

Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building, July 2015

The Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity (TFSCB) aims to strengthen the capacity of statistical systems in developing countries. It is a global grant facility, administered by the World Bank's Development Data Group on behalf of the contributing donors. TFSCB focuses on improving countries' capacity to produce, analyze, disseminate and use timely data and statistics.

The TFSCB was launched more than a decade ago, and has so far provided funding for more than 250 projects in all regions of the world. To maximize its impact, TFSCB strives to respond to changes in the drivers of demand for support for statistics and statistical capacity building. Thus, the TFSCB is currently repositioning itself in order to expand its support beyond its current remit and dedicate funding to help fill key data gaps linked to the need for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals and national development plans.

Background

Data are essential for decision-making and the raw material for accountability. Without high-quality, timely data, designing, implementing and evaluating effective public policies and services becomes almost impossible.

The lack of data limits monitoring and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Bank's twin goals and national development plans. A few examples:

- **Poverty:** Many governments cannot say with certainty if their policies are successful in fighting poverty. Some 57 countries lack two (comparable) data points in the 2002 -11 period, and additionally 20 countries have two household surveys in the reference period, but given their history of data production and the year of their latest survey are likely to miss the "two household surveys in ten years' criteria in the near future.
- **Size of economics and economic growth:** We don't really know how big (or small) many African economies are, as exemplified by the magnitude of the recent GDP revisions in countries like Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana.
- **Humanitarian crisis:** Valuable real-time, privately-held cell phone data could not be leveraged to aid the Ebola response because it was locked behind unclear legal frameworks.

Funding for statistics

Domestic funding should always be the cornerstone for any statistical system, but additional funding by donors is and will continue to be key. Notwithstanding progress, the range of funding instruments and availability of resources, data gaps remain a problem. Thus, existing instruments, including the World Bank's Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB), need to be repurposed and scaled up to meet new demands and new instruments may be required to fill holes in financial assistance for better data on development.¹

¹To meet these new demands, the Bank will establish a new facility to fund innovation in statistics, TF for Innovations in Development Data (TFIDD), which will be complimentary to existing trust funds.

TFSCB

The TFSCB, established more than a decade ago, was the first fund dedicated to making improvements in countries' capacity to produce and use statistics for better policy making. It has so far provided smaller scale funding (< USD 500,000) to more than 250 projects worldwide, focusing on improving countries' capacity in the production, analysis, dissemination, and use of timely statistics. Evaluations and advisory reports have all concluded that it is effective and has successfully adopted to meet new needs.

The TFSCB is well placed to play a key role to fill development data gaps through an expanded mandate. Thus, the TFSCB is currently repositioning itself in order to expand its support beyond its current remit and dedicate funding to help fill key data gaps linked to the need for monitoring the SDGs and national development plans.

The idea is to provide targeted funding (up to \$US 2 million) to improve very specific aspects of the statistical system, including the production of statistics. One initial area of focus would be household surveys, as data from these surveys will likely feed into numerous SDG indicators. Another would be national accounts, including provision for source data improvements or execution of needed surveys, such as establishment, price or informal sector surveys. Funding would be targeted to countries where: i) there are clear signs that the capacity to conduct surveys would be improved, and ii) there is clear country ownership for the need of this source data improvement – including funding from domestic and other sources.

For this to become a reality and make a real impact, new funding from donors would be needed. Initial contributions has already been promised and the TFSCB will pilot funding for the support to data production in the mentioned areas. However, in order to move from a pilot to regular operation, additional donor support will be needed.

Conclusion

Global leaders see the imperative in moving quickly to fill key data gaps to begin implementing the SDG agenda. The repositioning of the TFSCB will allow donors to move quickly to financially support surveys, as the TFSCB has the infrastructure and is "ready to scale up and go" as soon as funding is secured. Moreover, the Bank is eager to move the agenda forward and support countries who need to fill data gaps - and household surveys in particular, and its staff know the countries, the instruments, and stand ready to execute such projects. Thus, with funding in place, it should be possible to make a difference and start to see results by 2016/17.

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