

Peer Review on the Implementation of the Statistics Code of Practice for the ENP South countries (based on the European Statistics Code of Practice) in Jordan

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Abbreviations

CoP	Code of Practice
DG	Director General
DOS	Department of Statistics
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
GIS	Geographic Information System
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NSI	National Statistical Institute
NSS	National Statistical System
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OPOSs	Other Producers of Official Statistics
PR	Peer Review
SDDS	Special Data Dissemination Standard
SESRIC	Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic countries
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

Preface

The peer review (PR) of the Department of Statistics (DOS) in Jordan was undertaken in the framework of the Eurostat funded project “The provision of global assessments, sector assessments and peer reviews for enlargement and ENP countries”. The consortium led by DevStat, Servicios de Consultoría Estadística S.L., in cooperation with Statistics Lithuania, under contract with Eurostat, was responsible for organising all activities and tasks relating to the PR.

The ENP-South countries, together with Eurostat, have developed a Statistics Code of Practice (CoP) for the ENP-South countries (based on the European statistics Code of Practice)¹. The ENP-South CoP was agreed by the countries at the Forum of Euro-Mediterranean Statisticians, in Prague in April 2016.

The objectives of peer reviews in the ENP-South region are, in particular, to assess compliance of the reviewed National Statistical Institute (NSI) with Principles 1-6 and 15 and 16 of the ENP-South CoP, to highlight transferable practices suitable to foster compliance with the CoP and to recommend improvement actions needed in order to fully comply with the CoP. Jordan is the first country of the region to request a peer review based on the ENP-South CoP.

The review process was initiated by Eurostat at the request of the Department of Statistics. The review was conducted by the two experts, Mr Richard Laux (United Kingdom) who was the leading expert and Ms Pilar Martin-Guzman (Spain) who was assigned as supporting expert. The review mission took place on 6-9 February 2017. Besides the two experts, Ms Rosemary Montgomery, representative of Eurostat, participated in this mission. Written material was made available by DOS in advance and during the assessment mission. The review mission was also prepared through replies to the self-assessment questionnaire sent out in advance to DOS.

The peer review team very much appreciated the openness of the communication both with the staff of DOS and with representatives from partner and stakeholder organisations. It is hoped that the review will be of benefit to the further development of DOS.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-catalogues/-/KS-32-11-955?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Feurostat%2Fen%2Fpublications%2Fleaflets>

Executive summary

The General Statistics Law (No. 12 of 2012) establishes the roles and responsibilities of Jordan's Department of Statistics (DOS), the nature of DOS's engagement with Ministries that are involved in statistical activity, the protection of confidentiality, the membership and role of the Statistical Consultative Committee, and a range of fines and sanctions. It does not establish the concept of a Jordanian National Statistical System.

The reviewers' understanding is that the Law has been broadly effective in supporting the Department's independent statistical activity, and it is clear that the Department implements a range of activity in appropriate ways; external stakeholders hold DOS, including its *de facto* professional independence, in high regard. Nevertheless, the current Law is inconsistent with many aspects of the ENP South Statistics Code of Practice, and lags significantly behind latest international thinking about statistical legislation.

The reviewers understand that DOS is currently considering changes to the Statistical Law, *inter alia* to strengthen professional independence. The reviewers support this direction-of-travel, although it would seem more appropriate – particularly in the context of findings elsewhere in this report – to use the recently-published Generic Law on Official Statistics² as the basis for a modernisation of Jordan's General Statistical Law.

DOS has a legal mandate to collect information for statistical purposes. According to the law, Ministries which wish to conduct surveys should seek the advice and permission of DOS before they may do so. Unusually, this provision – which supports the conduct of high quality surveys and a minimisation of respondent burden – applies also to “non-official” bodies, that is to say research and private sector institutions. DOS has the legal right to access Ministries' administrative databases, although in practice the data they are able to access is out-of-date and does not fully meet DOS' needs. Access to the tax authority's databases has not been granted. Greater use of tightly-defined Memoranda of Understanding might improve DOS' access to administrative data, although it seems inevitable that high level political support will be required to make any *de jure* solution work in practice.

The statistical system of Jordan seems to have sufficient resources to meet the current national needs – to cover DOS' annual work plan and to fulfil the demands of the users. In particular, financial resources are sufficient. Although the budget is not flexible, which means that DOS has to apply for funds for any new statistical operation, the government seems to resource new statistical work without many restrictions. For the renovation of IT equipment DOS is making use of the funds provided by international cooperation programmes, which seem to be enough to cover current needs.

Human resources are also sufficient, but the very high turnover of qualified staff is creating some problems. The Training Centre provides well-received support for the qualification of statisticians on a permanent basis. It appears that the average level of English of the staff is comparatively low, which is a hindrance for the development of cooperation activities and to their participation in international capacity building programmes. The junior staff seem to be happy and highly motivated; they enjoy their work and are strongly committed to continuous improvement.

The main measure of quality used in DOS is SDDS, which is applied mainly to the data required by IMF. Quality statements and metadata exist, but need to be more accessible and up-to-date; and the development of user oriented quality reports should be a priority.

² <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45114>

The statutory provisions for the protection of confidentiality by DOS staff are consistent with the Statistics Code of Practice for the ENP-South countries. DOS appears to take appropriate steps to maintain the physical and electronic security of the data it holds. However, by international standards DOS is unusually generous in its provision of micro-data to researchers – generous to a point of clearly risking the identification of respondents’ confidential data by anyone who might obtain a copy of the micro-data (which itself would not seem unduly difficult). There is no evidence of a written protocol establishing the requirements for access to micro-data and including a description of the methodological processes and dissemination rules that guarantee full compliance with the principles of confidentiality and objectivity.

In general terms, DOS is highly compliant with the principle of impartiality and objectivity, and there is a clear commitment among senior staff to following best practice. The main limitation is the scarcity of information and documentation disseminated on the website.

The accessibility and clarity of the statistics produced by DOS was highly regarded by the users who were interviewed during the peer review (belonging to the public sector, academy and the media). Moreover, the user satisfaction survey conducted by DOS last year presents very positive evaluations, with values between 4 and 5 (within a ranking interval from 0 to 5) for all the questions. The results of this survey have not been publicised on the website.

DOS’s Customer Service Centre seems to have a very high level of activity and to be appreciated by the users.

The peer review team considers that the proportion of information publicised in English on the website is still low, and that DOS should endeavour to increase it, in order to facilitate international access to the information.

The coordination and cooperation role of the DOS is clearly defined in the General Statistics Law 2012. This decrees that DOS is the sole Governmental body authorised to collect statistical information and data from respondents. DOS is also mandated to coordinate the statistical work of the different Government departments, helping to develop their administrative records so as to be able to use them for statistical purposes, in line with international practice and standards. The Law also gives DOS the role of approving and overseeing statistical surveys planned and carried out by ministries. And Governmental departments are obliged to coordinate with DOS concerning changes to the forms or the mechanisms they employ to gather data, to facilitate their use for statistical purposes.

DOS is widely recognised as the authority on statistical issues and statistics units in Government departments regularly consult DOS concerning their definitions, methods, samples, etc. For most products, DOS coordinates through ad hoc committees that bring together users and producers, and other stakeholders. Moreover, any non-public body that plans to collect and disseminate statistics on behalf of another body must obtain written permission from the DG of DOS. This allows DOS to comment on / approve the questionnaires, methodologies, etc. This procedure works smoothly, and a number of such surveys are approved each year.

The General Statistics Law is fairly recent (2012) and the processes and procedures for this coordination work are not yet complete. Major activities such as the population and housing census in 2015, have slowed down implementation, so that this coordination is “work in progress”. However, the steps taken so far indicate that the role is taken seriously, by DOS and by some of the other Government departments.

Recommendations

1. The General Statistics Law should be modernised; a revised version should be based on the Generic Law on Official Statistics³. The key elements of the modernisation should be:
 - a. To strengthen the professional independence of DOS and the Director General, including that the DG should have sole responsibility for the development, production and dissemination of statistics.
 - b. To specify the appointment and dismissal procedures for the Director General.
 - c. To focus on establishing the Jordanian statistical system, and providing DOS with a central coordinating role.
 - d. To require the publication of a Multi-Annual Work Programme that relates to the national statistical system as a whole, building on DOS' strategic plans.
 - e. To specify a role for the Statistical Consultative Committee that follows best international practice for statistical councils.
 - f. To strengthen DOS' right of access to administrative data held by other official agencies, including by making statutory provision for tightly-defined Memoranda of Understanding.
2. DOS should make wider use of the Training Centre. In addition to the current capacity building programme, some additional courses, oriented towards attracting the participation of the other producers of official statistics (OPOS) – dealing, for example, with the Code of Practice, or with public relations in statistics – should be organised. This would also help to make wider use of the coordinating potential of the Training Centre.
3. A mechanism for the establishment of positive and negative priorities in statistics should be implemented. An effective Statistical Consultative Committee, meeting frequently, and including representatives from all types of users, could take charge of this task.
4. The section of the website on Quality and Metadata should be reorganised so as to be able to find the quality policy and quality commitment statement more easily. It should also be expanded to explain the purpose of the checklists and templates that are on the website, and to include more detailed guidelines on how to implement quality management. The metadata should be reviewed and linked to the data.
5. The user satisfaction survey should be extended to include on-line users.
6. Quality reports aimed at users should be progressively introduced (and published), and on-line users should be asked to assess whether they are accessible and useful.
7. A standing committee for confidentiality protection should be established, under the chairmanship of the Director General.
8. DOS should conduct an immediate review of international best practice in relation to the release of micro-data and then, following discussion with existing users, implement more stringent access arrangements.
9. DOS should document the guidelines used for compilation and dissemination, and make them public on the website, in Arabic and in English.
10. Announcements about the correction of errors should be made more visible on the website.
11. DOS should establish links between the files containing the data and those describing the corresponding metadata.

³ <http://www.unecce.org/index.php?id=45114>

12. DOS should encourage OPOSs to progressively make public their release calendars, and to publish them both on their websites and on the DOS website.
13. The existing pre-release access arrangements should be documented on the website. Mindful of the fact that the newspapers are, in effect, releasing the statistics, DOS should take steps to cease the provision of pre-release access to the media.
14. DOS should establish a complete archiving system including all statistical operations (surveys and administrative sources).
15. DOS should increase the proportion of information published in English, so facilitating international access to the information.
16. DOS should accelerate, as much as possible, the ongoing process of adapting the current metadata into SMDX format.
17. DOS should encourage the other producers of official statistics to publish more of their data on their website, in order to increase the visibility and use of the data. DOS should also update and expand the links on their website to include the websites of the statistical units responsible for producing official statistics within Ministries and other Government Departments.
18. The main producers of official statistics should be encouraged to sign up to a common dissemination policy, and to publish it on their websites.
19. Coordination of statistical work within a country is a continual process, and should be included in the Strategic Plan to ensure that adequate resources are available for this work. Coordination work should be formalised, possibly by a sub-group of the Statistical Consultative Committee (as set-up by the statistical law with the duty to reviewing DOS' annual plans and examining development proposals). The recommendations of DOS to other producers of official statistics and to producers of administrative data should be documented and should be reviewed from time to time to ensure they are still in line with international standards. Some of the reports and recommendations should be put on the websites of DOS and relevant Government departments.
20. A formal procedure, including regular discussions and meetings with holders of administrative data, should be put in place to allow the exchange of information on planned amendments to administrative data, to record and document the recommendations from DOS concerning the proposed amendments, and to follow up on their implementation.
21. The coverage of the catalogue of data obtained from administrative sources should be expanded from the ten sectors it currently covers to include also the remaining sectors.
22. Given the high turnover of staff, the statistical assistance and training received by DOS should be coordinated by an internal team of experts, to ensure continuity.
23. Regular English classes and Discussion Groups in English should be organised by DOS, for example, at lunch times, in order to build language skills within DOS. The Discussion Groups would build confidence of those who already know English, but who have little opportunity to practice it, and who therefore hesitate to speak in international meetings.

1. Findings per principle

1.1. Principle 1: Professional independence

Professional independence of the National Statistical Institute and other producers of official statistics from other policy, regulatory or administrative departments and bodies, as well as from private sector operators, ensures the credibility of official statistics.

Overall assessment

The General Statistics Law (No. 12 of 2012) establishes the roles and responsibilities of Jordan's Department of Statistics (DOS), the nature of DOS's engagement with Ministries that are involved in statistical activity, the protection of confidentiality, the membership and role of the Statistical Consultative Committee, and a range of fines and sanctions. It does not establish the concept of a Jordanian National Statistical System.

The reviewers' understanding is that the Law has been broadly effective in supporting the Department's independent statistical activity, and it is clear that the Department implements a range of activity in appropriate ways; external stakeholders hold DOS, including its de facto professional independence, in high regard. Nevertheless, the current Law is inconsistent with many aspects of the ENP South Statistics Code of Practice, and lags significantly behind latest international thinking about statistical legislation.

The reviewers understand that DOS is currently considering changes to the Statistical Law, inter alia to strengthen professional independence. The reviewers support this direction-of-travel, although it would seem more appropriate – particularly in the context of findings elsewhere in this report – to use the recently-published Generic Law on Official Statistics as the basis for a modernisation of Jordan's General Statistical Law.

Assessment per indicator

1.1.1. Indicator 1.1: The independence of the National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat from political and other external interference in developing, producing and disseminating statistics is specified in law and assured for other producers of official statistics.

Article 4 of the General Statistics Law says that the Department is the sole Governmental body authorised to collect statistical information and data from respondents (although Article 7(b) mentions that Ministries may conduct statistical surveys). However, the General Statistics Law does not explicitly address the independence of the Department (or of statistical units in Ministries). The reviewers were told that DOS is regarded as an “independent Department” in the sense that the DG reports to the Minister (of Planning) as his point-of-access to the Prime Minister. This is in contrast to other Departments, such as those responsible for land and surveying, for customs, and for tax, which are connected to the Ministry.

The reviewers were told that in the past DOS has suggested that its status be brought into line with the Jordanian Audit Office, which reports directly to Cabinet and Parliament; however, the Cabinet did not wish to encourage other organisations to pursue this approach.

1.1.2. Indicator 1.2: The heads of the National Statistical Institutes and of Eurostat and, where appropriate, the heads of other producers of official statistics have sufficiently high hierarchical standing to ensure senior level access to policy authorities and administrative public bodies. They are of the highest professional calibre.

The post of the Director General (DG) of DOS is that of the highest level civil servant. The DG reports to the Minister for Planning, for administrative purposes, but in effect is accountable to the Prime Minister. From discussion with stakeholders the reviewers understand that the DG is regarded as highly effective / professional. The DG attends Cabinet Meetings about once every two months, to discuss the DOS budget (this is common practice for DGs) but also to discuss statistical issues. During the population and housing census he attended Cabinet meetings more frequently. He also attends Parliamentary meetings, to discuss the same range of issues.

1.1.3. Indicator 1.3: The heads of the National Statistical Institutes and of Eurostat and, where appropriate, the heads of other producers of official statistics have responsibility for ensuring that statistics are developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner.

The General Statistics Law indicates the high-level responsibilities of the DG. However, it does not specify his professional independence (in relation to the development, production and dissemination of statistics); neither does it mention the concept of independence in relation to the Department or the DG. From discussion with stakeholders the reviewers understand that the DG is regarded as operating with professional independence, and that under his leadership the Department is similarly regarded.

1.1.4. Indicator 1.4: The heads of the National Statistical Institutes and of Eurostat and, where appropriate, the heads of other producers of official statistics have the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases.

The General Statistics Law does not stipulate that the DG has sole responsibility in relation to methods, standards and practices or the content and timing of statistical releases. The reviewers were told that statistical releases are provided a day before publication to the Minister – but for information only, not for approval. From discussion with stakeholders the reviewers understand that the Department is regarded as having de facto rights of responsibility for methods, standards and practices.

Representatives of other producers of official statistics explained to the reviewers that they are responsible for decision about the methods, content and timing of their statistical releases. However, the publication date of their statistics is not pre-announced (although they have internal release schedules).

1.1.5. Indicator 1.5: The statistical work programmes are published and periodic reports describe progress made.

The General Statistics Law does not require DOS to publish an annual Plan or Report. However, DOS has published an annual work plan (“Aspirations”) on its website (although the latest available at the time of the Peer Review – February 2017 – related to 2016). It also publishes an Annual Report, but only in Arabic. The reviewers were told the DOS’s Strategic Planning Unit monitors progress against the annual work plan.

DOS has also published a Strategic Plan (2012-2015), and it is currently developing a Strategic Plan for 2017-2021, although it does not publish a Multi-Annual Work Programme.

Article 10 of the General Statistics Law establishes a Statistical Consultative Committee, chaired by the Minister of Planning (the DG of DOS is deputy chair). Despite apparently relatively wide-ranging responsibilities, the reviewers were told that it operates at a strategic, non-executive level, looking at the priorities for information about Jordanian society. Although it was established in 2012 it has only met twice, and not at all since 2014. The broad composition of membership is set out in Article 10; the DG is currently working with the Minister to refresh the Committee's membership. The reviewers consider that there would be merit in exploring international best practice in the roles and responsibilities, and membership, of Statistical Councils.

1.1.6. Indicator 1.6: Statistical releases are clearly distinguished and issued separately from political / policy statements.

Press releases and statistical reports are clearly identified as being published by DOS. The reviewers understand that they are issued separately from policy statements – and stakeholders confirmed that this was their understanding although this could not be verified directly.

1.1.7. Indicator 1.7: The National Statistical Institute and Eurostat and, where appropriate, other producers of official statistics, comment publicly on statistical issues, including criticisms and misuses of statistics as far as considered suitable.

DOS explained that they comment publicly in cases where there is a public criticism of a statistical issue. A recent example related to DOS' adoption of geometric mean in the calculation of price indices: this methodological change had not been flagged to users in advance (although it is normally DOS's practice to do so), and prompted media criticism by a prominent journalist. DOS explained that they had contacted him and explained the situation. In such cases, it would be appropriate to document the issue fully on DOS's website, in Arabic and English, to promote transparency and to enhance trust in DOS and official statistics.

1.1.8. Indicator 1.8: The appointment of the heads of the National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat and, where appropriate, of other producers of official statistics, is based on professional competence only. The reasons on the basis of which the incumbency can be terminated are specified in the legal framework. These cannot include reasons compromising professional or scientific independence.

The General Statistics Law does not specify the appointment procedures for the DG, or the basis for the termination of the incumbent's appointment. Previous DGs have stepped down to retire or to move to another post. The reviewers were told that the post is advertised publicly. The advertisement sets out the skills and competences required; applicants are then shortlisted and interviewed by a panel comprising four Ministers (including the Minister of Planning). The panel nominates its chosen candidate to the Prime Minister (the reviewers were told that no nominee has been rejected at this stage), and shortly afterwards a Royal Decree is issued, which confirms the appointment.

DGs are not appointed for a fixed term if they are existing civil servants; their appointment may be renewed. Two previous DGs were not civil servants, so were employed under fixed terms – initially for two years, subsequently renewed. The reviewers were told that this is standard practice for DG posts in Jordan.

Heads of statistical units in Ministries are recruited according to standard civil service procedures but are not required to be professional statisticians (although the reviewers understand that most have attended courses at DOS' Statistical Training Centre).

Recommendations

1. The General Statistics Law should be modernised; a revised version should be based on the Generic Law on Official Statistics⁴. The key elements of the modernisation should be:
 - a. To strengthen the professional independence of DOS and the Director General, including that the DG should have sole responsibility for the development, production and dissemination of statistics.
 - b. To specify the appointment and dismissal procedures for the Director General.
 - c. To focus on establishing the Jordanian statistical system, and providing DOS with a central coordinating role.
 - d. To require the publication of a Multi-Annual Work Programme that relates to the national statistical system as a whole, building on DOS' strategic plans.
 - e. To specify a role for the Statistical Consultative Committee that follows best international practice for statistical councils.
 - f. To strengthen DOS' right of access to administrative data held by other official agencies, including by making statutory provision for tightly-defined Memoranda of Understanding.

1.2. Principle 2: Mandate for data collection

The National Statistical Institute and other producers of official statistics have a clear legal mandate to collect information for official statistical purposes. Administrations, enterprises and households, and the public at large may be compelled by law to allow access to or deliver data for official statistical purposes at the request of National Statistical Institute and other producers of official statistics.

Overall assessment

DOS has a legal mandate to collect information for statistical purposes. According to the law, Ministries which wish to conduct surveys should seek the advice and permission of DOS before they may do so. Unusually, this provision – which supports the conduct of high quality surveys and a minimisation of respondent burden – applies also to “non-official” bodies, that is to say research and private sector institutions. DOS has the legal right to access Ministries' administrative databases, although in practice the data they are able to access is out-of-date and does not fully meet DOS' needs. Access to the tax authority's databases has not been granted. Greater use of tightly-defined Memoranda of Understanding might improve DOS' access to administrative data, although it seems inevitable that high level political support will be required to make any de jure solution work in practice.

Assessment per indicator

1.2.1. Indicator 2.1: The mandate of the National Statistical Institute and other producers of official Statistics to collect information for the development, production and dissemination of official statistics is specified in law.

Article 4 of the General Statistics Law says that DOS is the sole Governmental body authorised to collect statistical information and data from respondents, though as noted above, article 7 makes clear that Ministries may also undertake surveys if they are directly related to the Ministry's portfolio, if the

⁴ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45114>

data are not already held by DOS, and after securing the approval of the DG of DOS.

Article 8 of the General Statistics Law gives DOS authority over the statistical data collection work of non-official bodies (including those in the private sector): they require the written permission of the DG to do so, if they are working on behalf of another body. The intention behind this relatively unusual legal provision is to seek to minimise the burden on respondents and to provide a coordinated statistical picture of Jordan. DOS provides advice on methods, and may draw a sample for the non-public organisation, for a fee. It does not have an automatic right to the micro-data or to the results of such surveys. A list of such activities is published as an annex to the Annual Report.

1.2.2. Indicator 2.2: The National Statistical Institute and other producers of official statistics are allowed by law to use administrative data for statistical purposes.

DOS receives aggregated information compiled by some Ministries from their administrative databases. Article 6 of the General Statistics Law requires Ministries to allow DOS employees to examine Ministries' databases. However, the reviewers understand that this applies only to copies of databases relating to health, education and the environment – that is, off-line access – and that online access (to real time information) is not allowed. Access to tax data is less forthcoming: DOS employees cannot view tax data at all. The reviewers understand that this is because of the provisions of the statutory basis of the tax authority.

Although there is no statutory basis for Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between DOS and other organisations, DOS has established MoUs with a range of bodies (including the Civil Service Bureau, the Municipality of Amman, the Ministry of Tourism (related to its Arrivals and Departures Survey), the Ministry of IT / Communications (about the Survey of Households' IT usage), and the World Bank and the ILO (in both cases, about the provision of micro-data). There are no MoUs with the Ministry of Finance or the Jordanian Central Bank. The reviewers were told of the close working and coordination between these three organisations, but consider that the preparation and publication of MoUs would be an ideal opportunity to formalise relationships, and establish protocols for data transfer (including quality assurance arrangements). DOS said that they are looking to develop a MoU with the tax authority. This, in common with all MoUs, would need to be approved by the Prime Minister.

The Departments of Health and of Education collect information from (respectively), hospitals / clinics and schools, covering a wide variety of information. The data are entered at the local level (that is, by each institution), and are then aggregated by each of the Departments and published as official statistics.

1.2.3. Indicator 2.3: On the basis of a legal act, the National Statistical Institute and other producers of official statistics may compel response to statistical surveys.

Article 18 of the General Statistics Law specifies a fine (of up to 100 Dinar) for failing to comply with a statistical survey. The reviewers were told that (as in many European countries) this penalty is never applied in practice: instead it is used to try to improve response rates.

1.3. Principle 3: Adequacy of resources

The resources available to the National Statistical Institute and other producers of official statistics are sufficient to meet Official Statistics requirements.

Overall assessment

The statistical system of Jordan seems to have sufficient resources to meet the current national needs – to cover DOS’ annual work plan and to fulfil the demands of the users.

In particular, financial resources are sufficient. Although the budget is not flexible, which means that DOS has to apply for funds for any new statistical operation, the government seems to resource new statistical work without many restrictions. For the renovation of IT equipment DOS is making use of the funds provided by international cooperation programmes, which seem to be enough to cover current needs.

Human resources are also sufficient, but the very high turnover of qualified staff is creating some problems. The Training Centre provides support for the qualification of statisticians on a permanent basis, and the junior staff interviewed unanimously declared that the courses delivered there are extremely useful and of high quality. However, it appears that the average level of English of the staff is comparatively low, which is, of course, a hindrance for the development of cooperation activities and their participation in international capacity building programmes. Some measures should be taken by DOS in order to overcome this limitation.

The junior staff seem to be happy and highly motivated. They enjoy their work and are strongly committed to continuous improvement. They see good career prospects in DOS, and they agreed that gender discrimination is out of the question, both in new recruitments and in promotions. In fact, a significant proportion of the current junior staff are women.

As concerns other producers of official statistics, all the participants attending the relevant meeting (Central Bank, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health) agreed that they also have sufficient human and financial resources to carry out the statistical tasks allocated to them.

Assessment per indicator

1.3.1. Indicator 3.1: Staff, financial, and computing resources, adequate both in magnitude and in quality, are available to meet current statistical needs.

In DOS, as well as in the other organisations producing official statistics within the Statistical System of Jordan, the human, financial and computing resources available are adequate to meet current statistical needs.

Human resources in DOS consist of about 680 permanent staff, plus varying numbers of temporary staff depending upon the requirements of the statistical operations conducted. Permanent staff are recruited through a general procedure that applies to all civil servants in the country. There is an opening for all graduates and the selection is carried out through a combined method of examinations and interviews. Temporary staff are recruited by DOS through interviews. In the past, a fair proportion of the temporary staff became permanent after several years but, following new legislation, temporary contracts end as soon as the operation for which they were issued comes to an end. Temporary workers who want to become permanent staff of DOS would have to pass through the general selection process for civil servants.

There are good opportunities for DOS to recruit talented young graduates, as the unemployment rate of the country is now high. But staff turnover is very high, due to the fact that qualified statisticians frequently go to work in neighbouring countries where salaries are much higher, making use of a “leave without pay” arrangement from which they can benefit for a maximum of ten years. The reviewers were told that some 45 of the 680 permanent workers are currently in this situation. There is a need for replacement and capacity building that the Training Centre seems to be covering satisfactorily.

The Training Centre has been delivering courses (21 in 2014, 17 in 2015, 11 in 2016) mainly dealing with survey sampling, statistical analysis and IT programmes. The participation of OPOS’ staff in the courses organised by the DOS Training Centre is very limited. According to the information given by the OPOSs interviewed there is not much need for capacity building in their units for the kind of tasks that they are currently undertaking, and the existing need is well covered by other institutions, such as the Finance Training Centre, UNESCO or the Audit Bureau.

1.3.2. Indicator 3.2: The scope, detail and cost of statistics are commensurate with needs.

All users interviewed (belonging to the public sector, academia and the media) agreed in that their needs were satisfactorily fulfilled with the current scope and detail of the statistics produced.

1.3.3. Indicator 3.3: Procedures exist to assess and justify demands for new statistics against their cost.

The cost of each statistical operation is calculated only on the basis of the staff contracted for the operation and the specific equipment that has to be purchased in order to implement it.

In principle, the Statistical Consultative Committee should establish priorities for statistical work, taking into account requests for new surveys. However, this Committee does not currently meet on a regular basis.

1.3.4. Indicator 3.4: Procedures exist to assess the continuing need for all statistics, to see if any can be discontinued or curtailed to free up resources.

There is no effective standard procedure for establishing negative priorities.

Recommendations

2. DOS should make wider use of the Training Centre. In addition to the current capacity building programme, some additional courses, oriented towards attracting the participation of the other producers of official statistics (OPOSs) – dealing, for example, with the Code of Practice, or with public relations in statistics – should be organised. This would also help to make wider use of the coordinating potential of the Training Centre.

3. A mechanism for the establishment of positive and negative priorities in statistics should be implemented. An effective Statistical Consultative Committee, meeting regularly, and including representatives from all types of users, could take charge of this task.

1.4. Principle 4: Commitment to quality

The National Statistical Institute and other producers of official statistics are committed to quality. They systematically and regularly identify strengths and weaknesses to continuously improve process and product quality.

Overall assessment

The main measure of quality used in DOS is SDDS, which is applied mainly to the data required by IMF. Quality statements and metadata can be found on the English version of the website, but they are not easy to find. There is also a vision statement, but the text needs to be revised.

Priority is given to the quality of the survey process, with the use of monitors to follow up and report on the data collection process to the Director General. The quality of the publications is also checked.

Quality reports for users are not yet being produced, and user satisfaction surveys target a dwindling proportion of users.

It should be noted however, that Quality was one of the topics of the Twinning project between DOS and Statistics Denmark that started in 2014. The role of the Quality Assurance Division was strengthened during the Twinning project, and DOS is still introducing some of the recommendations.

Assessment per indicator

1.4.1. Indicator 4.1: Quality policy is defined and made available to the public. An organisational structure and tools are in place to deal with quality management.

At first, it appears that the only Quality Statement on the English version of the website is a banner on the home page. However, buried deep in the Quality and Metadata section, under metadata, is a section on policies and procedures. This section contains the principles and commitments related to quality in statistics.

There is a Quality Assurance Division in DOS which was reinforced during the recent Twinning project with Statistics Denmark. It may be necessary to promote quality within DOS in general, to ensure that staff understand that quality management is not just an issue for the Quality Assurance Division, but an over-riding ethos to be adopted by the whole department.

There are no guidelines on how to implement quality management on the English version of the website, just some checklists and templates, with no explanations. DOS informed that such guidelines, which are also shared with all users, are available on the Arabic website, but the team was not able to verify this. More comprehensive guidelines would be useful.

On the website there is a section on Quality and Metadata, and after some search, good metadata are can be found for four surveys: The Population and Housing Census (in the city of) Aqaba 2007; Household Expenditure and Income Survey 2008; Employment and Unemployment Survey 2009, Second Round; and Employment and Unemployment 2013, Round 4. The fact that these are relatively old suggests that there is no procedure in place to ensure documentation on quality is up to date. The Quality and Metadata section of the English version of the site needs to be thoroughly revised to become more coherent and user friendly.

Staff were trained on quality issues during the Twinning project with Denmark in 2014, and DOS plans to repeat the training at regular intervals. It is recommended that such training is offered also to staff of the statistics units in other Government departments.

1.4.2. Indicator 4.2: Procedures are in place to plan and monitor the quality of the statistical production and dissemination processes.

Every survey is carefully planned, and due consideration is given to quality issues. In particular, the monitors are trained to follow up fieldwork, and are required to report on its implementation. The IT phase has its own independent quality checking procedures, and is checked by the IT staff.

The use of “tablets” in the recent population and housing census allowed validation rules to be built into the questionnaires, allowing the consistency of the data to be checked and reducing the number of errors, as well as speeding up the data processing phase. A Call Centre was created to handle any IT problems encountered by the interviewers, and to deal with other concerns. These techniques and support platforms are being rolled out for other major surveys, including the Agriculture Census in 2017.

All publications are sent to the Quality Division to be revised and improved, before dissemination.

1.4.3. Indicator 4.3: Product quality is regularly monitored, assessed with regard to possible trade-offs, and reported according to the quality criteria for official statistics.

No user-oriented quality reports are made available to the public so far. Internal quality reports for each survey undertaken are submitted to the Director General and are discussed and analysed by the top management to identify any improvement actions that might be needed.

User Satisfaction Surveys are carried out at least once a year. These target visitors to the office and the mailing list of regular recipients of statistical publications. There is no satisfaction survey for on-line users. The results of the user satisfaction survey are published on-line, and are used as input to improvement action plans. There is an e-mail address given on the website where on-line users can submit their comments, requests or complaints.

1.4.4. Indicator 4.4: There is a regular and thorough review of the key outputs using also external experts where appropriate.

There are currently no plans for regular Quality Reviews (such as Auditing and Self-Assessment), but they could be included in the new Strategic Plan that is under development. The Quality Division and the Directorate of Internal Auditing are well placed to carry out such thorough reviews.

DOS has taken advantage of several external reviews offered by Eurostat, ESCWA and OIC.

Recommendations

4. The section of the website on Quality and Metadata should be reorganised so as to be able to find the quality policy and quality commitment statement more easily. It should also be expanded to explain the purpose of the checklists and templates that are on the website, and to include more detailed guidelines on how to implement quality management. The metadata should be reviewed and linked to the data.
5. The user satisfaction survey should be extended to include on-line users.
6. Quality reports aimed at users should be progressively introduced (and published), and on-line users should be asked to assess whether they are accessible and useful.

1.5. Principle 5: Statistical confidentiality

The privacy of data providers (households, enterprises, administrations and other respondents), the confidentiality of the information they provide and its use only for statistical purposes are absolutely guaranteed.

Overall assessment

The statutory provisions for the protection of confidentiality by DOS staff are consistent with the Statistics Code of Practice for the ENP-South countries. DOS appears to take appropriate steps to maintain the physical and electronic security of the data it holds. However, by international standards DOS is unusually generous in its provision of micro-data to researchers – generous to a point of clearly risking the identification of respondents’ confidential data by anyone who might obtain a copy of the micro-data (which itself would not seem unduly difficult).

Assessment per indicator

1.5.1. Indicator 5.1: Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed in law.

Article 11 of the General Statistics Law establishes DOS’s duty to protect the confidentiality of the data it collects, in particular, Articles 11A and 11B:

- Article 11A: All individual information and data submitted to the Department and related to any survey or census shall be considered confidential and the Department or any of the persons working herein may not, subject to legal responsibility, reveal to, or allow any other person or public or private body to view same, totally or partly, or use same for any purpose other than the preparation of statistical tables.
- Article 11B: When disseminating official statistics, the Department shall be bound to not reveal any individual data in order to safeguard the confidentiality thereof.

1.5.2. Indicator 5.2: Staff sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment.

On appointment, staff commit to the protection of confidentiality in two ways. First, they sign a declaration that they have read and will abide by DOS’s Code of Ethics, one element of which relates to the protection of confidentiality. Second, they swear an oath that includes a commitment to the protection of confidentiality. The requirement to sign such an oath is itself a statutory requirement (article 11C of the General Statistics Law).

1.5.3. Indicator 5.3: Penalties are prescribed for any wilful breaches of statistical confidentiality.

Article 15 of the General Statistics Law decrees that any employee disclosing any confidential information or data will be punished by between six months and one year in prison or a fine of between 500 and 1000 dinars, or both.

1.5.4. Indicator 5.4: Guidelines, training and instructions are provided to staff on the protection of statistical confidentiality in the production and dissemination processes. The confidentiality policy is made known to the public.

Each survey form clearly indicates that the data collected are confidential. The reviewers saw a household survey form that included the following: “Whatever information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone other than members of the survey team”. The reviewers were told that the issue of confidentiality is covered in the Interviewer Instructions, and that this is covered explicitly in the training provided to staff.

DOS does not have a single organisational unit or committee responsible for confidentiality protection. Instead it is regarded as the shared responsibility of staff working in IT, employees generally, and the Internal Audit Directorate. There would be merit in establishing a standing committee that brings together those responsible for confidentiality policy and guidelines, IT staff, those responsible for statistical disclosure control, and those responsible for the release of micro-data – to ensure that confidentiality is protected holistically.

1.5.5. Indicator 5.5: Physical, technological and organisational provisions are in place to protect the security and integrity of statistical databases.

DOS databases are held on servers protected by a firewall. The reviewers were told that DOS operates a security policy relating to databases, servers, and the network; also that the National Information Technology Centre conducts systematic security audits. Access to DOS's Data Centre is controlled by keypad entry. However, the reviewers noted that the DOS building generally did not seem subject to security arrangements such as the use of electronic passes, or turnstiles.

1.5.6. Indicator 5.6: Strict protocols apply to external users accessing statistical micro-data for research purposes.

DOS releases a range of micro-data on CDs, as it does not have a Safe Centre or provides remote access for researchers. For the population and housing census, micro-data files comprising a sample of 20% of the record are made available (including all variables except direct personal identifiers such as name, address or telephone number: the records show the neighbourhood of each individual). For household surveys, more data are made available: typically 80% or 100% (including the Labour Force Survey). The reviewers were told that 100% of the records from the Household Income and Expenditure survey had been provided to the ILO and the World Bank, although normally only 50% of the records are made available. Other than the proportion of data from the population and housing census (20%) to be made available, which is specified by Ministerial decree, decisions about the proportion of records to be made available are made by the DG.

The reviewers understand that there is a statement on DOS' website (in Arabic) setting out the terms and conditions of use of DOS's micro-data – specifically that it should only be used for scientific purposes, and that it should not be passed on to others.

But because micro-data are made available to researchers and international agencies on CD, DOS is unable to verify that the data are used only for the research purposes for which access was granted, or that the data are not shared with anyone else, or that the data are destroyed after the research has been conducted. DOS told the reviewers that this was not a problem because the micro-data do not include personal identifiers and hence, are not confidential. However, the reviewers consider that the large proportions of data being released, the fact that they include small area identifier, and because the data are not banded in any way, means that the micro-data being released would allow identifying an individual relatively easily.

Recommendations

7. A standing committee for confidentiality protection should be established, under the chairmanship of the Director General.
8. DOS should conduct an immediate review of international best practice in relation to the release of micro-data and then, following discussion with existing users, implement more stringent access arrangements.

1.6. Principle 6: Impartiality and objectivity

The National Statistical Institute and other producers of official statistics develop, produce and disseminate Official Statistics respecting scientific independence and in an objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably.

Overall assessment

In general terms, DOS is highly compliant with this principle. There is a clear commitment among senior staff to following best practice. The main limitation is a scarcity of information and documentation disseminated on the website.

As concerns OPOs the impression conveyed by the users interviewed is that their level of compliance with this principle is not of a particular concern, but that it falls short of the levels achieved by DOS.

Assessment per indicator

1.6.1. Indicator 6.1: Statistics are compiled on an objective basis determined by statistical considerations.

Although no explicit, written guidelines exist, it is implicitly assumed that statistics are compiled on an objective basis determined by statistical considerations. All users contacted have expressed a very positive opinion in that regard.

1.6.2. Indicator 6.2: Choices of sources and statistical methods as well as decisions about the dissemination of statistics are informed by statistical considerations.

There is no documentation about the choices of sources and methods, as DOS does not produce any user oriented quality reports or guidelines on dissemination. However, the peer reviewers have found reasonable evidence of implicit compliance with this indicator. All users consulted agreed that DOS follows a policy of open access to data, only limited by confidentiality issues, and that dissemination is implemented following best practice on impartiality and objectivity.

1.6.3. Indicator 6.3: Errors discovered in published statistics are corrected at the earliest possible date and publicised.

Dissemination in DOS is implemented through three channels: hard copy, files in CD on demand (micro data), and through the website.

DOS seems to have a clear (although not written) policy concerning the correction of errors. Errors are corrected as soon as they are discovered. Information about the error and the corrected figures is sent to those users who received the information on hard copy or on CD as soon as possible. For the non-contacted users – those who accessed the statistics online – the policy consists of the correction of errors and some announcement on the relevant file, but does not include a more visible announcement (such as a banner or equivalent) on the website.

1.6.4. Indicator 6.4: Information on the methods and procedures used is publicly available.

Metadata and methodologies are described in detail and disseminated on the website, in specific files, different from the ones containing the data.

A procedure for linking the file containing the data to the one containing the description of metadata and methodologies has not yet been put in place.

1.6.5. Indicator 6.5: Statistical release dates and times are pre-announced.

The Jordan Statistical System follows the SDDS.

DOS's release calendar includes the statistics covered by SDDS, to be disseminated through a given year, and is made public on the website, in Arabic and in English, several months before the beginning of the year. According to the information received during the peer review, DOS complies strictly with the calendar. A non-written protocol exists for cases whereby technical problems would prevent dissemination on the scheduled date, in particular for the indicators included in the SDDS, but it seems that so far it has never been necessary to follow it.

As concerns OPOSSs, they generally have a calendar for internal use. The calendar is made public only for the dissemination of the indicators that are part of the SDDS, in line with IMF standards.

1.6.6. Indicator 6.6: Advance notice is given on major revisions or changes in methodologies.

Advance notice is given about major revisions and methodological changes through several channels.

Announcements are disseminated on the website and in the newspapers. Also, the media and potential users, as far as they can be identified through previous contacts or demands, are contacted directly. In fact, some time before the methodological change or the new statistical operation is implemented, a committee of ad-hoc users and stakeholders is convened for meetings with the experts and the producers. In this forum, users and stakeholders can express their opinions and specify their needs.

When a significant methodological change is implemented, or results of a new statistical operation are disseminated, the corresponding press release includes a very detailed description of the change, as well as some indication about the potential impact of the methodological change on the main indicators. Very often a press conference, or an ad-hoc meeting, is arranged to accompany the press release.

1.6.7. Indicator 6.7: All users have equal access to statistical releases at the same time. Any privileged pre-release access to any outside user is controlled, limited, monitored and publicised. In the event that leaks occur, pre-release arrangements are revised so as to ensure impartiality.

The day before statistics are to be published, DOS gives (pre-release) access to the statistical press release to the Minister of Planning and – unusually, by international standards – to the main local newspapers and press agencies (there are currently three media organisations that benefit from such pre-release). This is to allow them time to prepare the article for publication in the newspaper on the same day as DOS releases the statistics on its website. This arrangement has not been publicised officially on the website, but it seems to be widely known by users and generally accepted in the country.

DOS told the reviewers that there has never been a leak of information.

1.6.8. Indicator 6.8: Statistical releases and statements made in press conferences are objective and non-partisan.

The users interviewed during the peer review were unanimous in the view that the press releases issued by DOS are objective and reflect the de facto independence of this institution.

Recommendations

9. DOS should document the guidelines used for compilation and dissemination, and make them public on the website, in Arabic and in English.
10. Announcements about the correction of errors should be made more visible on the website.
11. DOS should establish links between the files containing the data and those containing the corresponding metadata.
12. DOS should encourage OPOSs to progressively make public their release calendars, and to publish them both on their own websites and on the DOS website.
13. The existing pre-release access arrangements should be documented on the website. Mindful of the fact that the newspapers are, in effect, releasing the statistics, DOS should take steps to cease the provision of pre-release access to the media.

1.7. Principle 15: Accessibility and clarity

Official Statistics are presented in a clear and understandable form, released in a suitable and convenient manner, available and accessible on an impartial basis with supporting metadata and guidance.

Overall assessment

The accessibility and clarity of the statistics produced by DOS was highly regarded by the users who were interviewed during the peer review (belonging to the public sector, academy and the media). Moreover, the user satisfaction survey conducted by DOS last year presents very positive evaluations, with values between 4 and 5 (within a ranking interval from 0 to 5) for all the questions. The results of this survey have not been publicised on the website.

DOS's Customer Service Centre seems to have a very high level of activity and to be appreciated by the users.

An additional point to note is that DOS gives researchers access to (anonymised) micro-data. However, a written protocol – establishing the requirements for access to micro-data and including a description of the methodological processes and dissemination rules that guarantee full compliance with the principles of confidentiality and objectivity – has not yet been implemented or made public.

The peer review team considers that the proportion of information publicised in English on the website is still low, and that DOS should endeavour to increase it, in order to facilitate international access to the information.

Assessment per indicators

1.7.1. Indicator 15.1: Statistics and the corresponding metadata are presented, and archived, in a form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons.

Statistics are mainly disseminated by DOS via its website. The corresponding metadata and methodologies are also published on the website, although there are no links from the data files to the metadata.

Data and metadata are properly archived only for the most recent statistical operations. For the previous ones some archiving has been carried out, but metadata referring to old statistical data is not archived.

1.7.2. Indicator 15.2: Dissemination services use modern information and communication technology and, if appropriate, traditional hard copy.

Although the website is the main dissemination channel, hard copy is also widely used by DOS.

The website makes use of modern information and communication technology. All users interviewed considered that it is friendly, easy to access and dynamic, and allows the users to produce tabulations according to their needs. Most of the files, particularly those providing data from the main surveys, can be directly accessed using well-established software (Excel and SPSS) but there are some exceptions: population projections and poverty indicators. The reviewers were not able to find much data on the English version of the website, and consider that STATBANK is somewhat user-unfriendly (and that some data, for example National Accounts) is very old.

1.7.3. Indicator 15.3: Tailor-made statistics are provided when feasible and the public is informed.

DOS provides customised services; a lot of (paid for) custom designed analysis is carried out at the request of the Jordan public administration and international organisations and, on a smaller scale, for the private sector or the media.

Most of the results of these custom-designed analyses are made public, with the agreement of the customer.

1.7.4. Indicator 15.4: Access to microdata is allowed for research purposes and is subject to specific rules or protocols, including confidentiality rules.

Access to anonymised micro data has recently been provided to users. Micro data are provided on CD; the information included on the CD is a representative sample of the total information obtained from each census or survey. This was discussed earlier, in relation to CoP 5, indicator 5.6.

1.7.5. Indicator 15.5: Metadata are documented according to standardised metadata systems.

Metadata are accessible on the website for every statistical product. This has been a great achievement of DOS, following the Twinning project with Statistics Denmark. However, the metadata are not well adapted to the SDMX transmission model and DOS is now in the process of transforming the current metadata in order to adapt them to SMDX format.

There are no links from the data files of each statistical product to the corresponding metadata, or vice versa, which makes access to metadata rather cumbersome for users. This was discussed earlier, in relation to indicator 6.2 of the CoP.

1.7.6. Indicator 15.6: Users are kept informed about the methodology of statistical processes, including the use of administrative data.

Methodologies are also accessible through the website.

Methodological changes are advertised and widely publicised. Special reports are prepared and sent to the media and to some of the main users (particularly from the public sector) with a detailed explanation of the methodological changes and their potential impact on the results. Also, the Customer Service Centre is briefed to explain methodological changes to users.

The reviewers were told that whenever a methodological change is implemented, the main indicators are back-estimated using the new methodology for the previous three or four years, thus providing appropriate time series.

1.7.7. Indicator 15.7: Users are kept informed about the quality of statistical outputs with respect to the quality criteria for Official Statistics.

DOS does not produce user-oriented quality reports.

Some summary information about the quality of the surveys is, however, included in the methodological introductions. More specifically, the reviewers were told that information about non-response rates is provided for all surveys. Estimates of sampling errors are given only for household surveys. DOS has plans to progressively extend the calculation of sampling errors to its business surveys.

Recommendations

14. DOS should establish a complete archiving system including all statistical operations (surveys and administrative sources).
15. DOS should increase the proportion of information published in English, so facilitating international access to the information.
16. DOS should accelerate, as much as possible, the ongoing process of adapting the current metadata pattern to the SMDX format.

1.8. Principle 16: Coordination and cooperation

Coordination and cooperation in statistics contribute to the improvement of the quality of official statistics in the national statistical systems of the ENP-South countries.

Overall assessment

The coordination and cooperation role of the DOS is clearly defined in the General Statistics Law 2012. This decrees that DOS is the sole Governmental body authorised to collect statistical information and data from respondents. DOS is also mandated to coordinate the statistical work of the different Government departments, helping to develop their administrative records so as to be able to use them for statistical purposes, in line with international practice and standards. The General Statistics Law also gives DOS the role of approving and overseeing statistical surveys planned and carried out by ministries. And Governmental departments are obliged to coordinate with DOS concerning changes to the forms or the mechanisms they employ to gather data, in order to facilitate their use for statistical purposes.

DOS is widely recognised as the authority on statistical issues and statistics units in Government departments regularly consult DOS concerning their definitions, methods, samples, etc. For most products, DOS coordinates through ad hoc committees that bring together users and producers, and other stakeholders.

Moreover, any non-public body that plans to collect and disseminate statistics on behalf of another body must obtain written permission from the DG of DOS. This allows DOS to comment on / approve the questionnaires, methodologies, etc. This procedure works smoothly, and a number of such surveys are approved each year.

The General Statistics Law is fairly recent (2012) and the processes and procedures for this coordination work are not yet complete. Major activities such as the population and housing census in 2015, have slowed down implementation, so that this coordination is “work in progress”.

The steps taken so far indicate that the role is taken seriously, by DOS and by some of the other Government departments. However, there are no MoUs with some of the most important data holders,

such as the tax authority, and DOS has no access to information on businesses held by the tax authorities and which would be needed in order to maintain a robust statistical business register.

Assessment per indicator

1.8.1. Indicator 16.1: National mechanisms exist for coordinating the development, production and dissemination of official statistics and ensuring their quality.

DOS is nominated in the General Statistics Law as the sole Governmental body authorised to collect statistical information and data from respondents. DOS is also mandated to coordinate the statistical work of the different ministries and other Government departments.

Statistical work in Government departments is centralised in a statistics unit, which normally uses administrative data to produce statistics for their domain. These units are obliged by the General Statistics Law to comply with classifications and technical criteria adopted by DOS. The statistical plans of the ministries, including questionnaires, classifications, definitions, etc. are approved by DOS, and sometimes DOS selects the sample for the ministries for these surveys.

For each statistical project, DOS creates a steering committee of interested stakeholders, for example, user ministries, universities, etc. to coordinate the development of official statistics.

DOS has formal memoranda of understanding (MoU) with some ministries, for example, the Ministry of Tourism, and although there is no formal MoU with the other major producers of official statistics, such as the Central Bank or the Ministry of Finance, relations are good and data is freely exchanged with both.

There are no MoUs with key holders of administrative data such as the tax authority, the social security authority or the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Nevertheless, DOS is working closely with the Ministry of Industry and Trade to develop a unique identifier for businesses, though this is not yet universally applied.

A dissemination policy exists but is not publicly available. In principle, the dissemination policy included the data produced by the Central Bank (balance of payments, external trade, international investment position, etc.) and the Ministry of Finance (public debt, deficit and government finance statistics), but the on-line release calendar covers only products disseminated by DOS. Each producer publishes its own data, though not always on the web.

On the DOS website there are some links to related sites, e.g. the sites containing data from the Customs Office, or the Civil Register.

Because of the high turnover in staff, training is an important part of DOS activities, and common courses are organised for the staff of DOS and of other producers of official statistics.

There is a single-entry point at DOS for requests for data: stat@dos.gov.jo. Requests sent to this address will be directed to the appropriate person in DOS or to the statistics unit in the relevant ministry. This is the same contact point used by regional and international organisations when requesting data. However, these organisations, e.g. IMF often have their own list of contact persons, who are put in copy of the formal requests to DOS.

1.8.2. Indicator 16.2: When official statistics are based on administrative data, the definitions and concepts used for administrative purposes are a good approximation to those required for statistical purposes.

The General Statistics Law states that DOS should coordinate with the different Government departments, so as to develop their administrative records in line with international practice and standards, and to meet the user needs. This coordination work is a continual process, and is implemented through a system of focal points. In its paper publications, DOS documents definitions, sample size, methodologies, etc. of all processes from the beginning of the survey to the end.

However, it has proved difficult for DOS to gain access to important sources of administrative data held by Government departments, such as the tax authority, which are often covered by their own confidentiality rules. Moreover, the distinction between official statistics produced by 'other producers' and administrative data used to produce official statistics is not clear in the law and in practice.

1.8.3. Indicator 16.3: The national statistical institute and other producers of official statistics are involved in the design of administrative data in order to make administrative data more suitable for statistical purposes.

By law, Governmental departments are obliged to coordinate with DOS concerning changes to the forms or the mechanisms they employ to gather data, to facilitate their use for statistical purposes. There are several ways in which this is done:

- DOS is invited to join different committees that need data, and so is able to comment on the appropriateness of the administrative data;
- A catalogue of data sources has been compiled, and a platform has been created to look at what is available. So far, it covers 10 sectors, such as health, education, customs, etc, but needs to be expanded to cover the remaining sectors;
- Building good bilateral relations with specific Government departments. For example, there is a good relationship with the Ministry of Industry and Trade, which has recently replaced ISIC3 with ISIC4, with help from DOS.

1.8.4. Indicator 16.4: The national statistical institute has the capacity and structure in place to coordinate statistical assistance from other institutes or international organisations so as to maximise its impact.

The coordination of statistical assistance from other institutes or international organisations is the responsibility of the Technical Assistant to the Director General. When international organisations approach other Government departments on statistical issues, DOS is informed so as to avoid duplication of efforts and to encourage complementarities and synergies. The departments also normally involve DOS in the work. In cases where the main competence is outside DOS, then DOS does not get involved. An example would be statistical assistance provided by IMF to the Central Bank.

1.8.5. Indicator 16.5: The national statistical institute and other producers of official statistics actively participate, according to their areas of competence and in close coordination with the national statistical institute, in the main regional and international discussion forums on statistics.

DOS participates in international and regional statistical forums, such as UNSC, OIC / SESRIC, UN-ESCWA and MEDSTAT and Eurostat meetings for the ENP-South countries. Generally, DOS has an

adequate travel budget for such events. When the topic of the meeting is normally covered by a Ministry or other official body, DOS coordinates with them on which experts should represent the country at the meeting. An example of this is the Central Bank which is regularly involved in international events concerning Balance of Payments statistics.

Lack of English language skills can mean that the participants are not very active during the events, and that the achievements of DOS go unrecognised by the outside world.

The experts that participate in these events are asked to report back to the hierarchy and the relevant ministries. This could be formalised, to ensure that the knowledge they have gained during the event is passed on to others working in the same field.

1.8.6. Indicator 16.6: The national statistical institute advocates for the strengthening of statistical capacity and cooperation to be included in the national strategies for cooperation and in political cooperation programmes between the country and regional and international organisations.

DOS is a member of and contributor to many government committees, and uses these to promote DOS and the use of statistics in Jordan. A current example is the Steering Committee on a strategy for housing.

The Minister of Planning and International Cooperation is responsible for DOS, and the Director General of DOS meets him regularly. The DG is also consulted by the Minister on many documents. This is the same Minister who is responsible for planning national strategies and for all international agreements. He is therefore in a good position to ensure that the technical assistance needs of DOS and the other producers of official statistics are taken into account when new cooperation programmes are being designed.

Recommendations

17. DOS should encourage the other producers of official statistics to publish more of their data on their website, in order to increase the visibility and use of the data. DOS should also update and expand the links on their website to include the websites of the statistical units responsible for producing official statistics within Ministries and other Government Departments.

18. The main producers of official statistics should be encouraged to sign up to a common dissemination policy, and to publish it on their websites.

19. Coordination of statistical work within a country is a continual process, and should be included in the Strategic Plan to ensure that adequate resources are available for this work. Coordination work should be formalised, possibly by a sub-group of the Statistical Consultative Committee. The recommendations of DOS to other producers of official statistics and to producers of administrative data should be documented and should be reviewed from time to time to ensure they are still in line with international standards. Some of the reports and recommendations should be put on the websites of DOS and relevant Government departments.

20. A formal procedure, including regular discussions and meetings with holders of administrative data, should be put in place to allow the exchange of information on planned amendments to administrative data, to record and document the recommendations from DOS concerning the proposed amendments, and to follow up on their implementation.

21. The coverage of the catalogue of data sources should be expanded from the ten sectors it currently covers, to include also the remaining sectors.

22. Given the high turnover of staff, the statistical assistance and training received by DOS should be coordinated by an internal team of experts, to ensure continuity.

23. Regular English classes and Discussion Groups in English should be organised by DOS, for example, at lunch times, in order to build language skills within DOS. The Discussion Groups would build confidence of those who already know English but who have little opportunity to practice it, and who therefore hesitate to speak in international meetings.

2. Good practices to be highlighted

DOS's Training Centre is well-established, and offers a variety of relevant courses to staff. The reviewers consider that this represents a sound platform to extend the range of courses provided, and to target them increasingly to staff working in OPOSs.

The smooth conduct of the population and housing census in 2015 was a significant achievement for DOS. The reviewers were impressed that DOS has been able to maintain a number of features of the investment in the census – the use of tablets to improve data quality in surveys, the use of a Geographic Information System (GIS) to disseminate statistics, and the Call Centre.

Although there is no real concept of a Jordanian Statistical System, the General Statistics Law clearly defines DOS' coordination role. DOS implements this role in a low key but effective manner, based on ad-hoc committees, MoU, and relationship building. The reviewers noted that OPOSs both recognised and appreciated DOS's coordination activity.