Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

ADVANCING AGRICULTURAL STATISTICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACROSS AFRICAN COUNTRIES

The Global Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (GSARS) was developed in 2009 as a blueprint for a coordinated and long-term initiative to address the decline in the agricultural statistical systems of a number of developing countries.

Phase II of the Global Strategy, which is the focus of the project, aimed to address the growing demand for robust agricultural and rural data by enhancing the capacity of national statistical systems. At its core, the project sought to provide African countries with the technical and organizational skills needed to produce and better present agricultural statistics essential for evidence-based policymaking, monitoring and planning. This effort was particularly critical given the challenges faced by low and middle-income countries, where resources and trained personnel are often insufficient to support data-driven agricultural and food security initiatives.

GSARS II also played a crucial role in fostering South-South Cooperation and accelerating the implementation of the 50x2030 Initiative, contributing to long-term impact and sustainability.

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WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

The overarching objective of GSARS II was to strengthen the capacity of beneficiary countries to integrate high-quality agricultural data into their national statistical systems, aligning these efforts with national priorities and SDGs. Specifically, the project was structured around three main outcomes, namely (i) enhancing statistical capacity, (ii) improving data production and (iii) fostering the integration and sustainability of agricultural statistics. Each outcome was supported by activities organized under four components – Strategic Plans for Agricultural Statistics (SPARS), Training (target countries are equipped with skilled professionals), Technical assistance on survey techniques and Technical assistance on data analysis and dissemination. GSARS II made significant progress in advancing statistical capacity development across 17 countries. Underpinning the key accomplishments was the successful adoption of a demand-driven and country-led approach, resulting in tailored technical assistance closely aligned with national priorities. Capacity-building efforts have led to the training of a critical mass of statisticians, with a notable representation of women, contributing to enhanced skills and institutional capacities.

IMPACT

The project successfully strengthened capacities in national agricultural statistical systems for accountability, reporting and policymaking.

KEY FACTS

Latest Approved Budget
USD 6 000 000

Duration
December 2020 – June 2024

Resource Partner
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Beneficiaries
National statistics offices and ministries of agriculture, livestock and the environment in the participating countries

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ACTIVITIES

- Technical assistance tailored to meet individual countries' unique priority needs.

- Over 2 000 experts trained, 30 percent of whom were women, across 17 countries and 9 Regional Economic Communities (RECs), fostering sustainable capacity development.

- SPARS successfully implemented in Liberia and Zimbabwe, and ADAPT planning tool installed in Zimbabwe and in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

- South-South Cooperation facilitated through the engagement of African trainers and peer-learning initiatives, promoting local ownership and sustainability.

- Most of the countries benefited from regional workshops, peer-learning and online discussions under the human resources package of activities. Targeted training programmes established in Burkina Faso and Mali, resulting in a five-year staff training plan, and modernization of Burundi's statistical office.

- As part of the continuation of the scholarship programme introduced in GSARS Phase I, the project offered 28 scholarships for Master's degrees in agricultural statistics to candidates from 14 African countries. .

- Basic training courses in agricultural statistics organized in coordination between UNECA and FAO, to provide enhanced statistical capacity among officers in beneficiary countries and RECs.

- Technical assistance provided in all beneficiary countries on master sampling frame and survey techniques, including surveys on agricultural production, farm economics and farm losses.

- Tools like ADAPT and Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) introduced across multiple countries, enhancing the planning, collection, and processing of agricultural data.

- Three countries – Mali, Nigeria and Zimbabwe – were supported in compiling FBS using recommended methodologies to produce relevant indicators for national food security and agricultural policies. Ground-breaking results were achieved in Nigeria and Zimbabwe, who compiled their first national Supply Utilization Accounts/Food Balance Sheets for 2014-2020, enhancing statistical capacities and underpinning crucial food security indicators.

- Seven countries benefited from the dissemination package, which raised awareness about statistical dissemination policies and developed skills for effective data dissemination and preservation. Dissemination of official statistics, including well-documented microdata, is one key mandate of the agencies of the National Statistical System (NSS) as underlined by the first principle of the UN Fundamental Principle of Official Statistics. This technical assistance module laid the foundations for the establishment and implementation of an effective dissemination programme by the agency in charge of agricultural statistics in the beneficiary countries.

- Training to build technical capacities in data processing, compilation of indicators and farm typologies provided to strengthen analytical skills.

- Two regional workshops – "Data Analysis and Dissemination" and "Data collection for Decision-Making" – and the final GSARS II conference were pivotal in bringing together stakeholders from across Africa, reinforcing the programme's achievements.

- Consistent communication efforts, including the GSARS website, videos and social media engagement, significantly enhanced programme visibility.

- Integration of GSARS II outcomes into national strategies and the 50x2030 Initiative ensured long-term sustainability by leveraging established skills and infrastructure, accelerating implementation timelines and fostering the continued advancement of agricultural statistical systems.

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Global Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Statistics: Phase 2

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