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MEMO ON INDICATORS

I/ DEFINITION OF INDICATORS

Indicators are numerical or other data which characterize a department, company, branch or sector at a given point in time and serve as a basis for analysis. At Togo Telecom the statistics unit, which is responsible for establishing and processing indicators, handles three types of data:

- Internal indicators published regularly in management information reports;
- Internal indicators to be kept in the SIGET (Telecommunication information and management system) database for the purpose of studies or to be used in providing information to the outside;
- External indicators.

II/ DATA COLLECTION

COLLECTION OF INTERNAL DATA

Internal data are fed into the information system from operational departments at pre-set intervals or on request. In general, data are collected in printed form on sheets specifically devised for the purpose, known as basic data collection sheets. Collection via electronic media does not yet exist.

PROBLEMS WITH THE COLLECTION OF INTERNAL DATA

These problems relate to the measurement of basic data at their source. Neither within the hardware nor at the IT level, for example, are there applications for retrieving certain data which it is impossible to record manually.

As regards data, which can still be recorded and measured manually, the sources nevertheless still need to be made reliable.

COLLECTION OF EXTERNAL DATA

This is done in two ways:

- On the basis of an official request for information.
- On the basis of consultation of documents or Internet sites.

PROBLEMS WITH THE COLLECTION OF EXTERNAL DATA

Regarding the first method, the main problem lies in people's reluctance to communicate their information on the pretext of the confidentiality of data.

Regarding the second method, in the event that the required data are available, which is often not the case, the problem of their reliability remains.

III/ PROCESSING OF INDICATORS

The processing of indicators depends on the type of information that one wishes to present and the form in which one would like to present it. Some forms of basic data processing already occur in operational departments before transmission to SIGET, others are carried out by or within the system. Data capture and processing are always done using EXCEL and are somewhat cumbersome.

IV/ DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

This is both internal and external.

Internal dissemination takes place at regular intervals in the form of management information reports and statistical directories.

External dissemination may or may not use forms to be filled in, following specific requests or requests at set intervals.

V/ USE OF INDICATORS

In general, indicators are used for the purposes of study, analysis, planning and publication.

At an internal level, management of business policy depends on regular analysis of the principal indicators.

VI/ PROCEDURES AND POLICIES IN FORCE

DEFINITION OF INDICATORS

The choice of indicators to appear in management information reports is the responsibility of the hierarchical level for which the management information report is intended.

According to the analyses that it wishes to undertake, performances it would like to monitor and controls it wishes to carry out, the hierarchical level states its requirements regarding the indicators to be followed, sent by official memo to the Studies and Programmes Department (DEP).

COLLECTION OF BASIC DATA

The collection procedure for each indicator - e.g. the recording, measurement and collection interval - is defined by the validation committee concerned.

DATA TRANSMISSION

This is done through correspondents, and is either centralized (one correspondent designated for all indicators with transmission through hierarchical channels) or decentralized (a number of correspondents transmitting directly to the system).

Each method has its advantages and disadvantages.

With centralized data transmission through hierarchical channels, consistency checks are made directly in operational departments before transmission to the system. However, this results in failure to observe agreed transmission deadlines.

With decentralized transmission, transmission deadlines are certainly observed, but there is a great deal of inconsistency between data, especially those originating from diverse sources. It appears that practically no checking is done by correspondents before feeding data into the system. Consequently, the system experiences enormous difficulties and wastes considerable time monitoring consistency, at the risk of causing delays in the publication of the management information report.

VALIDATION OF INDICATORS

Whether it is data for external release or for inclusion in a management information report, validation is undertaken or provided for before dissemination.

For data provided externally, the procedure provides for validation of the data to be released, after processing in the operational departments concerned. This is necessary in order to prevent the company from providing the external party with two different values for the same indicator. However, this is a very lengthy procedure, which might have been avoided if operational departments did not keep parallel statistics of if they fed into the system the same data kept at their level.

For management information reports, the procedure provides for consistency checks by the validation committees before final publication and transmission to the hierarchical levels.

DISSEMINATION OF DATA

In all cases, whether for provision of data externally or for publication in management information reports or directories, the data pass through the requisite through hierarchical channels.

VII/ NEW INDICATORS

It would be desirable to monitor new indicators in order to gauge the status of mobile services and of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to measure their influence on conventional telephony.

These include the following:

- Information on VoIP;
- Cellular mobile service subscribers;
- Radio paging subscribers;
- Number of fax machines;
- Number of computers;
- Number of Internet servers;
- Estimated number of Internet users;
- Household antennas for direct reception via satellite;
- Television sets;
- Estimated number of cybercafés;
- Interconnection traffic.

The main problem here lies in the availability of data. In most cases the data are external to Togo Telecom and can only be obtained on request, through surveys or from estimates.