

What is PARIS21?

The Partnership in statistics for development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) was established in November 1999 as a international partnership of policymakers, analysts and statisticians. PARIS21 is served by a small secretariat hosted by the Development Cooperation Directorate of OECD in Paris, France.

What is PARIS21's objective?

PARIS21's goal is to promote a culture of evidence-based policymaking in all countries, and especially in developing countries, to improve effectiveness in reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). PARIS21 helps to achieve this by stimulating more effective dialogue and greater demand, availability and use of better statistics.

PARIS21 is focussing its efforts on assisting all low-income countries to design, implement, and monitor a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) – with a view to producing better national statistics by the time of the next Millennium review in 2010.

What is an NSDS?

An NSDS is a strategic approach to planning statistical capacity building across the entire national statistical system (NSS), encompassing data production, analysis and use, and all actors in the system, including line ministries. An NSDS will provide a vision for where the NSS should be in five to ten years and provide a robust framework and action plan for building the statistical capacity to meet both current and future data needs.

The NSDS approach looks at statistical capacity building through a development and management lens; and looks at development policy and best management practices through a statistical lens - all in pursuit of better development outcomes.

Why have an NSDS?

An NSDS can help by:

- Addressing data limitations which are constraining development progress
- Providing a framework for prioritising the use of limited resources
- Integrating statistics within policy processes
- Providing a robust and coherent framework for all statistics and statistical capacity building programmes across the NSS
-and acting as a catalyst for change.

A good strategy, adequately funded and successfully implemented can make a big difference to the performance of a national statistical system and help those countries locked in the vicious cycle of under funding and under performance to break free.

How does an NSDS fit into country processes?

An NSDS should be aligned with wider national development programmes and strategies. In many countries, the processes of preparing and updating these programmes and strategies provide an important opportunity to identify data needs and to highlight the priority areas where investment and improvements are needed. An NSDS will provide a framework for mobilising, harnessing, and leveraging resources (both national and international) and a basis for effective and results-oriented strategic management.

How does a country design an NSDS?

There is no single blueprint. Many countries already have strategic plans, typically covering their national statistics office; are following guidance such as the UN's handbook of statistical organization; and/or are signed up to frameworks such as the IMF's GDDS or SDDS. The aim should be to build on these. Experience from a number of countries has shown that the processes followed in designing an NSDS are important to build leadership, ownership and

commitment to implement the NSDS. Typically countries have progressed as follows:

Phase I: Launching the process

The key outcomes of this critical phase will be a decision to develop an NSDS and a Road Map for the NSDS design process, setting out what needs to be done when, by whom, and how it will be financed. To reach this point will require high-level commitment and leadership. This is likely to follow successful advocacy and dialogue with policy and decision-makers.

Phase II: Assessment of the Current Status of the National Statistical System

A range of assessments will be needed, including: identifying user satisfaction, their current and future needs for statistics, and existing data gaps; assessing key statistical output against agreed quality criteria; taking stock of existing statistical capacity; reviewing the legal and institutional frameworks and coordination arrangements; and assessing organisational factors.

Phase III: Developing the vision and identifying strategic options

These activities follow on from the assessment phase, including: agreeing mission and vision statements; and employing scenarios to deliver the vision and results. High-level agreement will be needed on the desired outcomes and on priorities and the strategies to deliver them; building on what already exists and is in progress.

Phase IV: Preparing the implementation plan

The "right strategies" are not all that is needed to make an NSS effective. The strategies have to be properly and effectively implemented through a costed and time-bound action plan, including a financial plan incorporating proposals for external assistance. The action plan will need to set priorities and strategies for implementation and for managing change, including crucially engaging and motivating staff.

Phase V: Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Strategic management is a continuous process - the preparation of the NSDS is only the beginning. To be effective, statistical systems must remain flexible and respond to new demands for data and a changing environment. The NSDS will inevitably require modification

and needs to build in mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress, to review the strategy and to make modifications when required.

How can PARIS21 help?

Advocacy: PARIS21 encourages broader recognition of the role of statistics in development and poverty reduction; and for NSDSs to provide a coherent framework for all statistical capacity building processes, whether funded nationally or by donors. A range of advocacy materials is being prepared to suit various audiences.

Documentation: PARIS21 partners have developed guidance to assist countries, including NSDS Essentials, incorporating the key principles, Making the Case, an advocacy paper, the NSDS design guide, and a guide to designing an NSDS roadmap. Preparations are also underway to produce a guide to implementing an NSDS. All this documentation — as well as a wealth of information from other bilateral and multilateral institutions — is available in the NSDS Knowledge Base on the PARIS21 website.

Regional programmes: PARIS21 is working with regional partner organisations to roll out the NSDS approach. Typically, a baseline assessment of the state of statistics and statistical capacity programmes in the region would be followed by a series of workshops covering critical stages of the NSDS process. The first workshop in each sub-region is intended as an NSDS launching event where participating countries prepare a draft NSDS design Road Map. Each country would then take the process forward to build high-level commitment and finalise their road maps with national authorities. Interested donor agencies would be invited to the workshops and invited to 'buy-in' to the process of design and implementation.

Mobilising resources: PARIS21 can help countries through advocacy, including helping countries to organise national activities to mobilise national and donor support. Also, PARIS21—in collaboration with other partners—is providing briefing to help develop expertise in strategic planning to address the shortage of expertise available to assist countries to design NSDSs.

How can PARIS21 help individual countries?

Typical activities in support of individual countries include helping to identify specific messages and target audiences; supporting advocacy activities and launching of the NSDS process; identifying international and national stakeholders and participating in stakeholder workshops; disseminating NSDS documentation to stakeholders; and organising or facilitating peer review missions for countries already advanced in the drafting or implementation of their NSDS.

How can I contact PARIS21?

PARIS21 is serviced by a secretariat hosted in the OECD's Development Cooperation Directorate. The Secretariat can be contacted at:

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Feed back is invited!

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

PARIS21 & NSDS



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