

Strategic Vision of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Statistical Commission (OIC-StatCom)

Introduction

Having membership of 57 states spread over four continents, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organisation after the United Nations. In the last decade, the OIC Member States have actively started to increase their efforts aiming at enhancing cooperation and collaboration in almost all fields among them and at strengthening their role in the development process. Statistics, as a crucial tool in assisting decision makers manage and comprehend information, has become one of the key themes of cooperation and collaboration among the OIC Member States in parallel with the growth of information usage in all aspects of life. However, the varying levels of development of the OIC Member States are also reflected in their national statistical capacities. This fact is one of the many reasons for igniting the embodiment of the OIC Statistical Commission (OIC-StatCom). Through the OIC-StatCom, it is aimed to bring about a dynamic platform for the national statistical offices (NSO) of the OIC Member States to share and exchange knowledge, experiences and best practices on initiatives that can help them become more effective and efficient in managing their National Statistical Systems (NSS).

An effective and efficient NSS can have a chance to proliferate if statistics becomes an indispensable tool for policymakers, private sector and civil society in all the tasks regarding decision-making process. In order for the OIC-StatCom to contribute to the NSSs of the OIC Member States on the path towards better effectiveness and efficiency, a strategic vision document is needed to be developed for elaborating short, medium and long-term plans by examining the position, mission, and vision of the OIC-StatCom.

The First Session of the OIC-StatCom, held on 11-12 April 2011 in Istanbul – Republic of Turkey, decided the establishment of a Working Group to develop a strategic vision for the OIC-StatCom towards more effective statistical systems and elaborate short, medium and long term plans to achieve this vision. **Indonesia** is the lead country for this Working Group with other

members including **Bangladesh, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Morocco, Palestine, Senegal, Turkey, IDB, and SESRIC.**

This Strategic Vision Document acts as a reference document for the OIC-StatCom in formulating the priorities, objectives, and short / medium / long term actions in guiding the Commission to facilitate the statistical cooperation and collaboration mechanism and overcome the challenges faced by the NSOs of the OIC Member States.

Challenges

The incessant change in the socio-economic and political environment accompanied with global crises shaking the social fabric of countries necessitates comprehensive and stratified data to enable the decision makers to act appropriately for survival in those turmoil times. The NSOs are expected to be the sources for such data; however, they encounter many challenges including:

1. **Different levels of statistical development among the OIC regions:** Statistical capacity development is a continuous process that every NSO strives to improve the availability and quality of their data to meet the user demands. At present, different statistical capacity development programmes are already being carried out at international level in parallel with the specific targets of the implementing agencies. Nevertheless, available statistics produced by the NSOs and demand from different users do not always match in most of the OIC Member States.
2. **Lack of human resources with strong technological and sustainable management skills:** High calibre human resources are essential for NSOs to enable them keep pace with the technological developments, especially in information and communication technologies (ICT), and modern sustainable management methods. These qualifications including foreign language skills to enable the statisticians follow the statistical literature and global practices will undeniably pave the way to enhance the production of quality statistics by NSOs. Nevertheless, a significant number of the NSOs of the OIC Member States are lagging behind due to the lack/insufficiency of qualified human resources.
3. **Mismatch between increases in budgetary resource allocations for statistical activities and demands for statistical services from different stakeholders:** The activities of NSOs are based on a budgetary approach, in which the NSOs allocate their

resources to activities to be conducted while adhering strictly to their budgets. Thus, an increase in the demands for services of the NSOs has to be matched with a commensurate increase in the respective budgetary resources. Nonetheless, due to the difficulties in raising budgets, the increase in the demand side usually leads to contractions in some other activities of the NSOs. This situation is even exacerbated unduly by the increasing workload of NSOs due to the overlapping data demands from both national and international stakeholders. This overlap sometimes inhibits the capacity of NSOs to implement their tasks.

4. **Difficulties in assuring data quality:** The NSOs continuously face increasing levels of statistical data demand from diversified groups of data users. To cater for these data needs, the NSOs conduct numerous surveys and censuses through which the respondents face much of the burden. This burden will in the course of time will generate undesirable negative impact on data quality and claim the valuable resources of the NSOs including time, money and manpower to monitor the response burden and set targets for its reduction over time for restoring the data quality.
5. **Accelerating supply of non-official statistics:** Being the primary intermediaries of official statistics, the NSOs face significant intricacies in terms of their future role in statistical data production as non-official statistical data providers are becoming an alternative source of information for data users in recent years. The following reasons may be cited for the origination of new data providers:
 - Official statistical data sometimes exclude some product areas and sectors; such as new markets generally stemming from ICTs that are covered by non-official statistics;
 - Non-official statistics also deliver different data types not included in official statistical data;
 - Non-official statistical data providers, in some cases, convert publicly available official data with commentaries that provide practical insights on the key developments in official data.
6. **Weak communication between the NSOs and data users:** Official statistical data can have a value when data users make correct use of them. However, due to the lack of desired level of healthy communication between the NSOs and data users, the users are

frequently inclined to interpret statistical data inaccurately, and even in an orientation fit for their purposes (“purpose-oriented”), and these have negative externalities on the official statistics themselves. It is very critical that the NSOs give adequate emphasis on both the production of official statistics and the outreach to data users in interpreting and using the data accurately.

7. **Insufficient usage of evidence in decision-making:** The usage of sound statistical evidence in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies at all levels and in all sectors is considered as an imperative on the path towards development. However, the NSOs encounter obstacles in bringing about systems where evidence-based decision making is indispensable for policy makers. Beside low levels of funds available for the NSOs as mentioned previously, lack of action-based national policies together with ineffective statistical advocacy programs may also aggravate these obstacles.
8. **Limited awareness in statistics:** Statistics is now so wide-ranging that its impact is felt in every facet of life. Although this discourse is broadly voiced, the shortcomings in efforts for results-oriented statistical outreach initiatives (in the form of incomprehensive outreach planning in which the profile of new generation of data users is not truly understood) shadow the accomplishments of the NSOs. Even, it makes the members of the society take no notice of the NSOs’ role in the production of high-quality and timely statistical information.
9. **Lack of dynamism in the operations of NSOs:** Despite the structural changes in both the society and economy, sometimes NSOs can be tardy in adapting to the current emerging situations. This lack of dynamism has implications for both innovation and productivity in the operations of NSOs.
10. **Inadequate collaboration and coordination within NSSs and at OIC level:** The statistical collaboration and coordination both within the NSSs of the OIC Member States and at the OIC level are inadequate due to several factors including:
 - lack of political will and resources required for establishing strong coordination mechanisms;

- insufficient sense of ownership among the relevant stakeholders to augment the level of statistical collaboration and coordination activities within the NSSs and at the international level;
- unclear separation of responsibilities;
- duplication of efforts;
- refraining from catalysing synergies owing to institutional rivalries;
- lack of awareness on the benefits associated with sharing the best practices and experiences;
- short term and limited scale collaboration among international organisations as a hindrance to take full advantage of experiences.

Mission of the OIC-StatCom

“To ensure quality statistics at the OIC level”

The mission of the OIC-StatCom is to be a platform for the National Statistical Systems of the OIC Member States by:

- promoting the strengthening of NSOs and NSSs of the OIC Member States while enhancing their competencies through statistical capacity development programs which take into consideration different levels of capacities and regional diversities among the OIC Member States;
- coordinating the statistical cooperation and collaboration activities within and among the OIC Member States and regional/international statistical organisations with an approach to avoid duplications of efforts;
- contributing to the enhancement of quality official statistics that are relevant, accurate, timely, accessible, comparable, and coherent in the OIC Member States by assisting them in overcoming data quality challenges;
- sharing knowledge and exchanging experiences and best practices with a view to enhance their performances while being guided by the objectives and principles to strengthen the solidarity and cooperation among the Member States;

- raising the profile of statistics in the OIC Member States through advocacy towards the political authorities of the Member States for a better allocation of human and financial resources.

Values and Guiding Principles of the OIC-StatCom

The values that will guide the activities of OIC-StatCom and to which the OIC-StatCom is committed are:

- **Professionalism** (with an emphasis on excellence and competence. The components of professionalism include *competency, innovativeness, pioneerism, effectiveness, efficiency, enthusiasm* and *having systematic approach*.)
- **Integrity** (with an emphasis on ethics in statistics reflected in transparent honesty. The components of integrity include *responsibility, dedication, consistency, discipline, openness, confidentiality* and *accountability*.)
- **Togetherness** (with an emphasis on establishing close relationships among the OIC Member States. The components of togetherness include *cooperation, communication, solidarity, and harmony*.)

The guiding principles of the OIC-StatCom are same as the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, adopted by the United Nations in 1994.

Vision of the OIC-StatCom for 2020

“Trustworthy and Responsive Statistical Data for All”

- To become an effective platform of sharing and exchanging knowledge, experiences and best practices present and available in the OIC Member States for the promotion of statistical data production and dissemination according to the internationally accepted methodologies and standards by ensuring coordination and cooperation among OIC Member States and international organisations;

- To collect all cooperation and collaboration activities regarding statistical capacity development oriented towards the OIC Member States under the umbrella of OIC-StatCom;
- To become the apex body of the OIC to develop common standards and methodologies for the statistical indicators specific to the OIC Member States;
- To produce an accreditation system for professional official statisticians working for organisations of the OIC Member States towards a more dynamic system.

Strategic Objectives

The following four thematic strategic objectives have been determined to make the OIC-StatCom achieve its vision:

Statistical capacity development

- Prepare an OIC-StatCom framework for supporting the NSS of the OIC Member States in accordance with their development priorities. This framework outlines the statistical capacity development priority areas by identifying the needs of the NSOs and professional skills essential for statistical information collection, collation, processing, and dissemination; and describes general strategies for carrying out effective programs;
- Develop a clear-structured governance mechanism based on a life-cycle approach for the statistical capacity development activities of OIC-StatCom;
- Harmonize levels of statistical development of OIC Member States on the basis of Statistical Work Program to be prepared by considering priorities of the OIC policies and urgent needs of the NSOs;
- Ameliorate the professional skills of the staff in ICT, modern management methods, statistical data collection, collation, processing and dissemination, and NSS management by organising training programs and constructing platforms for offering e-learning programs that are embedded in or offered as extensions of the statistical consultancy service programs to be carried out among the OIC-StatCom members;

- Share “Lessons Learnt” and “Success Stories” regarding the experiences gained and challenges faced by the OIC-StatCom members through a virtual statistical system;
- Exchange knowledge on particular topics of interest, and new statistical fields and indicators through an academic journal that is under the guidance of an editorial committee formed of active researchers and practitioners in official statistics;
- Develop statistical awareness and outreach programs for the public and media workers in cooperation with relevant stakeholders;
- Promote the design and implementation of national education curricula that are bound for bringing in statistical literacy to students of primary and secondary education levels with relevant stakeholders;
- Develop effective dissemination and communication systems including the usage of social media through a Communications Toolkit for NSOs for enhancing the usage of data produced by the NSOs and ensuring the data provided are correctly perceived and appropriately used by the users;
- Transform the current working conditions of NSOs into learning environments by considering change management and business process re-engineering to nurture dynamism into the operations of NSOs;
- Encourage the NSOs to communicate with higher education institutions to develop and strengthen academic curricula satisfying the human resources’ needs of NSOs and also encourage and support instructors-in-training in the Faculties of Education in using their services and products in class activities.

Coordination of statistical cooperation and collaboration among NSOs, OIC-StatCom, regional and international organisations

- Initiate cooperation and collaboration programmes for the needs of the NSOs of the OIC Member States to be identified through the physical and virtual meeting rounds of a panel of experts in a structured, systematic, and interactive way;
- Take a strong leadership role to promote close collaboration and cooperation among the OIC-StatCom, other relevant OIC bodies and relevant stakeholders by actively

communicating the objectives of the Committee and identified needs of the OIC-StatCom members;

- Strengthen the cooperation among OIC-StatCom and other national, regional, and international stakeholders by establishing sustainable relationships through effective networking channels for supporting the trainings, and developing mobility programs; such as staff exchange (secondment) between NSOs and international organisations, study visits, etc;
- Support the production of regional strategies by regional and international stakeholders for the development of statistics similar to national strategies for development of statistics;

Development of common methodologies for indicators specific to the OIC Member States

- Promote harmonisation of concepts, classifications and methodologies used in performing statistical activities in OIC Member States to promote consistency in statistical systems;
- Identify priority areas specific to the OIC Member States and develop conceptual and methodological background for the selected indicators;
- Develop a quality assurance framework for the NSOs of OIC Member States describing the tools and procedures put in place to ensure that the statistics produced by the NSOs are of high quality with a focus on statistical processes and outputs.

Accreditation of statistical professionals

- Develop conceptual and methodological background of the accreditation program for professional official statisticians working for organisations of the OIC Member States;
- Encourage the certification of expertise and knowledge under an official context for the professional conduct of statistical work of statistical specialists working for the organisations of the OIC Member States.