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**REPORT ON DONOR ACTIVITIES ON TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF
STATISTICS IN CENTRAL ASIA¹**

Note by the secretariat

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) meeting, in February 2006, decided that UNECE will, in cooperation with Eurostat and CIS-STAT, produce a survey on donor activities in the field of Statistics in Central Asia. The survey was performed between August and October 2006.
2. A number of problems were encountered during the conduct of the survey and even more experienced in analysing the results. To improve the quality of information on technical cooperation in the future, a set of recommendations is included with the summary of survey results. These recommendations are suggested to be implemented in the 2006-2007 ongoing work of a Task Force on Donor Activities established by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA). This task force aims at producing global recommendations and possibly a database for comprehensive reporting on technical cooperation in the field of statistics.

¹ The report was presented at the 12-13 February 2007 meeting of the CES Bureau. The full document (including Annexes) is available at the meeting's website: <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2007.02.bureau.htm> (in English only).

3. The UNECE received responses from 26 organizations out of the 37 that were surveyed (70% response rate). Ten of the respondents did not have any activities going on in the Central Asian sub-region.

4. In the field of statistics, the European Commission was clearly the major donor in the five observed Central Asian countries. It financed the greatest number of separate projects and provided about 40 % of the overall financial support reported in this survey. Other important donors were Department for International Development (DFID - United Kingdom), the World Bank, Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (FMCD - Germany), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA - Sweden) and UNDP. During 2005, the six donors mentioned provided more than 7.4 million Euros out of the total 7.5 million reported in the survey.

5. There were 38 activities in the field of statistics in the Central Asian sub-region reported for the year 2005. Of those, three German institutions (FSO, ICON Institute and GTZ) were the most active implementing agencies, together with UNDP. The majority of the projects (66 %) conducted during 2005 were long-term strategic projects, focused on strengthening the national statistical systems of the countries.

6. Among the five Central Asian countries reported, two countries - Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan - enjoyed particular attention of the donors. In 2005, 31 of a total 38 projects were running in these two countries and they received 72 % of all funding in the sub-region. Detailed reporting by country can be found in Chapter IV.

7. Two recommendations for future coordination activities and four recommendations for future reporting and survey activities are given:

(a) Coordination activities:

- (i) Compare donor activities and future plans on Technical cooperation with the Strategic Development Plan for Official Statistics of each country (Multi-Year Integrated Strategic Plan) and agree on main activities.
- (ii) Improve the communication and reporting, building up a transparent and, if possible, global reporting system in Technical cooperation in statistics; one form to promote this activity is to support the work of the CCSA Task Force on reporting donor activities on Technical cooperation, which commenced its work in November 2006.

(b) Future reporting and survey activities:

- (i) Provide a clear definition of the time intervals to be reported.
- (ii) Provide a classification and a clear definition of the stage of reported projects.
- (iii) Develop a classification on technical cooperation activities.
- (iv) Develop a good knowledge of the donor and recipient structures.

INTRODUCTION

8. The question of having better access to information on current and planned technical cooperation and coordination activities has been discussed at two CES Bureau meetings (in October 2005 and February 2006).

9. The result of these discussions was the Bureau decision ECE/CES/BUR/2006/6, according to which it would be the responsibility of UNECE to undertake the survey on donor activities in Central Asia. The survey would be based on two questionnaires already developed and used by Eurostat for collecting information on corresponding activities in the Western Balkans. The model questionnaires – the first for presenting all donor activities, and the second for describing each activity reported in the first questionnaire, were included as annexes to the Bureau's decision. The decision was supported by the Plenary Session of the CES in June 2006.

I. SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION

10. In August 2006, the Regional Adviser of the Statistical Division of UNECE commenced the work on defining targets and modifying the model questionnaire. With the assistance of an intern working at the UNECE, the questionnaires were sent out to 21 selected international organizations and 16 National Statistical Offices or National Donor organizations, which were likely to have donor activities on statistical capacity building in Central Asia.

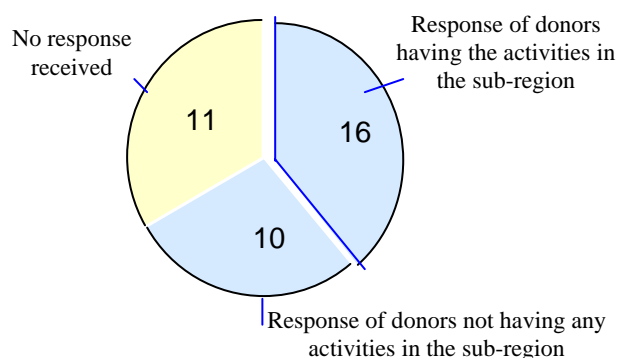
11. For the purposes of this survey, Central Asia was defined as consisting of five countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. According to the Bureau decision, Azerbaijan was considered to be the responsibility of Eurostat and Afghanistan was considered outside of the sphere of reporting, as it is not a UNECE member country.

12. The bulk of the survey was distributed on 25 August 2006 with the remaining letters sent to country offices of UNDP and Asian Development Bank (ADB) by early September. Respondents were given four weeks in which to reply. All communication was conducted using e-mail.

13. Twenty-one replies were received by the response date (22 September 2006). Following an e-mail reminder, the total number of 26 replies were received by 6 October. This represented 70 % response rate of the 37 organizations that had received a questionnaire. Ten organizations (27% of all surveyed organizations) reported that they have no activities in the sub-region.

The non-response rate was 30%.

Figure 2: Participation of the respondent donor organizations in the UNECE Survey



II. PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED IN THE SURVEY

A. Definition of the time period to be reported

14. During analysis of the survey, it became clear that the reporting period was not clearly defined in the questionnaire and was therefore open to interpretation by respondents. This created the most difficulties when analyzing the responses.

15. Most of the organizations reported activities focused on and around the year 2005. This was understandable since there were more than three months remaining of the year 2006 and no emphasis was made in the questionnaires, or cover letter, of reporting on future activities. Some organizations also reported earlier activities, particularly those that had no or minimal activities during 2005 (or 2006). Only a small number reported activities planned for 2007 or later.

16. Due to this issue, this survey round is not helpful in identifying overlapping donor activities. An exact definition of the time period to be reported must be included in future surveys on donor activities.

B. Reporting agency to be targeted: Headquarters or country organization?

17. Decision-making and the reporting structures differ from organization to organization. For instance, it would appear, as a side result of the survey, that the headquarters of UNDP had minimal information about the activities undertaken by its country offices. UNFPA has centralized some of its donor activities with others managed by regional and country offices. This makes it difficult to obtain an overall report and to avoid duplicate reporting on activities. In addition, UNECE's knowledge of organizational structures and appropriate contacts is limited for some organizations, for example, the Asian Development Bank.

C. Problems connected with regional reporting structures

18. As illustrated in the survey results, the European Commission/Eurostat is one of the biggest donors for building statistical capacity in the Central Asian sub-region. Nevertheless, not all important details on the activities of the European Commission in the sphere of technical cooperation in statistics in Central Asia are well reflected in this report. Much of the information received from European Commission/Eurostat – also after requests for more detailed information – was in a fairly aggregated form and presented only for country grouping. It was difficult to use this material for analyzing possible overlapping in donor activities.

D. Institutions with a high share of fixed costs may encounter problems in calculating and reporting country-targeted donor levels.

19. Some organizations working in Statistical Capacity Building activities have a cost structure with a fairly high share of fixed costs. For instance UNSIAP, a Tokyo based UN institution giving assistance to mainly Asian countries through training activities in statistics, could encounter some difficulties in structuring its reporting.

20. Another example is IMF. It reported having no activities in technical cooperation in the field of Statistics in the sub-region. But at the same time, it reported having trained 25 persons from four Central Asian countries in its headquarters in different themes of statistics in 2005.

21. Minimal share of the costs for supporting training activities is directly linked to the participation of trainees from a specific country – how should the bulk of costs, according to their nature, be reported? And how should costs, which have been reserved for planned training activities for a country, be reported if nobody from that country participated? In the UNECE reporting instructions it was underlined that “the cooperation activities to be reported should only include activities of technical cooperation with effective participation from the Central Asian countries. If, for instance, some country has the principal possibility to attend training activities but does not make use of it, this should not be reported”. How strictly this instruction was followed is unknown.

E. Other observations of the potential problem areas in the survey process

22. The overlapping of the different kind of activities in the shared projects, supported financially by more than one donor, should also be considered: how should a project, which is funded by 2-3 different donors by different amounts at different time periods and implemented by another agency, be reported? The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in Tajikistan is an example of complicated donor structures in the present survey. This project has been financed by UNDP, DFID and partly by UNICEF. UNICEF has also acted as the implementing agency.

F. Reporting problems – to be jointly resolved!

23. At the first meeting of the Task Team on Partner Reporting System on Donor Support to Statistical Activities in the facilities of Paris21 on 10 November 2006 in Paris, UNECE expressed a strong need to develop more exact definitions of activities to be reported internationally on donor activities.

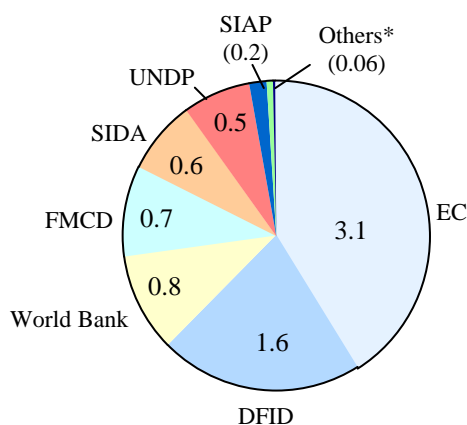
III. RESULTS OF THE 2006 SURVEY

24. The analysis of the survey includes 38 projects, which were ongoing, finished or started in the calendar year 2005.

A. Donor presence in the region

25. According to the survey results, nine donors were present in the field of technical cooperation in statistics in the sub-region of Central Asia in the year 2005. 38 projects were sponsored and financed by these activities, bringing 7.5 million Euros to foster development of the countries. With the total number of 12 projects and 3.1 million Euros as total amount of funding targeted to the region, EU/Eurostat was by far the largest donor.

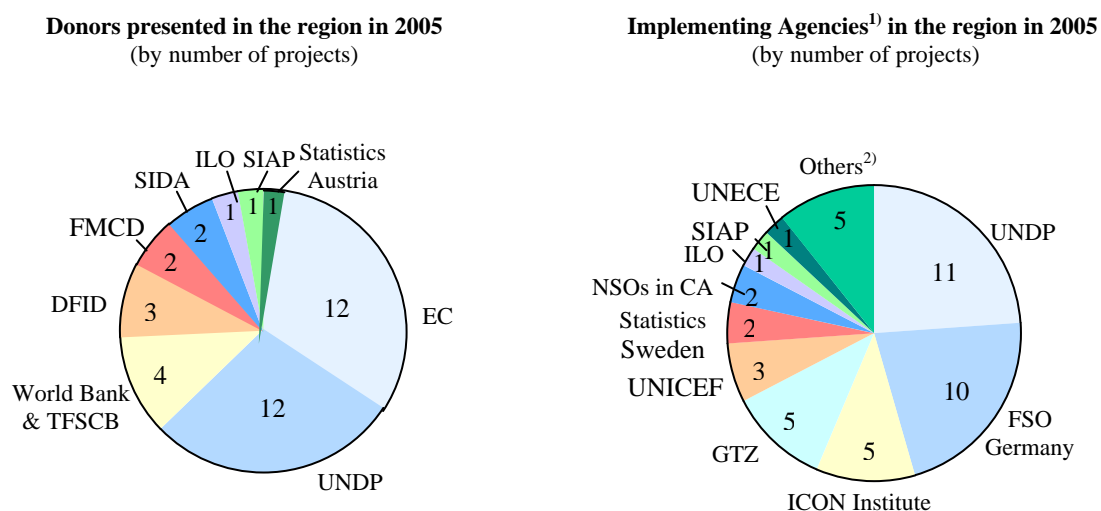
Figure 3. Distribution of total amount of funding of Technical cooperation in the field of statistics by donor (in millions EUR)



*Others = ILO (EUR 0.04 million) and Statistics Austria (EUR 0.02 million)

26. A number of implementing agencies partly shared financing of projects (e.g. Statistics Austria). NSOs may participate in general country-analysis projects (e.g. Rural Education of the World Bank or Human Development Tracking of UNDP). In these cases, it is difficult to estimate the magnitude of donor's support and the impact of the project on statistical capacity building. For this reason, these projects are not included in our analysis of funding.

Figure 4. Presence of donors and implementing agencies in the sub-region of Central Asia by number of projects on Technical cooperation in Statistics



¹⁾One project can be implemented by many agencies (e.g. GTZ and FSO Germany)

²⁾Others = British Council, DFID, IDA, Oxford Policy Management, Southampton University, Statistics Austria
NSO = National Statistical Office; CA = Central Asia

B. Characteristics of the projects

27. The projects running in the region during 2005 were mainly the long-term strategic projects (68% of total number of projects), focused on the strengthening of the National Statistical System of the countries, development of knowledge in special fields (e.g. Regional Statistics, Dissemination and publication, Promotion) and technical assistance for long-term surveys. The total number of such projects was twice as high as the number of short-term projects (projects with duration below 12 months). The long-term projects contributed with 6 million Euros (80% of total funding).

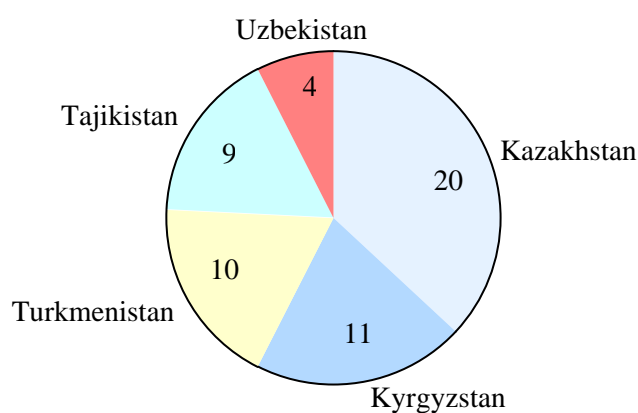
28. The short-term projects included area-focused training courses, sample surveys or seminars in specialized fields of statistics (e.g. Tourism Statistics, Small Business Statistics, Gender Statistics and few other subjects). The majority of them were organized by UNSIAP, UNDP, UNECE and EC (Statistisches Bundesamt, Statistics Austria).

C. Detailed description of activities in the countries

29. Among the five countries of Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan enjoyed the particular attention of donors. In 2005 in these two countries, 31 out of a total of 38 projects were running and they received 72% on all funding in the sub-region.

Figure 5: Number of projects by country

Number of projects in each country in 2005



30. Kazakhstan was a field for activity of seven donors. Besides four long strategic development projects, organized by the EC, FMCD and SIDA, many specialized projects were organized in 2005 to share the recent methodology in different fields of statistics (e.g. Innovation Statistics, Small Business Statistics, Environmental Statistics). These projects were financed by the EC and implemented by Statistisches Bundesamt. These activities corresponded to the strategic goals of Kazakhstan itself, striving to implement international standards and improve the quality of the production and dissemination activities of its National Statistical Office. In the field of poverty reduction, UNDP supported the country with a survey.

31. Kyrgyzstan attracted the largest amount of funding and the second largest number of projects. Half of the activities were dedicated to the long-term development of the National Statistical System and supported by FMCD, SIDA and World Bank. Two projects for technical assistance in special fields of statistics (Agriculture Statistics, Regional Statistics) were organized in 2005 by EC/Statistisches Bundesamt.

32. Six donors were present in 2005 in Tajikistan. The main emphasis of their activities was building of knowledge in poverty analysis and realization of MICS (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey) as well as a survey on living standards in the country.

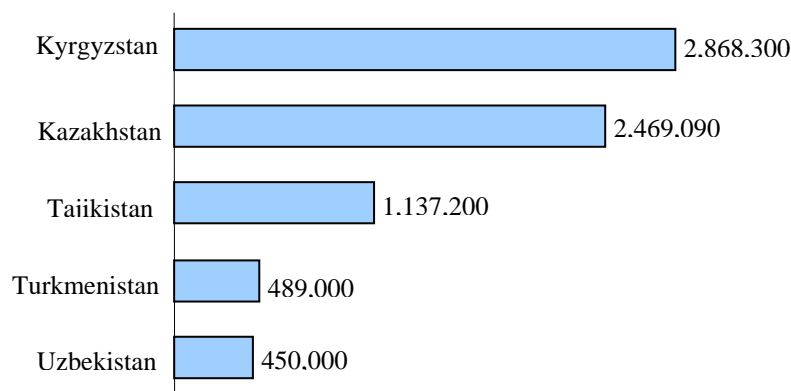
33. Four donors were active in 2005 in Turkmenistan. The major donor in the country was the UNDP. It supported the NSO with 6 projects in the development of the statistical capacity. The EC was active in the country with Statistics 8 program, commencing in the very end of 2005. Turkmenian specialists participated in two training courses, organized by IMF, UNSIAP and EC/Statistics Austria.

34. The number of donor activities in Uzbekistan was the smallest. In 2005, only 6% of the total funding was invested in development projects on statistical capacity building of this country. Staff members of the State Committee on Statistics of Uzbekistan had the possibility to take part in the training courses, which were offered by IMF, UNSIAP and Statistics Austria. In 2005, there was no project organized and implemented solely in Uzbekistan.

35. A summary graph on the financial magnitude of the donor activities in each country in the year 2005 can be found in Figure 6:

Figure 6: Magnitude of the donor activities in technical cooperation in the field of Statistics by country in the sub-region of Central Asia in 2005

Magnitude of the activities¹⁾ in the countries in 2005 (in EUR)



¹⁾ Not included are: Tracking Human Development (UNDP), Rural Education (World Bank), Training Course in Collection and Analysis (SIAP), TACIS Seminar for higher manager (EC/Statistics Austria)

D. Summaries by country

36. Being one step ahead of its neighbours in formulating its strategic goals and plans for the future, Kazakhstan can clearly express its current needs and successfully attract the donor funding. It participates actively in different training courses and special seminars and even plans to organize one of its own in the coming year.

37. According to its strategic plan, Kyrgyzstan strives “to take the maximum advantage from international contact to develop (its) statistical system”². Donor activities in this country are also focused on the long-term strategic development and strengthening the National Statistical System and building modern knowledge in the specialized fields of statistics. There is no one major donor in the country which would coordinate a large number of projects (compare: EC/Eurostat in Kazakhstan). The country enjoyed support from numerous donors, having a fairly large number of different activities.

38. Tajikistan was supported in the last years mainly by the World Bank and DFID. Their support was focused on organizing seminars and assisting in the development of National Strategic plan of statistical activities. Tajikistan had the largest number of surveys in 2005. The data from these surveys are used for basic statistics.

² Statistical Master Plan for the Development of the State Statistics and Information System in Kyrgyz Republic (2006-2008), Bishkek 2005, p. 4

39. The National Institute of State Statistics and Information of Turkmenistan receives, for the moment, financial support mainly from UNDP. EC started donor activities in the country at the very end of 2005 within the framework of its Statistics 8 project.

40. Uzbekistan is the only country in the Central Asia sub-region that does not have a long-term strategic plan for the development of National Statistics System. The statistical activities in Uzbekistan are based mainly on annual plans.

IV. COMPARISONS WITH RECIPIENT REPORTING FROM CIS-STAT REPORTING

41. The February Meeting of the Bureau of CES decided that it is the obligation of the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) to collect information on technical cooperation activities of the recipient member countries of the CIS.

42. CIS-STAT started the collection of information in Central Asia in Spring 2006. Three of the five countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – reported to CIS-STAT in Spring 2006, two in Autumn 2006. UNECE received in September-November 2006 copies of the country reports, in which the original Eurostat questionnaire for Western Balkans had been used as well.

43. Comparisons between information from donors and from recipients are, unfortunately, impossible to make. In the reports from the recipient countries the time focus is dominantly on the future years of 2007-2010 whereas the reports from different donors, collected in the UNECE survey, focus on and around the year 2005. A majority of the projects reported by the recipient countries in the material, collected by CIS-STAT are still in the planning stage. The CIS-STAT reporting gives a fairly good picture of the need structures of technical cooperation in Central Asian countries, but the quantity of projects listed may, at least in some cases, be so large that the likeliness to have the some project proposals to turn into really implemented projects is not too high.

44. In the material provided to UNECE by CIS-STAT, the sum of projects presented by countries range from 0.6 million Euros to 2.2 million Euros per country. The time ranges are also quite different, the focus being on 2007-2008 but covering in some cases also 2009 and 2010 and in one case even the years until 2015. The number of projects reported ranges from 3 to 13 per country. Uzbekistan reports the names and the implementation - or planned implementation - years of the TACIS 8 and 9 components as separate projects, but reports no other details or other projects. The majority of recipient countries report the different TACIS 8 and 9 projects as one project but do not report the names or the themes of their components.

45. For the numerous reasons mentioned, it is not possible to produce a comparative analysis of donor and recipient reporting.

46. In future survey rounds of reporting on technical cooperation, much more exact definitions on what is to be reported and especially the stage of the projects to be reported should be defined. For coming coordination activities, the time approach used in the present recipient countries' reporting would be more helpful in comparison with the accounting approach, which now dominates the UNECE-organized donors' reporting.

V. NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BETTER COORDINATION

A. Overlapping Activities

47. Based on the UNECE survey, no serious overlapping activities in the technical cooperation activities in the sub-region of Central Asia could be observed in the year 2005. The amount of technical cooperation activities in the field of Statistics was in 2005 still so small that no danger of overlapping could be observed. Concerning 2006 or future years, the material from donors is too incomplete to make any conclusion in this sphere.

B. Coordination of activities on technical cooperation

48. Besides the general coordination activities traditionally taking place in the framework of the Conference of European Statisticians and its Bureau, UNECE maintains a Database on International Statistical Activities on its web site that includes also information on technical assistance activities <http://unece.unog.ch/disa/>. Furthermore, coordination of technical cooperation take place at the annual TACIS and CARDS coordination meetings, organized by Eurostat. An exchange of information, assisting to inform and coordinate technical cooperation activities in statistics also takes place at the regional conferences on strategic statistical development, organized by PARIS 21 and regional Commissions of the United Nations. In 2006, the United Nations Special Programme for Central Asian countries (SPECA) started to have certain coordination activities at its annual meetings of the Project Working Group for Statistics in the Central Asian sub-region, organized by UNECE and UNESCAP.

49. Even though this report does not identify any serious overlaps in donor activities in the field of statistics in Central Asia, the main problem still being the need for more donor funding and activities, an improvement of the reporting quality on technical cooperation will be helpful for future coordination of activities. The stronger involvement of EC/Eurostat through the re-including of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan into the TACIS programme, starting in practical terms from 2006, the implementation of the UN Development Account project StatCapCA by UNECE and a number of other donor activities in the field of statistics will in the future years demand strengthening the coordination of activities in Central Asia. Among others, the following measures could be discussed to improve the coordination of activities between different main donors:

- (a) Compare donor activities and future plans on technical cooperation with the Strategic Development Plan for Official Statistics of each country (Multi-Year Integrated Strategic Plan or corresponding) and agree on the main activities;
- (b) Improve the communication and reporting, building up a transparent and, if possible, global reporting system in technical cooperation in Statistics; one way to promote this activity is to support the work of the CCSA Task Force on reporting donor activities on technical cooperation, which commenced its work in November 2006.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE REPORTING AND SURVEY ACTIVITIES

50. Four recommendations are provided as a summary of the problems encountered during the survey and the analytic phase of its results.

(a) Provide a clear definition of the time intervals to be reported

51. The conducted survey clearly indicated that the time definitions of the period to be reported were not sufficiently specific in both the model questionnaire and the questionnaire modified for the Central Asian survey. This was the main source of difficulties and limitations, coming up at the stage of analysis. The discrepancy in time between the UNECE collected material from donors and the CIS-STAT collected material from the recipients made comparisons between donors and recipients practically impossible.

(b) Provide a classification and clear definition of the stage of reported project

52. Building statistical capacity is a long and time-consuming process – and not only over time. In this activity there are a number of clearly different stages. A number of project ideas can be outlined, but they do not necessarily receive the funding needed and so they will possibly not be implemented. Usually a larger number of projects are planned than are implemented. The time span between planning and implementing – not to mention the time span between outlining and finalizing – of a project can be 3-5 years. Some projects, e.g. building statistical capacity for Population and Housing Censuses, are very long term by their nature.

53. This means that the definition of the stage to which a project has progressed should be clearly defined in the forthcoming reporting.

54. There are at least six stages in which a project can be identified: a project can be (i) outlined, (ii) planned, (iii) planned and decision on financing taken but implementation has not yet started, (iv) in implementation, (v) implemented, but not yet finalized and (vi) finalized.

55. The more the information is collected for coordination purposes, the more the reporting should concentrate on stages (i) and (ii), possibly also (iii) and (iv). However, this focus on reporting will automatically bring in elements of instability due to the fact that a number of those projects outlined and planned will never really materialize into real technical cooperation activities.

56. When the reliability of reported information is emphasized, the quality of reporting will improve, if emphasis lay in stages (v) and (vi). But here the risk is that the material reported will to a great extent carry the character of a post factum “accounting report” and will not effectively serve the purpose of coordinating the technical cooperation activities.

(c) Develop a classification on technical cooperation activities

57. In the performed survey it could be noted that the names of the projects were in some cases reported in such general terms and in many cases no information on the subject matter or themes of the activities was given, that a serious analysis of overlapping would have been difficult to make, had the number of projects been bigger. A classification of technical cooperation activities could be helpful in future reporting exercises.

(d) Develop a good knowledge of the donor (and recipient) structures in the reporting agency

58. Due to the complex structures of big international organizations as well as the empowerment structures for decisions on donor activities, it was not always possible to know whether the “correct” part of the organization had been approached with the Survey questionnaires and, to conclude, whether non-response from some part of the organization implied that the organization had no donor activities for the benefit of Central Asia. It may also have been a simple case of non-response from a donor really having ongoing activities in the spheres focused on by the survey. In the latter case a new reminder or redirecting the questionnaires to another respondent within the organization would have improved the response rate and thus the quality of the information.

59. A fourth conclusion is that the conduct of donor surveys demands a good knowledge of the decision-making structures of different donors. A good knowledge about the structures of recipient countries would be helpful as well. Also good quality contact information on decision makers in relevant organizations is needed. If information on decision makers in at least the larger international organizations from different levels is available, it helps to improve the quality of information.

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