National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS)

1. Introduction

Having so far implemented three 5-year national development plans (NDPs), the Iranian society is experiencing an accelerating move in different areas. To keep the momentum of the move, the Iranian government managed to prepare a long-term program called the '*20-year Development Vision'* in 2003 in which it is provisioned that by the year 2023, Iran would be a developed nation standing at the top in economic, scientific and technological fields in the region. The *20-year Development Vision* covers four 5-year NDPs – fourth to seventh.

The materialization of the development vision is conditioned to realistic, comprehensive and accurate planning of the four NDPs covered by the vision. To develop and implement the NDPs efficiently, different facilities and resources are needed, including comprehensive and accurate statistical information. This means that, as we move towards the policy of drawing on statistical information in planning - approaching the evidence-based management - not far from now, there will be increasing demand for various types of up-to-date statistical data. It is a prerequisite, therefore, to pay attention to the development of the national statistical system besides the economic, social and cultural developments, so that the system could be responsive to all statistical needs of the nation. By the article 56 of the fourth 5-year NDP for the years 2005-2009, the government is bound to prepare a program for the development of the national statistical system. Accordingly, the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) was comprehensively prepared to subsequently receive verification of the High Council of Statistics and the government. The strategy is meant to enable the national statistical system to gradually get to the required level of competency for meeting all the statistical needs of the 5-year economic, social and cultural development plan.

> **Realization of a developed statistical system is a gradual process which demands a serious continuous strive.**

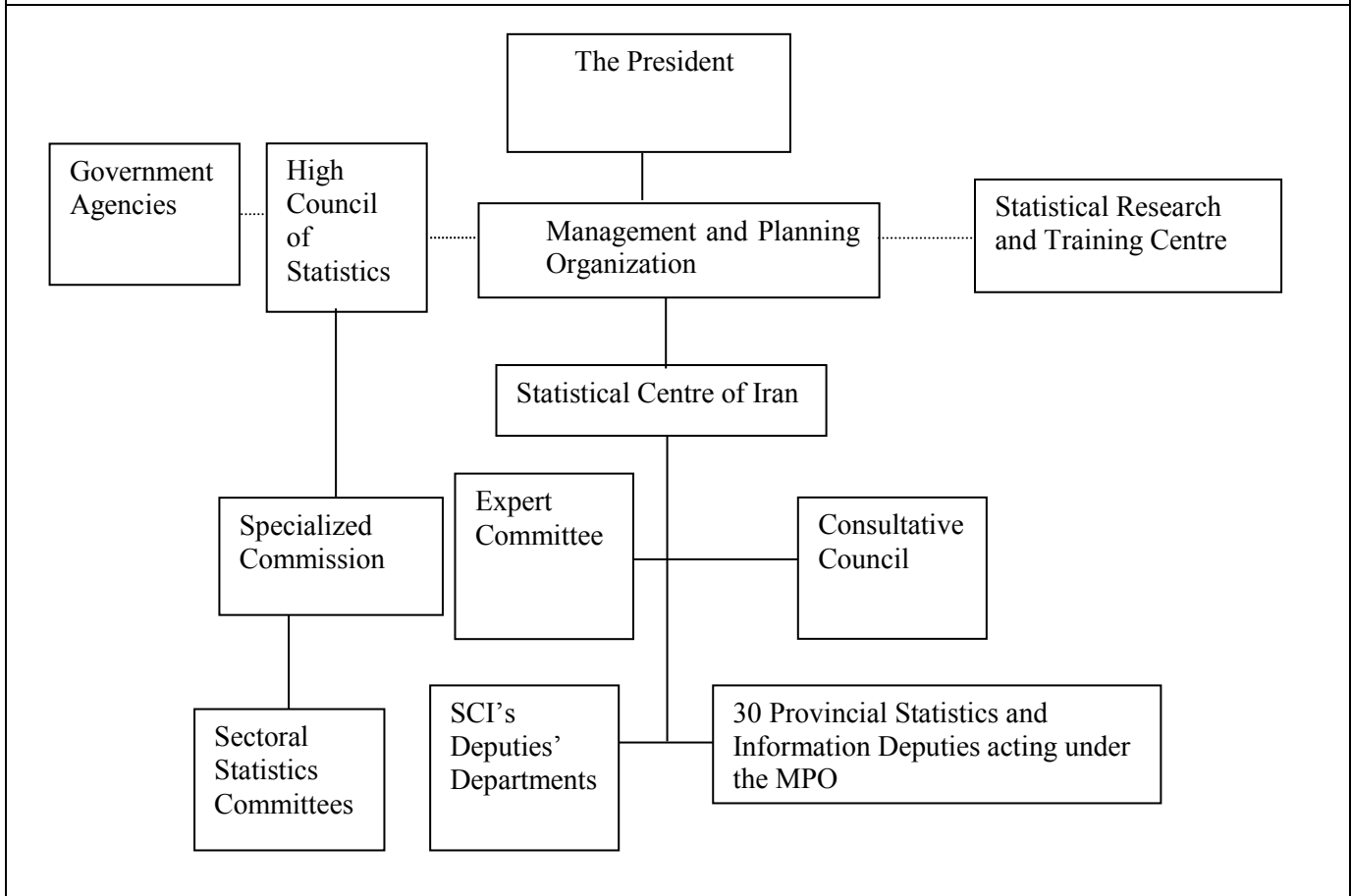## 2. Structure and components of the current Iranian statistical system

The Figure 1 shows the organizational chart of the current Iranian statistical system, which is based on the 1974 Law. The general specifications of the system are as follows:

- The highest government official, the President, is at the top of the system followed by the Management and Planning Organization (MPO). As mentioned above, the products of the national statistical system are used in the 5-year NDPs; so the presence of the President and the MPO at the top of the organizational chart is of special importance.

- The Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) stands at the centre of the national statistical system, while directly running some parts of it. The SCI's head is appointed by the head of the MPO while he is a deputy to him at once. He takes office for an open ended period when approved by the President. The position of the SCI is important in two aspects:

  a. As it is legally bound to produce the national accounts and price indexes, the SCI is at the moment the producer of a major part of statistical information as well as the authority responsible for launching the national population and housing census every ten years.
  b. According to the article 8 of the 1974 Law, all ministries, government agencies and government-affiliated agencies are bound to draw on the statistical concepts, definitions, methods, criteria and classifications developed or adopted by the SCI. Also, according to the government approval in 1999, the results of the statistical surveys implemented by other government agencies may be used by officials only when approved by the SCI.

> **The Statistical Centre of Iran plays a pivotal role in the current statistical system and will do the same in the developed system in future.**

- The Expert Committee and the Consultation Council are two bodies run by the SCI. The Expert Committee comprises a number of well-informed experts from offices of the SCI. They are responsible to recognize and discuss the new statistical fronts. Following feasibility studies, the new issues are reported to the SCI's head in the form of a project; later, the project would be referred to the concerned unit to get operational. The significance of the Committee is that all its members are from the SCI, so they are fully aware of the activities as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the Centre. That's while the Consultative Council is comprised of the experts and university faculty members with expertise in such fields as statistics, economics, demography and computer. The Council discusses the problems referred by the SCI's head, deputies and directors and provides possible solutions.

Figure 1: Organizational Chart of the Current Iranian Statistical System

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                              │  The President  │
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┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Government   │  │ High     │  │ Management and        │  │ Statistical Research │
│ Agencies     │  │ Council  │..│ Planning Organization │..│ and Training Centre  │
│              │  │ of       │  │                       │  │                      │
│              │  │ Statistics│ └──────────────────────┘  └──────────────────────┘
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                        │        ┌──────────────────────┐
                        │        │ Statistical Centre   │
                        │        │ of Iran              │
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              ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
              │ Specialized  │  │ Expert       │   │ Consultative │
              │ Commission   │  │ Committee    │───│ Council      │
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         │ Sectoral     │  │ SCI's        │  │ 30 Provincial Statistics │
         │ Statistics   │  │ Deputies'    │──│ and Information Deputies  │
         │ Committees   │  │ Departments  │  │ acting under the MPO      │
         └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────────────────┘
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- The High Council of Statistics is comprised of the MPO's head -a vice-president at once- SCI's head, and deputies of 11 ministries in addition to the deputy of the Central Bank. Moreover, two more ministries are represented in the Council as supervisor members. The head of the MPO acts as the head of the Council and the head of the SCI as the secretary. It should be noted here that the approvals of the Council are binding for the government agencies. The main duties of the Council are as follows:
    1. Review of the national statistical system's short-term and long-term programs,
    2. Review of data production priorities in the national statistical system,
    3. Review of correspondence between the national statistical programs and general policies and the statistical priorities set by the Council.

The High Council of Statistics also includes a specialized Commission in charge of reviewing the problems ahead of discussion in the Council. The members of the Commission are the director generals of statistics and information units in the ministries and government agencies who are at once members of the Council.
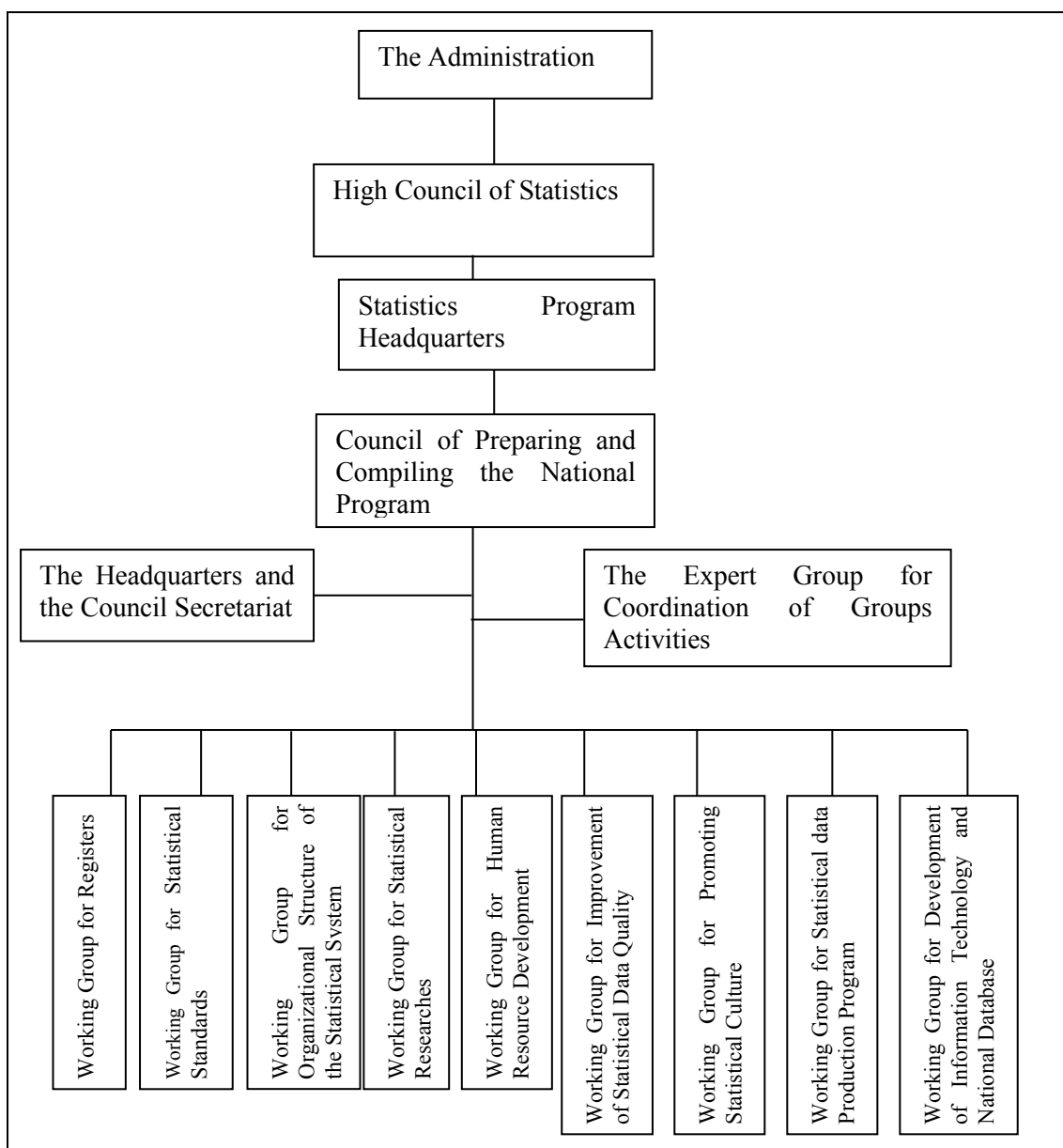
- The Statistical Research and Training Centre (SRTC) was established in the year 1999 in order to facilitate statistical capacity building in the national statistical system. The two major responsibilities of the SRTC are holding in-service training courses and designing and conducting researches on official statistics. The SRTC is affiliated to the SCI and its head is appointed by the head of the SCI.

Up until 1980, the SCI acted through 18 affiliated regional units to carry out its statistical activities. In 1980, following an approval aimed at making the government smaller, the units were merged with the provincial units of the MPO. It is noteworthy that in the year 2000, the former Plan and Budget Organization and the Administrative and Recruitment Affairs Organization were merged into the present Management and Planning Organization. Considering all the mergers so far happened, the implementation of the SCI's activities in provinces has been entrusted to the MPO's provincial units which are meanwhile affiliated to the Centre. This, however, has led to a new challenge, which will be discussed in chapter four.

3. The NSDS developing procedure
In order to develop the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics, primarily, 9 working groups were established as reflected in Figure 1. All groups followed and drew on the steps included in the four stages of Table 1. Another group titled *The Expert Group for Coordination of Groups Activities* supervised all the groups to coordinate all the activities and prevent any duplication.

Figure 2: Organization Chart of Compiling and Approving the National Statistical Program

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                    │  The Administration │
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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │ High Council of Statistics│
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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │ Statistics      Program │
                    │ Headquarters            │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                               │
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │ Council of Preparing and│
                    │ Compiling   the National│
                    │ Program                 │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
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   ┌──────────────────────┐                  ┌──────────────────────┐
   │ The Headquarters and │                  │ The   Expert  Group   for │
   │ the Council Secretariat│                 │ Coordination   of   Groups │
   └──────────────────────┘                  │ Activities              │
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Working Group for Registers

Working Group for Statistical Standards

Working Group for Organizational Structure of the Statistical System

Working Group for Statistical Researches

Working Group for Human Resource Development

Working Group for Improvement of Statistical Data Quality

Working Group for Promoting Statistical Culture

Working Group for Statistical data Production Program

Working Group for Development of Information Technology and National Database

The studies made by these 9 working groups were handed to the ***Council of Preparing and Compiling the National Program*** to be integrated and then drawn on for developing a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics. The draft NSDS was required to be approved by the High Council of Statistics prior to being presented to the government. To this end, the Specialized Commission of the Council discussed the draft in some 20 sessions and it was eventually approved by the government in July 2005 following the Council's approval in June 2005. The strategy has already been put into effect.

The significant point with the development of the strategy, either at the level of working groups or at higher levels, was the good clarity of the targets and the moving direction; since planning for developing the statistical system was started with the aim of meeting the

specified data needs of the national 5-year plans, this gave the endeavor a clear direction. When it comes to the statistical needs of the 5-year plans, one should think of a wide range of requirements from required departments to human resource, to training facilities, and many others.

Table 1: The steps included in the four stages of developing the NSDS

Stage	Description
Recognition of the present situation	To answer the question: 'Where are we standing?' the experts were expected to efficiently recognize all deficiencies present in different activities being carried out in the statistical system in addition to the potential and realized capacities.
Outlining the ideal Vision (the ideal situation)	To answer the question: 'Where are we to get to?' it was expected to get to a perspective of future activities based on the perception of ideal response to the needs of statistical data users within the framework of the 5-year national plans. While realistic, the ideal situation should be ambitious so that the statistical data are well used by planners and decision -makers.
Developing operational programs:	To answer the question: 'How to move towards the ideal situation?' there have to be operational programs - the procedures required to get to the ideal perspective. The significant point in this stage was involvement of a "political commitment" concerning developing the national statistical system; that is, the statistical data produced serves the national management system and moves the nation to the right direction. The data will be used in different national plans at micro and macro levels and will be drawn on for evaluation of the plans and decision-makings. So in developing the strategy, there had to be a great extensive support by the government.
Execution, supervision and evaluation	To realize the operational programs, all the national capacities are employed and the move towards the ideal situation gets started. At this stage, there is a close cooperation between the planners and the executives. The executives have to regularly make the feedbacks from their activities available to the planners so that they would be able to make the necessary changes in the programs as a means to guarantee getting into the targets. The point here is that implementation of the statistical development strategy creates new statistical capacities in the country to be used in future development programs; this indicates that the process of developing the national statistical system is of a continuous nature.

4. A profile of the NSDS

In this section, an outline of the NSDS is presented and in the following section the strategy will be dealt with in detail. It should be mentioned here that the SCI is only in charge of the execution of some parts of the strategy while entrusted to ensure the good implementation of all the strategy, while it should be in full implementation by the end of the 4th NDP.

4.1. Major challenges of the national statistical system (recognition of the present situation)

- **Inefficiency of the statistical units:** To ensure qualitative implementation of the statistical development programs at national level, the system needs professional active statistical units in different government agencies. At present, with shortage of expert human resource besides organizational deficiency, these units are facing serious problems in production of data and implementation of statistical programs.

- **Recognition of statistical needs:** At the moment, there is not a comprehensive list of statistical needs. Though in the national statistical system, the High Council of Statistics is meant to make co-ordinations between the SCI and the government agencies, but there is still no appropriate relations between the major statistical data users and the producers. This might originate from the low statistical awareness at different management levels and weak performance of the government agencies statistical units.

- **Private sector activities:** The legislative restrictions in hiring expert personnel have led to leaving a part of the statistics production job to the private sector. That is while the private sector's statistical activities seriously demand capacity building and reorganization at the national level in order to make the grounds for legal commitment as regards confidentiality of personal data and quality of the statistics produced.

- Official statistics in universities: At the moment, the subject of official statistics is absent from the scene of local universities. As a result, the graduates do not have the required abilities to work in this field and mostly are in need of in-service trainings after being hired by the statistical offices.

- **Duplications:** Though according to the law, the SCI is the only national institution authorized to produce and disseminate statistical data, and according to the government approval in 1999, all the data produced by other government agencies should be ratified by the SCI, in practice this has not yet realized, i. e., some agencies independently produce and disseminate statistical data with an unknown quality, and some produce data which are produced by the SCI as well.

- **Statistical awareness in society:** Because of their uncertainty as to what extent their personal data would be preserved confidential, and their ignorance about the applications and significance of the accurate statistical data in planning activities, the respondents are usually reluctant to show a good cooperation with census enumerators or sample survey interviewers. Moreover, frequent referring to a certain person during sample surveys carried out by different government agencies, brings about a boring situation for them. Obviously, these two problems could simply turn the data collection activity into a challenging undertaking.

- **Statistical awareness in the management sector:** Though the nation has been on a growing trend in recent decades and there have been different development plans, the evidence-based management is not yet common at all management levels, and the statistical data are not properly used in all concerned areas so that their role could be felt in decision makings. This has led to reluctance for supporting professionalism in statistics production in government agencies and, as a result, to production of low-quality data.

- **Administrative registers:** Since the system of registers is not yet established in most government agencies, the survey statistical data are still on widespread use.

- **Provincial statistics units:** The Management and Planning Organization have agencies in all 30 provinces of the country. These agencies have in their agenda implementation of the SCI's statistical activities in provinces. The big area of the country and the extensive nature of most statistical activities make it difficult the execution of development programs to be led only by the SCI which is located in the capital; actually the SCI needs to have its own affiliated provincial agencies so that there would be just one ruling system for the statistical activities, and as a result, inefficiencies originating from differing management policies might be avoided. Moreover, there should be regulations to bind the government agencies and institutions to cooperate with such provincial agencies.

- **Updating methodologies:** So far, the idea of updating the national statistical system's methodologies and current procedures, which obviously would lead to higher quality of statistical products, has been ignored. This, in part, is due to shortage of capable and knowledgeable manpower, and in part because of low statistical awareness in the national statistical system.

> **Though the existing problems are frustrating at first look, awareness of them promises they might be removed through efficient planning.**

4.2. Vision

The ideal vision for the national statistical system was compiled based on the ***20-year National Vision***, particularly, the fourth economic, social and cultural development plan. The main ideas of the vision are as follows:

- Production of updated, reliable and accurate statistical data proportional to the statistical needs of the users based on priorities of the national development plans with the help of proper and up-to-date methodologies,
- Fast and comprehensive data dissemination while preserving the confidentiality of individual data,
- Giving rise to the statistical awareness of the respondents, data producers, and data users to pave the ground for their active contribution to statistical activities,
- Reorganizing or quantitative and qualitative promotion of the statistics units in the government agencies,
- Decentralization in statistics production while integrating macro-level policy makings as regards, e. g., compiling standards, allocating jobs and data dissemination.

In the statistical vision, the SCI will serve as the national information base while production of official statistics will be entrusted to the concerned government agencies according to the subject-matter – except for the official data for which there could be no proper agency or that entrusting their production to government agencies might lead to biased output data. Drawing on the state-of-the-art information and communications technology, the SCI will get connected to the official data producing government agencies and would be able to integrate and save the data in its own database to subsequently provide data to different users or introduce the users to the proper statistical databases. Also, in the statistical vision, the SCI's main mission will be organizing, leading and supervising the system of official data production across the nation; and it will be sought that the government agencies would produce to the extent possible the data they need based on the standard guidelines compiled by the SCI.

> **Unlike the present situation in the statistical vision, the SCI will experience a gradual fall in its data production responsibility and an increasing rise in its policy-making and supervisory roles.**

4.3. Quantitative targets

The vision cannot make a practical breakthrough unless explained and presented as quantitative targets. The quantitative targets are also helpful in feasibility study of the program in the specified time span, recognizing the requirements of the program, allocating duties and responsibilities, and finally evaluating the activities at the end of the period.

The present subsection reviews some quantitative targets of the national statistical system development program up to the end of the 4th NDP. A part of quantitative targets was decided on according to different statistical needs; e.g., with the growth in statistical demands in the fourth plan, the coverage of data production will undergo a change. Moreover, with the emergence of new surveys or the need to review some current ones it is expected that there would be an increase in the number of research projects.

- Increase in the production coverage of the data required for the fourth development plan in economic, social and cultural fields up to 20%, 30% and 45% respectively,
- Filling job openings in the statistics units of the government agencies at an annual rate of 18% during the years of the fourth plan,
- Full production of the accounts provisioned in the system of national accounts,
- A surge in the number of statistics graduates in the government agencies statistics units up to 25% of the total by the end of the fourth plan,
- Reducing the time interval between the production and dissemination of the data in accordance with the Special Data Dissemination System (SDDS),
- Moving the nation's stand for the international 'data accessibility indicator' from category B to category A,
- Organizing and enhancing administrative records in different stages of design, implementation, computerization, and establishing at least two information systems in some 31 government agencies,
- Conducting at least some 150 statistical research projects by the government agencies by the end of the 4th NDP,
- Review of 12 statistical surveys to correspond them with new international standards,
- Editing, updating, translating, and implementing at least 19 standard international classifications.

5. Detailed program

In this section, the detailed program is presented by the activities of each working group. The point is that developing the statistical system – the final objective of the program – depends on developing in different areas. For example, according to Table 2, developing in the area of statistics production – the activity area for one of working groups – depends on developing in areas of manpower and registers system and organizational improvement of major bodies of the statistical system, which are the activity areas of three other working groups. Therefore, only an overwhelming move towards development can lead the plan to be realized.

> **Developing the statistical system at national level is in dire need of an overwhelming move, i.e., there should be a coordinated simultaneous move in all concerned areas towards development.**

5.1. Statistical data production

- **Current problems**
    - Lack of information about overall statistical needs of the nation, which has led to statistical shortages – statistical items, coverage, and time frequency.
    - Duplication in data production, which causes wasting of resources and production of conflicting data – because of drawing on different methods and definitions.
    - Decentralized decision-making and absence of supervision on production of statistical data, which cause less integration in data production and lower quality.
    - Shortage in manpower and credits, which makes it difficult to meet some statistical needs and lowers the effectiveness of statistical activities.

- **Vision**

The statistical surveys as a complement to the system of administrative records, will be implemented in all economic, social and cultural fields for any required time period, and the results will be made available to the users with high quality and in accordance with the concerned standards and in a fast and timely manner. The new statistical needs will be recognized by the experts and will be provided in an efficient manner.

- **Strategies**
    - The national statistics production program for the period of 2005-2009 is already compiled. It includes the estimated credit, data production methodology, geographical coverage, the responsible government agency, and the estimated manpower for each statistical project. The program has been prepared based on the statistical needs of the government agencies, researchers and other users with a focus on the 4th NDP.

    - To protect data quality and to observe the standards, the SCI is now less present in the production scene, as compared to the previous year, while it has been added to its supervisory role in implementation of all statistical projects. Now all government agencies are required to present their statistical projects to the SCI in the first six months of the year to be included in the budget agenda for receiving credit following approval of the High Council of Statistics. As a result, duplications are now less than before while the statistical activities are more integrated.

    - An increase in the SCI's scientific capabilities and statistical knowledge management,

    - Applying the information technology in data production and dissemination,

    - A reduction in the number of statistical projects and growing interest for using register-based data.

5.2. Organizational structure of the statistical system

- **Current problems**
    - The current organizational structure of the statistical system - which is a highly centralized one - is mainly based on the 1974 Law; and while it has undergone various changes during the last three decades, it is not yet an efficient one.
    - Since there are no provincial agencies affiliated only to the SCI, projects face different obstacles in their implementation due to lack of a unique management system.

o Since the statistical system has not undergone a review process during the last three decades, planning and execution of the statistical activities are not centralized due to intervention of different government agencies, and this leads to some duplications.

- **Vision**

Cooperation between the SCI and other government agencies will take place in a systematic and favorable manner. All the government agencies are equipped with a proper statistics office with specific working agenda. The SCI as the National Statistics Office (NSO), with a suitable organizational position, will coordinate and lead the statistical activities across the nation. In this Vision, the national statistical system will act efficiently in planning and policy-making, while the type of the statistical system will remain centralized.

- **Strategies**
    o Determining the position of the SCI at national and provincial level,
    o Reviewing the SCI's establishment law, approved in 1974,
    o Making the procedures of leading statistical activities and policy-making centralized while improving the system of supervision in the SCI,
    o Revising the responsibilities, objectives and composition of the High Council of Statistics,
    o Determining where the statistics offices should stand in government agencies.

5.3. Manpower

- **Current problems**
    o The university graduates in statistics are not qualified enough to join the national statistical system, and it makes the officials to hold in-service training courses for them.
    o The staff of statistics offices are usually less valued than workers of other offices, and it takes away their incentive for working eagerly. Moreover, it has made recruitment of new staff for statistics offices a real challenge.
    o The probation and in-service trainings are not in a direct relation with the statistical needs of the nation.

- **Vision**

With recruitment of new staff and giving rise to technical capability of the workers in the SCI and other agencies statistics units, their capabilities will experience a boost proportional to the needs of the national statistical system.

- **Strategies**
    o To include the major of official statistics in the national higher education system,
    o To compile the subject-matters of the probation and in-service training courses specific to the workers of the government agencies statistics units,
    o To create motives in order to attract and keep the expert manpower to the government agencies statistics units,
    o To change the trend of statistics training in the schools by holding training workshops for the teachers and changing the textbooks in a proper way, so that there could be motives for the students to continue their education in statistics,
    o To fill all the job vacancies in the statistics units of the government agencies, while excluding the units from the government size reduction policy.

5.4. Statistical standards

- **Current problems**
  o Disharmony between different parts of the statistical system, particularly the data producing sections, in definitions, concepts, classifications and standards,
  o Lack of enough flexibility in some government agencies for accepting the standards provided by the SCI, which is mainly because of weak performance of their local regulations, disinclination to cooperate with the SCI and absence of legal support for their application,
  o Shortage of experienced manpower in some government agencies.

- **Vision**
With preparing and compiling the statistical standards by the SCI and their application in production of official statistics, the statistical data could be easily integrated and would be comparable at national and international level. Moreover, the standards would be simply available to all users by the statistical databases.

- **Strategies**
  o Preparing, implementing and reviewing the classifications at use by the SCI – the activity will cover 19 classifications during 2005-2009,
  o Standardization of statistical terms and items in 29 government agencies by the SCI,
  o Preparing and updating other statistical standards by the SCI to be used in statistical projects, and presenting them to the High Council of Statistics to be declared to all government agencies,
  o Monitoring the application of the statistical standards in government agencies in accordance with the instructions provided by the SCI,
  o The SCI's membership in international organizations and active representation in meetings and workshops concerning statistical standards.

5.5. Improving the quality of the statistical data

- **Current problems**
  o There is not a proper system for evaluating and continuous improving of data quality as a part of data production procedure in most government agencies.
  o There is no enough experienced manpower for evaluation and improving the quality of the statistical surveys results.
  o The relation between the data producers and users is not organized; so it is hard to recognize the statistical needs and measure the user satisfaction.
  o There are total non-responses to questionnaires of some surveys because of problems with the frames; also there are item non-responses or wrong answers because of respondents low statistical culture.

- **Vision**
With establishment of the system of continuous data quality improvement, the quality of the statistical products will improve and data production will be based on the users needs.

- **Strategies**
  o To require the quality assessment indexes to be offered along with the results of the sample surveys,
  o Preparing the regulations for the assessment of continuous quality improvement of the statistical surveys results,
  o Holding training courses on statistical quality management and quality indicators in statistical projects,

o Requiring the government agencies to allocate a part of research projects credit to analysis of the statistical surveys results by university lecturers and other experts.

5.6. Statistical researches

- **Current problems**
o There is not a system of research on official statistics,
o There is no proper relations between official statistics producers, academic centres and research centres,
o There are not enough researchers and financial resources.

- **Vision**

The outputs the researches carried out on official statistics in the country will be discussable in the world forums. So, such researches would be scientific, innovative, and responsive to the needs and questions of the centres producing official statistics, while providing accurate and up-to-date results.

- **Strategies**
o Establishing a local databank for statistical researches while making connections with similar developed databanks in other countries,
o Preparing a research schedule comprising some 153 research projects in the area of official statistics in order to answer the needs and remove the problems of the national statistical system during the years 2005 to 2009. In the program, the government agencies are responsible for research projects and securing the required credits,
o Improving the attractions of the field of official statistics through providing facilities and financial support in order to attract cooperation of researchers,
o Supporting presentation of scientific papers in local and international specialized publications and supporting theses and dissertations with the subjects concerning official statistics,
o Helping the experts to take part in the conferences and training workshops held within the country or abroad and supporting statistical societies and scientific associations.

5.7. Registers

- **Current problems**
o There are either no statistics units in government agencies or they act very poorly.
o There is no consensus on using a certain methodology in organizing administrative records in the government agencies.
o There is not enough experienced and skillful manpower for organizing the system of administrative records and designing and constructing information systems. Moreover, there are not enough consultative companies in the field of designing information systems.
o The current credits are not enough for implementing all the stages of establishing the system of administrative records in government agencies.

- **Vision**

The system of administrative records will be established in all government agencies and all the statistical needs will be secured from registers. And the national statistical database will be fed in an up-to-date manner.

- **Strategies**
  o To design and put into operation two information systems in some 31 selected government agencies during the 4ᵗʰ NDP - the priority is with the agencies who are supposed to feed the data needs of the national statistical database. To this end, the manpower and the required credits for the time period of 2005-2009 have been estimated,
  o Making grounds for further cooperation of the private sector in providing information systems,
  o Holding orientation and training sessions in government agencies and consultative companies for managers and experts at different levels.

5.8. Developing information technology and constructing the national statistical database

- **Current problems**
  o There is not required expertise in using ICT in statistical activities in some levels of the statistical system.
  o There is not a comprehensive and clear planning for making the ICT activities integrated with the statistical system.
  o There is no access to high speed telecommunication lines.
  o There are restrictions in recruiting ICT experts.

- **Vision**
  o The SCI seeks to turn into a pioneering organization in applying the ICT in statistical activities and developing it in the field, so that a part of data production and dissemination would take place in a digital environment. In this vision, plans, decisions and policies will be made based on the information from the national statistical database which because of incorporating the concept of comprehensive information supply, will result in utmost user satisfaction.

- **Strategies**
  o Turning the SCI into the only statistical information source in the country through construction of a proper fundamental network and providing the basic software. So, the users may directly have access to a wide range of statistical data from the comfort of home or office –whether the data is produced by the SCI or other government agencies,
  o Seeking integration in producing, storage, updating and disseminating of statistical data as well as in providing information services through standardization of activities and monitoring their application,
  o Developing a designing and data extraction system for statistical surveys in a way that we would be able to define the subject-matter and technical projects as well as censuses and sample surveys questionnaires based on the standards in it, and then go for field operations, data compilation, data processing and report generating.
  o Holding long- and short-term in-service training courses for the statistical system workers to upgrade their ICT know-how,
  o Developing a specific data analysis system for amateur users, so that they would be able to simply access to statistical indexes and time series and easily use heaps of statistical information; as a result, one of the obstacles preventing apparent presence of statistical information in the area of planning and decision-making will get removed,
  o Preparing a program which presents the progress measures in a timetable along with the responsible agency for each measure, and the estimated manpower and credits – a corresponding program has already been developed for the 2005-2009 period,

- o Supporting and encouraging the government agencies to conduct the comprehensive plan of information technology,
- o Making use of the private sector potentials in providing services and developing information systems.

5.9. Promoting the statistical culture

- **Current problems**
  - o Respondents are ignorant of positive effects of the statistical information on their personal and social life, which prevents them from active participation in surveys.
  - o Respondents are not confident about preserving confidentiality of their responses; and release of conflicting figures has caused more distrust in them.
  - o There is no guarantee in regard of respondents to give correct answers.
  - o Some users hold wrong interpretation of statistical data.
  - o There is no regular contact between data producers and data users; so users know little about the official statistics definitions, concepts and methodologies and how to access them.
  - o Referring to statistical data is not yet common in different levels of planning and policy-making.

- **Vision**

The general public will be well aware about the importance of the statistical activities and will have confidence in the released data while showing good cooperation in providing statistical data. Policy-making and decision-making will be based on correct statistical data. The statistical data will be released with great objectivity. All the statistical data needs of the society will be met and management will be evidence-based.

- **Strategies**
  - o Preparing and compiling the statistical awareness evaluation indexes and evaluating the statistical awareness based on them every two years,
  - o Holding statistical awareness biennial conference,
  - o Supporting the theses and dissertations on statistical culture,
  - o Supporting studies on the ways to up confidence and interest in respondents and users,
  - o Preparing suitable training programs to be aired by the national radio and television, installing statistical billboards, and the like, in order to provide the general public with simple expression of statistical subjects and to gain their confidence,
  - o Holding statistical training courses for students, teachers and journalists,
  - o Requiring the government agencies to refer to official statistics in preparing plans and making policies.

Table 2: Requirements for realization of working groups' outlooks

Requirements / Working group	Statistical data production	Structure of the main bodies of the statistical system	Manpower	Statistical standards	Improving statistical data quality	Statistical researches	Administrative records	Developing information technology and the national statistical database	Promoting statistical culture
Statistical data production		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Structure of the main bodies of the statistical system			√						√
Manpower		√							√
Statistical standards									
Improving statistical data quality			√	√		√			√
Statistical researches			√						
Administrative records	√			√		√		√	√
Developing information technology and the national statistical database						√			√
Promoting statistical culture						√			