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South Africa**

Preferred supplier of quality statistics



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World Statistics Day: Celebrating many achievements of official statistics

Today is World Statistics Day. For the very first time in the history of official statistics the United Nations has dedicated a special day that acknowledges the bean counters of the world and to celebrate their professionalism and integrity.

The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon says: "Statistics are a vital tool for economic and social development, including our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals."

South Africa, like so many countries in the world, agrees that quality statistics is a prerequisite to good planning that will meet the needs of the society to provide a better life to its citizens.

The Statistician-General, Mr. Pali Lehohla says: "The United Nations has declared the 20th of October 2010 [20-10-2010] World Statistics Day, and today we celebrate service, integrity, and professionalism in the fields of official statistics."

Lehohla stressed the United Nations view that statistics permeate modern life; they are the basis for many governmental business and community decisions. They provide information and insight about the trends and forces that affect people's lives.

On this World Statistics Day the global trend is to firmly move towards evidence-base policy making – and the call is that this phenomenon must become irreversible in every country, because without good statistics it will be impossible for governments or business to make informed decisions.

Today Stats SA only produces about 10% of the statistics necessary to measure South Africa's performance in terms of both planning and measuring levels of success, but over the next five years the organisation plans to bring together all producers of statistics and to coordinate these to ensure all statistics needed are produced and they will be of a quality that is fit for use.

This development is already reflected in the latest country report on the Millennium Development Goals. Stats SA in partnership with other producers and civil society has reported on the progress made by South Africa in terms of the MDGs.

As the report notes, the functional literacy rate of 15 to 24-year olds increased from 88% in 2002 to 91% in 2009, but the maternal mortality rate is still high and increasing. The main message of the report is thus that in some areas of the MDGs South Africa is doing well, but is lagging behind in a number of other goals.

Conclusion

Stats SA launched the Census 2011 campaign 10 days ago, and response was overwhelming, so many people asked about working on the census and there were many questions on how the census will be done. Stats SA is continuing to inform the nation about the census.

“We have our work cut out for us”, says Lehohla, “but Stats SA is ready to count everybody within the borders of South Africa during October 2011.”

Lehohla says he appreciate that people are raising important questions about the relevance of census and whether is it worth having the big count. He says; “The case for a census is indisputable – without such an undertaking it is difficult to plan for the country’s economic development and planning for a better life.”

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