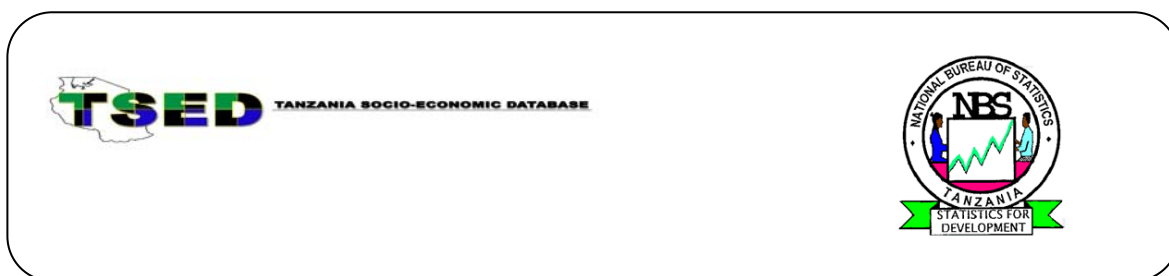


## GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

### *Establishing a database to facilitate national MDG monitoring*

#### **What was achieved?**

The National Bureau of Statistics in Tanzania has established a user friendly, easily accessible database with data on over 300 indicators, disaggregated by sex, urban/rural and by administrative areas down to ward level, where available. The data allows for trend analysis since good time series are available. The database includes a module that highlights the MDGs their related indicators. The sources of data include surveys and censuses as well as routine data systems. The aim of the database is to contribute to “evidence-based decision-making” and is targeting Government policy makers and planners, but also MPs, the NGO/CSO community and the Media.



The Tanzania Socio Economic Database (TSED) is at the heart of the poverty monitoring system providing a tool for storage and dissemination of all quantitative information generated by the poverty monitoring system. It has contributed to the production of the status and trends sections in the national Poverty and Human Development Report (PHDR)<sup>1</sup>. The fact that TSED can provide insight in the differences in the status of poverty and human development between districts and wards also allows planners to strategise in targeting their resources in a more effective manner. TSED is also used to disseminating data to stakeholders for example by producing a poster on income poverty for poverty policy week, 2002. The database will also be used to produce a poverty atlas based on the Household Budget Survey and the Census data.

#### **Why is TSED a good practice?**

<sup>1</sup> In Tanzania the national Human Development Report is produced through a nationally owned process and is a major output of the Poverty Monitoring System. This approach has been recognised as a good practice in the OECD reference guide on Harmonising Donor Practices for Effective Aid Delivery, p38, 2003

- TSED is government owned.
- TSED is fully institutionalised within the framework of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the Poverty Monitoring System (PMS).
- It allows regular monitoring of the MDG indicators.
- It contributes to capacity building for evidence based decision-making.
- It has contributed to build partnerships between UN agencies and between the Government, the UN and the private sector.
- It is a cost effective initiative because it was customized from UNICEF's ChildInfo and by drawing on many years of experience with the package in other countries.
- It avoids duplication of efforts by linking up with other government initiatives like the establishment of a database to monitor the implementation of the Local Government Reform Programme.
- It contributes to South-South collaboration. The NBS has already hosted two study tours with delegations from 8 African countries.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned:

This section highlights some of the challenges the TSED team faced while establishing and operationalising TSED. Some challenges have been overcome, some however still exist and work is in progress to resolve them.



One of the biggest challenges facing the Initiative is **to stimulate substantive use**

of the Database. Indications are that people are not used to tools like databases to assist in decision-making processes. Several initiatives have been developed to try and overcome this challenge. These include giving demonstrations in the respective ministries; using the database to generate specific presentations and maps for ministries; using TSED in the preparation of major reports (e.g. 10 maps generated by TSED were included in the Household Budget Survey (HBS)). A special CD-rom was also prepared for the HBS including data from TSED and used in the official launch of the HBS during Poverty Policy Week in September 2002. In the near future a special TSED Census CD-rom will be made containing all information generated by the Housing and Population Census going to the village level, as well as regional and district profiles

**High-level commitment** to the product is required. Tools like TSED need to be formally endorsed by the respective government agencies before staff can use it. An MOU is being prepared to seal this commitment.

Furthermore TSED is made available free of charge and efforts are ongoing to ensure work on TSED is included in the job descriptions of the focal points in each ministry. Each participating ministry has two TSED Focal Points who have been trained on how to update and manage the database within their own institutions **Training for users** is customised and people learn by using their own data. Training is also being organised to stimulate the use of data for decision-making and analysis.

It proved to be a challenge to develop a user-friendly database tool locally. In case of TSED one year was lost because of this! **Using the off the shelf tool developed by UNICEF** that could be modified to reflect local needs made a tremendous difference. This was an already tested tool used in many countries. This avoided a long process of development and testing.

A challenge to any new product is to convince potential users of the added benefit of the product itself. The TSED team consciously worked towards adoption of **TSED in the wider framework of the PRSP/PMS**. We ensured the data set included data on the key Poverty Monitoring Indicators and hosted many demonstrations. Once 'embedded' in this framework, people were easily convinced of the usefulness and purpose of TSED. Other possibilities exist as well a TSED-like database can also be specifically linked to MDG monitoring or even assist one particular government sector in producing performance reports.

The institutional framework set up for TSED is very elaborate and includes over 17 Government and non-government Agencies, Ministries and Institutions. It consists of a Steering committee and Taskforce and focal point in all the partner institutions. The idea was to reach **broad consensus** on the substance of the database. The lesson here is starting small might push the process along faster. Furthermore initiatives like this can be integrated in existing institutional frameworks.

A full time Data Management Adviser (DMA) was recruited to **support the NBS in building its capacity** to manage the TSED initiative. The DMA has been supported by two professional staff from UNICEF and UNDP. In a recent reorganisation NBS has fully institutionalised TSED and has assigned one full time staff member and several part-time staff members to the initiative. The DMA is working towards handing over the responsibilities to the NBS counterpart. DFID has provided costsharing to cover the costs of the DMA position. Although the initial costs for customisation of the database are relatively low (US\$15,000), substantive support through providing technical assistance is rather costly.

## **How was it done? A step by step guide and checklist for success<sup>2</sup>:**

- 1** Build consensus and raise awareness among stakeholders on the need and usefulness of the tool and on the indicators it should contain.
- 2** Reach agreement among stakeholders on the institutional framework for the initiative.
- 3** Call on support of the local UNICEF Office and/or the DGO in New York to access technical assistance to customise the DevInfo database to suit your needs and develop a first version. Develop a subsequent “data entry plan” to input data from each ministry.
- 4** Agree on a robust data management system, including IT backstopping to ensure data quality and proper lines of responsibilities for data entry and dissemination. Regularize data input (on an annual basis) to ensure data is kept up to date.
- 5** Organize a formal launching to gain publicity and to ensure high level buy in from the participating stakeholders.
- 6** Establish a training programme for users and administrators. Focusing on management of the database but also on the use of it, particularly in the area of analysis. Specialized training is also required on technical aspects. This will ensure a sustainable base for local support and backstopping.
- 7** Develop a marketing strategy (as part of host institution if applicable).

### **What else would have helped?**

More awareness on similar initiatives and information sharing would have assisted the TSED team to make strategic decisions. We lost for example one year by trying to develop our own software package while DevInfo was already available and used in many countries.

### **Who prepared this guide?**

This good practice guide has been developed by the National Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with UNDP and UNICEF. It is based on more than 5 years experience and also draws from the various study tours hosted by

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NBS, where delegations from across Africa were invited to learn about the experiences (good and bad) to date.

### **CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS**

- Ensure linkage to practical application, preferably linking it to an existing government or UN initiative, like PRSP or UNDAF.
- Take note of lessons learned from other countries that are more advanced in this area
- Keep the institutional framework simple with limited number of partners. If possible fold it into an existing Government or UN framework.
- Keep the first version of the database small, in terms of substance. Focus on quality data and a product that can be developed quickly to be used to demonstrate its potential, rather than going for substance and a long preparatory process.
- Data quality is of utmost importance for the credibility of the tool. Ensure data is entered from reliable recognised sources only and include relevant meta-data on definitions and sources.
- Try and formalise the participation of stakeholders by signing of an MOU. This will ensure the needed high-level support.
- Undertake a capacity assessment of partners/users to customise the training and to gauge support required. Focus on users who are ready for it and aim to produce a 'showcase'.

(Note: The above checklist for success is based on experiences from few countries. Some recommendations might not be relevant elsewhere.)

### **More information?**

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A User Guide and TSED Brochure are available from the offices mentioned above, as well as on the following website [www.tsed.org](http://www.tsed.org)