COUNTRY REPORT ON SUPPORT TO STATISTICS (CRESS) - PHILIPPINES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Country Report on Support to Statistics (CRESS) aims to improve the financing for the various development initiatives of the national statistical systems. It is meant to better inform statistical programs of the country about the situation in domestic and external financing and current technical capacity.

In June 2015, the formulation of CRESS was introduced in the Philippines by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) in coordination with the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). Such was timely in the nation's growing consciousness for the need for statistical evidence to support economic and sociocivic actions, and as the Philippines looks forward on focusing on attaining the new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To suit the Philippine setting, the CRESS methodology and materials were modified to include concepts and definitions, and new items in the questionnaires as well as additional categories in the UNECE Classification of Statistical Activities (CSA). Out of the 123 institutions invited to participate in the study, a total of 36 turned in accomplished questionnaires, while seven sent regrets. Alternative sources of information were also utilized to address non-response of sample institutions.

Findings in the Philippine CRESS showed that during the period 2012-2014, the government agency budgets for statistics totaled to PhP 10.6 billion. On the average, this amount corresponded only to 1.6% of the agencies' total budgets for the period 2012-2014, and 0.17% of the national government budget in the same period. About 79% of the government agencies that reported were dependent regular budgets provided by the national government through the General Appropriations Act (GAA) to finance their statistical generation and development activities.

The period 2012-2014 also witnessed a decline in the number of government statistical personnel, which was mainly attributed by the reorganization of the PSS. Government personnel tasked in undertaking statistics-related functions in the responding agencies represented only 12.2% of the total number of government personnel in these agencies, illustrating the limited number of statisticians in government service.

Three development partners/donor organizations reported to have extended PhP 629.2 million for statistics projects and project components related to the generation of data and statistics for the period 2012-2014. This level of commitment by the respondent development partners were noted to decrease by 94.1% for the period 2015-2017. In terms of disbursement rates, the performance of each government agency varied compared to the 100% and 92% in academe and private sector, respectively.

The CRESS also pointed out the various factors and opportunities facilitating support and measurement of statistics investments in the Philippines. These include, among others, open data policy, establishment of the PSA and the consequent redirection of the Philippine Statistical System (PSS) with PSA Board as the lead, continued advocacy for the use of statistics, and the government's campaign for monitoring and evaluation of the socioeconomic programs. Despite these, the challenge of actually quantifying the statistics budget provided by the government remained, thereby necessitating a long-term measure from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and PSA not only to know how much goes to statistics but also to revisit the budget preparation policies and monitor how these funds were spent to effectively monitor and inform the priority programs and decisions of the nation.

The pilot CRESS-Philippines is not without problems. Disparities were noted in the reports between the external funding received by the government agencies and the amounts reported by the development partners which participated in the research. In addition, the absence of line item budgets for statistics in many non-PSA government agency respondents resulted to their difficulty in extracting the amount of funding they received for statistics from the budgets they received.

In consideration of these issues, the CRESS-Philippines likewise outlines the lessons learned from the initial CRESS exercise, particularly on expanding efforts to validate and further develop the instrument and framework to capture region-wide statistical support, include the local government efforts in data collection and use as well as increase the response rate.

The PSA's role in being at the forefront of statistics investment measurement, monitoring and advocacy is crucial in this day and age of escalating demands for relevant, accessible and reliable information and in addressing the data needs in tracking our performance in the SDGs. With the institutionalization of CRESS, it is expected that stronger coordination mechanisms will be established between the statistical units and the DBM to embark on M&E activities, as well as between the PSS and the development partners to harmonize and rationalize provision of external funding for priority statistical programs slated in the Philippine Statistical Development Program (PSDP).

Thus the PSA, as the central statistical authority in the country, must remain solid and responsive in its quest to strengthen its favorable position to maximize further its capacity and assist in improving the capacities of other PSS institutions. PSS agencies, on the other hand, are called upon to remain steadfast in their commitment for better quality statistics. Indeed continuous support to enhance the quality of statistics so as to adequately inform the nation and its stakeholders should be always a goal.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. STATISTICS AND THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

In addressing the global development agenda, it has become evidently clear that the use of and need for statistics are limitless. Further, the onset of data revolution has provided an environment conducive to addressing the emerging data concerns of society, allowing people and institutions to collect and use data for their own evidence-based decision-making.

Undoubtedly, it is in policy making where statistics have the most important use. As leaders of nations grapple with problems in their societies, statistics become an essential tool to craft appropriate policies to address various public issues and concerns. As the 2nd World Statistics Day[1] slogan goes, better data and statistics require appreciation for and higher investments in statistics.

Unfortunately, in many developing economies, especially low-income ones, government financing and technical support to achieve better statistics are often insufficient despite the growing and getting more sophisticated demand for data.

With the reckoning of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015, a successor global development agenda was crafted to be more comprehensive and encompassing. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development "is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity" that spells out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[2] and 169 targets that "seeks to build on the MDGs... and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental."[3]

Monitoring the SDGs is clearly the role of National Statistical Systems (NSSs). While the development of the MDGs suffered from a lack of consultation with official statisticians, in the crafting of the SDGs, the role of the NSSs is widely recognized. In fact, the UN Statistical Commission created the Interagency Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), with the Philippines as Co-Chair.[4] The IAEG is tasked to develop an indicator framework for monitoring the SDG targets at the global level, and to support its implementation.

Learning from MDG experiences of countries, the SDGs would require considerable financial investment and human capital to improve the availability and quality of statistical indicators to monitor the progress in attaining the SDG targets and support the design of more sustainable development policies. This will put more pressure on the already overstretched capacity of many NSSs. To address this concern, NSSs and development partners would need to work together towards a data revolution for sustainable and inclusive development where the right data are provided to the right people at the right time and in the

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[1] To be celebrated on 20 October 2015

[2] As of August 2015, the SDGs consist of 17 goals, 169 targets, and more than 300 Indicators, compared to the 8 goals, 21 targets, and 60 indicators under the MDGs. The SDGs are expected to be adopted during the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly scheduled to start on 15 September 2015.

[3] Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (finalized text for adoption). 1 August 2015.

[4] The IAEG-SDGs is Co-Chaired by Dr. Lisa Grace S. Bersales, NS of the PSA.

right format. This will entail investments in among others, ICT, human resources, capacity building of NSSs on new tools and technology, and new statistical methods. It is therefore essential to consider the strategy of a coordinated national and global statistical development agenda highlighting the need for rational and increased financing of statistical activities.

1.2. PARIS21

Demand for greater resources needed in the generation of quality statistics for the formulation of accurate and goal-oriented policies has long been a major challenge faced by different states and organizations.

Since its establishment in 1999, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) has supported the strengthening of statistical capacity of developing countries to improve their provision, availability and use of high quality data; foster dialogue within societies on the use of data for accountability and evidence-based policy making; and promote the well-being of people through contributing to the achievement of national and international development goals. It remains as catalyst for promoting evidence-based standards and policies among countries, bringing together producers and users of statistics in a shared goal towards statistical development and better development outcomes.

1.3. PRESS

In pursuit of its mission to advance global efforts to promote statistical development in developing countries, PARIS21 initiated the PRESS as a means to monitor global support to statistics from a development partners' perspective and a valuable tool for collaboration among countries and development partners.

The objectives of the PRESS are to learn what donors (i.e., technical and financial partners) are doing and plan to do in the statistical field and identify countries or areas of statistics in need of more support, offer this information to donors responsible for giving aid and to countries receiving it, and raise the profile of statistics within the overall context of aid to developing countries.[5]

PRESS outputs include a database showing the different statistics-related projects and activities supported by development partners, the objectives of the programs, the recipient countries, the financing mechanisms, and the commitment and disbursement costs.

1.4. CRESS

Recognizing the important information on global statistics financing generated from the PRESS, PARIS21 launched the CRESS as a means to document financing of statistics at the country level.

The objective of the CRESS is to improve financing of the NSS and increase investments in statistics through better planning for statistical development. Specifically, it aims to provide information on the financing made available to NSS and its future requirements; analyse funding priorities for statistics; promote harmonization of external support for statistics; and validate and monitor the extent of financing for statistics by development partners. It gathers

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[5] http://www.paris21.org/Press

data on support given to NSS by the national government, private sector, other local funders, and development partners. Moreover, it gives information on the type of statistical activities most-funded and the areas that need further attention. The contribution of development partners has an impact on developing official statistics as pointed out in the study conducted by Tejada[6], as "these organizations and agencies influence the country's statistical development in terms of the kinds of statistical information to generate, disseminate and improve."

In 2011, the national statistical offices of Cameroon, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Senegal launched the pilot CRESS activities in Africa region, with support of PARIS21. CRESS was launched in the Asia-Pacific region in 2015, with the Philippines and Vietnam as pilot countries.

1.5. THE ASIA-PACIFIC PILOT: CRESS-Philippines

As one of the countries receiving external support and assistance on statistics and having a good documentation of sources of statistics budget, the PSA and PARIS21 agreed to pilot CRESS in the Philippines to provide a better understanding of the sources, amount, type and purpose of financing received by the PSS. The exercise aims to promote the institutionalization of government-wide statistics budgeting and better planning of resources for statistics towards improved statistical financing and increased investments made in the PSS.

The CRESS-Philippines launching forum was held on 08 June 2015, attended by 100 participants from data producing agencies as well as data users from government, private sector and civil society, including development partners. The program, the list of participants and the presentations are in Appendices 1-3.

1.6. THE PSS/PSA

Pursuant to Republic Act No. 10625, the major statistical agencies (MSAs) in the Philippines, specifically the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS), Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES), National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), and National Statistics Office (NSO), to be referred to from hereon as the 4 former MSAs were merged into one agency, the PSA, in order to rationalize and promote efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of statistical services, maintain an integrated statistical system, promote the orderly development of a statistical system capable of providing timely, accurate and useful data for the government and the public, and support decentralization through the establishment of the statistical infrastructure necessary to service the statistical needs of local development planning.[7]

The PSA is headed by the National Statistician[8] who is assisted by three Deputy National Statisticians. The PSA is the central data producer in the Philippine Statistical System (PSS) but many agencies of government also produce sector-specific statistics. In addition, the Philippine Statistical Research and Training Institute (PSRTI) serves as the research and training arm of the PSS. The PSS thus includes the PSA, the PSRTI, the government

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[6] The Role of International Organizations in the Development of Official Statistics and Its Implications on Good Governance: The Philippine Case, Millicent Gay B. Tejada. 2009.
[7] http://www.gov.ph/2013/09/12/republic-act-no-10625/
[8] Currently, Dr. Lisa Grace S. Bersales

research institutions and academic institutions offering statistics programs, and all data-producing/using agencies in government.

2. THE CRESS-PHILIPPINES METHODOLOGY

2.1. THE CRESS-PHILIPPINES CONCEPT NOTE

PARIS21 developed the CRESS methodology including the questionnaires which were used in countries in Africa. They were modified to suit the Philippine setting. The methodology has the following features, which are described in detail in Annex 1.

1. Launching Forum
2. Scope of data collection
3. Period covered
4. Coverage of financing
5. Classification of statistical areas funded
6. Instruments used in collecting information
7. Periodicity
8. Data Transmission Protocols
9. Institutional Framework: Coordination Arrangements
10. Analysis Framework
11. Dissemination and Communication of CRESS-Philippines Results

On the data transmission protocols, the CRESS Team agreed that the respondents will be encouraged to submit the accomplished questionnaires in Excel format until the Team could design a new protocol.

On dissemination and communication, in addition to the dissemination forum held on 28 August 2015, a paper[9] entitled "Investing in Statistics Towards More Effective Monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals: The Philippine CRESS Experience" and based on the CRESS-Philippines results was presented during the Annual Conference of the PSAI on 23-25 September 2015.

The modified questionnaires and the modified classification system of statistical activities (CSA) are in Annex 2, and Annex 3 respectively. The analysis framework developed specifically for CRESS-Philippines is in Annex 4.

2.2. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Period covered in the study is 2012 -2014 (the past) for statistics financing of government and development partners, and 2015-2017 for statistics financing of development partners (the future).

On 4 May 2015, the Project Committee on the Formulation of the Country Report on Support to Statistics (CRESS) - Philippines was established in the PSA as the coordinating agency of the CRESS Project. A working group on the CRESS-Philippines (or CRESS Team) headed by the Deputy National Statistician of the Censuses and Technical Coordination Office (CTCO) was further organized within the PSA, which facilitated the CRESS processes, helped improve the CRESS instruments, aided in the accomplishment of

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[9] Written by Romulo A. Virola, Regina S. Reyes, Millicent Gay B. Tejada, and Camille Joy O. Ardoña

CRESS questionnaires for the PSA and distributed the CRESS questionnaires to the respondents.

The 4 former MSAs became the first CRESS pilot respondents[10] with the Project Committee taking charge in accomplishing the CRESS questionnaires. As a result of its experience, revisions were made on the CRESS questionnaire design and methodology. Furthermore, the following sources of data were gathered/documented which were then shared with the other CRESS pilot respondents:

- General Appropriations Act (GAA) and other agency budget and human resource documents
- Project concept notes/papers and completion reports
- Press releases and agency official presentations on the project outputs

Prior to the distribution of questionnaires, the CRESS Team also identified the potential data sources and grouped/prioritized them as follows:

For Domestic Sources, 106 agencies, including 4 LGUs[11] expected/known to have statistical activities were identified:

1. Four former Major Statistical Agencies (MSAs)[12], the NSCB, the NSO, BAS, and BLES which now comprise the Philippine Statistics Authority
2. PSS agencies with Designated[13] Statistical Activities
3. PSA Board-member Agencies (without Designated Statistical Activities)
4. Academe/universities with statistics degree-granting programs
5. Research and training institutions
6. Agencies/institutions with surveys submitted for clearance under the Statistical Survey Review and Clearance System (SSRCS)[14] from 2010-2015
7. Local Government Units (LGUs) actively engaged in statistics utilization and production
8. Other agencies in the government with statistical units/offices

Initially, knowing that some institutions from the private sector including the media[15] are themselves data producers and/or data users, the plan was to include them as data sources and sent the questionnaires to 4 nongovernment sources, but the CRESS Team ultimately decided they should be excluded in the coverage to make the scope of CRESS more manageable.

For Development Partners as External Sources of funding, 13 institutions expected/known to have supported statistical activities, were identified:

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[10] Only 1 MSA was able to accomplish the questionnaires on time

[11] As of March 31, 2015, the Philippines has 17 regions, 81 provinces, 144 cities, 1490 municipalities, and 42,029 barangays.

[12] For the period 2012-2014 , the 4 MSAs submitted separate budgets to the DBM.

[13] The System of Designated Statistics (SDS) is a mechanism which identifies the statistical activities to be conducted by government agencies, the indicators and statistics to be generated, and the desired frequency, disaggregation, and time lag.

[14] The SSRCS is a quality assurance mechanism under which surveys and censuses conducted by the PSS agencies or for government pass review.

[15] Some of them actively participated in the Launching Forum

1. Asian Development Bank
2. Australian Agency for International Development
3. Embassy of Canada – Development Section
4. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
5. German Technical Cooperation Agency (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
6. International Labour Organization
7. Japan International Cooperation Agency
8. Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
9. United Nations Children's Fund
10. United Nations Development Programme
11. United Nations Population Fund
12. United States Agency for International Development
13. World Bank

Expecting that not all will respond, the prioritization scheme is meant to guide the CRESS Team in following up responses.

After the CRESS methodology and questionnaires were revised and finalized, a survey clearance was issued for the conduct of the CRESS-Philippines under the Statistical Survey Review and Clearance System (SSRCS) on 16 June 2015 (PSA Approval No. PSA-1535-01 to 05).

Questionnaires 1-3 are to be filled up by local institutions while Questionnaires 4-5 are to be filled up by development partners.

Formal letters of request from the National Statistician, metadata, definitions and instructions as well as the modified CSA together with the questionnaires, were then sent out to 123[16] institutions composed of 106 national government agencies (NGAs), including research institutes, government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), academic institutions, and 4 LGUs which have been supportive to activities of the four former (MSAs) and currently of the PSA; 13 development partners; and 4 non-government organizations (NGOs). Among the 106 potential respondents from government, all 20 PSS agencies with designated statistics or 19% were included.

The e-copy of the questionnaires was provided to the CRESS respondents starting 8 June 2015 in USB flash disks during the CRESS Launching Forum, and was later disseminated to other respondents via email until 3 July 2015. Those who were not reached by the CRESS Team thru email due to technical issues were later given the e-copy of the questionnaires in CDs.

To guide the CRESS respondents especially those who were not able to attend the launching forum, special meetings were organized by the PSA on 22-23 June 2015. Participants in these meetings were representatives from the Bureau of Customs (BOC), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Export Marketing Bureau (EMB) and Foreign Trade Service Corps (FTSC) of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), National Tax Research Center (NTRC), Philippine Ports Authority (PPA),

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[16] The 4 MSAs comprising the PSA were counted separately

and Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). These special meetings became useful venues for discussing the various issues and concerns in line with accomplishing the CRESS questionnaires. They also served as fora for the PSA and the PARIS21 consultant to explain to the CRESS respondents in detail the CRESS questionnaire items and the different estimation techniques which their respective agencies could undertake to derive their statistical budgets.

Regular communication and follow-ups were made by the CRESS Team thru phone and via email throughout the data collection period to inquire on the status of the agency responses and to encourage respondents to relay their questions and difficulties in accomplishing the CRESS questionnaires. Estimation techniques emanating from the PSA Staff's experience in accomplishing the instrument were likewise shared in email and phone conversations of the CRESS Team with the respondents.

Some flexibility in accomplishing the questionnaires was explored by government agencies which utilize their own earnings to deliver their mandated functions, products and services such as the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC), Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL), and Philippine Postal Corporation (PHLPost). By allowing slight modifications in the questionnaires and using footnotes/remarks in their submissions, they were able to estimate the portion of their agency's resources that are allocated for statistical activities.

As soon as submissions were received, the CRESS Team in coordination with the Project Management Committee reviewed and validated the entries in the accomplished CRESS questionnaires as necessary.

There were instances in which agencies confused one item with another within the same questionnaire, while some provided answers for an item found on a different questionnaire. To address these issues, the persons responsible in the completion of the questionnaires were contacted to verify the items with discrepancies.

The submission through email and in MS Excel format by some respondents facilitated the review of agency responses and data entry in the CRESS database. However, there were respondents who submitted in printed copies with accompanying formal transmittal letter, and some submitted in MS Word format, which contributed to the delay in processing the survey results.

To facilitate data processing, MS Excel was used to establish the database. The information provided by the respondents was manually entered to the worksheet designated for each questionnaire. A column was labeled for each corresponding item in the questionnaires. From these worksheets, the statistical tables were generated.

While it may be possible and more convenient and time-saving to have the respondents input their responses directly to the database, the use of questionnaires is still more appropriate and comprehensive as it shows descriptions and proper flow/arrangement of questions.

Besides the CRESS questionnaires, the CRESS Team utilized GAA publications and the DBM website as substitute sources of data particularly for the former Statistical Research and Training Center, now the Philippine Statistical Research and Training Institute (PSRTI), as well as to address the issue on missing information/entry from the questionnaires.

Throughout the duration of the data collection and validation exercise, the CRESS Team documented the challenges, observations, issues and concerns as well as the good practices and lessons learned from the Philippine pilot of the CRESS.

As of August 10, 2015, among the 4 LGUs that were sent questionnaires, 1 has sent it back.

Of the 102 other government institutions[17], 28 returned the questionnaires, 6 sent their regrets and 68 have not responded.

Of the 13 potential respondents from the development partners, 6 filled up the questionnaires, 4 said they did not provide statistical financing for 2012-2014 and have no plans for 2015-2017, and 3 were nonresponse.

One of the 4 private institutions sent regrets and 3 were nonresponse.

Among the 29 government agencies that returned accomplished questionnaires, 10 (NSCB, NSO, BAS, BLES, BSP, BIR, DOT, DPWH, FNRI, and MGB/DENR) or 34% have designated statistics.

Among the 71 government agencies that have not responded, 8 or 11% have designated statistics.

Of the 6 other government institutions that sent regrets, (out of the 102 government institutions excluding the LGUs that were sent questionnaires) 2 have designated statistics.

Thus, as of 10 August 2015, 29 government institutions and 6 development partners had accomplished the questionnaire. The data for 1 other government institution were obtained from other sources.

Annex 5 provides the list of agencies that were sent out questionnaires and the agencies that have responded/not responded, with the dates of submission of the questionnaires, the priority groupings, whether they have designated statistics for government agencies, and the reasons, if any, for nonresponse.

3. THE CRESS-PHILIPPINES FINDINGS

3.1. ASSESSMENT OF DATA SOURCES

- Data sources both for domestic and external financing of statistical activities are clearly incomplete for the CRESS-Philippines pilot
  - As expected, there is disparity/inconsistency between the data from the government agencies and the development partners on amount of external financing of statistical activities partly because it was decided that to make

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[17] The questionnaire from the Philippine Statistical Research and Training Institute (PSRTI) (for the former Statistical Research and Training Center) has not been returned. But since the SRTC/PSRTI is a major statistical agency in the PSS, the information needed was gathered through the GAA and the Staffing Summary available in the DBM website. Also, the accomplished questionnaire from one agency was excluded because the estimated statistical budget was even greater than the PSA budget.

CRESS more manageable, the private sector would not be asked to fill up the CRESS Questionnaires 1-3 on the financing of their statistical activities but the development partners included them in the support for statistics they reported in Questionnaires 4-5

- o But it is expected that the next round of CRESS will have more complete coverage
- LGUs definitely have statistical activities but they are severely undercovered in the CRESS-Philippines pilot. Only 1 LGU is included in the pilot.
- Some data sources faced problems of estimation of the statistical component of their budget/expenditures. Some agencies revised their responses after consultation with the CRESS Team
- Some agencies could not provide estimates on statistical personnel
- One agency (was excluded from coverage because its reported statistical budget was even higher than the total budget of the 4 former MSAs now comprising the PSA)

3.2. QUALITATIVE FACTORS

3.2.1 Factors facilitating support for statistics and improving the measurement of support for statistics

The open data policy of the government is conducive to further statistical development as it drives improved accessibility, dissemination, communication, and utilization of official statistics. It will thus enhance the relevance of the PSS and encourage financing of statistical activities that can lead to a virtuous cycle of higher investments in statistics, higher quality of statistics, and better development outcomes.

In addition, the reorganization of the major statistical agencies in the PSS in 2013 brings forth new opportunities for greater investments in statistical development in the country. Moreover, mechanisms previously put in place by the 4 former MSAs were sustained by the new PSA. These mechanisms such as the Philippine Statistical Development Program (PSDP)[18]; the PSA Board, which is the policy-making body on all matters relating to government statistical operations, standards and classification systems[19]; and the System of Designated Statistics (SDS) will promote rational investment in statistical development both by government and external providers of statistics financing.

Supporting the current PSA Board in its policy-making functions are the various interagency committees (IACs)[20] on statistics that serve as venues for resolving

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[18] The PSDP is the Philippine version of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and serves as the strategic planning framework and identifies the major statistical development programs to be pursued in the medium term with the corresponding timeline and multi-year budget requirements, which guide the priority statistical investments to be made in the medium term. The current PSDP 2011-2017 is the 8th PSDP that the PSS has formulated

[19] The PSA Board has the mandate to recommend measures to promote and maintain an efficient and effective statistical system in the government, reviews the budgetary proposals for statistical activities and endorses an integrated budget for the PSS to the DBM.

[20] As of 31 July 2015, PSA has created 21 IACs, 2 Task Forces, and 5 Technical Committees, pursuant to PSA Board Resolution No. 4, series of 2014.

issues on the generation and dissemination of statistics which consequently lead to rationalized financing of statistical activities. The IACs promote collaboration and cooperation among the agencies which facilitate the resolution of issues, and the delivery of outputs. Through the IACs, the 4 former MSAs have established good relations with other institutions making it less difficult to get their cooperation and establish partnerships with them. The former MSAs have collaborated with the former Statistical Research and Training Center (now the PSRTI in a number of statistical research and studies aimed at improving the timeliness, methodology, and quality of surveys conducted in the PSS. The IAC collaboration has also facilitated the accomplishment of questionnaires by development partners, agencies in both the executive and legislative branches of the government, private sector, researchers, academe, media, and civil society, as well as in getting their support in the activities of the PSS as manifested in their attendance and active participation in PSA-organized activities such as the CRESS launching forum ; PSDP 2011-2017 consultation meeting; user-producer forums on inclusive growth, data revolution, etc.

Apart from the IACs, the PSS through the 4 former MSAs and now PSA has instituted and maintained advocacy mechanisms not only to promote the importance of statistics in evidence-based planning and decision making but also to elicit the cooperation of data providers in responding to surveys and censuses. Press conferences and data dissemination forums are regularly conducted to inform the public of the latest data such as those on national accounts, poverty estimates, population counts, and price statistics, among others. Consultations through user-producer forum, periodic conferences/fora on statistics such as the National Convention on Statistics, those conducted by the Philippine Statistical Association, Inc., data dissemination fora, and Statistics Congress are among the advocacy mechanisms that the PSS has implemented through the years. A National Statistics Month (NSM) is celebrated annually all over the country. The NSM is now on its 26th year and continues to get support from the various sectors of society. Greater cooperation and collaboration among agencies generated by these coordination/statistical advocacy mechanisms have definitely facilitated support for statistics and its measurement.

Other factors include the increasing interest for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems of agencies, particularly the DBM which has partnered with UNICEF to strengthen M&E capacity of national government agencies in support of mainstreaming performance-informed budgeting (PIB) in government for economic and social development. The PIB approach links public expenditure and results for better accountability, as well as increased efficiency and effectiveness to attain targets set forth in the current Philippine Development Plan (PDP, 2011-2016) and the MDGs. To support the PIB approach, the PSA, with the support of DBM, enjoins all agencies to provide a separate line item for statistical activities, such as the generation of statistics/indicators from the administrative forms of agencies with regulatory functions to form part of their agency performance indicators. For this purpose, a board resolution was approved by the PSA Board during its   meeting on 27 August 2015.

The increasing interest in statistics is also shown in the increased media coverage on the releases of statistics such as those on the quarterly report on the Philippine economy, poverty estimates, and governance statistics. From the legislature, free

access to information has been promoted through the filing of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill, although it not been passed[21]. From the academe, the University of the Philippines School of Statistics increased its quota for BS Statistics to 150 from 120 for Academic Year 2015-2016 in view of the growing interest in statistics as a profession.

On the other hand, because of the good relationship of the former statistical agencies with development partners, it has not been difficult to get their cooperation in the accomplishment of the CRESS questionnaires.

In the past, the former NSCB (now part of PSA) conducted a Forum on Statistical Capacity Building aimed at forging strategic partnerships for statistical capacity building between and among development partners, and enjoining development partners to support statistical activities. The forum contributed to enhanced convergence of the PSS agenda and development partners' priorities, and to a number of technical assistance on various statistical projects being provided by the development partners, some of which, such as small area estimation, have been institutionalized by the PSS. In fact, it is safe to say, that in general, the 4 former MSAs got good support from the development community for their statistical activities.

Budgetary support from the DBM for statistical activities has been increasing. In 2013, many periodic statistical activities like the CAF, CPBI, FIES, FLEMMS, NDHS, HSDV, and NNS received funding, and the total budget (regular, locally funded and from other government sources) of the 4 former MSAs also increased from PhP 3.04 Billion in 2014 to at least PhP 4.95 Billion for the PSA or by at least 63% in 2015.

The response rate to the CRESS-Philippines exercise, while low, has been above expectations[22]. As of 10 August 2015, out of 123 agencies that were given copies of the questionnaires, 28% returned the questionnaires, 5% had no statistical activities to report on, 5% decided not to participate, 9% had not finished accomplishing the questionnaires and, 53% had not responded.

3.2.2 Factors hindering support for statistics and its measurement

Until 2013, the former NSCB was mandated to review budget proposals of agencies involving their statistical activities and to submit a consolidated statistical budget for the entire PSS to the DBM. This is to ensure that the proposed statistical activities of agencies are aligned with the approved PSS budgetary thrusts and are therefore allocated with the required budget.

The statistics budget review mechanism assists the DBM in the evaluation of budget for statistical purposes. It is estimated that a large portion of government budget for statistics is allocated to the 4 former MSAs in the PSS. However, some agencies that collect statistics struggle to estimate their specific statistics budget from regular agency operations. Often, budgets for statistics are included as part

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[21] The latest (as of 26 August 2015) from the Right to Know, Right Now! Coalition is that "the FOI is dead!"
[22] The response rates in two pilot countries in Africa are as follows: Ethiopia 78% (31 out of 40 line ministries/agencies), Malawi 88% (7 of 8 ministries), plus the NSO, and 15 development partners

of the regular activities of the planning unit or the monitoring and evaluation activities of agencies. This is particularly the case for agencies that do not have a statistics unit. Hence, it is difficult to document the actual government budget allocation for statistics. The existing budgeting process that does not allow allocation of budgets for specific uses for statistics gives latitude to agencies to realign resources originally intended for statistics, usually a low priority, for other supposedly higher priority expenditure items.

While the PSS was able to address some of the data demands of stakeholders thru lower levels of disaggregation and more frequent releases of data through new techniques such as small area estimation to generate municipal level poverty estimates, there are still other data requirements that the PSS would need to deal with. For example, efforts to compile provincial product accounts (PPA) by the then NSCB and LGUs are not sustained, despite the clamor for PPA by planners and decision makers.

The PSDP 2011-2017 lists down development programs aimed at improving current business processes in statistical operations. While some agencies have started using geospatial information, maps, remote sensing, and IT-based techniques to facilitate collection, processing and dissemination of information, others have insufficient capacity or lack the political will to provide resources and invest in these new technologies. In the age of big data and data revolution, the relevance of the PSS is put into question.

3.3. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS ON THE SUPPORT TO STATISTICS

Following the CRESS-Philippines methodology, a questionnaire on financing statistics was administered to 123 NGAs, LGUs, research institutes, GOCCs, academic institutions, NGOs, and development partners. For the analysis in this section, the 4 former MSAs now comprising the PSA, namely, the former NSCB, NSO, BAS, and BLES, filled up separate questionnaires for 2012-2014. The real PSA[23] budget started only in 2015. Also, for the PSRTI, the budget of the former Statistical Research and Training Center for 2012-2014 is used.[24] Finally, the results presented in this section must be seen subject to the limitations of the study presented in Section 3.4.4

3.3.1. Support from Domestic Sources

Results from the 35 accomplished questionnaires and one institution (the former SRTC) for which data were sourced from the GAA are highlighted below but excluding some agencies from some tabulations due to data unavailability[25]:

- The total statistics budget[26] of 29 agencies that responded increased from PhP 2.66 Billion in 2012 to PhP4.31 Billion or by 61.8% in 2013 then decreased to PhP 3.63 Billion or by 15.7% in 2014 (Table 1, Figure 1).

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[23] The PSA was created in 2013.

[24] The PSRTI was also created in 2013 to take the place of the Statistical Research and Training Center but the budget submissions until 2014 were under SRTC.

[25] No data on the total agency budget was available/provided for the BSP, IPOPHL, LGU-Batangas, LLDA, LWUA, OSHC, and PDIC.

- The spike in the budget allocation from 2012 to 2013 was due to an increase in the budgets of the 4 former MSAs (by PhP 1.55 Billion) and of FNRI[27] (by PhP 67.08 Million) for locally-funded projects.
- The decrease from 2013 to 2014 came from the reduction in the budget of the 4 former MSAs[28] by PhP 671.28 Million and of DOT[29] by PhP 24.23 Million, also for locally-funded projects that were conducted in 2013.

Locally-funded projects include periodic censuses and surveys which are not conducted annually. Under the existing budget cycle, provisions for such periodic censuses and surveys are not automatically allocated[30] and instead fall under locally-funded projects which must compete with other expenditure items.

- The statistics budget as a percentage of agency budget was 1.58% in 2012, rose to 1.97% in 2013, but went down to 1.32% in 2014, not a good sign for statistics. Excluding the 4 former MSAs and the former SRTC, the shares are 0.29%. 0.27%, and 0.21% (Figure 2).

- For 2012-2014, 60.2% of domestic financing for statistics comes from the national government; 35.4% comes from other allocations (locally funded projects) and 4.4% comes from other government sources. The PSS agencies reported zero statistical financing from nongovernment domestic sources (Figure 3).

- On the average, 32 of the 37 respondents or 86% reported receiving regular statistical budget from the government for 2012-2014 (Tables 2a-2d).

- The number of statistics projects reported by the agencies was 72 for 2012-2014 and 49 for 2015-2017. Among the agencies that reported projects for both periods, there was a decrease from 66 in 2012-2014 to 49 in 2015-2017. This could be an indication of decreasing importance of statistical projects, or that some of the projects have been institutionalized/regularized, or

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[26] Per CRESS methodology, the total statistics budget is composed of the statistical component of the regular budget plus locally funded statistical projects plus statistical budget from other government sources. Other government sources refer to sources of funding that include other national government agencies, local government units, and government-funded organizations and academic institutions

[27] The increase in the FNRI budget was for the conduct of the 2013 National Nutrition Survey

[28] In 2013, the former NSO, now part of the PSA, conducted the Census of Agriculture and Fisheries (CAF), Census of Philippine Business and Industry (CPBI), Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS), and National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), and Family Income and Expenditures Survey (FIES), for which it received budgets under locally-funded projects. The budget for these major surveys was also provided in 2014. However, the allocation for 2014 was relatively smaller than for the previous year because 2013 was the year of conduct of the mentioned surveys. Also, the Unified Multi-Purpose ID System – Central Verification and Enrollment Agency Component (UMID-CVEA) received a smaller budget in 2014 than that of 2013.

[29] The Household Survey on Domestic Visitors (HSDV) is a periodic survey conducted for the DOT by the NSO every 5 years, the latest of which was in 2013.

[3030] These locally-funded projects do not form part of the so-called budget ceiling of agencies.

that conceptualization of projects that will be undertaken in the future has not been done (Tables 3a-3b).

- Locally-funded projects which comprise 35% of the statistics budget were on Statistical Advocacy, Justice and Crime, Health, Data Sources and Labour-related activities; while financing from other government sources were for Statistical Advocacy, Income and Consumption, Sectoral Statistics, International Trade and Balance of Payments, Macroeconomic Statistics, and Health-related activities. Most of them funded the conduct of surveys.

- PSDP statistical activities that were funded were on Science, Technology and Innovation, Justice and Crime, Labour, Health, Statistical Advocacy, and Environment.

- Excluding three agencies for which there were no appropriate disaggregation, 59% of the statistics budget went to PS, 38% to MOOE, and 3% to CO (Figure 4).

- Excluding the 4 former MSAs, data indicate that having designated statistics does not necessarily translate into a bigger share of agency budget going to statistics. In fact, for 2012-2014, the share of the statistics budget to agency budget was practically the same at 0.25% for agencies with designated statistics and for agencies without designated statistics. Moreover, the share of the statistics budget to total budget of agencies with designated statistics continuously declined from 0.29% in 2012 to 0.26% in 2013 to 0.21% in 2014. The same pattern is true for agencies without designated statistics excluding the former SRTC as the share of their statistics budget decreased to 0.21% in 2014 from 0.28% in 2012 and in 2013 (Tables 5b and 5d).

- Including the 4 former MSAs and the former SRTC, the share of the statistics budget to agency budget was 2.1% in 2012, up to 2.4% in 2013, but down to 1.6% in 2014 or 2.0% for 2012-2014 for agencies with designated statistics and 0.34% in 2012, 0.34% in 2013, and down to 0.24% in 2014 or 0.30% for 2012-2014 for agencies without designated statistics (Tables 5a and 5c).

- The statistics budget of the 29 reporting PSS agencies totaled PhP10.60 Billion during the 3-year period from 2012 to 2014. It represents, on the average (Tables 6a-6c)
  - 1.60% of agency budgets
  - 0.17% of total government budget
  - But excluding the 4 former MSAs and the former SRTC, the statistics budget amounted to PhP 1.62 Billion or 0.25% of agency budgets, compared to the 5% budget that is supposed to be allocated for Gender and Development[31] and 1% of agency budget allocated for Senior Citizens and Persons with Disability[32]

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[31] Section 43 of Republic Act 9710
[32] Legal Basis of the 1% of agency budget allocated for Senior Citizens and Persons with Disability: DBM-DSWD Joint Circular 2003-01 - Section 28 of the 2012 National Expenditure Program (NEP)

○ 0.03% of GDP in current prices, compared to the recommended 1% of GDP for total R&D expenditures, both by government and the private sector.[33]

- 84% of the statistics budget for the covered PSS agencies for the period 2012-2014 went to the 4 former MSAs.

- For the four former MSAs[34] (Tables 7a-7d),
  ○ The total regular budget increased from PhP 1.50 Biilion in 2012 to PhP 1.64 Billion or by 9.6 % in 2013, then to PHP 1.65 Billion or by 0.8% in 2014.
  ○ The locally funded project funds increased from PhP 0.66 Billion in 2012 to more than three times at PhP2.07 Biilion or by 212% in 2013 but down to PhP 1.38 Billion or by 33% in 2014. The increase in 2013 is mainly due to the budget allocations of the former NSO for CAF, CPBI, NDHS, FIES, and FLEMMS.
  ○ Funds coming from other government sources were only on the account of the former NSCB and the former NSO, averaging about PhP 0.5 Million each year for NSCB and a total of PhP 540.55 Million for NSO.
  ○ The total budget increased from PhP 2.16 Billion in 2012 to PhP 3.71 Billion or by 72% in 2013 but down to PhP 3.04 Billion or down by 18% in 2014. The increase in 2013 and the decrease in 2014 are mainly due to the locally funded projects (Figure 5).
  ○ It is worth noting that compared to the total budget in 2014 of the 4 MSAs, the budget of the PSA for 2015 is higher by at least 63%. And while this is due primarily to the increase in the budget for locally-funded projects, the regular budget of the PSA for 2015 is also at least 37% higher than the total regular budget of the 4 MSAs..

In 14 agencies for which data were available, a decline in statistics personnel is noticed from 2012 to 2014. The decline is due to freeze hiring policies, including as a result of the creation of the PSA from the merged agencies of the former NSCB, NSO, BAS, and BLES, and attrition due to the implementation of the rationalization plan of government.

- The total number of filled up plantilla positions for statistics personnel for the fourteen agencies was 3317 in 2012, 3170 in 2013, and 3074 in 2014, a trend which is not good for statistical development since regardless of any reorganization/restructuring in government, more statisticians are needed to be able to respond to increasing demand for statistics, especially in addressing emerging concerns like the SDGs, and particularly in measuring the impact of climate change (Table 8a).

- For the combined NSCB, NSO, BAS, and BLES, the total number of filled up plantilla positions for statistics personnel is also on the decline with 3005 in 2012, 2886 in 2013, and 2776 in 2014 (Figure 6).

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[33] http://glossary.uis.unesco.org/glossary/en/term/2445/en
[34] For these four agencies, the statistics budget is equal to the agency budget.

- The ratio of filled up positions for statistics personnel to authorized positions for statistics personnel for the 14 agencies was 76 % in 2012, down to 75 % in 2013, and further down to 72 % in 2014 or 74% for 2012-2014. Unfortunately, the CRESS questionnaires cannot provide reasons for this. But whatever the reason, something needs to be done (Figure 7).

- For the four former MSAs, the ratio of filled up positions for statistics personnel to authorized positions for statistics personnel was 76 % in 2012, down to 74 % in 2013, and further down to 72 % in 2014 or 74% for 2012-2014.

- Filled up positions for statistics personnel represented 12.2% of filled up agency personnel positions (Table 8b). But excluding the 4 former MSAs and the former SRTC, the ratio went down to 1.2%, meaning that of 100 filled up agency personnel, fewer than 2 were statistics personnel (Table 8c).

- Authorized positions for statistics personnel, represented 13.3% of authorized agency personnel positions (Table 8d) Excluding the 4 former MSAs and the former SRTC, the ratio went down to 1.3%, meaning that outside of the 4 former MSAs and the former SRTC, less than 2 of 100 authorized agency personnel was for statistics (Table 8e). It also means that there were relatively more unfilled statistical positions in the 4 former MSAs and the former SRTC than in the rest of the PSS.

For purposes of the CRESS exercise, statistics personnel would include statisticians, IT officers, economists, enumerators, and administrative assistants, provided that their job entails database management, data gathering, information system maintenance, and other statistics-related activities such as data collection, analysis, interpretation, presentation, and organization of numerical and non-numerical data.

3.3.2. Support from External Sources (as reported by the government agencies)

For the period 2012-2014,

- Only one agency reported one project funded by external sources outside of the 4 former MSAs, which reported 18.

- Total committed cost of the externally funded projects amounted to PhP 180.0 Million, or 1.5% of the statistical budget. As of December 2014, 49% of the cost has been disbursed with the 4 former MSAs having a 53% disbursement rate (Table 9a).

- Major providers of external statistical financing/support as reported by the government agencies were the World Bank (464%), the Government of Japan (33.7%), the FAO (8.6%), UN Office on Drugs and Crime (8.3%), and PARIS21-OECD (1.1%). All the other donors had less than 1% share (T Figure 8).

- The statistical domains funded the most were on strategic and managerial issues of official statistics (9 projects), environmental and multi-domain statistics (6 projects), and economic statistics (6 projects). Demographic and

social statistics were funded the least, with only 2 projects. Even if the data sources and time frames are different, it is worth noting that in Tejada's 2009 study, the majority of projects supported were on demographic and social statistics, possibly indicating changing priorities of the donors.

- Statistical activities under Domain 5.2 on statistical programmes, coordination within the national statistical system, and statistical advocacy received the most support from 9 projects.

- Of the 19 projects funded from external sources, 10 have been institutionalized by the PSS agencies, all of which were reported by 4 former MSAs (Table 10. These projects include:

  o Improving the Quality and Usefulness of the Philippine System of National Accounts
  o Capacity Building for the Philippines Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics: Database Management for Decent Work Indicators
  o Project on Improving the Formulation of the Philippine Statistical Development Program (PSDP)

3.3.3. Responses from 6 Development Partners

- Of the 13 development partners which were requested to accomplish the questionnaire, four replied that they have not funded statistical activities for the period, 2012-2014 and have no statistical activities programmed for 2015 onwards. Three institutions have yet to send reply.

- Six development partners reported to have funded a total of 32 statistical projects for the period 2012-2014; half were stand-alone projects and the other half were components of a bigger/major project. This is 15 projects more than the 17 reported by the agencies. It must be noted however, that the reports from the development partners cover funds provided to the private sector which are not captured in the funds received by local agencies (Table 11a).

- Total budget committed by the six development partners during the period amounted to PhP 731.9 million or US$ 17.1 million. The amount includes projects which started before 2012 and those with project duration extending beyond 2014 (Table 11b). It also includes projects implemented by the academe, the private sector and international NGOs such as:

  o Young Adults Fertility and Sexuality Survey - Fourth Edition (UNFPA; Exec Agency: Demographic Research and Development Foundation - private)
  o 2013 Survey in Informal Settlements in 5 cities (UNICEF; Exec Agency: Ateneo de Manila University - Institute of Philippine Culture - academe)
  o Real-time evaluation of UNICEF'S Humanitarian Response to Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda in the Philippines (UNICEF; Exec Agency: Universalia – international

- While the PSS reported only a PhP 180.0 Million committed cost for externally funded projects, the development partners reported more than four times the amount (Tables 9a and 11b). From the distribution of the funds reported by the development partners, it does not look like it all went to the private sector and international organizations.

- As reported by the development partners, for 2012-2014, the major sources of external funding were UNDP and UNICEF with 66% and 20% shares by amount, and 28% and 41% by number of projects, respectively (Table11b). But government agencies reported receiving 0% of their external funds from UNDP and 0.20% from UNICEF. Japan, which was the second major source of external funding as reported by the government agencies, did not respond to the survey (Table 9b).

- 84% of the budget committed covered both financial and technical assistance, only 13% are solely for financial assistance and 3% are purely for technical assistance (Table 12).

- Following the UNECE Classification of Activities, most of the projects funded by the development partners were on Environment and multi-domain statistics and Demographic and social statistics (15 projects each); followed by 12 projects on Methodology of data collection, processing, dissemination and analysis; Strategic and managerial issues of official statistics, 7, Others (Child Protection and Humanitarian Response) with 6 projects and Economic statistics with 4 projects (Table 13).

- Weighted average duration of projects supported by the responding development partners in 2012-2014 is 36.28 months (Table 14).

- Of the PhP 731.9 Million support to statistics from the development partners for 2012-2014, the five biggest recipients were the Climate Change Commission (40.8%), DENR (13.3%), the 4 former MSAs (12.2%), University of the Philippines Population Institute (8.3%), and the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (6.1%). (Figure 9)

- Amount wise, 70% of the project funds provided by development partners were coursed thru a separate bank account managed by the project team in the partner agency. By number of projects however, 69% went directly to the implementing agency/organization (Table 16).

- Disbursement rates of the recipients of external support as reported by the development partners averaged 52% compared to 59% as reported by the government agencies. They are high for the academe (100%) and the private sector (92%) but low for some agencies (3% and 12%). This could be the reason why the development partners appear to have a bias towards supporting the academe and the private sector as implementing agencies (Table 17.

- Three development partners (UNICEF, UNDP, and OECD) have committed a total of US$ 0.83 Million in support of statistics for 2015-2017, 94% lower than

the support they actually provided in 2012-2014[35] (Table 18a). The significant reduction in levels of funding from 2012-2014 to 2015-2017 may however just be an indication of the refusal/inability/lack of midterm plan of the development partners to commit to certain levels of support and definitely not an indication of the reduced funding for statistical activities in the future.

- For 2015-2017,
    - 96% of the committed funds will go to combined technical and financial assistance, 3% to financial assistance only and less than 1% to technical assistance only (Table 19).
    - Majority of the projects are related to Demographic and social statistics, while some involve Strategic and managerial issues of official statistics, and Child protection. Methodology of data collection, processing, dissemination and analysis, and Environment and multi-domain statistics have one project each (Table 20).

3.4. GOOD PRACTICES, ISSUES & CHALLENGES, LESSONS, LIMITATIONS

Conducting a pilot exercise provides room for improvement. However, proper documentation is necessary to identify the good practices, important lessons, and bottlenecks encountered. Some of these in the CRESS-Philippines are the following:

3.4.1. GOOD PRACTICES

- Creation of a CRESS Team within the CRESS coordinating agency.
The PSA created a CRESS Team headed by a Deputy National Statistician with the National Statistician as Adviser which facilitated the CRESS processes and improved the CRESS instruments (Annex 6).

    Ideally, such a CRESS Team should be institutionalized within the PSA, which in turn will facilitate the institutionalization of the CRESS in the PSS.

- High level support of the National Statistician/Deputy National Statistician

    The National Statistician led the launching of the CRESS exercises in a forum conducted for PSS stakeholders. In her message, she highlighted the potential contribution of CRESS in improving statistical budgeting and financing in the PSS as well as in further strengthening cooperation among data producing agencies and development partners. She also committed to advocate for a separate line item for statistics in government budgeting. The Deputy National Statistician for the Census and Technical Coordination Office also actively provided many excellent suggestions to improve the CRESS-Philippines processes. The enthusiastic engagement of the two top officials of the PSA certainly contributed to the success of CRESS-Philippines.

- Participation of the heads of the units/divisions/offices handling statistics matters and agency budget officers/officials in various forums and meetings convened for CRESS

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[35] However, 14 out of the 27 projects reported by the six development partners in the 2012-2014 Questionnaires are still on-going.

The Launching Forum and the series of meetings with respondents witnessed the active participation of officials handling statistics and agency budgets. Remarkably, to date, the Launching Forum was the largest PSS gathering organized for agency budget officers/officials to tackle investments in statistics.

- Provision of metadata/definitions/instructions in the CRESS instruments. Some of the questions were initially not very clear or vague and the inclusion of instructions/definitions enhanced the understanding/appreciation of the information being sought in the questionnaires.

- Conduct of special meetings with the respondents after the Launching Forum

  Some of the questions the respondents were not able to raise during the Launching Forum were addressed during a special session conducted by the PSA.

- Conduct of follow-up calls with the respondents

  As expected, many agencies were not able to send back the accomplished questionnaires by the deadline set. The follow-up calls were necessary to improve the response rate and address other issues the respondents may have. The information and recommendations solicited during the Launching Forum and the Meetings with CRESS Respondents were communicated and explained to those who asked questions about the questionnaires and the CRESS Team regularly followed up on their responses. Estimation techniques emanating from the PSA Staff's experience in accomplishing the instrument were likewise provided to those who sought guidance throughout the period of data collection, including the DOJ, DOST, DPWH, DTI-EMB, FNRI, IC, IPOPHL, NTRC, PDIC, PHLPost and Provincial Government of Batangas.

- Flexibility in the submission date of questionnaires

  The original deadline given to respondents was 29 June 2015. However, recognizing the difficulties being experienced by the respondents, the deadline was extended to 28 July 2015 which increased the response rate from 2% to 33%.

- Relatively strong statistical coordination within the DOJ

  Given that the statistical budget of an agency is not limited to/concentrated in one unit of the agency, agency representatives to the Launching Forum were encouraged to consolidate all the forms from all attached bureaus/agencies. Not only was the DOJ one of the agencies which submitted before the deadline, it also collected the accomplished questionnaires from seven of its attached offices.

- Better information management and documentation in some agencies like the former NSCB.

Better documentation made the accomplishment of the questionnaires easier and faster. It was useful in providing detailed information about past statistical programs and activities that enriched the quality of responses to the questionnaires.

- Having a separate line item for statistics-related activities in the total budget of agencies such as DOJ, DOST, DOT, EMB-DTI, FNRI, IPOPHL, and NTRC made it easier for these respondents to accomplish the questionnaires.

- Use of alternative data sources for agencies that do not return questionnaires.

- The policy resolution passed by the PSA Executive Board on 27 August 2015 enjoining agencies and the DBM to introduce in the budget process a separate line item for statistics

3.4.2. ISSUES & CHALLENGES

As a pilot exercise, CRESS-Philippines was not without problems. The following are some of the issues and challenges encountered:

- Convincing the respondents to accomplish the questionnaires

  Although majority of the Launching Forum attendees were provided with flash disks containing the materials, more than half of these agencies did not actually participate in the activity, while almost each data source had to be followed-up regularly just to be reminded of the deadline. Emails, containing the formal letter of request from the NS and the documents/forms needed to accomplish the questionnaires, were also sent to each organization. In addition, CDs were delivered to agencies experiencing technical glitches. However, most of them submitted questionnaires after clarification/explanation.

- Difficulty in identifying which part of the agency budget could be considered as statistical budget. This issue stems from the following observations:

  - There was no line item for statistical activities in the budget documents of government agencies except for agencies mentioned with good practices above.

  - Some activities and projects that are statistical in nature were being undertaken by agency personnel occupying non-statistician positions. Thus, CRESS respondents from the government were reminded that budget allocated for the activities of IT personnel in-charge of database management, personnel in regional offices gathering data from sources at the local levels, as well as researchers collecting and processing data for internal policymaking and decision purposes of the agency were also covered.

  - Generation of statistics was often associated with the conduct of surveys. Collection and management of administrative data in registries and licensing systems as well as the conduct of research for internal agency

purposes were not readily understood as a component of the concept of "statistical activities".

- Some projects funded by development partners might have subcomponents involving data gathering and generation of statistics. There is a need for a more specific definition of the coverage statistical activities for both the government and international organizations, so as to help them identify which projects are statistically-related or have statistics-related activities.

- Even for agencies that expressed strong willingness to respond to the questionnaires, the timing of the survey conflicted with the work schedule of the respondents making it difficult for them to find the time to accomplish the questionnaire. In these cases, they were encouraged to submit the data even at a later date.

- Non-participation by an institution does not necessarily mean unwillingness to support CRESS but is the result of the unavailability of data in the institution.

- One agency provided answers only on statistics projects and statistics personnel but did not provide information on budget for statistics projects "based on the opinion of the Office of the General Counsel and Legal Services (OGCLS) on the propriety of furnishing the requested data on the basis of fiscal and administrative autonomy and possible confidentiality issues"

- Another challenge is making the agencies understand that there are ways to disaggregate the allotment for statistics-related activities from their overall budget. However, most of them either found it hard or lacked the time to estimate. The CRESS Team tried to assist them by answering their queries either thru phone calls or emails.

- Development partners could not provide sufficiently accurate/complete information about their projected financing of statistical activities in the next three years.

- Lastly, the difficulty in gathering complete information from some departments/ministries especially those with many statistical units. The CRESS exercise certainly highlighted the need to continue to improve coordination not only within the PSS but within individual offices in government.

- External support to statistical activities (as reported by the government agencies) very roughly amounted to 1.5% of the statistical budget of the responding PSS agencies. The issue is, should the target be to increase (higher statistical development but not sustainable?) or reduce this? (more sustainable but lower statistical development?)

3.4.3. LESSONS

Lessons learned include the following:

- Data cleaning/validation is necessary. One agency reported an impossibly high amount for its statistics budget. Another agency reported under support from external sources (development partners) what was actually support from other government sources.

- While the CRESS-Philippines exercise already tried to improve the initial instruments developed by PARIS21, there is certainly room for further improvement. The definition of statistical support, statistical budget, statistical personnel and statistical activities is still not clear in the minds of many. Metadata and clear instructions are necessary. More time and close guidance are needed by agencies to fill up the questionnaires, specially in the initial years of CRESS implementation

- It is difficult to implement hard deadlines on activities like CRESS – a new initiative that takes on the challenge of collecting information on the financing provided by donor organizations to both mainstream statistics agencies and other agencies with data management activities.

Towards the institutionalization of the CRESS in the PSS, an effective advocacy and communication plan will be useful in enhancing the cooperation and support of respondents.

- For some departments with many units involved in statistical activities including those located at the subnational level, the collection and consolidation of all the questionnaires were not easy.

- The CRESS exercise must be ready for surprises. Some institutions unexpectedly did not send back the questionnaires. In piloting the questionnaires within the PSS, even some former MSAs were not able to accomplish the questionnaires on time, indicating that it may not be that easy to fill up the CRESS questionnaires.

- The CRESS questionnaire should consider other agencies such as the GOCCs that do not receive annual appropriations from the government. Some GOCC respondents found the GAA irrelevant in defining their funding sources for statistical activities. These organizations were asked to note their specific sources of funds other than GAA.

- The CRESS questionnaires should also capture region-wide statistical support given by development partners. At present, they capture support from development partners given solely to one country.

- In accordance with the CRESS framework, financing received by local private sector organizations for their statistics-related efforts was not accounted for, unless it was appropriated to support government statistical activities and was reported in the CRESS by government agencies. This partly explains the difference between the numbers reported by the development partners and the numbers coming from the government agencies. Bearing in mind that in the PSS, the private sector also actively produces information complementing

official statistics, such undercoverage in CRESS has to be appreciated in measuring support for statistics.

- Out of the four (4) LGUs sampled for the CRESS pilot, only one was able to respond. While this definitely indicated that some LGUs allocated portions of their resources for statistics, unless CRESS fully covers them, support for statistics will be underestimated.

- As expected, the support reported by donors does not tally with the support from external sources reported by the agencies, which does not include the private sector.

3.4.4. LIMITATIONS

Some of the limitations associated with the CRESS-Philippines pilot are:

- Possible underestimation in the global estimates on financing of statistics both from domestic and external sources due to:

  o Non response
  o The private sector being out of scope of Questionnaires 1-3
  o Severe undercoverage of LGUs
  o Undercoverage of development partners (UN Statistics Division, UNESCAP, ASEAN Secretariat, SIAP, IMF, ADB) and the regional statistical projects they finance. In other words, only country-specific projects of development partners supporting statistics were covered and region-wide projects were not captured.

- Inaccurate estimates also arise from the inability of respondents to correctly identify which financial and human resources should be considered as statistical.

- Difficulty on the part of development partners in making firm commitments for future statistical activities.

4. MAJOR COMMENTS DURING THE DISSEMINATION FORUM

In accordance with the CRESS-Philippines Methodology, the PSA, in collaboration with PARIS21, conducted the Dissemination Forum on the Country Report on Support to Statistics (CRESS) on 28 August 2015 at the AIM Conference Center, in Makati City. Although the Secretary of Socio-Economic Planning and Chair of the PSA Board could not attend the forum, he sent Deputy Director General Rolando Tungpalan of NEDA to read his message. The National Statistician and her Deputy National Statisticians also attended the forum. Representatives from government agencies, financial institutions, GOCCs, LGUs, private organizations, and development partners attended the forum.

The main outcomes of the forum were: (a) increased awareness of the current financing made available to the Philippine Statistical System (PSS) and future requirements; (b) recognition of need to review funding priorities for statistics; (c) appreciation of need to

harmonize external support for statistics; and (d) recommendations for further strengthening of the PSS through improved systems/processes.

Specifically, the forum discussed the factors facilitating support for statistics and improving the measurement of support for statistics, as well as the factors posing as hindrance to both. It also showed graphic representations of: (a) budget allocation for statistics; (b) share of statistics budget to total agency budget; (c) total domestic financing for statistics; (d) statistics budget by expense category, i.e., personal services (PS)/maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE)/capital outlay (CO); (e) filled up positions for statistics personnel, and its share to authorized positions; and (f) total committed cost of externally funded projects. On the side of development partners, information as to the total budget committed and biggest recipient of support were reported, among others. Moreover, the forum identified the good practices observed and the issues and challenges encountered while undertaking the CRESS, as well as the limitations of the study. The CRESS Consultant likewise presented recommendations on how to improve the: (a) measurement of support to statistics; and (b) support to statistics.

As an immediate measure, the forum agreed on providing separate line items for statistical activities in the annual agency budgets. This is to clearly distinguish budget for statistical activities from that allocated for non-statistical activities. Relatedly, the National Statistician provided the information that the PSA Board approved in its 27 August meeting the PSA Board Resolution enjoining agencies to provide separate line items for statistical activities in the annual agency budget. Similarly, the following needs had been identified: (a) clarification as to where statistical activities should be placed in the annual agency budget; (b) provision of definitions/typology of "statistical activities;" (c) for the DBM to find a way to include statistics code in the system of budgeting; and (d) forging stronger collaboration between the PSA and the DBM towards improving the budget review process.

In order to achieve the aforementioned medium- to long-term outcomes, the forum recommended the:

- increase of budget allocation for MOOE and CO to cover requirements for enhancement of IT/software compatibility, data dissemination and interconnectivity;
- enhancement of appreciation and awareness on statistics/"marketing" statistics through: (a) packaging statistics for the business sector; and (b) drafting of a good communication plan to inform the public re availability of statistics;
- reference to CRESS in the budget review process, i.e., to see how funds were used and what happened to the funded activities;
- strengthening of coordination between PSA and DBM re budget review process;
- strengthening of statistical capacity of Departments/agencies and LGUs by: (a) providing more statistical training and enabling environment for career growth; and (b) cross-posting of PSA staff in other agencies and LGUs;
- establishment of the national development indicators system (NDIS); and
- response to the challenges of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The forum also underscored the important role of technical/interagency committees TCs/IACs in identifying the statistical requirements in respective sectors. Other recommendations raised for consideration are: (a) drafting of proposed legislation to allocate portion of the total agency budget for statistics; and (b) for PARIS21 to develop

modules to enhance appreciation on statistics among agency heads and policymakers, and of the need to invest on them.

A more complete listing of the issues and concerns raised during the forum is in Annex 7.

5. THE WAY FORWARD: SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

As we all most certainly agree, statistics plays an important role towards good governance, towards inclusive growth, and towards the attainment of the SDGs. And, as we manage our lives in this day and age of fast-paced technology and innovation, the need for statistics is increasing every second, every nanosecond even. But what many do not appreciate is that for statistics to be able to effectively play its role, governments and even the private sector must invest reasonably in statistics, recognizing fully well the presence of competing priorities. Toward this end, it is desirable to undertake some initiatives, some of which were highlighted during the dissemination forum on 28 August 2015.

5.1. IMPROVING THE MEASUREMENT OF SUPPORT TO STATISTICS

Towards improving the measurement of support for statistics:

- Move towards a separate line item for statistics in the budgeting process (a major step in this direction has been taken by the PSA through the PSA Board policy resolution it passed on 27 August 2015);

- Adoption of the modified UNECE Classification of Statistical Activities in the annual statistical budget review mechanism of the PSA, monitoring of the financing for and implementation of the statistical programs/activities slated in the PSDP, as well as in the future CRESS initiatives;

- Improve further the CRESS framework/instruments to adequately cover the GOCCs[and private sector organizations involved in the production and financing for statistical activities;
  - The CRESS framework should be able to consider the budget processes and protocols in the country that have implications on the ability of agencies to respond to the questionnaires
  - The conduct of CRESS activities should consider work plans of potential respondents to make it easier for them to accomplish the questionnaires.
  - Respondents to CRESS should be given thorough orientation about the CRESS framework/instruments to improve understanding of the coverage of CRESS
  - Improve data sources
    - Identify other data sources, including LGUs in order to reduce undercoverage/underestimation of support to statistics
    - Reconcile the data being provided by the government agencies on external resources with the data from development partners.
    - Some details on the nature of the Capital Outlay of government agencies for statistics could be provided

- Greater advocacy to heads of agencies, LGUs and to other key stakeholders to enhance their appreciation for statistics;

- Institutionalize CRESS-Philippines in the PSS, conducting the survey periodically, say every three years;
    - Create a CRESS Team (already created in the PSA)
    - Secure the firm commitment of the National Statistician (the current National Statistician is very supportive)
    - Formally organize the network of CRESS-Philippines respondents (Annex 8)
    - Pass a PSA Board resolution on the institutionalization of CRESS.

- Deepen the collaboration between the PSA and the DBM towards improving the statistics budget review process; and

- Replicate CRESS in other Asia-Pacific countries to improve global/regional estimates of support to statistics
    - Pilot in South Asia
    - Extend to the CLMV countries. in ASEAN

5.2. IMPROVING SUPPORT TO STATISTICS

Towards improving support for statistics:

- Exert continuing efforts to enhance the relevance of the statistical products and services of the PSS to a wider sector of stakeholders, making sure to avail of recent advances in ICT;
    - Address the statistical challenges of the SDGs, ensuring the generation of appropriate and timely indicators to monitor the SDGs:
    - Actively participate in the data revolution to ensure that the statistical information needed to eliminate poverty and to monitor development progress (right information) is available to the right people at the right time and in the right format;
    - Enhance appreciation and awareness on statistics, "marketing" statistics through: (a) packaging statistics for the business sector; and (b) drafting of a good communication plan to inform the public re availability of statistics;

- Sustain and continuously improve on the data dissemination efforts already put in place in the PSS;

- Update and Disseminate the CRESS-Philippines results. The respondents who had not submitted the questionnaires should be encouraged to send the questionnaires back and new computations should be done. Towards wider dissemination of CRESS, in addition to the presentation made during the Annual Conference of the PSAI in September 2015, it is recommended that the PSA prepare a paper for presentation during the 2016 National Convention on Statistics;

- Revisit budget preparation policies/practices that allocate budgets for periodic censuses and surveys like the CPH, POPCEN, CAF, CPBI, FIES, NDHS, NNS, FLEMMS, etc. under Other allocations or locally funded projects instead of under the regular budgets of the PSS agencies, covered by their budget ceilings.

- Establish the national development indicators system (NDIS) and consider aligning the agency statistics budget with the responsibility of the agency in the provision of indicators being monitored in the Philippine Development Plan;

- Sustain the PSS engagement with PARIS21;

- Manage the statistical human resources of the PSS better thru among others, a continuing education/training/retraining program, a rationalized compensation structure for statisticians in government, more statistical units and statistical plantilla positions in government, including in the LGUs, strengthening of statistical capacity of Departments/agencies and LGUs by providing more statistical training and enabling environment for career growth and cross-posting of PSA staff in other agencies and LGUs;

- Strive for a specified percentage allocation of agency budgets for statistics, similar to allocations for Gender and Development, Senior citizens, and Persons with Disability;

- Revisit/Update the System of Designated Statistics; and

- Strengthen the role of the PSDP/NSDS as the blueprint for the statistical development of the country.

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BAS	Bureau of Agricultural Statistics
BIR	Bureau of Internal Revenue
BLES	Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics
BOC	Bureau of Customs
BSP	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
CAF	Census of Agriculture and Fishery
CLMV	Cambodia Lao Myanmar Vietnam
CO	Capital Outlay
CPBI	Census of Philippine Business and Industry
CPH	Census of Population and Housing
CRESS	Country Report on Support to Statistics
CSA	Classification of Statistical Activities
CTCO	Censuses and Technical Coordination Office
DBM	Department of Budget and Management
DENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
DOJ	Department of Justice
DOST	Department of Science and Technology
DOT	Department of Tourism
DPWH	Department of Public Works and Highways)
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EMB	Export Marketing Bureau (EMB)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FIES	Family Income and Expenditure Survey
FLEMMS	Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey
FNRI	Food and Nutrition Research Institute
FTSC	Foreign Trade Service Corps
GAA	General Appropriations Act
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOCCs	Government-Owned or Controlled Corporations
GSIS	Government Service Insurance System
HSDV	Household Survey of Domestic Visitors
IAC	Inter-Agency Committee
IAEG-SDGs	Inter-Agency Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators
IC	Insurance Commission
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPOPHL	Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines
LGUs	Local Government Units
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MGB	Mines and Geoscience Bureau
MOOE	Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses
MSAs	Major Statistical Agencies
NEDA	National Economic and Development Authority
NDHS	National Demographic and Health Survey
NGA	National Government Agencies

NGO	Non-Government Organizations
NNS	National Nutrition Survey
NSCB	National Statistical Coordination Board
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSM	National Statistics Month
NSO	National Statistics Office
NSS	National Statistical System
NTRC	National Tax Research Center
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PARIS21	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
PDIC	Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation
PDP	Philippine Development Plan
PHLPost	Philippine Postal Corporation
PIB	Performance-Informed Budgeting
POPCEN	Census of Population
PPA	Philippine Ports Authority
PPA	Provincial Product Accounts
PRESS	Partner Report on Support to Statistics
PS	Personal Services
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
PSAI	Philippine Statistical Association, Inc.
PSDP	Philippine Statistical Development Program
PSRTI	Philippine Statistical Research and Training Institute
PSS	Philippine Statistical System
R&D	Research and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDS	System of Designated Statistics
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission
SIAP	Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific
SRTC	Statistical Research and Training Center
SSRCS	Statistical Survey Review and Clearance System
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	World Bank

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