,262	196,838	-0.3
Côte d'Ivoire	22,920	22,921	0.0	Rwanda	5,624	5,624	0.0
DR Congo	13,191	13,110	0.6	Sao Tome and Principe	207	201	3.1
Djibouti	1,129	..		Senegal	12,859	12,855	0.0
Egypt	215,464	218,894	-1.6	Seychelles	960	963	-0.3
Equatorial Guinea	12,386	14,500	-14.6	Sierra Leone	2,153	1,910	12.8
Eritrea	2,117	2,117	0.0	Somalia	1,747		
Ethiopia	26,593	29,684	-10.4	South Africa	364,580	363,523	0.3
Gabon	13,255	13,200	0.4	Sudan	70,523	66,997	5.3
Gambia	947	1,050	-9.8	Swaziland	3,696	3,698	-0.1
Ghana	33,023	32,175	2.6	Tanzania	22,915	22,915	0.0
Guinea	4,714	4,736	-0.5	Togo	3,186	3,176	0.3
Guinea-Bissau	846	835	1.2	Tunisia	45,380	44,238	2.6
Kenya	32,212	32,198	0.0	Uganda	17,715	17,197	3.0
Lesotho	2,179	2,179	0.0	Zambia	16,190	16,193	0.0
Liberia	1,039	988	5.1	Zimbabwe	7,433	7,476	-0.6

More than half of African countries have less than 6 professional staff working in the national accounts departments of their NSOs. On the other hand, staff turnover is relatively high. On average, 4 national accounts professionals left national accounts departments in African countries during the last five years. Lack of resources and weak capacity to carry out household and business surveys and censuses for data collection to meet the minimum datasets requirement for national accounts may be reflected in the fact that most of the data sources (60% to 70%) used for compiling national accounts rely on administrative records from industries ranging from agriculture, manufacturing to services. The overall statistical infrastructure in terms of data dissemination, networks with users and respondents, as well as analytical capacity is also relatively weak in the whole continent. For example, the average number of months it takes to release the first estimates of a survey conducted is 5 months, while the publication of final estimates takes around 17 months. Advance release calendars for statistical data exist only in about half of the countries. Different versions of the SNA are used in different countries. While most of the countries (88%) are using the 1993 SNA, some countries (12%) are still using the 1968 system. This situation is not unique or specific to a sub-regional, i.e each region has at least one country using such a system (North, Central, East, West, and Southern Africa).

One of the issues that emerged from the implementation of the International Comparison Programme for Africa (ICP-Africa) 2005 round was the lack of consistency in national accounts between some countries. Despite the fact that countries were compiling their national accounts in accordance with either the 1968 or 1993 SNA, there were some significant discrepancies between some countries' accounts because their estimates did not fully cover everything in some important

basic headings. In Africa, the basic heading for imputed rents of owner-occupied dwellings stood out as being a major source of inconsistencies between countries, with estimates ranging from 0 to more than 10% of GDP. Other important components were also affected by having less than the full coverage recommended in the SNA. For example, large variations between countries at similar stages of economic development in the levels of own-account production and consumption indicated that some countries' estimates were not completely in accordance with the scope defined in the SNA. There is also a challenge concerning the inclusion of the informal sector in the SNA on a regular basis, a very important sector as far as African economies are concerned. In many cases, only formal activities are partially covered and the veracity of data from informal activities is questionable. Institutional sectors are partially covered. For example, the non-profit institutions and civil societies, other levels of governance like state and local government, and aid agencies are not covered. Consequently, the true size of the economy is not fully captured by the SNA.

Compared with the six milestones adopted by the UN Statistical Commission, which represent the six phases for full implementation of the 1993 SNA, one fifth of African countries (20%) have reached only Phase 1 with statistical capacity to produce economic statistical aggregates of basic indicators of GDP at current and constant prices supported by the approaches and accounts including final expenditures on GDP and GDP by industry. Most of the African countries (65%) have so far reached Phase 2 with statistical capacity to produce additional economic aggregates of gross national income, and other primary indicators supported by the approaches and accounts including external accounts of primary income and current transfers, capital and financial accounts for the rest of the world. This group includes 27 countries compiling supply and use tables. Less than eight countries (15%) have reached Phase 3 with the capability to produce the first step of institutional sector accounts supported by the approaches and accounts including production accounts for all institutional sectors, generation of income, allocation of primary income, secondary distribution of income, use of incomes, capital accounts and financial accounts for general government.

The above challenges have however, to be put into context in our quest in supporting African countries to address them. It is to be recalled that most of the African countries are still carrying the insufficiencies inherited from the SAPs era as clearly argued in Jerven (2013). One of the main consequences of SAPs was the reduction in state activities. As a result, NSOs were subjected to cuts emanating from the prescription of Bretton Woods institutions. They lost not only human resources but also experienced reduction in investments in statistical infrastructure and cuts in budgets to conduct surveys and other statistical operations. Moreover, many of the state-owned firms were privatized, depriving the state of an important source of administrative data that are inputs to many statistical production activities such as the compilation of national accounts. In an attempt to catch up on the devastating effects of SAPs, the same institutions came up with PRSs and related development frameworks. In addition, several regional and international development frameworks emerged during the last decades of the twentieth century, putting additional pressure on already weak and vulnerable statistical systems.

These frameworks put a lot of emphasis on social statistics which resulted in diverting resources to this area to the detriment of economic statistics. In fact, it is more attractive for NSOs staff to work on big internationally and donor-driven statistical operations such as Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), and Living Standard Measurement Surveys (LSMS) than sitting down compiling national accounts. This is because the returns of being in the field for the conduct of such well-funded surveys are higher than national accounts which generally consist of desk work.

3.2 Social Statistics

Data on a large number of social development indicators can be derived from household surveys and a few of them can only be obtained from these statistical operations. Although administrative datasets are relevant in monitoring the effectiveness of government programmes, they are limited by their inability to measure outcomes and impacts, which are crucial for designing policies and programmes. For example, although the overall income of a country or even per capita income can be measured through the SNA, the proportion of population in poverty and the depth of poverty can only be obtained through such vehicles as the income and expenditure surveys. Similarly, although employment offices register the unemployed, the data compiled from this source cannot provide the detailed information needed for policy formulation. The latter can only be obtained through labour force surveys. In addition to providing data on development indicators, household surveys help analyze the correlates of such indicators for better understanding of their interplay that could lead to better inter-sectoral and integrated approach towards development policies and programmes implementation. Moreover, due to the fact that in most African countries administrative data and civil registration systems are underdeveloped, household surveys tend to be the only reliable source for data on most of the social development indicators.

The major surveys that provide social statistics include the World Bank sponsored LSMS, the International Labor Organization (ILO) sponsored Labour Force Surveys (LFS), the World Bank sponsored Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) sponsored MICS, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) DHS¹², and the World Bank sponsored Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaires (CWIQ). This list is not exhaustive as there are other household surveys that focus on specific topics such as HIV/AIDS surveys, education surveys etc.

Despite wide recognition of the importance of household surveys in producing development indicators, the UN Household Survey Capability Program initiated in the late 1970s followed by other international efforts over the years have not necessarily improved the capacities of African countries in household surveys undertaking and have largely been donor-driven. This has resulted in uneven mix of

¹² The Demographic and Health Surveys collect, analyze, and disseminate accurate and representative data on population, health, HIV, and nutrition in developing countries. They are sponsored by the USAID) with contributions from other donors such as UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, and UNAIDS.

surveys within a country and also wide disparities among countries in terms of number of surveys.

It is interesting to note that some countries have not conducted any household survey of a particular type while others have managed to conduct many. The reasons might vary from political will (Libya); data generated through administrative systems (Mauritius and Seychelles), lack of capacity, lack of a survey programme in response to data needs, and lack of or skewed donor attention.

While it can be argued that the development of social statistics had diverted resources previously allocated to the development of economic statistics, the former are still subject to both data gaps and data differences. The advent of the MDGs has eloquently illustrated the issue of data gaps in this area.

Figure 3¹³ below depicts the number of surveys conducted in Africa by type of surveys for two periods 1990-2000 and 2001-2012. As many as 428 household surveys were conducted in Africa during the last two decades, with DHS leading with 29% of the total number followed by MICS, among others. Curiously, for some surveys, the number decreased after the MDGs were adopted, and these included HIES and MICS. The two survey types that have seen significant increases are LFS and CWIQ. The CWIQ which were introduced in the late nineties were designed to monitor social indicators in Africa on an annual basis and meant to complement rather than replace other surveys. They were adopted in many countries as they provided data on many of the MDG indicators much more frequently.

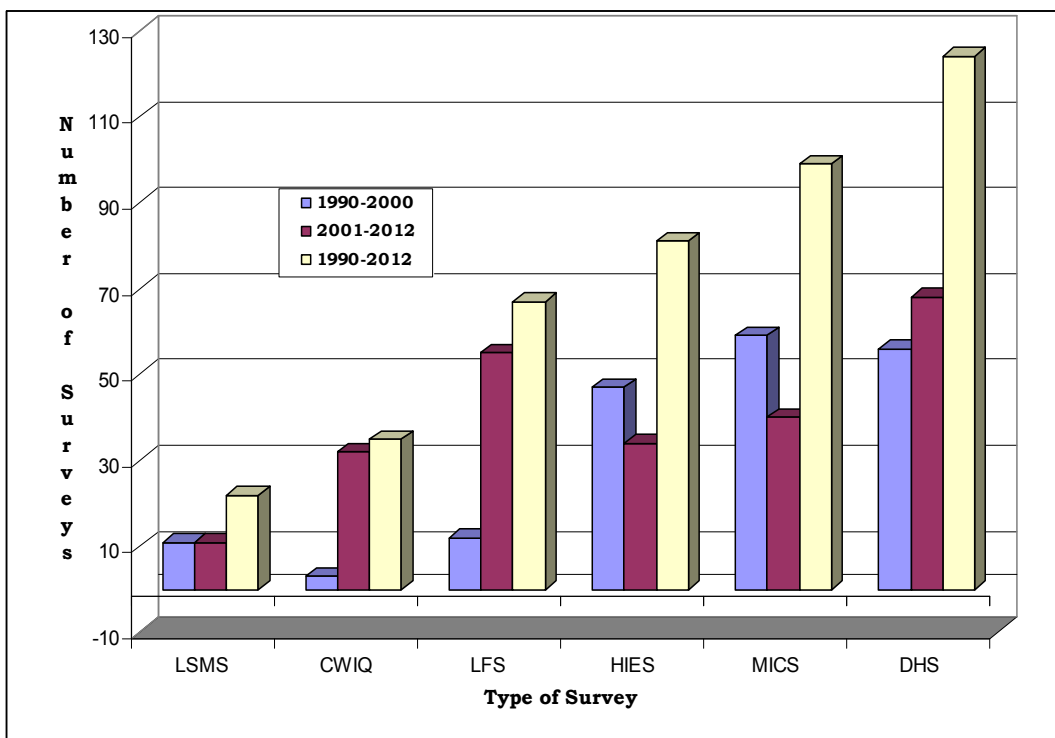
In terms of distribution of household surveys taking in Africa during the last two decades, there exist significant disparities. Table 3 in Annex 1 shows that out of the then 53 African member States, 30.2% of them conducted less than 5 household surveys, 45.3% between 6 and 10 surveys, and 22.6% between 11 and 16 surveys. None of the 53 countries conducted more than 20 surveys during the last two decades despite the importance accorded to MDG monitoring and other international agendas. The disparities are such that Libya has conducted no household survey while Tanzania led the pack by conducting as many as 20 surveys. As many as 17 countries have not undertaken a single HIES during the last two decades. It is worth noting that Mauritius, Seychelles, and Tunisia had not conducted DHSs during the period. This might be due to the fact that their administrative systems may have been generating the needed statistics on a regular basis. In fact, Mauritius and Seychelles have not undertaken any MICS or CWIQ too.

It is interesting to note that some countries have not conducted any household survey of a particular type while others have managed to conduct many. The reasons might vary from political will (Libya); data generated through administrative systems (Mauritius and Seychelles), lack of capacity, lack of a survey programme in response to data needs, and lack of or skewed donor attention.

¹³ Source: <http://www.ihsn.org/home/?q=activities/catalog/surveys>. The completeness of the survey catalogue is not known but can be presumed to be close to complete. The figure summarises information for surveys undertaken 1990 as it is starting point of MDGs. 2001 has been chosen as the starting point of the second period in the table as MDGs were introduced around that period.

While it can be argued that the development of social statistics had diverted resources previously allocated to the development of economic statistics, the former are still subject to both data gaps and data differences. The advent of the MDGs has eloquently illustrated the issue of data gaps in this area.

Figure 3: Household Surveys in Africa 1990-2012



Data gaps are very common in the area of social statistics as household surveys are conducted sporadically in African countries. This is a result, among others, of donor-driven statistical operations in this area. Table 4 in Annex 2 illustrates very well data gaps in MDG indicators¹⁴. It can be observed that no country has more than 4 data points on any of the indicators considered for a 16-year period (1996-2011). Most of the countries have less than 3 data points. As could be expected, it is only when a major survey was conducted that a country has a data point on the considered variables. DHS have been major sources of data on these variables. In addition to data paucity for a long period of time, it is worth noting that the surveys are not conducted during the same years for different countries, resulting in challenges in making international comparisons on different indicators. This confirms the findings in Sanga (2011) where he argues, among others, that if data had been reported and recorded in the UN Statistics Division (UNSD) database-the global and authoritative repository for MDG indicators-for the 48 indicators (out of the current set of 60), excluding 12 on global partnership in Goal 8, then there would have been 384 data-points in all for the period 2000-2007. Only and 36 %

¹⁴ The data used from to illustrate data gaps and differences consist of 3 MDG indicators (children under five mortality rate, percentage of live births delivered at a health facility, and percentage of children underweight) from selected countries (Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda) covering a 16-year period.

and 34% of the data points have been reported in Ethiopia and Uganda respectively. Several factors contribute to the observed data gaps. These include periodicity of sample surveys; adjustments in the MDG framework; and national priorities. Changes in the number and type of indicators are also a contributing factor to the observed gaps in social statistics. In fact, out of the 60 MDG indicators in use today, since early 2007, excluding 12 indicators that deal with global partnership in Goal 8, there are 15 new indicators, 13 modified since 2007, and only 20 that have been around since before 2007. Hence, one cannot expect much for the 28 indicators, which are either new or modified since 2007. This is in addition to the fact that the whole process of the design of the MDG framework did not involve at the onset those who are supposed to come up with indicators for its monitoring and evaluation: statisticians. The latter were called upon to come up with indicators on already decided goals and targets. On the other hand, some of the indicators emanating from global agendas are not part of the national agenda of many African countries. There may have been lack of in-country capacity to collect data on account of cost and other considerations, and some indicators like carbon dioxide emission and ozone depletion in Goal 7 of the MDGs may not be quite in line with national priorities of many African countries.

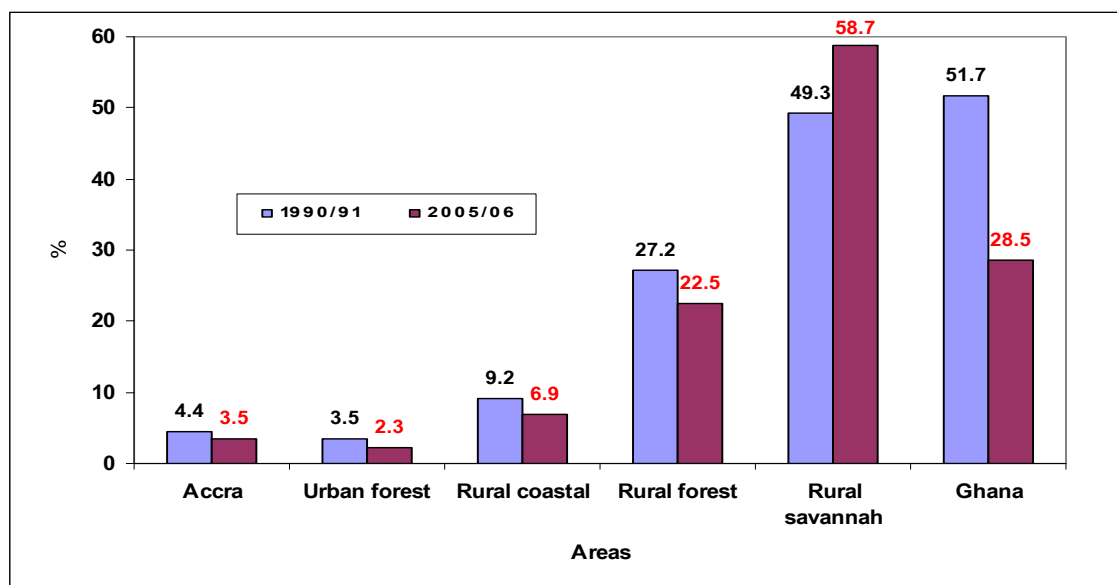
When data are available, the perennial problem of differences among sources emerges. Table 6 in Annex 4 presents differences in values between national data sources and international ones for the same indicators for selected African countries. The difference between national data values and international ones is more than 20% for many of indicators and countries. Differences in indicator values between national and international sources are common due to a variety of reasons. National data often remain unused by international agencies because they do not comply with data quality requirements set by international standards. In response to this deficiency, international agencies often impute and/or adjust the national data for international comparability reasons. As a result, as shown in Table 5 in Annex 3, many countries have complete time series on many indicators for the 16-year period covering 1996-2011. In fact only three indicators have more data in national data sources than can be found in international data sources. These model-based estimates are derived by a number of UN agencies for several indicators, and their estimates are invariably used in important decision-making. In many countries there is often a lack of coordination among national data producers, which results in weak national reporting and dissemination of inconsistent or contradictory information to international statistical agencies. Data can also be different because the various components included in a statistical indicator can follow different definitions at the national and international levels. Moreover, computation methods of indicators can vary, thus producing discrepancies between national estimates and those produced by international agencies. Several MDG indicators require the use of population estimates for inter-census periods, and these are invariably made using various assumptions about population growth based on further assumptions regarding trends in birth rate, death rate and net migration. UN agencies often use such estimates made either by the UN Population Division or by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). In the absence of data from civil registration, such assumptions may be too strong. On the other hand, institutions within the country often use estimates produced by the NSOs. Hence, different sets of assumptions are

bound to lead to discrepancies between in-country estimates and those in the UNSD database in those MDG parameters that make use of inter-census population estimates.

3.3 Who's Demand to Meet?

African NSSs have seriously been challenged with the ever growing demand for data to support national, sub regional, continental, and international development efforts. Given the limited resources allocated to the development of statistics in African countries, there is a need to prioritize. The starting point of this prioritization is to decide which part of the demand to meet first. While it is interesting for a country to know that the poverty incidence is lower than the one of the neighboring country for example, it is less likely that this information will be of paramount importance to the minister of finance of the country. In fact, the aggregate level of the information often used to assess progress towards supranational development frameworks hides discrepancies across sub national settings and population groups in the country. As can be observed in Figure 4, looking at national averages would lead to the conclusion that poverty incidence in Ghana has been seriously reduced from 1990 to 2006 by 23.2 points, a commendable achievement at the national level. However, sub national data that depict poverty incidence across different regions of the country show that the Rural Savannah Region has seen poverty incidence increasing by 9.4 points.

Figure 4: Incidence of Poverty in Ghana by Regions



National priorities should have precedence on international ones. In the quest of complying with international standards, many countries have engaged into the production of data that are not responding to their own national needs. Fortunately, indicators that are needed at different levels require the same type of raw data as inputs. It is the disaggregation level that makes the difference. Data at lower levels of disaggregation allow for targeted socioeconomic policy decision-making and

programme formulation. They help planners and policy makers to be able to identify that some locales require more support for educational programmes, others require disproportionate investment in HIV treatment or malaria abatement etc. African countries should be encouraged to produce data at the sub national level to own their national development narrative.

4 Addressing the Challenges: Ongoing Efforts at the Continental Level

In view of the above challenges and others, stakeholders in statistical development in Africa have undertaken several initiatives mainly built on strategies such as advocacy, coordination of statistical capacity building activities, training, and enhancing capabilities of countries to undertake household surveys and censuses. Particularly, the past five years have seen unprecedented initiatives that brought Pan African Organizations (PAOs) that are the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the ECA joining forces to advance the statistical rejuvenation agenda in Africa. Through such vehicles as the Africa Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD)¹⁵, the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa)¹⁶, expert group meetings, city groups and others, the PAOs have worked with African NSOs, RECs and international partners to strengthen Africa's capacity to produce and use quality statistics. As a result, a number of strategic frameworks have been developed; programmes and projects have been successfully undertaken. These include the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA); the Africa Implementation Plan of the Global Strategy for Improving Food Security, Agricultural and Rural Statistics; the Labor Market Information Systems in Africa Project; the Infrastructure Statistics Programme; the International Comparizon Programme for Africa etc. At the heart of all these achievements is the RRSF as the overarching framework.

There currently exist many statistical governance structures at different levels which are relevant to the proper implementation of the above mentioned initiatives and yet, many statisticians and policy makers in Africa are not aware of these governance structures, their roles and linkages among them, and how they relate to each other. In a paper commissioned by the African Statistical Coordination Committee (ASCC)¹⁷, a mapping of these structures into a unique African governance mechanism was attempted. The mechanism presents different layers of governance (policy, forums, coordination and statistical structures) at different levels –

¹⁵ The ASSD is a country-led initiative aimed at providing a forum where African countries discuss issues pertaining to their statistical development on a regionally coordinated basis. The Symposium is organized in African countries on a rotational basis. It considers a number of aspects relating to developing sustainable statistical systems, addresses the challenges of capacity building, and provides a platform for a comprehensive exchange of practical experiences and best practice among African countries.

¹⁶ StatCom-Africa was established by the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in April 2007 as the apex inter-governmental body in charge of statistics and statistical development on the continent. Membership of StatCom-Africa comprises African countries as represented by their Directors Generals. It reports to the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and, like other regional statistical commissions, it also reports to the UNSC. StatCom-Africa meets every two years.

¹⁷ Room paper accompanying document E/ECA/COE/30/13 and AU/CAMEF/EXP/13(VI) presented at the Fourth Joint Annual Meetings of the AU Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in March 2011.

international, continental, regional and national - and the linkages among them. This was produced with a view to bring different stakeholders to appreciate the roles played by stakeholders in statistical development at different levels. While there are no formal reporting channels between these policy levels, their responsibilities are complementary and mutually re-enforcing. In addition to the governance mechanism, there are a number of principles, frameworks and strategies that have been put in place to foster statistical coordination and development. They cascade from the international, to continental, to regional and finally to the national level. Establishing relationships between them help policy makers and the statistical community in Africa to appreciate opportunities that exist to build partnerships and synergy among key stakeholders at different levels.

African stakeholders under the facilitation of PAOs developed and are implementing a number of initiatives that have yielded noticeable benefits to African member States. The success of the implementation lays on the setting up of joint programming arrangements through the SHaSA. Presented below are some achievements in selected areas during the last decade.

4.1 Population and Housing Censuses

It is common knowledge that Population and Housing Censuses (PHC) are a major source of data for socio-economic planning and development and constitute the sampling frame for other statistical operations such as surveys. Accordingly, the PAOs along with other UN agencies and partners came together to promote and support the implementation of the 2010 Round of PHCs (covering the period 2005-2014) in African countries. This was achieved, among others, through advocacy campaigns spearheaded by PAOs in collaboration with some leading countries such as South Africa. In fact, they vigorously advocated for an enhanced participation of African countries during the current Round, particularly through a series of five ASSDs specifically dedicate to PHCs, with the last one being held in Cairo in 2010. As a result of this effort, so far, thirty-three countries have already undertaken their censuses and all others are planning to conduct one by 2014, with the exception of Somalia. The strategy under this programme consisted in advocating for census taking; supporting countries at different stages of census taking; providing countries with manuals and handbooks for proper census taking; and ensuring exchange of best practices among member States. If the trend continues, it is more likely that the participation of African countries in the 2010 round of PHC will be far better than what was observed during the 2000 round when only 37 countries undertook a PHC. Whilst the challenge of conducting censuses in Africa is being addressed, the use of census data remains at an unacceptably low level. This happens for a variety of reasons, including census data availability and accessibility. In an attempt to address this, the African Census Analysis Project was launched in Pretoria, South Africa. The Project has successfully retrieved and archived data from several past African censuses and these census data are now available for research. Building on this initiative, the Africa Demography series has been initiated with contributions from African scholars and practitioners. Moreover, the African Integrated Census MicroData (AICMD) website has been launched at the ECA, through which 51,524,324 records are freely available to researchers and policymakers. By simply

registering and agreeing to the conditions of user license such as protection of statistical confidentiality, and sharing research results, visitors can download and use the desired datasets. The continent is planning an assessment for the 2010 Round of PHCs in 2013 covering various aspects such as the questions asked, the outputs generated and the processes followed in the collection, processing and dissemination of data. It is also proposed to disseminate manuals and handbooks on PHCs already developed and integrate them into the curricula of African Statistical Training Centres for greater outreach.

4.2 The International Comparizon Programme

The ICP-Africa was launched in 2002 by the AfDB as the coordinator and in close collaboration with RECs. From its original inception basis, the AfDB introduced fundamental changes to the Program to allow for greater participation by African countries. As a result, virtually all African countries (48 in all) were part of the 2005 ICP-Africa, and together they comprised the largest single regional participating group and a third of the total number of countries in the global programme. Unlike other programs in the other regions of the world, the Africa program also serves as a platform for improving the NSSs of participating African countries. It is a broad-based capacity building effort involving African and international partnerships. The 2005 ICP-Africa assisted participating countries to strengthen their compilation capacity of economic statistics, consumer price indexes, GDP and related aggregates, and production of Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs). It also aided the general statistical development in areas including and not limited to the design of the NSDSs. The AfDB uses ICP-Africa as a springboard for its continent-wide statistical capacity-building programme. The 2011 round of ICP-Africa was launched in June 2010 and its activities officially kicked off in January 2011 with 50 countries participating. The activities can be divided into two main categories, namely, price statistics and national accounts including training, technical assistance, etc. The Programme offers a platform for capacity building on household consumption data collection and management which includes data processing tools activities at the national level.

4.3 Improving Food Security, Agricultural, and Rural Statistics

In order to respond to the declining quantity and quality of agricultural statistics in developing countries, a Global Strategy for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics was developed and endorsed in February 2010 by the UN Statistical Commission. The purpose of the Global Strategy is to provide a framework and methodology that will lead to improvements in the availability and quality of national and international food and agricultural statistics, to guide policy analysis and decision-making in the 21st century. Africa is the first region to develop and implement the Global Strategy. The Action Plan for Africa of the Global Strategy was designed in 2010 by AfDB, ECA, AUC and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The Action Plan adopts a long-term perspective (10 to 15 years) but will follow a phased approach, with the first phase covering the five-year period 2011–2015. The launching and training workshops on the Action Plan in general, and on the country assessment process of country needs and capacities in

particular have been organized in June and August 2012 for the benefit of countries. The country assessment data compilation is currently underway and the related result report is expected in the course of 2013. The next steps are to undertake work towards the integration of agricultural statistics into NSDSs and in-depth country assessment with the aim of developing national action plans.

4.4 Harmonized Consumer Price Indices

The monitoring of monetary policies in Africa requires Consumer Price Indices (CPI) comparable across countries. Under the leadership of the AfDB, the Statistics Unit of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have since 2010 embarked on a programme to compile HCPI, in line with the sub-regional integration efforts of meeting the macroeconomic convergence criteria. Member countries of the two RECs have been compiling the HCPIs and posting them on COMESA, SADC and AfDB websites. AfDB, under its Statistical Capacity Building Programme phase III, will provide similar support to the remaining RECs namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

4.5 National Accounts

In order to accelerate the implementation of the 2008 SNA, the African Group on National Accounts (AGNA)¹⁸ has designed a strategy to establish national accounts tools for the African region in line with international standards and practices. The strategy aims to equip the continent with the capacity to develop national accounts in accordance with international standards, taking specific realities into consideration, as development levels across countries vary. At the operational level, a five-year (2010-2014) Regional Programme on the Implementation of the 2008 SNA has been developed to implement the strategy. The Programme is being executed through components related to advocacy campaign; methodological developments followed by capacity building (training and technical assistance); and institutional settings are being strengthened.

The above mentioned initiatives are only part of ongoing efforts to boost the statistical development of the continent.

5 Conclusions

This paper has shown that African countries are still struggling to meet the growing demand for statistical data to support development efforts. There are several reasons for the demand and supply mismatch. While the African statistical system is facing various challenges, different areas of statistics are affected differently. Based on existing datasets namely the ECA database that collate information on development information on African countries and international data sources, it was

¹⁸ AGNA is one of the working groups of the Statistical Commission for Africa dealing with issues pertaining to economic statistics and national accounts.

demonstrated that social statistics are subject to more data gaps than do economic statistics, at least at the aggregate level. This is in part because economic statistics and related components such as national accounts data are needed for macro economic and other sectoral policy decision-making that constitute the basic foundation of any nation irrespective of the level of development. Moreover, the functioning of any country is also dependent on relationships with international organizations including the Bretton Woods institutions that require a minimum of information to provide grants and/or lend money to their members. Demographic and social statistics are generally derived from surveys and census that take place at irregular and sporadic intervals due to the lack of adequate resources. While economic statistics are subject to less data gaps, the data availed to users in this area by African countries are of questionable quality, leading to differences between data available at national and international levels. International organizations do adjust the information received from countries to ensure international comparability of data. The difference between national and international data in some cases is more than 30% for some of the African countries as demonstrated in Table 2. In addition to methodological problems, data differences in the area of social statistics are due to the periodicity of sample surveys and use of population data from different sources. Moreover, because most of demand in this area emanates from international agendas, it is less likely that when the issues at stake are not part national priorities, enough attention and resources be devoted to the collection and use of the data.

The production and use of economic statistics in many African countries had specifically been affected by the insufficiencies inherited from the SAPs era as well as the ever growing demand for information emanating from PRSs and other recent development frameworks. Regional and international development frameworks that emerged during the last decades of the twentieth century did not only put pressure on already weak and vulnerable statistical systems but also a lot of emphasis on social statistics diverting resources to this area to the detriment of economic statistics. There is a need for PAOs and other partners to advocate for enough resource mobilization at all levels in order to strengthen institutional and human resource capacities in African countries for the production and use of economic statistics and national accounts. Despite ongoing efforts by PAOs to develop strategies and project documents, economic statistics have not attracted the kind attention decision-makers and partners accorded to social statistics in the framework of MDGs and other social development frameworks during the last decades.

As far as social statistics are concerned, the decision to conducting a survey and its regularity has to be in response to the evolving needs of the government and the society. It is important for NSSs to plan a programme of household surveys based on such needs with an element of continuity and predictability in designing and implementing such surveys. Such a plan of a right mix of surveys and its continuity will not only help a country monitor its progress towards development agendas but also provide valuable inputs for holistic understanding of the synergies of development that is needed for a more effective policy planning and programme implementation. The year 2015 will mark the end point of the MDGs that the

countries adopted at the beginning of millennium and also perhaps mark the beginning of the post 2015 development framework the world will embark on. It is therefore, imperative that NSSs collect data that measure important development indicators around 2015 for evaluating progress made against a set of targets as well as provide baselines for the targets that would perhaps be set under the new framework. Accordingly, it would be appropriate for partners to systematically work together on a set of strategies for improving the availability of data on development indicators through household surveys, especially in countries which are deficient in this regard. There is therefore a need for a mapping of data gaps in African countries and identification of household surveys that require being undertaken to fill in the gap. Partners can also strive to identify the neediest countries and provide financial and technical support for conducting different household surveys in order of priority. African stakeholders should also consider developing a regional capacity development plan for planning, designing, and implementing various household surveys on the continent.

In reaction to the identified challenges, PAOs and other stakeholders engaged into efforts towards building the capacity of African countries in the production and use of statistical information in support of their development efforts. Several frameworks, strategies, initiatives have been put in place and are being implemented in this regard with a noticeable degree of success as described in this paper. Moreover, African stakeholders have been given tremendous political space to bring their concerns and show progress made in their quest to propel the statistical development of the continent to new heights and to own the narrative of Africa's development. In fact, statistics is one of the thematic areas that has secured a slot in every Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development for the last decade and this is yet to change in the near future, since the historical Ougadougou 2006 meeting where for the first time a statistical perspective was brought to the attention of the ministers. Moreover, the African region is one of the few regions where decisions on statistics and statistical development go along way up to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. These and others are opportunities that should be seized to call upon decision-makers to support African NSSs in order to address the identified challenges. Only this way can we bring African countries to own and influence the narrative of their development.

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Annex 1:
Table 3: Household Surveys in Africa 1990-2012

Countries	LSMS			LFS			HIES			MICS			DHS			CWIQ			All Surveys		
	1990-2000	2001-2012	1990-2012	1990-2000	2001-2012	1990-2012	1990-2000	2001-2012	1990-2012	1990-2000	2001-2012	1990-2012	1990-2000	2001-2012	1990-2012	1990-2000	2001-2012	1990-2012	1990-2000	2001-2012	1990-2012
Algeria					1	1				2	2	4							2	3	5
Angola							2	1	3	1	2	3							3	3	6
Benin				1	1	1	1	1	2				1	3	4		1	1	2	6	8
Botswana				1	1	2	1	2	3	1		1							3	3	6
Burkina Faso					1	1	1		1	1	1	2	2	2	4		4	4	4	8	12
Burundi										2	1	3		1	1		1	1	2	3	5
Cameroon	1		1		1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	4				5	5	10
Cape Verde								1	1				1	1	2		1	1	1	3	4
Central African Republic										2	2	4	1		1				3	2	5
Chad										1		1	1	1	2				2	1	3
Comoros					1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1	2				3	2	5
Congo													2	2			1	1		3	3
Côte d'Ivoire					1	1	1		1	2	1	3	2	1	3				5	3	8
DR Congo					1	1	1		1	1	1	2		1	1				2	3	5
Djibouti					1	1					2	2								3	3
Egypt				1	1	2	3	1	4	1		1	5	3	8				10	5	15
Equatorial Guinea										2		2		1	1				2	1	3
Eritrea													1	1	2				1	1	2
Ethiopia				1	4	5	3	3	6	1		1	1	2	3				6	9	15
Gabon					1	1	2	1	3	1		1	1	1	2		1	1	4	4	8
Gambia					1	1				2	2	4		1	1				2	4	6
Ghana	2	1	3		1	1				1	2	3	3	2	5	1	1	2	7	7	14
Guinea							2		2	1		1	2	2	4		2	2	5	4	9
Guinea Bissau							1		1	2	2	4				2	2	3	4	7	7
Kenya				1	1	2	1		1	1	2	3	2	2	4				5	5	10
Lesotho					1	1	2	1	3	2		2		2	2		1	1	4	5	9
Liberia					1	1		1	1	1		1		1	1		2	2	1	5	6
Libya																					
Madagascar				4	1	5				2		2	2	2	4				8	3	11
Malawi		2	2		1	1				1	1	2	1	3	4		1	1	2	8	10
Mali					1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	3		1	1	3	6	9
Mauritania								1	1	2	1	3	1	1	2		2	2	3	5	8
Mauritius					5	5	1	2	3										1	7	8
Morocco	2		2		5	5	1		1	1		1	2	1	3				6	6	12
Mozambique					1	1	1	2	3	1	1	2	1	3	4	1	1	2	4	8	12
Namibia					1	1	1	1	2				2	1	3				3	3	6
Niger					1	1	1	1	2	2		2	2	2	4		1	1	5	5	10
Nigeria		1	1		1	1	1		1	2	2	4	2	2	4	1	3	4	6	9	15
Rwanda					1	1	1		1	1		1	2	2	4		2	2	4	5	9
Sao Tomé and Príncipe								1	1	2	1	3		1	1				2	3	5
Senegal					1	1	2	1	3	2		2	3	3	6		1	1	7	6	13
Seychelles					1	1	1	1	2										1	2	3
Sierra Leone		1	1		1	1				2	2	4		1	1		1	1	2	6	8
Somalia										2	2	4							2	2	4
South Africa	1		1		6	6	2	2	4				1	1	2				4	9	13
Sudan					1	1				2	1	3	1		1				3	2	5
Swaziland					1	1	1	2	3	2	1	3		1	1				3	5	8
Togo					0	1		1	2	2	2	4	1		1		2	2	4	4	8
Tunisia				2	1	3	3	3	3	1	2	3							6	3	9
Uganda		1	1		1	1							1	3	4				1	5	6
Tanzania	5	3	8	1	1	2	2	2	4	1		1	3	2	5				12	8	20
Zambia		2	2		2	2	2		2		1	1	2	2	4				4	7	11
Zimbabwe				1	1	2	2	4	6		1	1	2	2	4				5	8	13
Total	11	11	22	12	55	67	47	34	81	59	40	99	56	68	124	3	32	35	93	240	428

Annex 2:
Table 4: Selected MDG Indicators on Selected African Countries: National Data Sources

Country	Indicator Name	Source	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Availability
Burkina Faso	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	DHS 1999, 2003, 2010, MICS 2006	...	...	...	219	...	...	...	184	...	...	186	...	...	...	129	...	4
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	DHS 1999, 2003, 2010, MICS 2006	...	...	...	32.1	...	...	...	38.5	...	...	53.5	...	...	...	66.3	...	4
	Percentage of children underweight	DHS 2003, 2010, MICS 2006	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	33.2	...	...	37.4	...	...	...	25.7	...	3
Equatorial Guinea	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	DHS 2007	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	148	...	...	...	...	1
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	DHS 2007	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	70.1	...	...	...	...	1
	Percentage of children underweight	DHS 2007	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	25.1	...	...	...	...	1
Ethiopia	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	DHS 2000, 2005, 2011	...	...	...	...	166	...	...	...	...	123	...	...	...	...	...	88	3
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	DHS 2000, 2005, 2011	...	...	...	...	5	...	...	...	...	5.3	...	...	...	...	...	9.9	3
	Percentage of children underweight	DHS 2000, 2005, 2011	...	...	...	...	41.2	...	...	...	...	32.9	...	...	...	...	...	28.7	3
Ghana	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	DHS 1998, 2003, 2008, MICS 2006	...	...	108	...	...	...	...	111	...	...	111	...	80	...	...	...	4
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	DHS 1998, 2003, 2008, MICS 2006	...	...	43.4	...	...	...	...	45.6	...	...	49.7	...	57.1	...	...	...	4
	Percentage of children underweight	DHS 2003, 2008, MICS 2006	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	18	...	...	17.8	...	13.9	...	...	...	3
Liberia	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	DHS 2007	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	110	...	...	...	...	1
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	DHS 2007	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	36.9	...	...	...	...	1
	Percentage of children underweight	DHS 2007	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	19.2	...	...	...	...	1
Mali	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	DHS 1996, 2001, 2006	238	...	...	...	...	229	...	...	...	...	191	...	...	...	...	...	3
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	DHS 2001, 2006	...	...	...	...	...	37.8	...	...	...	...	45.1	...	...	...	...	...	2
	Percentage of children underweight	DHS 2001, 2006	...	...	...	...	...	29	...	...	...	...	26.7	...	...	...	...	...	2
Nigeria	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	DHS 1999, 2003, 2008, MICS 2007	...	...	...	140	...	...	...	201	...	...	...	138	157	...	...	...	4
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	DHS 2003, 2008, MICS 2007	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	32.6	...	...	...	44.3	35	...	...	...	3
	Percentage of children underweight	DHS 2003, 2008, MICS 2007	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	24.3	...	...	...	25.3	23.1	...	...	...	3
Tanzania	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	DHS 1996, 1999, 2005, 2008, 2010	136	...	...	147	...	...	...	...	...	112	...	...	91	...	81	...	5
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	DHS 1996, 1999, 2005, 2008, 2010	46.5	...	...	43.5	...	...	...	...	...	47.1	...	...	...	...	50.2	...	4
	Percentage of children underweight	DHS 2005, 2008, 2010	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	16.4	...	...	...	...	15.8	...	2
Uganda	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	DHS 1996, 2000, 2006, 2011	147	...	...	...	...	151	...	...	...	...	128	...	...	...	...	90	4
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	DHS 2000, 2006, 2011	...	...	...	...	...	36.6	...	...	...	...	41.8	...	...	...	...	57.4	3
	Percentage of children underweight	DHS 2000, 2006, 2011	...	...	...	...	...	18.4	...	...	...	...	15.9	...	...	...	...	13.8	3

Annex 3:
Table 5: Selected MDG Indicators on Selected African Countries: International Data Sources

Country	Indicator Name	Source	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Availability
Burkina Faso	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	IAEG	195.6	191.9	188.7	185.2	181.5	177.9	174.7	171.1	168.2	164.5	161.7	157.3	154.8	151.9	148.8	146.4	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	IAEG	...	...	31.0	...	...	...	...	37.9	...	...	53.5	...	...	...	...	...	3
	Percentage of children underweight	IAEG	...	...	...	33.7	...	...	...	35.2	...	...	37.4	...	...	26	...	...	4
Equatorial Guinea	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	IAEG	167	162.9	159.9	155.5	152.2	149.1	145.5	142.7	139	136.4	132.5	130.6	127.1	123.8	122	118.1	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	IAEG	...	...	...	...	64.6	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
	Percentage of children underweight	IAEG	...	13.8	...	...	15.7	...	...	...	10.6	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Ethiopia	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	IAEG	163.6	157.4	150.9	144.7	138.6	131.5	124.6	118.2	112.4	106.6	100.9	95.8	90.3	85.8	81.5	77	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	IAEG	...	...	...	...	5.7	...	...	...	...	5.8	...	...	...	...	...	10.0	3
	Percentage of children underweight	IAEG	...	...	...	...	42	...	...	...	...	34.6	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Ghana	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	IAEG	107.5	105.5	103.3	101.1	98.7	96.8	94.6	92.4	90.8	88.4	86.5	84.6	83	81	79.6	77.6	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	IAEG	...	...	44.4	...	...	...	...	47.2	...	...	49.7	55.2	57.1	...	...	...	5
	Percentage of children underweight	IAEG	...	...	...	20.3	...	...	...	18.8	...	...	13.9	...	14.3	...	...	...	4
Liberia	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	IAEG	208.5	199	186.6	174.3	163.8	153.6	144.1	134.3	126.1	116.8	109.7	103.6	96.4	89.2	83.1	78.3	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	IAEG	...	...	...	50.9	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	46.4	...	...	...	...	2
	Percentage of children underweight	IAEG	...	...	...	...	22.8	...	...	...	...	...	...	20.4	...	...	...	...	2
Mali	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	IAEG	230.6	226.2	222.3	218.2	214.4	210.6	206.7	203	199.5	195.9	192.3	188.8	185.4	182.1	178.9	175.6	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	IAEG	...	...	...	...	...	40.7	...	...	...	...	49.0	...	...	...	...	...	2
	Percentage of children underweight	IAEG	37.6	...	...	...	...	30.1	...	...	...	...	27.9	...	...	...	18.9	...	4
Nigeria	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	IAEG	207.2	203.4	199.6	193.6	187.9	181.3	174.6	168.3	162	156	150.3	144.6	139.1	133.9	129.2	124.1	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	IAEG	...	...	...	41.7	...	...	...	35.3	...	...	...	...	38.9	...	...	...	3
	Percentage of children underweight	IAEG	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	27.2	...	...	...	25.7	26.7	...	...	...	3
Tanzania	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	IAEG	148.9	144.3	138.4	132.3	126.4	120.4	114.7	109.1	103.6	98.1	92.7	87.2	82	77.2	72.5	67.6	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	IAEG	38.2	...	...	35.8	...	...	...	...	43.4	...	...	...	...	...	48.9	...	4
	Percentage of children underweight	IAEG	26.9	...	...	25.3	...	...	...	...	...	16.7	...	...	...	...	16.2	...	4
Uganda	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	IAEG	162.1	157.5	152.1	146.3	140.5	134.9	129.8	124.9	120.1	115.5	111	106.6	102.1	97.8	94.2	89.9	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	IAEG	...	...	...	...	39.0	...	...	...	...	...	42.0	...	...	...	...	...	2
	Percentage of children underweight	IAEG	...	...	...	...	...	19	...	...	...	...	16.4	...	...	...	...	...	2

Annex 4:

Table 6: Selected MDG Indicators on Selected African Countries: Deviation from National Data Sources

Country	Indicator Name	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	National	International
Burkina Faso	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births				15%				7%			13%				15%		4	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility								2%			0%						4	3
	Percentage of children underweight								6%			0%						3	4
Equatorial Guinea	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births												12%					1	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility																	1	1
	Percentage of children underweight																	1	3
Ethiopia	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births					17%					13%						13%	3	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility					13%					9%						1%	3	3
	Percentage of children underweight					2%					5%							3	2
Ghana	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births			4%					17%			22%		4%				4	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility			2%					3%			0%		0%				4	5
	Percentage of children underweight								4%			22%		3%				3	4
Liberia	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births												6%					1	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility												26%					1	2
	Percentage of children underweight												6%					1	2
Mali	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	3%					8%					1%						3	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility						8%					9%						2	2
	Percentage of children underweight						4%					4%						2	4
Nigeria	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births				38%				16%				5%	11%				4	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility								8%					11%				3	3
	Percentage of children underweight								12%				2%	16%				3	3
Tanzania	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	9%			10%						12%			10%		10%		5	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility	18%			18%											3%		4	4
	Percentage of children underweight										2%					3%		2	4
Uganda	Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	10%					11%					13%					0%	4	16
	Percentage of live births delivered at a health facility											0%						3	2
	Percentage of children underweight						3%					3%						3	2