

Country Report of Thailand
Title: Implementation of Thailand's Statistical Master Plan

1. Introduction

Thailand's national statistical system has developed and continued to evolve in the last century. Presently, the National Statistical Office (NSO), the central statistical organization, produces basic statistics from surveys across almost all sectors, while a number of government agencies also produce statistics which are largely administrative data based on existing reporting and registration system. Over time therefore, the country's statistical system has become rather fragmented, without a shared vision and direction. Each agency tends to produce statistics largely to meet its own demand, while facing human resource and financial constraints. This has resulted to data inconsistencies, weak statistical standards and quality, and in some cases, overlapping and redundant data and information.

An integrated and reliable statistical system is crucial for national development. The NSO is now empowered by the new Statistics Act 2007 to serve as the focal point of the national statistical system. The Act further states that it is the obligation of the NSO to develop a statistical master plan for all government agencies to ensure that Thailand's statistical development which supports national policies and development plans. The NSO, in collaboration with all line ministries, has therefore initiated the development of Thailand's first Statistical Master Plan (TSMP) for 2011-2015, which involved the participation of line ministries and consultations with various stakeholders. The TSMP received endorsement from the Cabinet on December 28, 2010.

Consistent with law, the TSMP likewise provides that NSO would serve as the "manager" or "coordinator" of the national statistical system. With this new role, the NSO will coordinate with all statistical units in the government – many of which are line agencies that produce statistics largely from administrative records – to ensure that there are no gaps and redundancies. Therefore, the statistics are useful, timely produced, integrated and linked, and that they meet quality standards.

2. The first Thailand Statistical Master Plan 2011-2015

2.1 Concept of Thailand Statistical Master Plan

The TSMP, a tool for management of national statistical system, is used as the guideline for direction, objectives, main goals, structures and strategic framework for the development of national statistical system.

2.2 Guideline for Thailand Statistical Master Plan

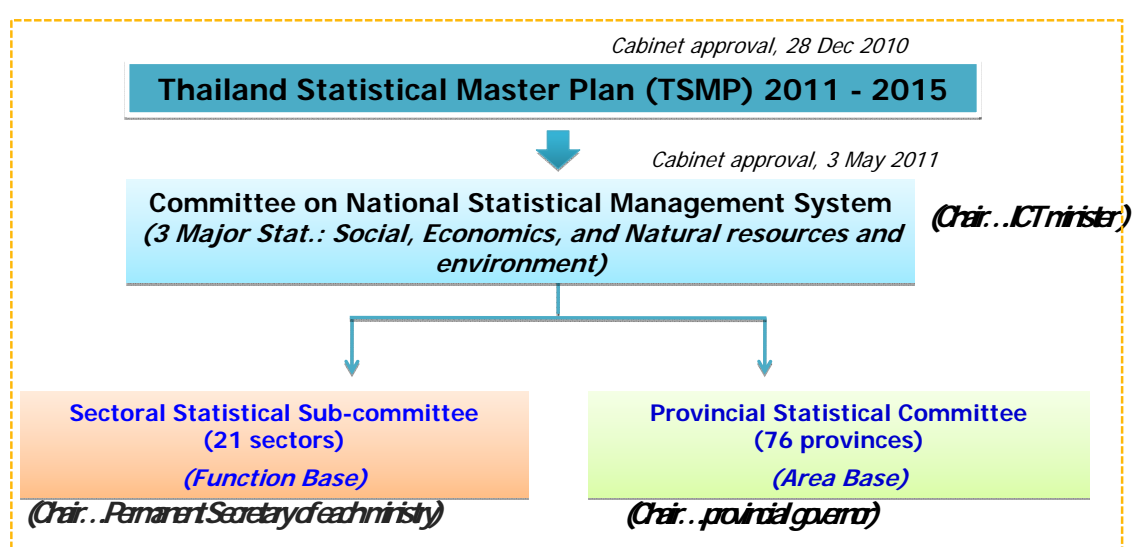
A set of guideline for TSMP is as following:

- 1) Establishing a multi-stakeholder mechanism to bring all the relevant stakeholders (data producers and data users)
- 2) Evaluation the status and the capacity of statistical system as well as concerning the expectation of current users

- 3) Building a share vision and goal among relevant agencies for the development of national statistical system
- 4) Establishing a strategic framework, setting priorities in order to accomplish vision and goals
- 5) A clear defined of action plan including time and budget planning in accordance with strategic plan
- 6) Establishing a monitoring and evaluation mechanism in order to assess the progress of the plan

2.3 Governance Structure of Thailand Statistical Master Plan

The TSMP has been governed by the following structure:



- Committee on National Statistical Management System

According to the TSMP, the National Statistical Committees (responsible for 3 major statistics groups: social, economic, and natural resources and environment), appointed by the Cabinet, will steer the direction and oversee the implementation of the TSMP. The committee composed of permanent secretaries from ministries and representatives from other organization concerned. The committee is chaired by the minister of Information and Communication Technology, and NSO serves as secretary. The committee is responsible for outlining statistical policies, overseeing and monitoring the management of the national statistical system including budget and human resource development, and reporting progress to the Cabinet.

- Sectoral Statistical Sub-committees (21 sectors)

The Sectoral Statistical Sub-committee has been established for 21 sectors in accordance with the main function of line ministries concerned. The respective ministry serves as chairman and secretary. The majority of each sub-committee is from departments or bureaus of the main counterpart. The NSO serves as deputy chairman and co-secretariat with the respective line ministry. The sub-committee is responsible for reviewing existing statistics, selected Official Statistics (OS), analyzing data gaps, outlining and implementing

development plans including quality assessment, disseminating statistics, coordinating budget and human resource development issues, preparing an annual report. This is so-called the “Function-base Approach” for TSMP implementation.

- Provincial Statistical Committees (76 provinces)

For each province (except Bangkok), the NSO and the Ministry of Interior have established a Provincial Statistical Committee composed of representatives from statistical units concerned in the provinces as well as local policy makers. The committee is chaired by the provincial governor. The provincial statistical officer of NSO serves as secretary. The main goal of the provincial committee is to integrate information from all sectors in order to achieve the decision support system at local level. This is so-called the “Area-base Approach” for TSMP implementation.

2.4 Output from the Thailand Statistical Master Plan

Main outputs from the TSMP are as following:

- Establishing database of Official Statistics (OS) along with metadata; which will be used as important statistics and indicators of the country - the project “Key National Development Indicators” has now implemented under the support of UNDP.
- Clearly identifying responsible agency for each OS
- Setting up the system of data integration and linkage
- Having the Sectoral Statistical Master Plan for each sector
- Having the development plan for capacity building of statistical units and necessary resources (including time schedule)
- Having the plan for quality development for each sector
- Having the annual report to be submitted to the Cabinet

2.5 Outcome of the Thailand Statistical Master Plan

The ultimate outcome of the TSMP is that “the country has key set of official statistics in supporting the evidence-based policy / decision making for all levels of administrators”.

3. Challenges of the Thailand Statistical Master Plan implementation

The Statistics Act and the TSMP both expanded NSO’s functions and responsibilities from its traditional role to statistical production to being the manager/coordinator of the national statistical system. This new role and its attendant responsibilities have posed several challenges to NSO.

- 1) The Act and the TSMP are new to both the NSO and line agencies. Despite many briefings and consultation sessions, it is apparent that there remains a number of confusion and misunderstanding on both the part of NSO and other agencies on their respective functions.

- 2) The new statistical system as provided for by the Act and TSMP has not been designed and outlined in detail – translating this from a conceptual idea to a real system implemented on the ground has so far been a real challenge.
- 3) Most NSO management and staff are new to NSO's "manager and coordinator role" – NSO has rather limited experience in managing multi-agency committees/subcommittees and taskforce systems, yet this particular capacity is key to the success of the national statistical system.

4. Recent progress “the implementation of Thailand Statistical Master Plan”

- Collaboration from line ministries and the perception of the high-level executive on the significance and usefulness of statistical data for national development as well as for the development of their agencies

- A well understanding and pursuing by relevant staff from all agencies.
- Establishing the Sectoral Statistical Master Plan of each sector (21 sectors)
- Having the quality statistics from each sector
- Having an annual report (for a fiscal year 2012) of each sector
- The preparation of
 - 1) The Guideline for Good Statistical Practice (GSP) which is used as a tool to improve the quality of statistics produced by various government agencies.
 - 2) The Quality Assessment Framework (QA) which is used as a tool for statistical quality management.

5. Problems / Obstacles

The implementation of the TSMP is so far having a well collaboration from line ministries, however the progress was slightly delayed because the work involved the participation of line ministries in concerning that most of participants have their usual work and the TSMP is somewhat an extra assignment. Another concern is the difficulty in scheduling the meeting date of each sector because the chairman is the permanent secretary of the respective ministry which needs an advance booking.

6. Way forward

- Conducting the TSMP implementation assessment of the first phrase (year 2011-2012)
- Constructing the capacity building programs; 1) a good practice for the production of statistics and 2) the use of the statistical service system
- Preparing the centralized system for statistical service (including the development of the input, searching and presentation feature) such as Data Networking, for which the statistics is used worthwhile.