



**CONCEPT NOTE**  
**10<sup>TH</sup> AFRICAN SYMPOSIUM ON STATISTICAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

*“A Decade of Statistical Development: Revolutionising Censuses and Civil Registration and Vital Statistics towards Africa Agenda 2063”.*

**1. Introduction**

Africa Agenda 2063, is the African Union’s vision of “An Integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena” and hinges on seven critical pillars: (i) a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, (ii) an integrated continent, politically united, based on the ideals of Pan Africanism, (iii) an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law, (iv) a peaceful and secure Africa, (v) an Africa with strong cultural values and ethics, (vi) an Africa where development is people-driven, relying particularly on the potential of women and youth; and (vii) Africa as a strong and influential global player and partner.

Agenda 2063 has taken into account pertinent global development frameworks and programmes such as the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The UN High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda recommended that the new development agenda be guided by the vision of eradicating extreme poverty once and for all in the context of sustainable development. While envisioning the post-2015 development agenda as a **universal vision**, the panel proposed that it

should be driven by five big, transformative shifts<sup>1</sup>. Among them the first ‘leave no one behind’ underscores the need to ensure that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status – is denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities. The Panel has also put emphasis on the need for monitoring development-related indicators at disaggregated levels. It also called for a **data revolution** for sustainable development, with a new international initiative to improve the quality of statistics and information available to citizens.

## **2. The ASSD and the Significance of the 10<sup>th</sup> ASSD on Africa’s Journey of Statistical Development**

### **2.1 Background**

The African Symposium on Statistical Development led by Statistics South Africa as its Secretariat, has brought the statistical community in Africa together annually since 2006 to (i) cooperate in ensuring that every African country undertook a population census in the 2010 round, share best practices on planning, execution, processing, analysis and dissemination of population census data; and (iii) promote South-South cooperation.

The Africa Symposium on Statistical Development is a forum created to address a concern by African statisticians in a gathering in Yaounde, Cameroon in the year 2005. Taking place against a background of poor performance of African countries in undertaking population census previously and a report that painted an unimpressive picture of the continent’s state of readiness for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, it was decided that something needed to be done to improve the situation going forward. A fortification meeting was subsequently held in Cape Town in 2006 which ushered the ASSD as a standing platform with an initial objective of mobilising all African countries to ensure that they carried censuses in the 2010 round covering the period 2005- 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> The five big transformative shifts proposed are 1. Leave no one behind; 2. Put sustainable development at the core; 3. Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growths; 4. Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all; and 5. Forge a new global partnership

The Yaounde meeting was held in the wake of a report by the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan to the General Assembly in September 2005 that showed glaring data gaps in monitoring progress made in Africa on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The main resolution of the first ASSD in Cape Town meeting was the call to Africa's National Statistics Offices to re-enforce the need for the African statistical community to meet on an annual basis to engage actively in the ongoing revision of the Principles and Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses (PHCs) to share best practices in the planning and management, execution, processing, analysis and dissemination of census data.

Amplifying and complementing this resolution was the decision of the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in Ouagadougou in May 2006 that assistance should be provided to countries emerging out of conflict. Furthermore, governments were called upon to make resources available for successful census taking. In carrying out these resolutions, the ASSD became an important platform for the African statistical community in its desire to realise unprecedented statistical development efforts on the continent. Five ASSDs were subsequently held in Kigali (Rwanda), Accra (Ghana), Luanda (Angola), Dakar (Senegal) and Cairo (Egypt). The Ministers responsible for CRVS in Africa in their first conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in August 2010 implored African statisticians to address yet another problem bedeviling the continent: CRVS. The Heads of National Statistics Offices adopted a resolution at the 6<sup>th</sup> ASSD held in Cairo, Egypt to implement the CRVS Ministers call. The 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> editions of the ASSD held in Cape Town (South Africa), Yamoussoukro (Cote d'Ivoire) and Gaborone (Botswana); respectively dealt with CRVS.

## **2.2 The 10<sup>th</sup> ASSD**

The 10<sup>th</sup> ASSD marks a special milestone in the revitalization of statistics in Africa. Particularly, the past ten years have witnessed a revival of statistics in Africa through the setting up and resuscitation of pertinent statistical forums and initiatives driven led by various stakeholders such as the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission and others. The revitalization voyage has been captured in a book by

Professor Ben Kiregyera which will be launched at the 10<sup>th</sup> ASSD itself. The symposium will also mark the 10 year celebration of the African Statistics Journal. The theme of the 10<sup>th</sup> ASSD will therefore be: *“A Decade of Statistical Development; Revolutionising Censuses and Civil Registration and Vital Statistics towards Africa Agenda 2063”*.

The overall objective of the 10<sup>th</sup> ASSD is to rally member States around a united statistical programme aimed at supporting the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Africa Agenda 2063 vision. The symposium will focus on four topical areas of statistics: data revolution, the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses and Civil Registration and Vital Statistics.

### **2.2.1 Data revolution**

The Independent Expert Advisory Group appointed by UN Secretary General in August 2014 made concrete recommendations on bringing about a data revolution in sustainable development. In its report, the IEAG highlighted two big global challenges for the current state of data: (i) the challenge of invisibility and (ii) the challenge of inequality.

Calling for an UN-led effort to mobilise the data revolution for sustainable development agenda, the specific recommendations made by the IEAG on how to address these challenges are:

- (i) **Fostering and promoting innovation to fill data gaps.** New technologies offer new opportunities to improve data, if they are used for the common good. The IEAG proposes a programme for experimenting with how traditional and new data sources (including big data) can be brought together for better and faster data on sustainable development, developing new infrastructures for data development and sharing (such as a “world statistics cloud”), and supporting innovations that improve the quality and reduce the costs of producing public data.
- (ii) **Mobilising resources to overcome inequalities between developed and developing countries and between data-poor and data-rich people.** The group stresses the need for increased funding and resources, used both to develop national capacity and global data literacy, and for public-private partnerships to leverage private sector resources and

knowledge in the global interest. The international conference in July 2015 to discuss financing for new Sustainable Development Goals provides an opportunity for this.

- (iii) **Leadership and coordination to enable the data revolution to play its full role in the realisation of sustainable development.** The group proposes a global effort to improve cooperation between old and new data producers, ensure the engagement of data users, and develop global ethical, legal and statistical standards to improve data quality and protect people from abuses in a rapidly changing data ecosystem.

The report further states – ‘The integration of these new data with traditional data to produce high-quality information that is more detailed, timely and relevant for many purposes and users, especially to foster and monitor sustainable development.’ This essentially would translate into meaningful co-existence of information from both, the new as well as traditional sources. The report also highlights ten basic principles of the data revolution for sustainable development. Therefore, there will be a paradigm shift in the way the National Statistics Offices to their business and prepare themselves embrace other ‘data communities’ to meet the growing demand of information for real time and equity based monitoring of development.

### **2.2.2 The 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses**

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Notably all but seven African countries undertook their population censuses in the 2010 round thanks to contributions to the various pan-African institutions, UN agencies and donors as well as the advocacy efforts led by the Statistics South Africa through the series of ASSD starting from 2006. Some of the key achievements were (i) regional workshops on various organizational and technical aspects of census , (ii) technical assistance to countries by well-meaning partners and development agencies; and (iii) handbooks developed by ECA (iv) improved participation by countries, (v) improved budget allocation by countries, (vi) improved timeliness in data release, (vii) improved inter-country collaboration, (viii) improved use of technology in the areas of census cartography and data capture, including use of hand held device for data collection (ix) improved dissemination of data; and (x) south-south cooperation

The 2010 round has not been without challenges and these include such challenges as the postponement of census dates by some countries, late and poor planning, lack of resources, staff turnover inability to effectively manage outsourced activities.

### **2.2.3 The 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses**

The international community is now looking towards developing international standards for censuses conducted within the framework of the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme, using experiences of the 2010 round as valuable input. Following an international programme review on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 43rd session in 2012 welcomed the suggestion to initiate early enough a programme of work for the third revision of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*. Consequently, in May 2013 UNSD conducted a world-wide survey on what should be enhanced, revised, added to, or deleted from, the next revision of United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*.

Africa raised the bar in the 2010 round and going forward into the 2020 round it has only one brief, to outperform itself in line with UN recommendations taking African specificities.

## 2.2.4 Civil Registration and Vital Statistics

In Africa a large number of people do not exist in government records and many remain invisible throughout their life time. This is primarily due to inadequate systems of registration of births and deaths in African countries. Despite long history of existence, civil registration systems in most African countries do not function properly to date. Most countries on the continent have systems characterized by incompleteness in terms of coverage of the entire population as well as in registration of events themselves. The APAI-CRVS was initiated in 2010, jointly by the AU, UNECA, AfDB, the ASSD Secretariat and other UN partners namely UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, WHO and HMN, with the aim of supporting governments in building fully functional and comprehensive CRVS systems that are built on strong legislative provisions, efficient operations and management systems.

The Second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration made a specific call to each African country to urgently undertake a comprehensive assessment of the CRVS system and to develop a reform action plan for strengthening the system based on the findings of the assessment. The ministerial meeting further called on the regional CRVS Core Group, and other regional and international organizations to provide technical and financial support to countries in undertaking these processes. Subsequently, a number of countries have undertaken comprehensive assessments. The assessments will help to generate evidence that will enable them to systematically and innovatively address various challenges. The assessment will also help countries to upgrade their current systems to international standard.

Notably, CRVS was the focus area for the past three symposia. The theme for the 7<sup>th</sup> ASSD was “Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Institutional and Human Infrastructure” which was followed by 8<sup>th</sup> symposium which focused on the theme - “Improving Death Registration and Certification of Causes of Death in Africa”, while the 9<sup>th</sup> ASSD held in Gaborone in February 2014 focused on “Promoting the use of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in support of good governance in Africa”. The Conference of Ministers responsible for the Civil Registration to be held in February 2015 in Yamoussoukro, Cote D’Ivoire will focus on CRVS and good governance, the topic that has already been deliberated in the 9<sup>th</sup> ASSD. The 10<sup>th</sup> ASSD therefore, will limit itself to only taking stock of the achievements and challenges in implementing APAI-CRVS in last five years at the regional and country levels.

One of the major challenges in tackling Ebola crisis was the complete lack of systematic information on number of deaths and causes of deaths. There are only a very few countries in Africa that produce credible data this data on regular basis making it extremely difficult to develop health policies or even make timely health interventions. Following the decisions taken in the 8<sup>th</sup> ASSD on the improvement of death registration and causes of death, the WHO has recently published a guidance document for country strategies and partner support to improve mortality statistics through CRVS systems. This will help in developing specific strategies for improvement of mortality statistics through CRVS keeping in view the African conditions and realities. The conference will deliberate on the new approach and recommend specific steps in improvement of mortality statistics in Africa, which currently is scanty.

The specific objectives include:-

- (i) To review progress made in the implementation of the African programme of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses.
- (ii) To develop an Africa approach to the carry out the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in alignment with applicable United Nations Principles and Recommendations
- (iii) To review the progress made and challenges faced in the implementation of the APAI-CRVS at the regional and country level in past five years;
- (iv) To review the proposed approach of WHO for improving mortality statistics through CRVS
- (v) To adopt an African data revolution framework in line with the recommendations of the International Expert Advisory Group on Data Revolution

### **2.3 Expected accomplishments**

The 10<sup>th</sup> Symposium is expected to deliver the following:

- A practical programme for the achievement of a data revolution in Africa
- A set of recommendations on APAI-CRVS that will feed into the progress report to the upcoming conference of Ministers
- A Programme of Action for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses embedding lessons learnt from the 2010 round.
- A clear set of strategies for improvement of mortality statistics in Africa

- 10<sup>th</sup>ASSD recommendations and resolutions.

## **2.4 Activities**

The activities to be undertaken in organising the 10<sup>th</sup> ASSD will include the following specific pre-symposium activities:

- Preparatory meetings of the ASSD International Planning Committee, the National Organising Committee and Workstreams
- Preparing concept note and work programme;
- Undertaking advocacy and resource mobilisation activities;
- Invitation and arrangement of logistics; and
- Identification and communication of resource persons.

Activities during the symposium will cover the actual implementation of the work programme of the meeting. On the other hand, post-meeting activities will include handling of administrative and logistics issues and preparation of reports and related activities. Accordingly, the organisers are expected to handle financial and logistics issues and prepare and disseminate the meeting reports.

## **2.5 Organisers of the Symposium**

The 10<sup>th</sup> ASSD will be hosted by the Republic of Uganda which has constituted a National ASSD Committee (NASSDC) headed by the Executive Director of the Uganda Bureau of and drawing membership from all government ministries and key development partners. The NASSDC is supported by an International Planning Committee which includes Statistics South Africa as the ASSD Secretariat, the ECA as the CRVS Secretariat, the AfDB, AUC, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and other partners.

## **2.6 Participants**

The 10<sup>th</sup> Symposium is expected to bring a total of about 400 delegates made up of participants from NSOs and Civil Registration Authorities in Africa, representatives of regional and international organisations as well as invited participants from different institutions and associations.

## **2.7 Venue and Date**

The meeting will be held in Kampala, Uganda from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>st</sup> January 2015