

Robust Statistical systems – A Tool for Good Governance



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The role of Statistics in formulation, monitoring and evaluation of developmental policies needs no emphasis. Statistics is also required for improving transparency and accountability in the implementation of policies through better understanding and control on delivery of public services. To cater to the requirements, a robust statistical system needs to be in place for collection, validation, compilation and dissemination of data. The roots of statistical system in India can be traced in Kautilya's Arthashastra and AbulFazal's Ain-i- Akbari. During the British era, the Indian statistical system started getting the shape and Prof P. C. Mahalanobis 'father of Indian Statistical System' laid the foundation of modern statistical system. I also acknowledge the contribution made by Prof. P. V. Sukhatme particularly in the field of Agriculture Statistics. Keeping the importance of statistics in view, the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) was created in the year 1999 by bringing the Department of Statistics and Department of Programme Implementation under one umbrella. To oversee the entire gamut of official statistics, the National Statistical Commission (NSC) was set up in 2005. At present, India has a laterally decentralized system of statistics over different Ministries at the Centre and a vertically decentralized system between the Centre and the States and the Union Territories.

The authority of collection of statistics on any subject generally vests in the organization that is responsible for that subject. My Ministry through Central Statistics Office (CSO) and National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), plays a pivotal role in streamlining of Keeping the importance of statistics in view, the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) was created in the year 1999 by bringing the Department of Statistics and Department of Programme Implementation under one umbrella. To oversee the entire gamut of official statistics, the National Statistical Commission (NSC) was set up in 2005. At present, India has a laterally decentralized system of statistics over different Ministries at the Centre and a vertically decentralized system between the Centre and the States and the Union Territories. The authority of collection of statistics on any subject generally vests in the organization that is responsible for that subject. My Ministry through Central Statistics Office (CSO) and National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), plays a pivotal role in streamlining of Keeping the importance of statistics in view, the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) was created in the year 1999 by

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The NSSO of my Ministry conducts regular socio-economic surveys on various subjects across the country. During last three years, surveys were conducted on Domestic Tourism Expenditure and Household Consumption Expenditure on Services & Durable goods, Unincorporated Non-Agricultural Enterprises and Enterprise focussed Survey of Services Sector. Based on the experience and understanding acquired during the 'Enterprise Focussed Survey on Services Sector' carried out in 2016-17, the possibility of conducting an Annual Survey of Services Sector in line of Annual Survey of Industries will be explored. In the year of 2017-18, NSSO is undertaking surveys on Household Consumer Expenditure and Household Social Consumption on Education and Health. In 2018, two surveys, one on Disability and one on Sanitation, Hygiene & Housing have been planned. To assess the conditions of farmers and villagers, a Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households and a Debt & Investment Survey are proposed to be undertaken in 2019.

One of the major initiatives taken by the Hon'ble Prime Minister after assuming office was the Swachh Bharat Mission. NSSO conducted a rapid survey on Swachhta Status during May-June 2015 covering 3788 villages and 2907 urban blocks. The survey gave the baseline position of the situation on the availability and accessibility of toilets and solid waste and liquid waste management.

The data collected by NSSO on employment-unemployment in India is presently available at an interval of about 5 years. Considering the importance and the fact

that the employment data is required more frequently for effective policy interventions, we have launched the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) from April 2017. Now, the employment data for urban areas would be available every quarter, while that for rural areas on annual basis. This survey will also give data on distribution of workers by industry and occupation, as also on workers employed in informal sector, besides condition of employment of the workers. In this survey, we have replaced the traditional approach of using paper schedules for filling-in information at the field level by the Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) method. The data will be directly entered into Tablets from the field by the field workers using a specialised software developed by my Ministry in collaboration with the World Bank. By combining the tasks of data collection and data entry, this process will save substantial time. We intend to extend this technique to various other surveys of NSSO in due course of time.

Recently, we have also revised the measurement standards of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to make them better compliant with the United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA), 2008. Further, due to advancement of the Budget session to 1 st February, 2017, my Ministry has revised the Advance Release Calendar of Annual and Quarterly Estimates of GDP and policy of revision of Annual & Quarterly Estimates of GDP and related Macro-economic Aggregates to make available the estimates before the presentation of Budget 2017-18. Work has been initiated towards revising the present base 2011-12 to 2017-18. To reflect the structural changes taking place in the industrial sector more accurately, the base year of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) has been revised to 2011-12. The new series of IIP with base 2011-12 was released in May 2017. The methodology has been changed in the new series to make the indices more robust and representative. We are also planning a web portal for collecting data from the respondent units. On operationalization, this will considerably reduce the time lag in release of the monthly index from the current 42 days.

My Ministry has also revised the Base Year of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from 2010 to 2012. The revised series was launched in January 2015. The Reserve Bank of India uses Consumer Price Index (Combined) as the key measure of inflation for formulating the Monetary Policy of India. To ensure standardisation of procedures, National Accounts Division of CSO and Survey Design & Research Division of NSSO have been certified ISO-9001:2008 compliant for quality of performance. The Ministry has also been making all efforts towards e-governance.

Some of the achievements are:

- To facilitate the users, new website of the Ministry was launched last year which has been designed and developed as per the prescribed guidelines.
- Bharatkosh, e-receipt portal gateway, is being used by Indian users for dissemination of Unit level data of NSS, ASI and Economic Census. The process of online payment by non-Indians for supply of data has been initiated.
- Creating of a web-based Survey Data Catalogue/ Micro Data Archive to disseminate NSS Survey, ASI and Economic Census Data.

The Programme Implementation Wing of my Ministry deals with implementation of Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS), monitoring of

Central Government's projects costing more than Rs. 150 crore and the Twenty Point Programme (TPP).

My Ministry has been responsible for the policy formulation, release of funds and prescribing monitoring mechanism of MPLADS. A new Integrated MPLADS Portal has been developed for use of all stakeholders, namely, Hon'ble Members of Parliament, State Nodal Authorities, District Authorities and Citizens. This Portal is an attempt towards ensuring transparency and making Citizens aware of the implementation of the Scheme. The MPLADS Portal also provides an opportunity to the Citizens for suggesting the developmental works in their areas to the Hon'ble Members of Parliament. To give a boost to completion of works undertaken under MPLADS, particularly old pending projects, officers from my Ministry are visiting the States to review the progress with senior officers of State Governments, including the Chief Secretaries. To imbibe systemic improvements in the design and implementation of the Scheme and to ensure optimum utilization of Government Funds, the Guidelines on MPLADS have been modified with changing requirements as well as on advice / feedback received from the stakeholders, including members of public, Hon'ble Members of Parliament, Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), etc. Our Government is committed to the welfare of the less privileged. It has been made mandatory for the durable assets created under MPLADS to be friendly to persons with disability, wherever feasible. Retrofitting in existing durable assets created under MPLADS to make them friendly to persons with disability has also been permitted. All moveable assets specifically permissible under Guidelines on MPLADS such as school buses, ambulances, etc. procured with MPLADS funds must be friendly to persons with disability. My Ministry monitors the ongoing Central Sector Infrastructure Projects costing Rs150 crore and above on time and cost overruns, through its Online Computerised Monitoring System (OCMS) on the basis of information provided by the project implementing agencies. The OCMS serves as a reliable MIS tool for review of projects by the Administrative Ministries and Cabinet Secretariat, as well as the PMO through its PRAGATI meetings. A number of other steps have been taken to ensure timely completion of projects. It is because of these measures and painstaking efforts that the cost overruns have come down from 19% in March 2014 to 11.2% in January 2017.

My Ministry's future roadmap envisages a large number of important initiatives. Firstly, Technology will increasingly be used in data collection through the technique of Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) on cloud server, online web portals, etc. and for maintaining the activity of Ministry for Digital India/e-Governance/e-Kranti. Secondly, we have initiated actions on formulation of National Policy on Official Statistics consistent with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Adoption of these principles aims to ensure data quality through consistent and transparent procedures in data collection, compilation and compliance with the laid down practices.

We are also exploring developing a framework for bringing out National Factsheet of the Indian Economy with 100 indicators, on a quarterly basis using data provided by various source Ministries/ Departments through a dynamic user-friendly Dashboard, and 13 indicators on annual basis.

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