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Paper on:
Data collection and availability of ICT indicators in The Gambia

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1.0 Background

1.1 General Profile on The Gambia

The Gambia is located midway on the bulge of the West African coast and stretches 350 kilometres inland from west to east on either side of the River Gambia, varying in width from about 50 km near the mouth of the river to about 24 km upstream. The country is bound to the north, south and east by the Republic of Senegal, and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean. The River Gambia, which runs the entire length of the country from the Futa Jallon highlands in the Republic of Guinea to the Atlantic Ocean, divides the country's land area of 10,689 square kilometres almost equally into two halves – the South Bank and the North Bank.

The Gambia is a LDC with a population of about 1.4 million inhabitants (2003 Population and Housing Census). Its population growth rate is estimated at about 2.8 percent per annum. The crude birth rate is estimated at 46.2 per thousand and crude death rate is about 11.3 per thousand. The country has a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of about 6.04 per woman. Infant Mortality (IMR) is about 91 per thousand and Maternal Mortality (MMR) is about 730 per 100,000. Life expectancy at birth is about 59 years.

The Gambia is a multi-ethnic society characterised by commonalities and marked differences in social norms and values. Islam and christianity are the two main religions.

GDP per capita at current prices as at 2003 is estimated at around US \$167. Agriculture – mainly groundnut production and marketing, Distributive trade and Tourism are the most important industrial activities. Recently, the communications and construction industries have registered significant growth. Marked variations exist in levels of human development and gender relationships across the country.

1.2 The Statistical System and Mandate

The Central Statistics Department (CSD) was established by the Statistics Act of 1972, and is part of the Department of State for Finance and Economic Affairs for which it provides basic statistics for use in national planning and monitoring. The department has the mandate to collect, produce and disseminate key macroeconomic and social data. For that matter it conducts, coordinate or collaborate in the conduct of censuses and surveys.

1.3 ICT Indicator Availability in The Gambia

In The Gambia, limited ICT and related indicators are available from surveys, statistical undertakings and administrative procedures. This is because there is no system in place to allow for an organized collection or gathering of ICT data. However, it is worthy of mentioning that ICT institutions themselves and their regulatory bodies have seen the need for ICT indicators and have put mechanisms in place to generate some indicators for purpose of policy formulation or regulating.

2.0 Production of Statistical Data in The Gambia

Production of statistical data in The Gambia is done through operations involving household surveys, establishment surveys and/or accessing administrative records or through administrative procedures.

Household surveys are mostly sample-based whilst establishment surveys attempt complete coverage. Whilst household surveys use reliable list frame comprising primary units, frame of list of establishments is not reliable due to the fact that there is not yet a system of annual updating in place. Administrative records or procedures from which data are gathered also have drawbacks as the nature, regularity and consistency of such records may not allow for obtainment of appropriate data or indicator.

This paper will discuss the various undertakings in The Gambia from which ICT indicator or related may be collected/gathered.

2.1 Business/Establishment Surveys

These are basically economic surveys that are conducted by the Central Statistics Department to help provide the Government, etc. with basic economic data. However, these surveys somehow enable the obtainment of limited data/indicator relating to ICT sector. These surveys are: (1) National Accounting Survey and (2) Employment and Earnings Surveys.

- 2.1.1 *National Accounting Survey*: The ICT related data/indicator that could be obtained from this survey is the sector's component in the national product (GDP).

The basic method adopted to estimate the domestic product of The Gambia is to assess the value added by each branch or kind of economic activity. The classification by kind of activity adopted for the purpose is the same as recommended in the SNA. However, there are still a number of gaps in the statistical information required for the compilation of the national accounts. Plans are in final stages to undertake an economic census that will form basis for an improved and modernized national accounts compilation.

Regards the compilation for the sectors, only the electricity and water supply, distributive trade and communication sectors will be discussed in this paper.

Electricity and Water Supply: The production approach is followed for the estimation of value added. The generation, transmission and distribution of electric power and the collection, purifying and distribution of water for sale to domestic, industrial and commercial users are undertaken by the National Water and Electricity Corporation (NAWEC), a public sector undertaking.

The relevant data required for the compilation of domestic product for this sector are available in the Annual Reports and Accounts of NAWEC.

The base year estimates of gross domestic product is obtained using the index of quantity of electricity generated/quantity of water supplied to obtain the estimates at constant prices for different years.

Distributive trade: This is another sector where ICT related data could be captured. The production approach is again used here for the estimation of domestic product arising from distributive trade.

The sector has been sub-divided into the following sub-sectors:

- (i) Imported Goods (other than petroleum products);
- (ii) Petroleum Products;
- (iii) Locally Manufactured goods;
- (iv) Agricultural Products; and,
- (v) Fish and Forestry products.

From the total imports classified by commodities, private imports entering the trade channel is estimated by excluding public and duty-free imports.

The Gross mark-ups, based on a survey in early-90s, by commodity groups is used. The estimates of intermediate consumption and consumption of fixed capital are based on the information furnished in the National Accounts questionnaire for trading establishments.

The estimates at constant prices for the different sub-sectors are prepared separately. In the case of imported goods, the estimated value of goods at current prices entering the market (as estimated for current price series) was deflated by the unit value of imports. The gross output in distributive trade was then estimated using the gross mark-up of 1976/77. The same procedure was followed for intermediate consumption.

Communications: The sector comprises Postal Services and Telecommunication Services. The requisite information regarding the income and expenditure is obtained by the analysis of data contained in the government budget documents and the annual accounts of GAMTEL respectively.

The constant price estimates are built using appropriate volume indicators representing the activity.

2.1.2 Employment and Earnings Surveys: This survey has been conducted by the Central statistics Department since 1974. Of recent the survey has been stalled as a result of declining response rate coupled with the lack of a regularly and comprehensive frame of list of establishments.

The survey collected data on employment, wages, salaries and other benefits. The classification adopted by kind of activity is the same as recommended by ISIC. The ICT related data that could be obtained is the employment and wages in the sector.

It is planned that the survey will be redesigned and put on sound footing after the conduct of the planned Economic Census from which benchmark data on employment and earnings could be obtained along with a comprehensive list frame for which it is planned to look into the possibility of regularly accessing and utilizing administrative records. Planned also is the Labour Force Survey to be incorporated as an important module in Household Surveys.

2.2 Household Surveys

Ad-hoc household surveys have been conducted in The Gambia to help obtain socio-economic indicators for the country. However, through the support of the

African Development Bank (ADB) a Social Dimension of Adjustment Project was established that resulted to the establishment of a Household Survey Section in the Department of Statistics. The section, through the project, undertook several household surveys that include, amongst others, the 1992 Household Economic Survey and the Priority Survey.

The existence of the section enabled joint undertakings, with other stakeholders, of household surveys such as the 1998 National Household Poverty Survey and the current 2003 Integrated Household Survey that aims to reassess the poverty situation of the country as well as form basis for the revision and updating of the CPI basket and weights and national accounts basic data.

The ICT related indicators that could be obtained from the 2003 IHS will be limited to household's availability of electricity and telephone as well as expenditure on some aspects of ICT.

As there isn't a Permanent Household Survey Programme in place, plans are being discussed to have such a programme in place to allow for a regular conduct of household surveys on core modules along with interchanging modules.

2.3 Other Collection

External trade compilation from which some ICT related indicator/data could be obtained are based on Customs documents and are for that matter being compiled by Customs Department.

The data entry is in ASYCUDA system at major ports. The analysis and tabulation programme being performed at the CSD, using the EUROSTAT programme. The classification used is in line with ISTC.

In addition, the CSD gathers some information, especially on exports, that Custom fails to record. Information on re-exports seems to be weak. The work on the preparation of an index of imports is underway with the IMF assistance.

2.4 Administrative Records/Procedures

The 1972 Statistical Act, which is being revised as 2004 Statistical Act, has not given a clear mandate for CSd to access and utilize administrative records or procedures. However, the department do persuade some institutions, with the assurance of adhering to the code of confidentiality, to have access to their records or obtain their relevant documents for statistical purpose.

In this vein, the department does obtain telecommunication data form GAMTEL which is obtained in the course of the enterprise's operations. The data along with what is obtained from GAMTEL's annual accounts are mostly used for national accounting purpose.

Under the CBEMP (World Bank funded) project, the department is to be restructured through the revised Statistical Act and the implementation of a six-

year Master Plan covering period 2005 to 2011. The revised Act and the Master Plan will enable the streamlining of the department's operations with emphasis on efficient and cost-effective statistical data collection, gathering, processing, analysis and dissemination. This will include access to and utilization of administrative records.

3.0 Plans

As stated above, the department is to be restructured through a transformation process that involves revision of the Statistical Act and the implementation of a Master Plan. During the process, which has in fact started, the statistical applications and the infrastructure will be revitalized and restructured.

The revitalization of the statistical applications will involve the undertaking of some statistical activities that will serve as benchmarks as well as update collection procedures, processing and dissemination of data. The on-going 2003 Integrated Household Survey aims at updating the poverty profile of the country as well as the CPI by revising the consumption basket and their weights. The planned Economic Census also aims at updating the key economic indicators as well as help enable the re-designing and putting in place a regular Economic Survey. The Economic Census is expected to capture some relevant ICT indicators.

These undertakings will help to devise approaches that may help capture ICT related indicators.

4.0 Conclusions

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that as there isn't a systematic and conscious approach to capturing ICT indicators in The Gambia, the various plans mentioned above can be capitalized upon to have in place ICT indicator measuring and reporting programme.

The department of statistics relies on the collaboration of stakeholders and is therefore more than willing to cooperate in this area.

5.0 Recommendations

The following are recommendations towards having in place a system of measuring and reporting on ICT indicators:

- 1) Conduct a stakeholder discussion to identify ICT indicator needs, uses and sources
- 2) Develop approaches to collecting, processing and reporting on ICT indicators

- 3) Discuss and agree on incorporating in the workprogramme of the Central Statistics Department an ICT indicator collection and reporting
- 4) Discuss and agree on the cost implications
- 5) Develop and implement plan of actions.