

## THAILAND: GOOD PRACTICES IN OFFICIAL STATISTICS\*

### PRINCIPLE 1 - RELEVANCE, IMPARTIALITY AND EQUAL ACCESS

Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a society, serving the government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honor citizens' entitlement to public information.

#### Advisory Bodies

*Statistical Act, BE 2508 (1965)*

Section 7. There shall be a National Statistical Commission, consisting of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and not more than ten other members, appointed by the Cabinet, as well as representatives from every Ministry as members ex-officio. The Secretary-General of the National Statistical Office shall serve as member and Secretary.

Section 8. The National Statistical Commission shall serve as an advisory body to the National Statistical Office.

Section 9. The Members of the National Statistical Commission as appointed by the Cabinet shall serve for a term of three years.

In the event that an appointment to the Statistical Commission must be made during a term of office, whether to appoint additional members or for replacement, the newly appointed member(s) shall serve for the remaining period of the present term.

Any member of the National Statistical Commission who has completed his term may be re-appointed.

Section 10. Aside from the termination of office according to the provisions under Section 9, the membership of the National Statistical Commission shall terminate upon;

- death;
- resignation;
- bankruptcy;
- incompetence or quasi-incompetence;
- imprisonment by a final court decision, except for petty offences committed through negligence.

Section 11. At the meetings of the National Statistical Commission, not less than one half of all the members must be present so as to constitute a quorum.

If the Chairman is absent from the meeting, the Vice-Chairman shall act as Chairman. If both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are absent from the meeting, the members shall elect a member to act as chairman.

Section 12. The decision of the meetings shall be by a majority vote.

Each member shall have one vote. In case of a tie, the Chairman shall cast an additional vote as the decisive vote.

Section 13. If, to perform its functions as charged, the National Statistical Commission deems it appropriate to appoint a Subcommittee to perform any activity as assigned, or to call upon any person for information, explanation, advice or opinion, it may do so.

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This compilation is based on the information provided by the United Nations Statistics Division <<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/goodprac/default.asp>> at 22 January 2003.

The provisions of Section 11 and Section 12 shall apply to meetings of the Subcommittee, mutatis mutandis.

### **User Consultation**

#### *Communication with users.*

Even though, we do not have a user's council, the NSO has close communication with its users especially the National Economic and Social Development Board, our major user, which is responsible for formulating and implementing national economic and social development plans.

To serve users' need and make its products more useful, the NSO occasionally organized meeting/seminar on statistical data required for decision making. The meeting/seminar was attended by users and other statistical producers. Also, in planning for surveys and censuses, other government agencies concerned were invited to send representatives to be members in the Steering Committee and the Working group.

### **Organisational planning and operation**

None

### **Presentation of statistics**

None

### **Dissemination and marketing**

#### *Data dissemination*

The statistical information services provided by the NSO consists of data compiled through the NSO censuses/surveys and data produced by other statistical government agencies.

The NSO disseminates statistical information to the users through various ways such as publications, diskettes, magnetic tapes, special tabulation, etc. The NSO has also organized a system for users self service by computer. In case of providing data through diskettes, tapes, and special tabulation upon private requests, the expense for computer processing is to be paid by the users.

In terms of statistical data disseminations, fair information practices are used. The NSO maintains the confidentiality of individual responses. Confidentiality of the information that respondents furnish is assured by combining the data reported, and publishing the findings in summary tables, analyses, and reports. Data of less than 3 establishments is not to be issued.

In addition, according to the Statistical Act B.E. 2508, the person performing his/her duties disclose individual information shall be liable to imprisonment or a fine.

#### *Publications*

In general, our publications (mostly are reports on surveys/censuses) are distributed to local and foreign government agencies including international organizations upon request, private sectors are subject to pay at market prices.

#### *Information services*

In providing users with better statistical information services, the NSO had developed electronic data dissemination using the World Wide Web as the medium of distribution. This medium is commonly known as the NSO Web-Site ([www.nso.go.th](http://www.nso.go.th)). The NSO has also provided data to meet the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) required by the International Monetary Fund and subscribed to by the Government of Thailand.

An initiative of the National Statistical Office to develop a statistical data warehouse, which will enable internet access to micro data, macro data and metadata, is underway. This will provide clients with direct and user-friendly access to all official statistics produced in Thailand.

The NSO provincial statistical offices have also developed their own web sites. Hosted at NSO headquarters and accessible through the national web site, the provincial web sites are developed and maintained by provincial staff.

#### **Release policies**

None

#### **Dealing with the media**

None

### **PRINCIPLE 2 – PROFESSIONALISM**

To retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to strictly professional considerations, including scientific principles and professional ethics, on the methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.

#### **Application of statistical methods**

None

#### **Statistical standards**

None

#### **Statistical training**

##### *Statistical Training Programme*

Concerning training, the NSO regularly organizes several in service training courses for the staff of government agencies, state enterprises, and of the NSO itself. The main objectives of the training are to develop experience and skills of statistical personnel and to promote their coordination on statistical activities as well. Other than two courses in statistics (primary and intermediate) emphasizing on the theoretical statistics and its application for practical works, various courses in computer data processing are also offered. In addition, the NSO in collaboration with the Statistical Institute for Asia and Pacific (SIAP) had organized, from time to time, sub-regional courses on statistics for regional statisticians.

#### **Research and innovation**

None

#### **Quality management**

None

### **PRINCIPLE 3. – ACCOUNTABILITY**

To facilitate a correct interpretation of the data, the statistical agencies are to present information according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures of the statistics.

#### **Concepts, sources and methods**

None

### **PRINCIPLE 4 - PREVENTION OF MISUSE**

The statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.

#### **Dealing with misuse**

None

**Education programmes for users**

None

**PRINCIPLE 5 - COST-EFFECTIVENESS**

Data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.

**Minimize reporting burden**

None

**Form design**

None

**Access to administrative records**

None

**PRINCIPLE 6 – CONFIDENTIALITY**

Individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether they refer to natural or legal persons, are to be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes.

**Confidentiality**

None

**Access to micro data**

None

**Privacy**

None

**PRINCIPLE 7- LEGISLATION**

The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are to be made public.

**Statistic legislation***Statistic Act, BE 2508***Position of national statistician**

None

**PRINCIPLE 8- NATIONAL CO-ORDINATION**

Coordination among statistical agencies within countries is essential to achieve consistency and efficiency in the statistical system.

**Organizational arrangements for producing statistics***Statistic Act, BE 2508*

Section 5. The National Statistical Office is authorized to perform the following statistical activities;

- compile statistics from all statistical agencies;
- plan and conduct all censuses;
- promote and develop government as well as private statistical activities;

- plan, co-ordinate and direct technical aspects of all government statistical projects and activities;
- collaborate with, and participate in the co-ordination of the work of all statistical agencies in the assembling, compilation and analysis of statistics;
- make recommendations to, or advice other statistical agencies on plans, methodology, forms, questionnaires, and other documents, such as handbooks, and instructions which are to be used for statistical purposes;
- conduct or direct sample surveys, or collect, abstract, compile and analyse statistics relating to the basic conditions of the country obtained from censuses and surveys;
- supervise statistical agencies in the technical aspects of planning sample surveys, or in collecting and analysing statistics;
- conduct or direct research on statistical techniques;
- issue periodicals and publish statistical data;
- maintain a library of books and technical documents pertaining to statistics, and exchange the said books and documents;
- direct and promote the study of and training in statistics;
- collaborate with, and participate in the co-ordination of the work of foreign states or international organizations

Section 6. The Secretary-General of the National Statistical Office shall have the power to appoint officers to perform any function under this Act.

### **National Statistical Office**

#### 1. Historical background

Official statistics in Thailand began on April 1, 1915 under a decree by His Majesty King Mongkut (Rama VI). An office, named the "Statistical Forecast Bureau", was established as a department under the Ministry of the Royal Treasury. His Highness Prince Bhattayalongkorn was the first Director General. The department underwent several changes in status until it became the National Statistical Office (NSO) in the Office of the Prime Minister on May 23, 1963. Subsequently it has expanded its network to all the regions with a provincial statistical office in each province.

In 1992 a royal decree was proclaimed, dividing the NSO into 9 divisions, each of which had specific authority and functions. Later in 1993, another change took place and the administration of the NSO was divided into central and local administrations. The organization has remained so until the present time.

#### 2. The organization of the National Statistical Office (NSO)

At present, Thailand has a decentralized statistical system. The NSO is the core body that collects basic statistical data while other agencies in various ministries and departments also issue their own statistical data which mostly used for their internal affairs.

The organization of the NSO is divided into the central and the local administrations.

##### 2.1 The central administration

The central administration comprises 9 divisions as follows:

1) The Office of the Secretary deals with all office correspondence, administrative coordination, public relations, finance, accounting, office supply and personnel administration.

- 2) The Statistical Data Bank and Information Dissemination Division are responsible for the compilation of statistical data produced by other statistical agencies, and the preparation of statistical publications. The division also provides statistical data and information to users in and outside Thailand, exchanges statistical data as well as disseminates the survey/census reports and statistical publications with local agencies and international institutions.
- 3) The Field Operations Division is responsible for planning of field operation and collecting the data of the censuses and surveys in Bangkok Metropolis.
- 4) The Statistical Policy and Coordination Division is in charge of establishing a statistical plan of the NSO, monitoring and evaluating the operational progress and achievements of its internal units, coordinating with data producers, users and providers, giving advice on statistical techniques to other agencies and setting statistical standards. It also conducts the surveys as requested by other government agencies.
- 5) The Data Processing Operations Division is in charge of preparing data collected from the censuses and surveys in a format that can be processed by computers, and tabulating data for NSO projects. It also services other government agencies in computer data processing.
- 6) The Data Processing Techniques Division is in charge of developing a Statistical Information System, mainly includes: computer data processing systems development, database systems development, setting up computer systems and networks, and providing advice regarding the above functions.
- 7) The Statistical Techniques Division is in charge of the sampling plans of the censuses and surveys, updating basic information for the sampling frame, developing statistical methodologies and setting the data quality control methods, evaluation of data collected from the censuses and surveys and organizing training courses in statistics and computer data processing for civil servants of government agencies. It also compiles basic information regarding cartography of the country for preparing the survey/census map.
- 8) The Economic Statistics Division is responsible for conducting censuses and surveys on economic issues, performing statistical analysis on economic data, preparing the census and survey reports and producing economic indicators.
- 9) The Social Statistics Division is responsible for conducting censuses and surveys on social issues, performing statistical analysis on social data, preparing the census and survey reports and producing social indicators.

## 2.2 The local administration

The local administration consists of 75 provincial statistical offices. These offices are responsible for the field operation of the surveys and censuses conducted by the NSO. They also act as provincial statistical information centers, promote and disseminate statistical information and provide consultation regarding statistical work for the government agencies in the province.

## 3. The workforce

At present, 1,064 civil servants and 83 permanent employees work in the NSO. Of this number, 654 work in the central office and 493 work in the provincial offices. Apart from this, 1,114 temporary employees are hired to help in collecting and processing the data. Of these, 456 work in the central office and 658 in the provincial offices.

## 4. Duties of the NSO

The NSO is governed by the 1965 Statistics Act to perform the functions which can be classified into five distinctive categories as follows:

### 4.1 Statistical data production

The statistical data production is considered the most crucial duty of the NSO and only basic statistics on the social and economic are produced.

Economic statistics: agriculture, marine fishery, industry, business trade and services, household income and expenditure, transport and communication, etc.

Social statistics: population, labour force, migration, education, health and welfare, culture, housing, etc.

Two important methods used in data collection are census and survey. The NSO produces timely statistics of good quality based on international statistical standards. In addition, new statistical techniques are constantly being studied and developed so that the NSO can produce higher-quality statistical data. The data, once analyzed, are prepared in the form of reports for dissemination.

#### 4.2 Statistical data dissemination

The NSO is the statistical information center for the whole country while provincial statistical offices also exist and act as information centers for the provinces. Data available in the centers consist not only of data produced by the NSO but that produced by other government agencies as well.

The information is available in the forms of publications such as census and survey reports, quarterly statistical bulletins, statistical year books, or in electronic media such as diskettes, CD-ROMs, and internet at NSO's website: <http://www.nso.go.th>.

The NSO also provides Statistical Information Searching System (SISS) for individual searches at the NSO.

In cases where required statistical data are not available, the NSO may consider special tabulation for the users. The NSO's major users include the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, the Bank of Thailand and international organizations such as World Bank, IMF, ILO, ADB, ESCAP, JICA, MITI, etc.

#### 4.3 Statistical coordination

The coordination of statistical activities is an important role which involves the following:

- coordination with the statistical producers to prevent duplication of work, thus helping save budget as well as ensuring statistical standard.
- coordination with statistical users so that the office will be aware of their needs and thus provide statistical data to suit their requirements. In planning of surveys and censuses, the representation of other government agencies concerned were invited to be the members of the Steering Committee as well as the Working Group.
- coordination with the information providers (households or establishments)
- coordination with foreign statistical offices and organizations in the exchange of statistical techniques, statistical data and technical assistance.
- organization of special surveys for other agencies as requested.

#### 4.4 Statistical technical advice and consultation

The NSO provides technical advice and consultation to other government agencies and private sectors on statistical methodologies, sampling design, questionnaire design, estimation of statistical measures, data analysis and report preparation to ensure that the preparation of each agency's statistical data is of a high quality in compliance with recognized statistical standards. This helps promote and develop the national statistical system of Thailand as a whole.

#### 4.5 Statistical and computer training

The NSO regularly organizes several in-service training programs for the staff of the NSO and those of other government agencies. The training aims to increase knowledge, skills and

experience relating to statistics to those working in statistics fields.  
Several in-service training courses are offered by the NSO as follows:

- The statistical training program emphasizes principles of statistical methods, data collection procedure and practical training. The trainees are required to work on one survey project in which they have to be involved in every stage of a statistical survey operation.
- The training program for NSO officials in both the central and the provincial offices aims at developing their experience and skills.
- The computer application training program is offered to government officials as specified in the cabinet's resolution.
- Other training programs are offered to statistical personnel from overseas.

#### 5. Communication with users.

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#### **Co-ordination of statistical activities**

##### *Statistical co-ordination*

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- coordination with foreign statistical offices and organizations in the exchange of statistical techniques, statistical data and technical assistance.
- organization of special surveys for other agencies as requested.

#### **PRINCIPLE 9 - INTERNATIONAL CO-ORDINATION**

The use by statistical agencies in each country of international concepts, classifications and methods promotes the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels.

#### **International statistical agreements**

None

#### **PRINCIPLE 10 - INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL CO-OPERATION**

Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contributes to the improvement of systems of official statistics in all countries.

#### **International activities**

None

#### **Technical co-operation**

None