

On the occasion of the World Statistics Day 20/10/2010

A word from the Acting President of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Ramallah

On this occasion, I would like to highlight on the challenge of maintaining the internal as well as external effectiveness of a national statistics office in light of the overwhelming developments in the last two decades mainly globalization, increasing demands of users, the attention on data quality, regional as well as international technical cooperation, and of course credibility of NSO versus its independence.

When we say an NSO is internally effective, few areas need to be thoroughly explored:

- What are the core competencies of NSO? How to maintain these core competencies in light of budget cuts, evolving interests of donors, and changing of methodologies and technologies? Can we outsource a core competency to maintain internal effectiveness?
- Job satisfaction: How to maintain healthy working environment and certain level of job satisfaction while keeping in mind that an NSO is part of the government structure and system?
- Succession planning: The issue here is to ensure the availability of experienced and capable employees that are prepared to assume key roles in the organization as these roles become available. This is important to maintain expertise and business knowledge, ensure business continuity and maintain strong client relationships.
- Regarding external effectiveness of NSO, the question that arises is whether NSO is fulfilling its obligation as stated in its mandate towards individual users, partners, society, and international communities. External effectiveness reflects the presence of NSO at the local, regional, and international levels.

- Global statistics: How can an NSO take proactive role in the provision of comparable statistics, contribution for developments of methodologies, and introduction of work related innovations?
- Dissemination: Empowering users through the dissemination of digital data sets and balancing between user's needs and data confidentiality. The challenge is how to bypass rigid legislations in favor of balancing between legal demands and user's needs. Answers like "statistics act does not permit" is not always relevant.
- Independence and credibility of official statistics: NSO as a role model at the national level as is the case with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

An NSO is a service agency, so its independence is related to its methods and results, not to its objectives. The issue of independence is strongly related to the issue of relevance. To be relevant, NSO must be independent enough to gain credibility among stake holders.

The independence of statistics from political interference is enshrined in the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. That means adoption of these principles on the national level is a strong step toward developing independence in national statistics

As statistics are increasingly being used for political and administrative or regulatory purposes such as distribution of funds and indexation, greater pressure is facing NSO to retain independence with the increasing political and special interest group interference.

Legal provisions are a good precondition for an application of the principles: independence, credibility, neutrality, ...etc. But they are not at all sufficient if only treated as formal statements. It is essential to fill these principles with life in everyday practice and to defend them where necessary.

- Data quality: Quality statistics is fundamental in shaping the image and the credibility of NSO. Investing in data quality is always a priority.

At the end, can NSOs meet these challenges? The answer is yes WE CAN to stay RELEVANT!

Thank you,