

The contents of this report constitute advice and recommendations provided by Directors general or Deputy directors general (the “Peers”) of the African Statistical System (ASS) to their counterparts (“Peer”) from a National statistical system (NSS) of the African Union Member States (the “Reviewed country”) in response to their request for assessment.

“The reviewed countries committed themselves to publish (or allow the publication of) the Peer Review Reports and ensure their discussion among the NSS partners” (see Manual for Peer Reviews of National Statistical Systems in Africa, www.austat.org).

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The Pan African Statistics Program (PAS) is meant to assist the African Union Commission in improving its statistical operations, as well as those of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the National Statistical Institutes. One of the aims of the PAS is to improve statistical dissemination.



Mauritius' Peer Review team

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Abbreviations

AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AUSTAT	Statistics Division of the African Union Commission
CPI	Consumer Price Index
GFS	Government Finance Statistics
GSBPM	Generic Statistical Business Process Model
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information Technology
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSI	National Statistical Institute
NSO	National Statistical Office
NSS	National Statistical System
Paris 21	The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
PAS	Pan African Statistics Programme
PC	Personal Computer
SDDS	Special Data Dissemination Standard
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Foreword

The peer review of the National Statistical System (NSS) of Mauritius is the first in a round of such reviews carried out by the African Union Commission (AUC), as part of the Pan-African (PAS) Statistics Programme in 2018-2019, funded by the EU through Eurostat. All African Union Member States were invited to express interest in having a peer review under the Programme of which 14 countries replied positively and will be included in this round of peer reviews. The peer reviews are prepared by the Statistics Division (AUSTAT) in the Department of Economic Affairs at the AUC, and Expertise France which is assisting AUSTAT with the management of PAS Programme.

The peer reviews under the PAS Programme are carried out according to a Manual for Peer Reviews of National Statistical Systems in Africa, which was prepared under the auspices of the AUC through the PAS Programme and agreed among the statistical authorities of AU member states. The Manual prescribes that the peer reviews shall be carried out through preparations involving fact finding and documentation, visits to the participating countries and their NSSs, and report writing. The peer review of Mauritius was prepared by the submission of documentation and filling in of questionnaires by Statistics Mauritius. According to the Manual, the peer reviews are conducted by a team of three senior statisticians, two peers and an expert.



The peer review team visiting Mauritius was composed of Mr. Risenga Maluleke, Statistician General of the Republic of South Africa, chair, Mr. Mohamed Salimi, Deputy Director of Statistics, the High Commission for Planning, Morocco, vice-chair, and Mr. Hallgrímur Snorrason, former Director General of Statistics Iceland, as expert. The peer review team was joined by three observers, Ms. Leila Ben Ali, Head of the Statistics Division of the AUC, Mr. Guest Charumbira, Expertise France expert on the PAS Programme, and Mr. Rafik Mahjoubi, Regional Programme Co-ordinator at PARIS21.


The Mauritius peer review visit was conducted in the period 21-25 May 2018. The visit involved meetings with the management and staff of Statistics Mauritius and representatives of the most important institutions of the NSS, including the Statistics Board, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Bank of Mauritius, the Ministry of Health and various other representatives of other producers and users of official statistics and data providers. The agenda of the peer review visit is at annex.

The peer review visit was prepared by Statistics Mauritius. The peer review team would like to acknowledge these preparations, the documentation submitted, and information given. The discussions at Statistics Mauritius and the other institutions visited were professional, open and conducted in a friendly spirit. The peer review team would like to express its gratitude to the Director, the country coordinator, management and other staff at Statistics Mauritius who participated in or assisted with the peer review, for their discussions, their assistance, warm reception and hospitality. The team also wishes to thank representatives of other institutions, with whom the team met and discussed, for their useful discussions, information and friendly reception.

Executive summary

The peer review of the national statistical system (NSS) of Mauritius was carried out as part of the PAS Programme in late May 2018. The review involved the study of documentation submitted by Statistics Mauritius, study of the websites of the main partners in the NSS, and a visit by a peer review team to Mauritius. The peer review followed the Manual on Peer Reviews of National Statistical Systems in Africa, issued by the African Union Commission.

The peer review revealed that Mauritius has a relatively well developed and operating system for official statistics. Statistics Mauritius is responsible for the bulk of official statistics with the Bank of Mauritius being responsible for monetary, financial and external sector statistics, except merchandise trade, and the Ministry of Health for health statistics. The statistical production is to a considerable extent based on administrative data. The cooperation among the main producers as well as the main data providers seems to work well but might be strengthened.



The production and dissemination of the official statistics is largely in compliance with the UN Fundamental Principle of Official Statistics and the African Charter on Statistics. Mauritius is one of four African countries that subscribe to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Currently, preparations are under way to migrate to the more demanding IMF standard, SDDS Plus, to which no African country subscribes at the present time.

While the peer review revealed many strengths and positive elements of the official statistics of Mauritius, it also highlighted some weaknesses and challenges. These are discussed in this report with recommendations being offered for remedial actions. The issues and the ensuing recommendations concern a variety of subjects. As regards the organisation and coordination of the NSS as well as the issue of professional independence, the peer review team recommends that the division of responsibilities between the Director of Statistics Mauritius and the Statistics Board is clarified and the mandate of the Board is reduced when in conflict with that of the professional independence of the Director of Statistics. It is also recommended that the opportunity presented by the on-going work on drawing up a new National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) be used for strengthening the coordination of the NSS.

Under the heading of institutional environment, the peer reviewers point to several weaknesses concerning the organisation, the ICT arrangements, and human resources situation of Statistics Mauritius, and recommend that actions are taken in those areas. Under the theme of quality, the peer reviewers find that there is a need to strengthen quality management and recommend that Statistics Mauritius should plan and gradually implement a framework for systematic quality management. In the field of statistical processes, Statistics Mauritius is recommended to consider adopting and implementing the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) in order to facilitate increased cooperation across boundaries of divisions, the use of standardised methods and applications, and a move towards adopting a functional model of the organisation of the institution. Moreover, the peer review found that in some instances data transfers between institutions should be improved and recommends that new technologies are adopted for ensuring secure transfer of data. Finally, the peer reviewers make several recommendations concerning dissemination of statistics.



Recommendations

Organisation and coordination of the NSS

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Statistics Act should be revised in such a way as to clarify the division of responsibilities between the Director of Statistics Mauritius and the Statistics Board thereby curtailing the mandate of the Board to coordinate the statistical activities of the various producers within the national statistical system and to approve statistical programmes and parts thereof. The role of the Statistics Board should be confined to being advisory and promoting the usefulness, the quality and the soundness of official statistics in Mauritius.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Statistics Act should be amended by granting a representative of the Ministry of Health a seat on the Statistics Board. Until that can be achieved, the Statistics Board should co-opt the Head of Statistics of the Ministry of Health to assist on the Board.



RECOMMENDATION 3

a) All main producers of official statistics, main providers of data for the purposes of official statistics, and main users of official statistics should be involved in the preparations for compiling a new National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and assume ownership of the NSDS once completed and under implementation.

b) The National Statistical System (NSS) should be defined as to include all main producers of official statistics and all main providers of data for official statistical purposes.

c) The Director of Statistics Mauritius should take the lead in establishing an NSS committee which shall be the main forum for the implementation of the NSDS and the cooperation within the NSS. The NSS Committee shall meet at regular intervals and be led and serviced by Statistics Mauritius.

Institutional environment

RECOMMENDATION 4

Statistics Mauritius should aim for and seek acceptance and funds for having and managing its own ICT system independent from the central government ICT system. As an initial step in this direction, Statistics Mauritius should develop an ICT policy, setting out main requirements and measures for ensuring security of the ICT system at Statistics Mauritius, and the data stored by Statistics Mauritius.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The current constraints on the number of posts allowed for each staff category at Statistics Mauritius should be eased considerably, allowing improved advancement of staff and reduced staff turn-over.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Current rules and schemes for recruitment of staff at Statistics Mauritius should be changed a) to allow recruitment of experts with other skills than statistics, such as economists, geographers, sociologists, IT experts etc., and b) to allow Statistics Mauritius to hire and manage its own pool of interviewers as part time staff.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The present inequalities in salaries between staff in Government ministries and at Statistics Mauritius should be corrected. Similarly, the hierarchical standing and the titles of the head and managers of Statistics Mauritius should be brought in line with those of Government ministries and agencies.

Quality

RECOMMENDATION 8

Statistics Mauritius should plan and gradually implement a framework for systematic quality control. The Bank of Mauritius and the statistics department of the Ministry of Health are advised to make use of that development as suitable for their statistical activities.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Statistics Mauritius should draw up and maintain a comprehensive and rolling training programme, based both on the observed needs for training and education and the interests of staff. Consideration should also be given to facilitating the participation of staff in training and education through flexible job arrangements and participation in costs.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Statistics Mauritius should undertake a project of studying possible solutions for systematic archiving of surveys and survey data and implement such measures at the earliest opportunity.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development should prioritise the implementation of accruals accounting and migration of the accounting standard to GFS 2014.

Statistical processes

RECOMMENDATION 12

Statistics Mauritius should study the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) and consider its applicability, both for reorganising its statistical processes and for facilitating the migration of the organisational structure of Statistics Mauritius towards a functional and efficient model of organisation.

RECOMMENDATION 13

All institutions within the NSS exchanging data should look for better ways of data exchange that are standard based, automated and rely on secure data transfer protocols within a protected environment.

RECOMMENDATION 14

In the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Health, the activities generating official statistics should be clearly separated from the monitoring and forecasting activities. Similarly, the set of data for official statistics should be treated in accordance with the principles and rules of official statistics.

Dissemination

RECOMMENDATION 15

Statistics Mauritius and the Bank of Mauritius should start publishing their press releases and statistical reports, including updates of databases, at a predetermined and preannounced hour on the release dates. The release hour should be the same for all statistical releases of each of the two institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 16

Statistics Mauritius, the Bank of Mauritius and other producers of official statistics should, for the benefit of the users of official statistics, consider establishing modalities for merging their release calendars and publishing one harmonised release calendar for the NSS as a whole. The harmonised release calendar could then be posted on the websites of the relevant institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 17


The current practice at the Ministry of Health of seeking approval for statistical releases should be abolished. Instead, the head of the Statistics Department of the Ministry should be made professionally independent in all matters of health statistics and charged with the responsibility of deciding on the processing, analysis and dissemination of health statistics. The dissemination should follow a preannounced release calendar.

RECOMMENDATION 18

The Statistics Department of the Ministry of Health should review and ease its restrictions on allowing the use of and/or granting access to anonymised microdata, thereby facilitating increased research based on health statistics.

RECOMMENDATION 19

Statistics Mauritius and the Bank of Mauritius as relevant should take actions to increase the supply and visibility of their statistical metadata on their websites. In the medium term, the institutions should focus on systematic generation and presentation of metadata, both output and process metadata.



The methodology for conducting the African peer reviews is set out in a Manual for Peer Reviews of National Statistical Systems in Africa which was produced and released under the auspices of the PAS Programme. The main modes of conducting the peer reviews are the following:

- The peer reviews are to be conducted through visits of designated peer review teams to each participating country, with discussions in meetings between the teams, the NSIs and NSS stakeholders.
- The length of the peer review visits to each country shall be five days.
- The peer reviews shall be based on documentation submitted by the countries under review, mainly a short description of the NSI and the NSS, statistics acts and related legal instruments, available statistical policy documents, and a self-assessment questionnaire based on the Eurostat Snapshot tool.
- The peer review discussions and meetings shall involve main producers of official statistics, data providers, and main users such as ministries, central bank, research institutions, business organisations, international organisations, and the media, as mainly relevant in each country.

Furthermore, the Manual specifies that the peer reviews shall focus on five major themes based on the African Charter on Statistics or the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The themes are:

- Organisation and coordination of the NSS
- Institutional environment
- Quality
- Statistical processes
- Dissemination

Under each theme, a list of issues shall be addressed as specified in the Manual.

The Manual also contains a model agenda for the peer review visits and sets out instructions for the reporting of the peer reviews.

The peer review of Mauritius was conducted in accordance with the Manual during the period 21-25 May 2018 in Port Louis. The documentation for the review was prepared in advance by Statistics Mauritius which is the national statistical institute of the country and the main producer of official statistics. Statistics Mauritius also prepared the agenda for the peer review visit. The peer review team started its work by discussions with the Director and management at Statistics Mauritius. There followed meetings with the Statistics Board, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Bank of Mauritius, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health, Business Mauritius, University of Mauritius, Financial Services Commission, Central Business Registration Department, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The peer review team also met with members of the staff of Statistics Mauritius. At the end of the peer review visit, the team presented and discussed its main findings with the Director and management of Statistics Mauritius and representatives of the NSS partners. This report has benefited much from questions and discussions at that final meeting.

4

Organisation and management of the NSS and official statistical activities in Mauritius





4.1 The National Statistical System

The National Statistical System (NSS) of Mauritius is fairly centralised. Statistics Mauritius, the national statistical office (NSO), is the main producer of official statistics. Other important producers and partners in the NSS are the Bank of Mauritius (the central bank of the country), and the Ministry of Health. Statistics Mauritius bases its statistics to a considerable extent on administrative data. Among the most important providers of such data are the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Labour, the Mauritius Revenue Authority, the Financial Services Commission, and the Central Business Registration Department.

4.2 Statistical legislation

Statistics Mauritius operates on the basis of the Statistics Act, most recently amended in 2011. The Act contains most of the basic principles of official statistics, as laid down in the African Charter on Statistics and the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It grants the Director of Statistics Mauritius professional independence and the mandate to collect data for statistical purposes, obliges him to process and disseminate statistics, and to keep the source data confidential. The Act also obliges public sector agencies to grant Statistics Mauritius access to their data that may be used for statistical purposes. The Director of Statistics Mauritius has also the function of coordinating and monitoring statistical activities of all producers of official statistics, including public sector agencies.

4.3 Statistics Board

The Statistics Board was established by an amendment of the Statistics Act in 2011. The Board replaced the earlier Statistical Advisory Council. The Board is composed of the following seven members:

- 1) Chairperson, appointed by the President of Mauritius on the advice of the Prime Minister;
- 2) the Financial Secretary or his representative;
- 3) the Deputy Governor of the Bank of Mauritius or his representative;
- 4) a representative of the private sector, appointed by the Minister;
- 5) a qualified and suitable person having international experience in official statistics, appointed by the Minister;
- 6) the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mauritius or his representative;
- 7) the Director of Statistics Mauritius.


The Statistics Board has several functions, mainly to approve, coordinate and monitor statistical programmes of producers of official statistics, advise producers on policy, procedures and regulations relating to official statistics, promote and safeguard the quality of statistics and adherence to good practices, and promote and protect the integrity of official statistics, including professional independence.

4.4 Code of Practice

The Statistics Act stipulates that the Director of Statistics Mauritius shall, with the approval of the Board, publish a Code of Practice for Official Statistics which shall be based on the values of the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the African Charter on Statistics. Statistics Mauritius has issued a Code of Practice which fulfils the stipulations of the Act and is partly based on the European Statistics Code of Practice. The Code is seen as a valuable guide to the operations of Statistics Mauritius and the NSS.

4.5 Strengths of the official statistics

The documentation and the discussions of the peer review revealed, in the opinion of the peer review team, that Mauritius has a relatively well developed and well working national statistical office and national statistical system. Official statistics seem to be widely used by Government and the private sector for planning, budgeting and monitoring developments. Cooperation within the NSS seems to function well although there is no formal and regular coordination mechanism within the NSS. However, there are close relations between Statistics Mauritius and



the other main producers and data providers as Statistics Mauritius has its own staff members placed within the other institutions for advising on and assisting with their statistical work. The relations are also partly based on the application of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between Statistics Mauritius and some of the partners on cooperation and provision of data.

Statistics Mauritius uses administrative data from a number of sources, mainly the Mauritius Revenue Authority, Ministry of Social Security, Central Electricity Board, Board of Investment, Passport and Immigration Office, the Corporate and Business Registration Department, the Bank of Mauritius, and other bodies.

Mauritius has subscribed to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) since 2012 and publishes its statistics in accordance with the Standard. Currently, preparations are on-going for migrating to the more demanding IMF Standard, SDDS Plus. Only six African countries subscribe to the SDDS at the present time but none to the SDDS Plus.

Statistics Mauritius conducts regular and ad-hoc meetings with specific stakeholders, such as meetings with other producers for forecasting on economic growth, tourism and foreign trade, and main producers of data on crime and justice prior to the yearly publication on that issue. There is also an advisory committee on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which meets at five yearly intervals to discuss the rebasing of the CPI. Statistics Mauritius, the Bank of Mauritius and the Ministry of Finance cooperate closely in a SDDS technical committee on the development work required for migrating to SDDS Plus. There is also on-going cooperation among the relevant institutions on developing and producing SDG indicators in line with international agreements and recommendations.

The coverage of official statistics is impressive and most of the official statistics are produced regularly and with adequate frequency. The quality of the statistics appears to be mainly good and the same applies to the timeliness of the regular statistical outputs. Statistics Mauritius publishes its regular statistical releases according to a release calendar which is issued at the turn of the year, covering the whole of the new year. The Bank of Mauritius also issues a release calendar. Both calendars fulfil the conditions set by the SDDS.

Statistics Mauritius conducts its regular business according to an annual work programme. The work programme and the whole of the budget of the institution is financed by the Government. Statistics Mauritius does not receive any donor funding but makes occasional use of technical assistance by international and regional agencies for developing its statistical operations. Statistics Mauritius employs some 240 staff but has a total number of positions of 270. The institution is located on rented premises, mainly in Port Louis. The office space is barely adequate and is rather spartan. Equipment wise, Statistics Mauritius is relatively well developed with a ratio of computers/laptops to staff of 1-1. All PCs and laptops have wired internet access and WIFI is available to selected devices.

The statistical operations of the partners of the NSS comply mainly well with the UN Fundamental Principles and the African Charter on Statistics as regards professional independence, integrity, impartiality, transparency, and observance of confidentiality. Statistics Mauritius and the other NSS institutions apply international standards, classifications and recommendations on good practices. Statistics Mauritius participates in African and international cooperation, including various African workshops where international and regional statistical methods and procedures are discussed.

Statistics Mauritius is committed to observe user needs. This is spelled out in its Customer Charter which outlines the commitment to providing quality customer service and improving access to statistical data for better decision making, research and debates. Statistics Mauritius conducts user consultations involving different stakeholders, for any new data collection and during development of new subject areas.

Statistics Mauritius keeps close contacts with the University of Mauritius (UoM), both as regards provision of data for research purposes and for statistical education and training of staff. These activities are specified in a MoU between the two institutions from 2016. The UoM is also represented on the Statistics Board. Statistics Mauritius does not operate its own training centre but has, in the past, benefitted from courses in official statistics and other training provided by the UoM. At the present time, however, Statistics Mauritius considers the Civil Service College as a first option for delivery of tailor-made training courses, as required by the latest Government policy.

5

Issues and recommendations

As accounted for above, Statistics Mauritius, the Bank of Mauritius and other producers of official statistics in the country are operating well in many respects and are committed to their mission of providing government, other domestic users and international agencies with relevant statistics of good quality on a regular basis. They are also firmly committed to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Nevertheless, the peer review team finds that there is scope for further improvements of the operations of the NSS. These concern the coordination and cooperation among NSS institutions, and the institutional environment and organisation of Statistics Mauritius. There are also some technical issues that should be developed further, such as establishing a framework for systematic quality management, reorganisation of the statistical production processes, and applying new technologies for the safe transfer of data between institutions. These and related issues are discussed below with recommendations for the way forward.

The discussion follows the themes that shall be covered in the peer reviews with reference being made to the relevant Principles of the African Charter of Statistics.

5.1. Organisation and coordination of the NSS

(African Charter Principle 6)

5.1.1. Professional independence (African Charter Principle 1)

The Statistics Act appears to be ambiguous as regards the professional independence and the mandate of the Director of Statistics Mauritius on the one hand and the mandate of the Statistics Board on the other.

Articles 4 and 5 of the Act, on the Director of Statistics and the functions and power of the Director, seem very clear. Article 4 states:

“In the discharge of his functions and the exercise of his powers under this Act, the Director shall act without fear or favour and shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority other than, in matters of discipline, the Public Service Commission.”

Article 5 lists the functions and the powers of the Director. There it is stated that „subject to this Act, the Director ...“has a number of functions which are listed in detail. Among the tasks the Director is charged with are the following:

- The Director may take a census in Mauritius.
- The Director may collect, compile, analyse, abstract, publish and otherwise disseminate statistics relating to various economic and social issues as listed in detail.
- The Director shall coordinate and monitor statistical activities of all producers of official statistics, ensuring that approved statistical standards and procedures, standard concepts, definitions and classifications are applied, and to minimise unnecessary overlapping and duplication in the collection and publication of statistical information.
- The Director shall collaborate with Ministries and Government Departments in the collection, compilation, analysis, production and dissemination of statistical information.
- Other tasks with which the Director is charged are e.g. to ensure the independence, accuracy, relevance, integrity, timeliness and professional standard of statistical information of Statistics Mauritius, ensure the security and confidentiality of information, convene meetings of users to review user needs, be the focal point of contact with international agencies, and have the sole responsibility for

deciding the procedures, methods and the extent, form and timing of publication and dissemination of any statistics produced or to be produced by Statistics Mauritius.

The functions of the Statistics Board are stipulated in Article 24 of the Statistics Act. The main functions are the following:

- a)** “approve, coordinate, and monitor statistical programmes of producers of official statistics in order to achieve consistency and efficiency, facilitate integration and promote comparability of data from different sources, avoid duplication, minimise respondent burden, and improve design of data collection and analysis;”
- b)** “advise any producer of statistics on the policy, procedures and regulations relating to the development of official statistics;”
- c)** “promote and safeguard the quality of official statistics, particularly in relation to their relevance, impartiality, accuracy, and timeliness and their coherence;”
- d)** “promote adherence to good practice including accessibility and international recommendations and standards, in particular, the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the African Charter on Statistics and any other internationally accepted principles relating to statistics;”
- e)** “promote and protect the integrity of official statistics, including professional independence;”

Article 24 also grants the Board the authority to set up one or more committees and to delegate its functions to any committee or the Director.

The comparison between these two sets of mandates shows that in some instances a similar mandate is given to both the Director and the Board. As regards coordination of the NSS, the Director seems to be given a direct and unequivocal mandate. But the Board is also granted a related mandate; to „approve, coordinate and monitor statistical programmes...“. As concerns the managing of Statistics Mauritius, the Director has sole responsibility for deciding on data collection, processing, analysis and dissemination and he shall not be „subject to the direction and control of any other person or authority other than, in matters of discipline, the Public Service Commission“. Nevertheless, the Director seems to be subject to at least partial such control by the Statistics Board. Thus, the Board approves the statistical programme of Statistics Mauritius and even checks and approves questionnaires. That last function is, in the opinion of the peer review team, without foundation in the Statistics Act and not in conformity with international recommendations on good practice in official statistics.

Despite these contradictions, the cooperation between the Director and management of Statistics Mauritius and

the Statistics Board is said to work well at present. The Board may have a real role to play in bringing together producers and users of official statistics and can probably be regarded as a significant contributor to the development and conduct of official statistics in Mauritius. However, it seems clear that the mandate of the Board does infringe on the function of Director, particularly as regards the coordination of statistical activities of the NSS and role of the Board of approving production plans and survey and census questionnaires.

In light of this, the peer review team recommends that this issue is resolved and brought in line with the provisions of the UN Fundamental Principles and the African Charter on Statistics, principle 1 on Professional independence. The peer review team makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Statistics Act should be revised in such a way as to clarify the division of responsibilities between the Director of Statistics Mauritius and the Statistics Board thereby curtailing the mandate of the Board to coordinate the statistical activities of the various producers within the national statistical system and to approve statistical programmes and parts thereof. The role of the Statistics Board should be confined to being advisory and promoting the usefulness, the quality and the soundness of official statistics in Mauritius.

5.1.2. Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health produces more or less all statistics on health and health related issues in Mauritius. The Ministry is a member of the NSS but is not represented on the Statistics Board. In view of the importance of the Ministry as producer of official statistics, the peer review team is of the opinion that it would strengthen the cooperation on official statistics if the Ministry was represented on the Board. Hence, the peer reviewers recommend that the law is changed in this respect. Until that can be accomplished, the peer review team recommends that the Statistics Board co-opts a representative of the Department of Statistics at the Ministry of Health to serve on the Board, as it can do according to the Statistics Act. Hence, the peer review team makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Statistics Act should be amended by granting a representative of the Ministry of Health a seat on the Statistics Board. Until that can be achieved, the Statistics Board should co-opt the Head of Statistics of the Ministry of Health to assist on the Board.

5.1.3. Preparing a new NSDS

Preparations for developing and implementing a new NSDS are about to start. The peer review team is of the opinion that it is very important that the NSDS is owned by the whole NSS. Thus, all main statistical agencies producing official statistics or being important providers of data for statistical purposes, should be included in the preparations. Furthermore, the peer reviewers believe that the NSDS work and, in due time, the NSDS programme, should be used for strengthening the cooperation within the NSS and the coordination of the various statistical activities undertaken by NSS institutions. The peer reviewers believe involving all producers of official statistics and providers of data for official statistics in the NSDS would facilitate the strengthening of the cooperation among the institutions involved. At the present time, Statistics Mauritius has no formal mechanism for coordinating the NSS or the work on the NSDS. The peer reviewers believe, however, that having a formal mechanism to advance the work on the NSDS and subsequently to ensure sufficient degree of coordination on the implementation of the NSDS, might be invaluable for the advancement of Mauritius official statistics. Hence, the peer review team makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 3 A

All main producers of official statistics, main providers of data for the purposes of official statistics, and main users of official statistics should be involved in the preparations for compiling a new National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and assume ownership of the NSDS once completed and under implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 3 B

The National Statistical System (NSS) should be defined as to include all main producers of official statistics and all main providers of data for official statistical purposes.

RECOMMENDATION 3 C

The Director of Statistics Mauritius should take the lead in establishing an NSS committee which shall be the main forum for the implementation of the NSDS and the cooperation within the NSS. The NSS Committee shall meet at regular intervals and be led and serviced by Statistics Mauritius.

5.2. Institutional environment

(African Charter Principles 1, 3 and 5)

5.2.1. Independent ICT system

Currently, Statistics Mauritius does not have its own ICT system but is one of the users of the central government ICT system. This arrangement has the institution at a disadvantage. On the one hand, the inclusion of the statistical system and the statistical databases in the government ICT system constitutes a security risk. On the other hand, Statistics Mauritius is forced to rely on the central government ICT department for maintenance and development. Normally, the needs of the institution are not accorded sufficient priority with the institution often having to wait for services.

The peer reviewers are of the opinion that Statistics Mauritius would be better off with its own ICT system. This is also in line with current international practices in this respect. Thus, having its own stand-alone ICT system with no uncontrolled linkages to other institutions, would be a much safer arrangement than the present involvement in the central government system. At the same time, Statistics Mauritius should be granted necessary funds for operating its own ICT department for carrying out the maintenance and updating continuously needed as well as necessary development work. In this way, the institution would be responsible for its own priority setting in this respect. In light of this, the peer review team makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 4

Statistics Mauritius should aim for and seek acceptance and funds for having and managing its own ICT system independent from the central government ICT system. As an initial step in this direction, Statistics Mauritius should develop an ICT policy, setting out main requirements and measures for ensuring security of the ICT system at Statistics Mauritius, and the data stored by Statistics Mauritius.

5.2.2. Abolishing constraints on organisation of staff at Statistics Mauritius

At the present time, the organisation of staff at Statistics Mauritius is both rigid and inefficient. Statistics Mauritius is a government institution and is subject to the rules and regulations of the civil service. The institution is granted a specific number of posts, both in total and for each staff category. There are three categories, professional statisticians, technical staff, and support staff, listed here in descending order. The rigidity lies in the fact that the low and finite number of posts allowed in the highest and the middle categories, hinders normal and necessary advancement of staff. In light of this, the peer reviewers make the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 5

The current constraints on the number of posts allowed for each staff category at Statistics Mauritius should be eased considerably, allowing improved advancement of staff and reduced staff turn-over.

5.2.3. Recruitment of staff at Statistics Mauritius

Statistics Mauritius is obliged to follow central government rules on recruitment of staff. The current rules only allow the institution to recruit staff at two entry points; the lowest level of support staff (statistical officer) and the lowest level of professional staff (statistician). For the latter, priority is given to Statistics Mauritius staff with the right qualifications. As all national statistical offices, Statistics Mauritius requires the skills of professionals other than statisticians, such as economists, demographers, sociologists, environmentalists etc. A scheme which does not allow this, is both rigid and inefficient.

Another issue regarding staff recruitment and human resource management concerns the hiring and management of interviewers and enumerators. Here, Statistics Mauritius is obliged to go through the central government recruitment system for hiring part-time staff for data collection instead of being allowed to recruit such staff directly. Again, this is felt to be inflexible and inefficient.

In light of the discussion above, the peer reviewers recommend the following:

RECOMMENDATION 6

Current rules and schemes for recruitment of staff at Statistics Mauritius should be changed a) to allow recruitment of experts with other skills than statistics, such as economists, geographers, sociologists, IT experts etc., and b) to allow Statistics Mauritius to hire and manage its own pool of interviewers as part time staff.

5.2.4. Abolishing inequalities in salaries

Statistics Mauritius is a part of the Mauritius Government administration under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. As regards the remuneration of staff, however, the institution does not seem to be an equal partner in the Government administration as the staff of Statistics Mauritius receive lower salaries than the staff of other government administrative departments. This inequality affects both recruitment and staff turn-over at Statistics Mauritius. Another sign of Statistics Mauritius being accorded a lower standing than Government ministries is the hierarchical standing and title of the head of the institution, Director, as compared with Director General of comparable positions in government ministries and agencies. The peer reviewers are of the opinion that such downgrading of the national statistical office is likely to undermine the importance of official statistics and recommends that the ensuing inequalities are corrected.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The present inequalities in salaries between staff in Government ministries and at Statistics Mauritius should be corrected. Similarly, the hierarchical standing and the titles of the head and managers of Statistics Mauritius should be brought in line with those of Government ministries and agencies.

5.3. Quality

(African Charter Principle 2)

5.3.1. Establishing a framework for systematic quality management:

Statistics Mauritius has so far not developed structured quality management of its processes and outputs. The Code of Practice provides considerable guidance for observation of quality, but the guidelines specified there do not seem to be followed in a systematic manner. There is no quality handbook in place and documentation on quality observance and control is scant. Of other NSS institutions, the Bank of Mauritius applies some quality control, but no systematic quality observance is applied at the statistics department of the Ministry of Health. The peer review team is of the opinion that Statistics Mauritius should plan and implement systematic quality management. This can be done gradually, starting by entrusting quality work (quality culture, quality awareness, quality control) to a specific manager or a working group, to be extended by embedding quality control into the work of the different sections of the institution. Quality reviews of specific processes and/or outputs could also be gradually introduced leading to regular compilation of quality reports of surveys, processes and outputs. It is further recommended that the two other main NSS institutions cooperate with Statistics Mauritius in this regard. Hence, the peer reviewers make the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 8

Statistics Mauritius should plan and gradually implement a framework for systematic quality control. The Bank of Mauritius and the statistics department of the Ministry of Health are advised to make use of that development as suitable for their statistical activities.



5.3.2. Training programme for Statistics Mauritius

Statistics Mauritius does not operate a training centre but relies on courses at the University of Mauritius and the Civil Service College for formal training of its staff as well as applying continuous on-the-job training. The peer reviewers believe that the training of staff could be strengthened if Statistics Mauritius were to develop a comprehensive and dynamic training programme, based both on the observed needs for statistical training and the interests of the staff for training and education. Statistics Mauritius should also consider encouraging the participation of its staff in training and university courses in statistics and related subjects by applying flexible job arrangements for those engaged in training and education. Consideration should also be given to supporting staff by participation in the costs of education. In light of this, the peer reviewers recommend the following:

RECOMMENDATION 9

Statistics Mauritius should draw up and maintain a comprehensive and rolling training programme, based both on the observed needs for training and education and the interests of staff. Consideration should also be given to facilitating the participation of staff in training and education through flexible job arrangements and participation in costs.

5.3.3. Survey archiving

Statistics Mauritius is currently not archiving surveys and censuses in a systematic manner. The peer reviewers are of the opinion that Statistics Mauritius should remedy this at the earliest opportunity. They make the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 10

Statistics Mauritius should undertake a project of studying possible solutions for systematic archiving of surveys and survey data and implement such measures at the earliest opportunity.

5.3.4. Application of GFS 2014 and accruals accounting

Government finance accounts in Mauritius are entered on cash basis and follow the Government Finance Statistics (GFS) Manual from 2001. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has entered on a project of applying accruals accounting and migrating the GFS standard to that of 2014. This project is not advancing rapidly. The peer reviewers are of the opinion that the Ministry should accord this task special priority, given its importance both for economic statistics, not least national accounts, and for planning and managing government finances. The peer reviewers make the following recommendation in this respect:

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development should prioritise the implementation of accruals accounting and migration of the accounting standard to GFS 2014.

5.4. Statistical processes

(African Charter Principle 2)

5.4.1. Reorganisation of statistical production processes

Statistics Mauritius is organised according to a traditional stove pipe model. This hinders cooperation across boundaries of divisions and subjects and retards utilisation of standardised solutions and standardised processes. In recent years, many national statistical offices have sought to reorganise and improve their statistical business processes by applying the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), developed by the Statistics Department of the UNECE. The GSBPM focuses on the use of standard approaches, methods and software applications across the statistical business processes, e.g. allowing the reuse or multiple use of applications in many fields. The peer reviewers are of the opinion that Statistics Mauritius (and later the statistics department of the Ministry of Health) should study the GSBPM and consider its applicability, both for reorganising its statistical production processes and for facilitating the migration of the organisational structure of Statistics Mauritius towards a functional and efficient model of organisation. In light of this, the peer review team makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 12

Statistics Mauritius should study the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM) and consider its applicability, both for reorganising its statistical processes and for facilitating the migration of the organisational structure of Statistics Mauritius towards a functional and efficient model of organisation.

5.4.2. Applying new technologies for secure transfer of data

Currently, data is being exchanged between the various statistical institutions and transferred from data providers to the statistical institutions in various ways. Some of the data exchange activities are not sufficiently secure and efficient as they do not rely on fully secure environments and protocols. This situation needs to be improved and hence the peer reviewers recommend the following:

RECOMMENDATION 13

All institutions within the NSS exchanging data should look for better ways of data exchange that are standard based, automated and rely on secure data transfer protocols within a protected environment.

5.4.3. Separation of statistical activities from other activities at the Ministry of Health

The Statistical Department of the Ministry of Health carries out various activities of very different nature, such as statistical data collection and processing, monitoring of the health situation in different fields, and forecasting. In the opinion of the peer review team, the statistical activities are not adequately separated from the other activities of the department. This risks that the statistical activities and outputs are compromised. Hence, the peer review team makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 14

In the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Health, the activities generating official statistics should be clearly separated from the monitoring and forecasting activities. Similarly, the set of data for official statistics should be treated in accordance with the principles and rules of official statistics.

5.5. Dissemination

(African Charter Principle 4)

5.5.1. Release practices at Statistics Mauritius and the Bank of Mauritius

Currently, both Statistics Mauritius and the Bank of Mauritius publish their statistical reports and update their statistical databases according to preannounced release calendars which the institutions develop and publish at the turn of the year for the whole of the coming year. These are posted on the websites of the two institutions. This practice is in line with international good practices and follows the SDDS and the Code of Practice of Statistics Mauritius. However, modern international practices take this one step further and specify the exact time of the day at which the releases are made. This is also taken up in the Code of Practice. The most common practice is that all releases are made at the same time of the day. The peer reviewers are of the opinion that Statistics Mauritius and the Bank of Mauritius should implement this practice. Thus, they recommend the following:

RECOMMENDATION 15

Statistics Mauritius and the Bank of Mauritius should start publishing their press releases and statistical reports, including updates of databases, at a predetermined and preannounced hour on the release dates. The release hour should be the same for all statistical releases of each of the two institutions.

5.5.2. Merging the release calendars of NSS institutions

Statistics Mauritius and the Bank of Mauritius publish their own release calendars, each on their separate websites. This entails that the users of the statistics from these two institutions, e.g. media, will have to look for the planned publication dates on two different websites. The users will also have to know exactly the division of labour between the two institutions in order to be certain of where to look for the statistical releases of their interest. A way to avoid this and increase the usefulness of the release calendars would be to merge the release calendars of the two institutions. That would mean that the users could obtain

information of all planned releases in one place, either at the Statistics Mauritius website or the Bank of Mauritius one. With this in mind, the peer review team recommends the following:

RECOMMENDATION 16

Statistics Mauritius, the Bank of Mauritius and other producers of official statistics should, for the benefit of the users of official statistics, consider establishing modalities for merging their release calendars and publishing one harmonised release calendar for the NSS as a whole. The harmonised release calendar could then be posted on the websites of the relevant institutions.

5.5.3. Dissemination of health statistics

The dissemination of the health statistics as described to the peer review team appears not to be in line with international recommendations and best practices in at least two instances: On the one hand, the release of the statistical reports is subject to ministerial approval or notification instead of being at the discretion of the head of the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Health. According to the African Charter and the UN Fundamental Principles, the head of health statistics should enjoy full professional independence and responsibility in all statistical matters. On the other hand, the Statistics Department does not release its statistical findings and reports according to a release calendar. The peer review team recommends that the ministerial approval or formal notification to the Minister of Health of releases is abolished and that the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Health starts disseminating its statistical findings and publications according to a release calendar in line with current practices of Statistics Mauritius and the Bank of Mauritius. Such a calendar might also be included in that of Statistics Mauritius. With this in mind, the peer review team makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 17

The current practice at the Ministry of Health of seeking approval for releases of statistics should be abolished. Instead, the head of the Statistics Department of the Ministry should be made professionally independent in all matters of health statistics and charged with the responsibility of deciding on the processing, analysis and dissemination of health statistics. The dissemination should follow a preannounced release calendar.

5.5.4. Access to microdata on health

The Statistics Department of the Ministry of Health holds a large amount of microdata on health, health related issues and causes of death. The current practice of the Statistics Department is to grant access to or allow the use of anonymised microdata in specific cases. However, this practice seems quite restricted entailing that the available microdata is underutilised for research purposes. The peer reviewers would therefore encourage the Statistics Department to review and ease its practices in this respect in order to facilitate increased research activity. The following recommendation is in this respect:

RECOMMENDATION 18

The Statistics Department of the Ministry of Health should review and ease its restrictions on allowing the use of and/or granting access to anonymised microdata, thereby facilitating increased research based on health statistics.

5.5.5. Information on metadata

Currently, information on statistical metadata of Statistics Mauritius and Bank of Mauritius is to be found in statistical reports and on their websites. The peer reviewers believe it would be useful to organise systematic storage and presentation of metadata, including organising a more user-friendly overview of and access to metadata on the websites. In the short term, it should be easy to increase the clarity of the websites and improve access to metadata by simple changes, making the existing metadata already posted on the web and referred to in statistical reports more visible. For the future, increased attention should be given to the systematic generation and presentation of metadata, both output and process metadata. In this light the peer reviewers recommend:

RECOMMENDATION 19

Statistics Mauritius and the Bank of Mauritius as relevant should take actions to increase the supply and visibility of their statistical metadata on their websites. In the medium term, the institutions should focus on systematic generation and presentation of metadata, both output and process metadata.

Annex 1

Agenda for Peer review of Mauritius' NSS (final)





Date	Time	Venue	Activity
Monday May 21	09.15 - 09.30	Statistics Mauritius (SM)	Meeting with Director of Statistics Meeting with Director and Deputy Directors of SM
	09.30 - 12.00	SM conference room	- Discussion of the programme of the peer review visit - Discussion of the methodology and focus of the peer review
	12.00 - 13.00		Lunch Break
	13.00 - 15.00	SM conference room	Meeting with Director and Deputy Directors of SM - Description of the statistical system of the country
	15.00 - 16.00	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED)	Meeting with key staff of MOFED
Tuesday May 22	09.30 - 11.00	SM briefing room	Meeting with Statistics Board
	11.00 - 12.00	SM briefing room	Meeting with Chief Executive Officer, Business Mauritius
	12.00 - 13.00		Lunch Break
	13.00 - 14.00	Bank of Mauritius (BOM)	Meeting with key staff of Research & Economic Analysis Department (READ), BOM
	15.00 - 16.00	Ministry of Labour (9th floor, Victoria House)	Meeting with Permanent Secretary and key staff, Ministry of Labour
Wednesday May 23	10.00 - 10.45	University of Mauritius (UOM)	Meeting with Vice Chancellor and key staff, UOM
	11.00 - 12.00	Financial Services Commission (FSC)	Meeting with key staff, FSC
	12.00 - 13.00		Lunch Break
	13.00 - 13.45	Ministry of Health (MOH)	Meeting with Deputy Permanent Secretary and key staff of Statistics Unit, MOH
	14.00 - 14.45	Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA)	Meeting with Director General and key staff of MRA
	15.00 - 16.00	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Newton Tower	Meeting with key staff, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Thursday May 24	09.00 - 10.30	SM conference room	Discussion with Director and Deputy Directors of SM on the NSS
	10.30 - 12.00	SM conference room	Meeting with SM staff of various grades
	12.00 - 13.00		Lunch Break
	14.00 - 15.00	Central Business Registration Department (CBRD)	Meeting with Registrar and Assistant Registrars, CBRD
Friday May 25	09.00 - 12.00	SM conference room	Drafting of preliminary findings and recommendations
	12.00 - 13.00		Lunch Break
	13.00 - 14.00	SM conference room	Drafting of preliminary findings and recommendations
	14.00 - 16.00	SM briefing room	Presentation of main findings to SM (Director and Deputy Directors), BOM (key staff of READ), MOH (Chief Health Statistician) and MOFED (Lead Analyst)

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