



OECD FINAL PROJECT REPORT ON THE ASIA-PACIFIC CONFERENCE ON

MEASURING WELL-BEING AND FOSTERING THE PROGRESS OF SOCIETIES

Introduction

This document presents the Final Report on the Asia-Pacific Conference on Measuring Well-Being and Fostering the Progress of Societies. It summarises the main highlights of the event and compiles a number of associated documents in the form of Annexes.

Executive Summary

The Statistics Directorate and the Development Centre of the OECD, with assistance from the Government of Japan (the Economic Social Research Institute, attached to the Cabinet Office) and other regional organisations (ADB, ESCAP, KOSTAT), organised the Asia-Pacific Conference on Measuring Well-Being and Fostering the Progress of Societies of 5-6 December 2011. The conference was the second in a series of regional conferences being conducted in preparation for the 4th OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policies, to be held in New Delhi in October 2012. It gathered around 180 policy makers, statisticians, academics, and other stakeholders from 30 countries across the Asia-Pacific region, as well as representatives from Belgium, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

The conference took place at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS). As for other regional conferences, its goal was to deepen on-going reflection on how to measure well-being and progress, enhance the relevance of measures and analysis for addressing key policy issues, and establish concrete outputs, such as establishing frameworks for future work. It constituted the primary mechanism for shaping the Asia-Pacific contribution to the 4th OECD World Forum.

The conference started with a series of opening addresses from the lead organisations. OECD Deputy Secretary-General, Rintaro Tamaki, outlined the importance of OECD's work on measuring well-being and its strong relation to ongoing discussion on the economic crisis and development. The official welcome was delivered by Motohisa Furukawa, Japanese Minister for Economic and Fiscal Policy. The keynote address from Karma Tshiteem, Secretary of the Bhutanese Gross National Happiness Commission, focused on Bhutan's pursuit of Gross National Happiness. The opening session concluded with an address by OECD Chief Statistician, Martine Durand, which set the scene for the conference by describing the OECD and national/international initiatives on measuring well-being and progress. This was then followed by a series of thematic sessions, combining plenaries and break-up.

The Material Conditions theme included sessions on "Inequalities: outcomes and opportunities", "Employment and human capital", and "Housing and urban infrastructure". The main messages emanating from these sessions concerned: the importance of measuring informality, under-employment, quality of education, and social protection; the importance of looking at assets and their distribution, in addition to income; the fact that the rapid urbanization experienced by the region raised challenges for how living conditions in urban centres are measured; and the need to move beyond the standard measures of extreme poverty used in poor countries towards measures



that capture the emergence of an increasing middle class in the region (e.g. taking account of the cost of urban living).

The Sustainability and future challenges theme included sessions on "Governance and participation", "Age and gender perspectives" and "Vulnerability to natural/man-made disasters and environmental risks". Highlights include the following: ageing poses particular challenges for assessing well-being in the Asia-Pacific region; women confront specific well-being challenges such as caring for children and the elderly, dealing with unfriendly working environments, and discrimination; governance should be understood as a separate dimension of well-being, while noting the need for a better conceptual framework, for translating this framework into tangible measures, and for recognising the large differences in types of governments in the region; and, finally, that governments need to manage extreme risks, recognising both their perceived and actual consequences, and providing transparent information on their effects.

The Quality of life and societal behaviour theme included sessions on "Subjective well-being", "Social relations", and "Time use". It was observed that: several countries in the region have existing programmes to measure subjective well-being and are using the results to influence policy; while social and family relations are very important for many dimensions of well-being, ageing, urbanisation and internet are changing their nature and quality; and, finally, that time-use surveys have the potential to better inform on the well-being of people, such as work-life balance, caring, leisure and social relations (while some data exist, NSOs in the region need to increase their capacity to analyse them and achieve further harmonization).

The conference ended with three plenary sessions. The first, on National well-being and policy making, focused on the work of New Zealand's Treasury in putting well-being at the heart of policy making. The second, on Challenges for official statistics in the Asia-Pacific region, focused on existing processes and capacity building at the regional level. The third (and final) session set out some Tentative conclusions, in order to move forward the measurement agenda and establish regional momentum towards the 4th World Forum in New Delhi. These draft conclusions (attached, and to be finalized, following feedback from participants, in January) recognize the following: i) the global drive to move 'beyond GDP', highlighted by the recent UN resolution (sponsored by Bhutan and adopted by consensus) and by a number of country-specific initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region; ii) the demand for a new development framework based on the notion of well-being, the need for the official statistical community to respond to this demand, and its possible implications for post-MDG discussions; iii) the measurement of well-being goes beyond money income, requiring the consideration of both objective and subjective dimensions, starting from individuals but considering societal well-being as its final goal; iv) the importance that the Asia-Pacific regional voice in the field of measuring well-being be conveyed to the 4th World Forum in New Delhi in October 2012, with proposals for specific outputs and future activities. The conference conclusion also highlighted a number of cross-cutting issues that are especially relevant to the Asia-Pacific region, such as: i) the importance of taking into account different spatial units (urban/rural, regions, cities); ii) recognizing cultural differences; iii) undertaking further research in a number of dimensions (subjective well-being, governance, social ties); iv) taking into account the large differences in statistical capacities across the region; iv) the special role that the ESCAP Statistical Committee will play to promote and coordinate efforts in the region; iv) the roles of both official and non-official statistics, and of private/public partnerships; v) the active contribution from the scientific and business communities in the region (e.g. by creating a regional research network and a blog hosted by Wikiprogress); and vi) the need to engage and communicate with the public.



Description of Annexes

Annex A contains the final agenda (in English) for the Conference, arrived at in consultation with ESRI and other members of the Organising Committee.

Annex B contains (1) a document on Measuring Well-Being and Progress, (2) An Executive Summary for How's Life, and (3) a document on How's life in Japan?

Annex C contains the final conclusions of the Conference (in English), taking into account the various keynote speeches, cross-cutting round tables and themed sessions which took place over the two day event, and also considering any issues which arose during the post-event consultation period.

Annex D contains the list of chairs and speakers at the Conference (in English).

Annex E contains the representatives from National Statistical Organisations at the event (in English).