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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

STATISTICAL INSTITUTE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (SIAP)
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**Fifth Regional Workshop on
Statistical Quality Management and Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics:
National Quality Assurance Frameworks**

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) and Statistics Division

In collaboration with

Statistical Centre of Iran, Islamic Republic of Iran

30 September – 3 October 2012
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Information Bulletin

I. Background

Quality statistics is a universal goal of official statisticians in fulfilling their mandate. In 1994, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) provided guidance on the features of an environment within which quality management can flourish by promulgating the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics for national statistical systems. While the statements of principles do not refer explicitly to quality, they are all basic to a quality management system. Since then, a number of developed countries and international organizations have developed quality frameworks that lay out detailed concepts and procedures for assuring quality in the statistical business process. For example, the data quality assurance framework (DQAF) developed by the International Monetary Fund is a well-known quality assessment tool designed for use by IMF staff and national statistical offices to assess the quality of specific types of national datasets including national accounts and consumer price indexes¹.

A national quality assurance framework (NQAF) allows national statistical offices to describe systematically how it assures quality, what its ongoing quality concerns are and how it plans to improve current quality assurance procedures or introduce new ones. In 2010, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) recognised the need for an internationally agreed upon national quality assurance framework to assist countries that may wish to formulate their own or further enhance an existing one. It established an Expert Group to develop a generic template that is cognisant of existing frameworks and is sufficiently flexible to permit national circumstances to be taken into consideration by countries that choose to apply it.

At its 43rd session in 2012, the UNSC fully endorsed the generic NQAF template (henceforth referred to as “g-NQAF”) proposed by the Expert Group. The g-NQAF consists of five sections: (a) quality context; (b) quality concepts and frameworks; (c) quality assurance guidelines; (d) quality assessment and reporting; and (e) quality and other management. The Expert Group focused on (c)

¹ Refer to document E/CN.3/2010/2, *Statistics Canada: national quality assurance frameworks* of the 40th session of the UNSC. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc10/2010-2-NQAF-E.pdf>

quality assurance guidelines -- identifying 19 core NQAF lines and detailing the corresponding elements to be assured as well as supporting mechanisms.²

Furthermore, the UNSC encouraged countries to use the g-NQAF and requested the expert group to develop an action plan to assist countries— supporting a plan to pilot the g-NQAF in some countries with different types of statistical systems. It also encouraged international, regional and subregional entities to work along with the UN Statistics Division in assisting countries to implement quality assurance programmes.³

This *Fifth Regional Workshop on Statistical Quality Management and Fundamental Principles* focuses on the topic of “national quality assurance frameworks” in support of the plan to pilot the g-NQAF. In particular, the regional workshop will bring together senior or middle-level managers of national statistical organizations in Asia and the Pacific who have existing quality frameworks and who wish to review these through the lens of the g-NQAF as well as managers of organizations who wish to initiate its implementation.

The United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), a regional institution of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the ESCAP Statistics Division will conduct the workshop in collaboration with the Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI).

II. Objectives and Expected Results

The workshop will provide a forum for discussing concepts and uses of quality assurance frameworks and facilitating understanding and application of the generic national quality assurance template and the associated tools and mechanisms for assuring quality. Participants will:

- Review the fundamentals of quality in statistical systems and the benefits of a national quality assurance framework;
- Discuss the rationale, contents and uses of the generic national quality assurance framework template (g-NQAF);
- Map the g-NQAF to their existing quality frameworks or their quality concerns;
- Identify gaps and opportunities for improving current procedures and adopting and implementing the g-NQAF in their organizations; and
- Develop a plan of action for implementing an NQAF in their organizations as well as the larger national statistical system

III. Design of the Workshop

A. Two-phased Workshop Design

The workshop design requires participation in a pre-workshop assessment exercise and the main workshop itself, as follows:

Preparatory phase (to be completed by 24 September 2012): Mapping and assessment exercise of the feasibility of applying the g-NQAF in the participating national statistical organization. The workshop organizers will provide a tool to nominating organizations to be used for systematically

² For further details, refer to E/CN.3/2012/13, *National Quality Assurance Frameworks* of the 42nd session of the UNSC. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc12/BG-NQAF.pdf>

³ Refer to the Final Report of the 43rd UNSC session : <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc12/2012-Report-E.pdf>

mapping the g-NQAF to existing quality framework or procedures; participants will need to send the results of the exercise to SIAP by 24 September.

Main phase (30 September – 3 October 2012): Conduct of the workshop in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. The workshop sessions will be a mix of learning activities, including: lecture presentations by experts; participant presentations and facilitated group discussions. Participants will present and discuss results of the mapping and assessment exercise as part of the workshop sessions. The workshop will be conducted in English.

B. Participants

SIAP will invite a limited number of statistical organizations in the ESCAP region to nominate one senior- or middle-level manager to participate in the workshop. Nominees must be responsible for developing and implementing quality assurance procedures in the organization and committed to carrying out the preparatory phase activities.

Costs related to travel to and meals and accommodation at the workshop venue of selected nominees will be borne by SIAP and SCI. Nominating organizations are expected to shoulder costs related to the preparatory phase activities of the workshop.

C. Workshop Topics and Tentative Programme (Main Phase)

30 September 2012

1. Opening
2. Overview of the workshop
 - Presentation and discussion of objectives and expected results of the regional workshop
 - Leveling of expectations
3. Introduction to quality frameworks
 - Quality concepts and dimensions and the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics
 - Multiplicity of quality frameworks (Code of Practice, DQAF, ISO...)
4. National quality assurance frameworks (NQAF)
 - Contents, use and benefits of an NQAF
 - Statistical business process and over-arching quality management process: how NQAF facilitates a systematic evaluation throughout the process?
 - Beyond NSO: Quality in the context of the national statistical system (NSS)

1 October 2012

5. Generic national quality assurance framework template (g-NQAF)
 - Rationale, objectives and guiding principles
 - Format and contents
 - Quality assurance guidelines

2 October 2012

6. Existing quality frameworks/procedures and mapping to g-NQAF quality assurance guidelines
 - Country presentations on their quality framework/procedures and mapping to the g-NQAF quality assurance guidelines
 - Group discussions (Participants will discuss NQAF implementation challenges and formulate recommendations)

7. Group presentations (each group will present outcomes of the discussions with specific recommendations)

3 October 2012

8. Way forward: Group discussions on further work on the g-NQAF
9. Plenary discussion: Institutional and technical requirements, specific activities and timelines for adopting and institutionalizing an NQAF

IV. NOMINATION PROCESS FOR PARTICIPATION

Number of Participants from Invited Countries

A maximum of 20 participants will be selected to participate in the workshop.

Nomination Procedures

Heads of national statistical offices of invited countries should send the completed nomination form(s) (blank form attached) of their nominees to the Director of SIAP by email: **staff@unsiap.or.jp** or fax: +81 43 299 2521. Deadline for receipt of nominations at SIAP is **5 September 2012**. However, if nominating agencies expect a lengthy processing time for visa and travel-related requirements to the workshop venue, they are urged to submit their nominations as early as possible.

Selection of Participants

Selection of the participants will be made by SIAP and the decision will be final. The order in which the candidates are listed by nominating authorities will not affect the likelihood of their selection.

V. PRACTICAL MATTERS

Each selected overseas participant will be provided with:

- (a) A round-trip air ticket by the most direct and economical route to travel from an international airport in his/her country to the International Airport in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran; and
- (b) A daily subsistence allowance at a reduced rate for Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran for the duration of the workshop (Accommodation and meals during the entire period of the workshop will be provided by the host agency, Statistical Centre of Iran).

The selected participants will receive an acceptance letter together with detailed information on the venue of the workshop, visa and related instructions, and other necessary information at a later date.

Nominating authorities are expected to continue to pay participants' salaries during the period of the Workshop.

Participants are urged **NOT** to bring their families with them.

VI. FURTHER INFORMATION

Inquiries should be directed to the Director of SIAP:

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