

The Relationship Between Central Banks and Statistical Institutes Botswana's Case

Introduction

As a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), one of Botswana's objectives is to provide up to date and reliable statistics to the world. In today's rapidly changing world, decisions are made regularly based on up-to-date and reliable statistics. The purpose of this paper is to relate how statistical institutes in Botswana work together towards producing the best statistics.

An Overview of Botswana's Statistical Institutes

Two main statistical institutions in Botswana are the Central Statistics Office and the Bank of Botswana.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO)

An Act of Parliament, referred to as the Statistical Act 1967, established the CSO in 1967. The function of CSO is to produce and disseminate official statistics for Botswana to the Government, private sector, parastatal sector and the general public as defined by the Statistical Act. It also provides advisory services to users on official statistical matters.

The CSO is divided into Economic Statistics and Social Statistics Divisions. Each division is responsible for collecting and compiling the statistics that relates to its area of speciality. The Economic Statistics division is further divided into five units: the National Accounts, Prices, Labour, Industrial and Environment, Agriculture and Trade Statistics Units. The Social Statistics Unit is divided into six sections comprising the Education, Health, Demography, Transport, Population Census and Household Surveys.

The Bank of Botswana (BoB)

The BoB was established in July 1, 1975 through an act of parliament referred to as the Bank of Botswana Act, 1975. One of its major functions is economic analysis. This covers production of research work and compilation and dissemination of statistical reports to other institutions and the public in and outside the country. The Bank is classified as another statistical institution as it is responsible for the compilation of the financial and balance of payments statistics. The data is collected from the financial institutes and other institutions, such as the commercial banks, the non-bank financial institutes and businesses.

The BoB's statistical work is done by the Statistics and Information Services (SIS) Unit, which is part of the Research Department of the Bank. The unit is divided into three sections: the Balance of Payments, Monetary Statistics and the Information and Database Services.

Working Together Towards Better Statistics (Working Groups/Committees)

The BoB works together with CSO in the production of national accounts data and other statistics. In this respect, the CSO is the main producer of national accounts data, but in the process it uses some of the data that is being compiled by the Bank. The Bank also works with the Department of Tourism to try to put together the tourism statistics.

Being a member of the IMF exposes Botswana to other countries' statistics. It also has an opportunity to publish its data on the IFS where all member countries' statistics is found. Above all, the member country has an opportunity to make use of technical assistance offered by the IMF. All this helps in producing uniform statistics across the globe.

In 1995, after numerous complaints that CSO was not delivering on time, a User-Needs Assessment (UNA) exercise was carried out based on the United Nations **“Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s”**. The UNA was involved in reviewing the operations of CSO through the help of senior members of CSO, representatives of users of CSO products and independent experts. The BoB represented users while the experts were from UK and the UNECA, who also financed the project.

The whole exercise was to focus the CSO's activities more on the users' requirements. Out of this exercise emerged the User-Producer Committee (UPC), which is composed of major users such as government departments, Botswana Institute of Development and Policy Analysis (BIDPA), BoB etc. Despite there being no regular meetings for UPC, CSO continues to identify interested users of particular products and initiate discussions with them.

Another problem that Botswana's statistics face is that most recent data is not readily available, for example, in the areas of trade and the tourist statistics. In many cases the data is reported with lags of up to a year. The Department of Tourism, under the Ministry of Commerce, came up with a project referred to as Tourism Statistics Development Project. The project is aimed at addressing serious deficiencies that existed in timeliness, coverage and accuracy of tourism statistical information. To ensure that the objective was met, a tourism-reference group was formed whose representatives are BoB, UNICEF-UNDP, Department of Immigration, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Hotel and Tourism Association of Botswana. The group ensured that the project was carried out effectively to achieve the objectives mentioned above and came up with ideas as to how best the tourism statistics could be collected and disseminated. For example, the project had to develop a database and a website, both have been achieved.

Conclusion

The Bank of Botswana is actively involved in various areas of statistics. It plays a major role in the publication of statistics, particularly the financial and the balance of payments. The Bank also plays major roles in working together with other statistical institutes, locally as well as internationally, to see to it that the best statistics is produced and disseminated to users.