Improving The Quality of Official Statistics in Nigeria

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1. Improving the quality of official statistics in a statistical system depends on the priority given to the evaluation of the statistical system. Data quality in many statistical systems is a multidimensional concept that includes issues of accuracy, relevance, timeliness and accessibility. It also requires the application of appropriate tools and techniques.

2. Quality measurement is not only a powerful tool for the control of a vast diversity of a statistical system but also a tool for management because measuring progress made over-time is essential for efficient management. Quality requires a team spirit and should not be the responsibility of a single unit. Hence for any organization to be truly effective, every single unit of it must work properly together because team work throughout an organization is an essential component of quality improvement, for, it builds trust, improves communication and develops interdependences (TQM)

3. The statistical production system used by Federal Office of Statistics in Nigeria in generating official statistics for the purpose of policy design, the well-being of the people and indeed the democratic process are of three types and these are:

    (i)   The National Integrated Survey of household (NISH) which is patterned after the UN's National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP) and which brings about continuous data collection exercise from the households as target population.

    (ii)   The National Integrated Survey of Establishment (NISE) whose objective is the effective data collection from institutions, organizations and establishments.

    (iii)   The System of Administrative Statistics (SAS), which is effectively used in tracking, harnessing and in production of comprehensive administrative statistics derived from records of day-to-day running of the government.

    Appropriate quality strategies have been developed for each of these sub-systems.

4. Different national data collection systems lead to different priorities in the quality evaluation. The quality issues largely adopted in FOS for most of the survey-based data are timeliness, relevance, accuracy and comprehensiveness/completeness. Measures taken to improve the quality of statistics produced are to ascertain the presence of the above-mentioned criteria of our statistical product. For instance, a lot of quality improvement was achieved through the following itemized actions.

Relevance
- Identifying users and their expectations
- Meetings with collaborating agencies
- Forming committees on improving the quality of statistics produced among the collaborating agencies
- User/Producer Interaction

Timeliness
   A timely released statistics is achieved through
- Cooperation at the field level between enumerators and respondents
- Proper publicity of the proposed survey to the society
- Improved retrieval situation on questionnaires lodged

- Improved data processing capability with the use of computers and appropriate software packages
- Database development
- Timely release of survey results for proper dissemination to users and the wider public

Accuracy

Accuracy is achieved through
- Training staff at all levels of data production
- Clear conceptual framework i.e. properly defined terms and concepts
- Supervision and quality check arrangement (monitoring)
- Use of appropriate methodology
- The precision of estimates are calculated using the design effect due to the complexity of the sample design
- Establishing a culture of evaluation and critical review

Completeness and comprehensiveness: The NISH is comprehensive in scope and coverage.

Cost effectiveness: the NISH is cost effective because same set of enumerators with accumulated experience are used for all surveys and the surveys are integrated both in design and operational tasks

Comparability: NISH design conforms with international norms, standards and practices.

5. Suggestions and Recommendations

In improving the quality of official statistics in Nigeria, there is:
(i)   need for creative and beneficial interaction between FOS, University researchers and centres of methodological expertise
(ii)   existence of an in-house capability for sampling and statistical methodology
(iii)   a strong need for comparability in quality assessment
(iv)   need for decision on quality levels and transparency on the reliability of the information disseminated.

6. Conclusion

High quality and trusted statistics promotes public confidence and improve the image of the statistical
system. Therefore quality statistics must
- be open and available to the wider user community
- build solid relationship with the media
- publish methods used and be willing to discuss them
- produce better data quicker and provide impartial and authoritative commentary on output for users to understand and interpret appropriately.

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