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TITLE OF THE PAPER WITH BRIEF ABSTRACT
ON CHALLENGES FACING
THE GENERAL STATISTICS OFFICE OF VIETNAM (GSO)

FACING CHALLENGES
WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

I. Structure of statistical organization system of Vietnam

Statistical organization system of Vietnam consist of central statistics system and line ministry statistics system. In which, the central statistics system includes the GSO and 63 Provincial Statistics Offices (PSO).

The central statistics system has been under vertical statistics management from central level to local level.

GSO is located in Hanoi. The official statistics are regulated by the Statistical Law. GSO is supposed to be the only channel for publishing official statistics from Vietnam, although official statistics are produced by different government agencies.

PSOs are collecting data and send it in an aggregated form to subject matter departments at GSO. PSOs also produce and publish their own publications with data on provincial level and do surveys for the local government. There are about 700 urban and rural district statistics divisions belong to the PSOs

There are near 6000 staffs working for the central statistics system, GSO has 400 peoples working, the remains are working for PSOs and district statistics divisions.

II. Major challenges of Statistics of Vietnam

1. Limitations and current stage of information dissemination activities

- To date, General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO) has no statistical information dissemination policy;
- No integrated statistical database linked with micro, macro database and data warehouses. Currently, the database of surveys and some data warehouses are scattered in the subject matter departments that are not built into a common integrated database.
- Dissemination of information activity is generally the individual operation of agencies and statistics organizations; thus there is no statistical information system to connect, share information and assign tasks clearly between GSO with Statistics of other ministries, branches and localities.
- Quality of information is limited, evidently shown in the data status of many important indices released by ministries, branches and localities inconsistent with data from GSO published. The situation made information users perplexed and gave rise to doubts about the reliability of the data collected, synthesized and disseminated by GSO.
- Compilation of statistical publications to provide and disseminate to users is manually processed since there is no database to directly exploit.
- Popular forms of information dissemination through electronic means such as floppy disks, CD-ROOM, Internet postings or uploading are constrained; information on GSO's website is poor and lack of database of surveys.

2. Limitations and issues in collecting statistical information

- Statistical reports of ministries and branches submitted to GSO are often inadequate and later than the time specified due to a number of reasons: Statistical officials in ministries and branches are very few,

not trained in statistics and often graduated from other profession hence the collection, synthesis and analysis of statistical information are difficult, resulting in overloaded responsibility in preparing statistical reports to GSO, the quality of statistical information, as a consequence, in a number of sectors is not high.

On the other hand, the highly turnover of these officers as they move to other units creates instability and delay in updating knowledge of statistics to new replacements. In addition, the process of building statistical indicator system of ministries is slow, and many ministries and branches have not yet developed their own system of statistical indicators.

- Training to improve analytical skill of Statistical officials although has been paid attention to, but not on a regular basis, often systemless hence results in low efficiency.
- Specialized statistical information channel of ministries that collects data from local faces many problems due to the shortage of statistical personnel in departments, branches and ministries; and the plurality of offices. Reports sent from localities to ministries and branches are often slow, thus affecting the progress of their reports to GSO.
- Applications of information technology in statistical work not well developed in many ministries and branches, and statistical personnel have difficulty in collecting, processing and storage of information, thereby affecting the progress and quality of reports as well as the disseminating and sharing of information between GSO and other ministries & branches; and amongst the ministries and branches themselves.

Many ministries so far have not developed specialized statistical database which lead to difficulties in accessing, extracting, integrating and sharing of information. On top of that, the development of software applications in the analysis and forecast of social and

economic issues in a number of ministries has not been sufficiently concerned.

- Data on financial and banking sectors is important for macroeconomic analysis, but often not sent to GSO or being sent too late, thus could not be used in quarterly and annual socio-economic analysis reports.
- The observance of the Statistics Law on submitting statistical reports of agencies, organizations and businesses is not serious and the penalties for violations of the Law of Statistics are not strong enough to be able to improve the situation. In addition, a number of provisions in the Law of Statistics reveal shortcomings in the implementation process or are out of date.
- For statistical information collected from surveys: Vietnam has provincial administrative management model, as such provincial statistic data is important, not only as a basis for the direction and administration of provincial leaders but also as a basis for building economic and social development strategy of the economic zones. Nevertheless, current statistical indicators collected from sample surveys across provinces are not reliable due to small sample sizes. Having larger sample sizes for provinces to ensure the reliability of data is not feasible, since human resources and funding are constrained, thus do not allow the operation to carry on.

3. Professional skill of statistics personnel

- The professional skill of human resources are limited in the entire system of Statistics in the country, in particular, those newly recruited staff in recent years. Currently, graduates from statistics major often choose to study a second degree to apply for jobs in other organizations, but not statistical organizations, to get higher incomes. Every year, the number of newly recruited staff in GSO with Statistics degree only amounts to about 0.1%, and the remaining are with economics major. Provincial statistics encounter the same situation. Another fact worth mentioning is that there are quite a lot of statistics

personnel have master degree, however not of statistics field or statistical forecasting analysis, but of business administration or accounting.

- As the input level has many shortcomings, each year, GSO holds short training courses on statistical knowledge for new staff, also known as training for non-statistical staff.

II. What should GSO do to settle the above challenges?

Vietnam is in the serious period of integration into the global economy, thus the demand for statistical data of the Government and the leaders of Vietnam is vast. Moreover, the demand for statistical information on the socio-economic areas of Vietnam to foreign users is enormous. In response, in 2010 Statistics sector developed a scheme called 'Reform and synchronize statistical indicator systems'. On 2nd March 2010, the Prime Minister signed Decision No. 312/QD-TTg promulgating the scheme.

GSO is currently implementing the scheme in the units under the General Statistics Office (GSO) and the Provincial Statistical Offices (PSOs). The system of statistical indicators built comprise indicators of numerous areas such as: Socio-economic, investment, environment, justice, security and social order ... with many statistical indicators assessing the quality of economic growth, including 4 indicator systems as follow:

1. National statistical indicator system: Consists of 350 indicators, in which 210 indicators are responsible by ministries and branches to collect, synthesize and send to GSO and 140 indicators are accountable by GSO to collect and synthesize.

To collect data of 350 indices, GSO has collaborated with other ministries and branches to build a national statistical survey program consisting of 60 surveys.

2. Provincial statistical indicator system: Composes of 242 indicators, in which 112 indicators are responsible by departments and branches of the local government to collect, synthesize and send to PSOs and the remaining indicators are accountable by PSOs to collect and synthesize.

3. District statistical indicator system: Includes 80 indicators, most of them are responsible by functional departments of the district for collecting and synthesizing
4. Commune statistical indicator system: Consists of 27 indicators.

According to the schedule, by 2015, all indicators in the 4 indicator systems would be collected to publish and distribute to information users. However the progress is sluggish due to the existence of the above-mentioned issues.

The mission of Vietnam statistics is to produce and disseminate adequate, timely, accurate, objective and transparent statistical information to serve the party and state agencies in assessing, forecasting, strategy development, policy making, and socio-economic development planning. It also aims to meet the needs for statistical information and services of domestic and international organisations and individuals.

In order to overcome the limitations and to solve the above mentioned challenges, GSO has developed a Statistical Development Strategy plan to 2020 and its vision to 2030. The goal of the strategy is to define the development programs of the State Statistics to 2020 and vision to 2030 in accordance with the process of socio-economic development of the country and international economic integration between 2011 and 2030, and in subsequent years.

Accordingly, the key contents of the strategy are defined as follow:

1. Review, supplement and amend the Statistics Law and the bylaws, including:
 - i. Develop a Decree to guide and regulate in detail a number of articles of the Law of Statistics;
 - ii. Develop a Decree on sanctioning of administrative violations in the field of statistics;
 - iii. Develop statistical inspection procedure;
 - iv. Develop and implement communication programs and propagate the Law of Statistics and the related text.

2. Consolidate, improve and innovate the statistical organizations. In particular, focus on organizational restructuring of the central and local statistical bodies towards specialization;
3. Build mechanisms to provide and share statistical information, including:
 - i. Develop mechanisms to provide and share statistical information between GSO and the ministries & departments;
 - ii. Develop statistical information dissemination policies.
4. Research and apply statistical methodology in accordance with international standards, including:
 - i. Set up a schedule to executing statistical work on National Accounts adopting version 2008 (SNA 2008) of the United Nations;
 - ii. Prepare the Balance Sheets of the economy, including:
 - Interdisciplinary Balance Sheet;
 - Energy Balance Sheet;
 - Provisions Balance Sheet;
 - Foodstuff Balance Sheet.
 - iii. Update sample survey methodology according to international standards.
5. Research and apply catalog tables and international standardized classification, including:
 - i. Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP);
 - ii. Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG);
 - iii. Classification of the Purposes of Non-Profit Institutions Serving Households (COPNI)
 - iv. International Classification of Activities for Time-Use Statistics (ICATUS);
 - v. Standard International Trade Classification (SITC).
6. Develop and apply procedures and quality control tools in statistical activities, including:
 - i. Develop and apply procedures for evaluating quality of sample surveys, general surveys and censuses;

- ii. Compile and apply the process of building statistical reporting system and statistical survey plan;
 - iii. Apply the control and evaluation procedures on the quality of statistical data in accordance with the assessment framework of IMF;
 - iv. Develop and apply quality manage processes of statistical activities in accordance with ISO.
7. Innovate and improve the quality of collecting statistical information, including:
- i. Construct and complete a synchronized statistical indicators system, including:
 - Review and update the national statistical indicator system;
 - Review and update the system of statistical indicators of provinces, districts and communes;
 - Review and update the statistical indicators of national gender development;
 - Develop statistical indicators of gender development at provincial, district and commune levels.
 - ii. Review and update the national statistical survey plan;
 - iii. Develop, update and complete a synchronized statistical reporting system, including:
 - Develop, update and complete the statistical reporting system applicable to base unit such as: Organizations, government agencies, business units, etc.;
 - Develop, update and complete the statistical reporting system applicable to provinces, districts and communes;
 - Develop, update and complete the statistical reporting system applicable to ministries.
8. Renovate, complete and improve the quality of processing, synthesizing and disseminating of statistical information, including:

- i. Develop and standardize the procedures for communicating, processing and synthesizing statistical reports to be used by the Bureau of Statistics and Statistics ministries;
- ii. Develop and standardize the procedures for communicating, processing, synthesizing, disseminating, storage and sharing results and database of survey & census of the National Statistical Survey Program conducted by GSO;
- iii. Develop and standardize the procedures for communicating, processing, synthesizing and disseminating of statistical information in the system of statistical indicators issued;
- iv. Develop and standardize the procedures for communicating, processing, synthesizing, compiling and disseminating monthly statistical reports and statistical yearbooks;
- v. Develop and standardize the procedures for communicating, processing, synthesizing, compiling and disseminating of Vietnam's statistical data on socio-economics provide to other countries and international organizations;
- vi. Develop and standardize a list and published calendar of statistical products;
- vii. Renewal and upgrade the content and appearance of the website;
- viii. Periodically survey and review users' satisfaction on statistical information.

9. Promote statistical analysis and forecasting, including:

- i. Form an unit for statistical forecasting analysis for the central statistics office ;
- ii. Implement the operation of statistical analysis and forecasting;
- iii. Construct a mechanism for coordinating, sharing and using the results of statistical analysis and forecast;

- iv. Enhance the capability of statistical analyzing and forecasting.
10. Apply and develop information technology in statistical activities, including:
- i. Upgrade and expand the information technology infrastructure of the centralized statistical system;
 - ii. Construct and operate the national database and the National Statistics Information Connection Center (Statistical Hub) of the centralized statistical system, including:
 - Meta database (metadata);
 - Micro and macro database of surveys and census carried out by the centralized statistical system;
 - Database of indicators in the national and local statistical indicator system;
 - Data Warehouse.
 - iii. Develop software applications in the collection, processing, synthesis, analysis, forecasting, transmission, storage and dissemination of statistical information.
11. Develop Human Resources for Statistics sector, including:
- i. Determine the number and structure of staff appropriate to ranks/ grades;
 - ii. Identify the needs for statistical knowledge training;
 - iii. Standardize the training program and manual in statistics;
 - iv. Upgrade Polytechnic of Statistics to University of Statistics;
 - v. Upgrade Statistical High Schools to College of Statistics (Polytechnic of Statistics);
 - vi. Plan an establishment of Human Resources Development for Statistics Center statistics.
12. Enhance facilities and mobilize financial resources for statistical activities, including:
- i. Upgrade and construct local-based statistical bodies;
 - ii. Invest in equipment and working facilities for statistical offices

During our implementation of the Strategy, some points we think are important for activities on Marketing, User Surveys and Commissioned Statistics.

- Increase the trust of data users in statistical information
- Improve the understanding of data users on methods and processes of data production.
- Consolidate and develop communication channels between data producers and data users.
- Social awareness and responsibilities of statistics of policy makers, information providers and other data users are improved annually.
- Propagandize and educate community to improve its awareness of the role of statistics in the country development process
- Develop and implement communication programmes to increase the community awareness of the role of statistics in development, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, socio-economic development strategies at national, sectoral and local levels and development plans of enterprises, organizations and individuals; increase community awareness of timely, adequate and accurate provision of information to statistical agencies and this is the responsibility of enterprises, organizations, households and individuals.
- Integrate statistical education in schools with the content and duration appropriate to awareness of each age group.
- Renovate and improve data processing, aggregation and dissemination of SSS: apply modern methods in data entry; standardize data processing and aggregation for all fields of statistics; develop a dissemination policy for statistical information and services; develop and use of statistical data dissemination standards according to international standards; develop advocacy programmes for statistical information and services to data users; periodically conduct the survey on user needs.
- Develop a regular dialogue between data producers and data users to understand and produce data relevant to each user of statistics.
- Develop and implement advocacy in mass media to increase awareness of organizations and individuals of statistical knowledge in general.